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ISSUE 204 MARCH 2009

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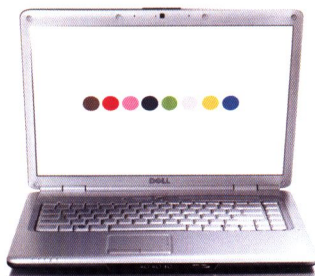
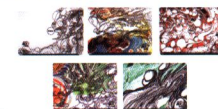


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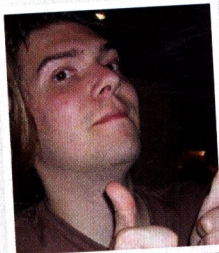
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Full offer details on page 102.

MEET THE TEAM



Where you see **ZONE's** drunkards and stoners in the flesh



CHRIS CAPEL

Freelancing for games

AGE: 26

LIKES: Douglas Adams

DISLIKES: Sony

FANCIES: Being on the Meet the Team page

FAVOURITE GAME: *Clive*

Barker's Undying

NOW PLAYING: *Red Alert 3*

The man we call Capel has been struggling to fit his addiction to PC games around his other half, who doesn't see why he wants to spend all his nights shooting zombies. He's also been hunting down the faceless suits who decided it was a good idea to release all the good games for 2008 at the same time. And he's annoyed about not being able to play various console games, but for that heresy we snapped his legs.

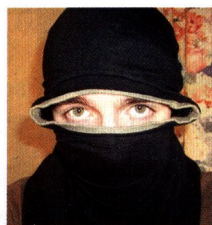


ALI WOOD

Lurking in forums

Our editor has examined the twisted happenings that go on in the *PC ZONE* forums. Luckily, she hasn't run to the hills just yet.

NOW PLAYING: *Empire: Total War*



STEVE HOGARTY

Running scared

After being mentally scarred by *F.E.A.R. 2*, Steve took to hiding under his desk, behind a pile of old magazines, trying to fend us off with a bent toasting fork.

NOW PLAYING: *F.E.A.R. 2*

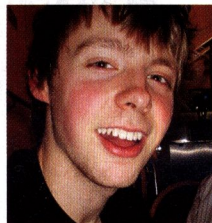


DAVID BROWN

Falling off buildings

This month, Dave moved back in with his parents. Now doesn't spend half of the day getting to and from Zone Towers and has his dinner made for him, which pleases him.

NOW PLAYING: *Mirror's Edge*

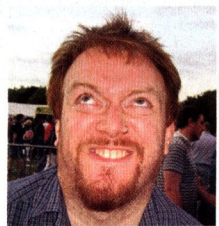


LAURENCE ELLIOTT

Experiencing work

Laurence was born with a big magnet in his skull, and spends his time headbutting PCs and wiping hard drives. At least that's what he did during his week at *PC ZONE*.

NOW PLAYING: *PURE*

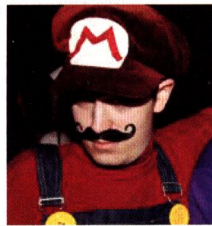


LOG

Having a month in Bordeaux

Log was in France this month, where he looked at *FUEL* and drank wine. He liked it so much he's staying over there to do up a farmhouse, John Thaw-style.

NOW PLAYING: *FUEL*



ED ZITRON

Going online somewhere

Zitron has been MMOing heavily. At the end of the fourth day of solid grinding, he collapsed to the ground. But an hour later, he was poopsocking away once more.

NOW PLAYING: *Guild Wars*

WHAT'S HELPED THIS MONTH... Christmas presents, gifts and book tokens made us feel all warm and glowing inside.

WHAT HASN'T HELPED THIS MONTH... Hard drives breaking down, petty family squabbles and presents of *Dr Daisy: Pet Vet*.

What we've been talking about...

2008 49mins Was it good? Was it bad? Will 2009 be better or worse?

THE PREMIER LEAGUE 8mins Can Liverpool win the title after so long in the wilderness?

GRAND THEFT AUTO IV 23mins Oh dear, it seems the release didn't go as smoothly as planned.

FREE BEER 5mins Rockstar did make some kind of amends by sending us a crate of *GTA4*-related alcohol.

LEFT 4 DEAD AGAIN 3mins Not playing it as much, could really do with some new maps.

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION 11mins We've promised ourselves to be nice and good for the next 12 months. It won't last more than a week.

ANAAL NATHRAKH 2mins Dave displayed that he has a taste for brain-shatteringly harsh extreme metal.

CHRISTMAS 29mins A time for all to gather round, open presents and spend hours away from the family playing games.

F.E.A.R. 2 10mins Despite Will's general sense of doom and gloom, it turned out to be a lot better than we'd imagined it would be.

APPARITIONS 13mins Production editor Richard raves about a BBC show involving ignited nuns and priests being skinned alive.

WIN!



HOW TO ENTER TINY COMPO: For your chance to win text TINY followed by your answer, name and email address to 87474; or post your answer, name, post address and phone number to Tiny Compo, PC ZONE, Future Publishing, 2 Bolcombe Street, London NW1 6NW. The winner will be picked at random from all correct entries received and will receive a copy of *LEGO Batman*. The winner will be notified within 28 days of the closing date. Texts will be charged at 25p plus your normal network tariff. By entering this competition, you consent to us using your personal details to send you information about products and services which may be of interest to you. If you do not

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XMAS STRESS

I **THINK** THE powers that be thought they'd play a trick on me, despite hoping to be exempt until my probation's up at least. But no! Someone thought it would be good fun to give us a two-week deadline and just before Christmas! Eeep. That didn't defeat us though and we've come out the other side kicking and screaming to start 2009 with a bang. Woo.

Now 2008 is behind us we've compiled all our highlights from the year, including the best and worst rated games (guess which was our favourite). There are also New Year's resolutions from the team and leading developers; no matter what I decide mine is, by the time you read this, I'll have forgotten all about it! Useless. Anyway, head to page 43 for a bumper section of reminiscing.

On page 56 Steve got to grips with *F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin*, hoping it will match the magic the original brought to the franchise. Dave has been getting excited about *Championship Manager 2009*, having a first look courtesy of Beautiful Game Studio's head honcho; head to page 24 for his initial reaction.

We also chat with Monolith (page 52) and Turbine (page 32), while Log finds Eidos Hungary have listened to criticisms and are on track to make *Battlestations: Pacific* the game *Midway* should've been.

As always, we'd love to hear any feedback you have about the mag, games you're playing and hardware queries, just email letters@pczone.co.uk.

Ali Wood

Ali Wood

Editor

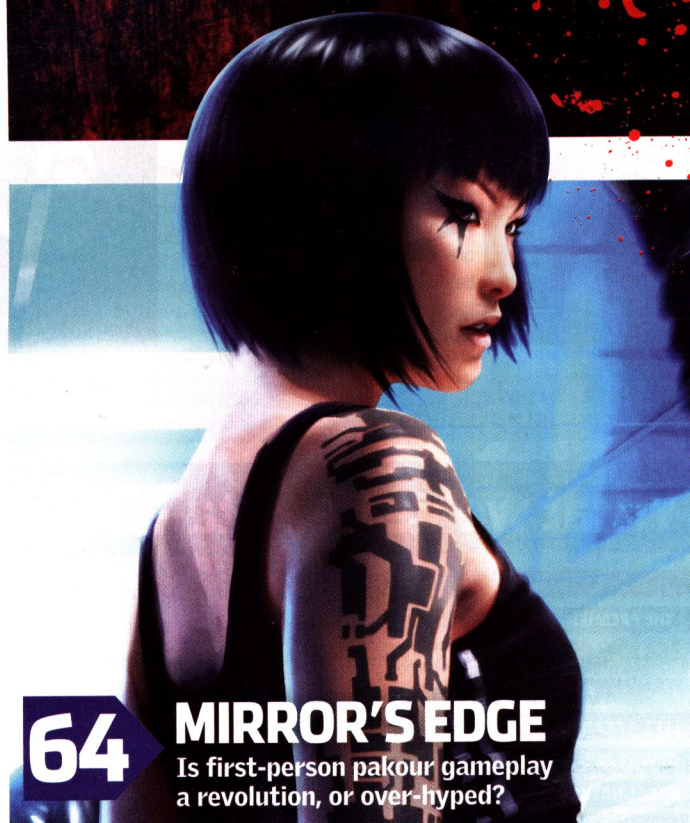
ali.wood@futurenet.com

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COVER STORY

F.E.A.R. 2: PROJECT ORIGIN

We've waited a long time for Alma's return – now she's here. But is her return worth it?



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MIRROR'S EDGE

Is first-person parkour gameplay a revolution, or over-hyped?

100



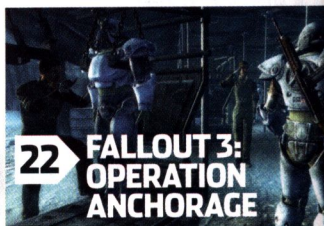
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ASSAULT ON DARK ATHENA



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FALLOUT 3: OPERATION ANCHORAGE

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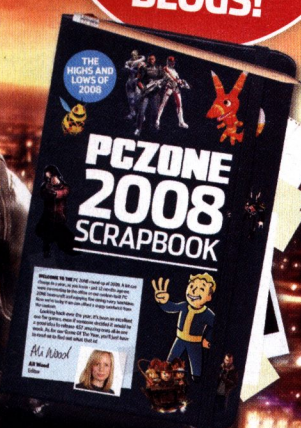
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GET INVOLVED!

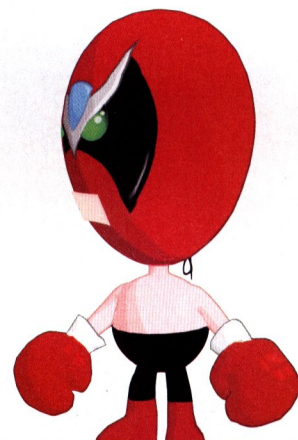
ONLINE ZONE
FIGHT CLUB!
ZONE CHAT!
RANTING!
BLOGS!



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PC ZONE'S 2008 REVIEW

The highlights and lowlights of the last 366 days.



WHAT'S ON THE COVER?



56 F.E.A.R. 2: PROJECT ORIGIN

Too busy? PC ZONE in 72 words...

This month we cast our minds back to 2008, remembering what games came out, which ones were good and which ones were bad. Steve gets to play some games this month, David looks at some upcoming titles before reviewing *Mirror's Edge*, Ali meets one of the guys behind *F.E.A.R. 2*, before Steve reviews it. There's also some Fight Clubbing, Zone Chatting and Will Porter being burnt alive in a giant wicker man.

96 FREEWARE

David Brown gets up to no good with Lovecraftian zombies, minotaurs, boxes and random drugs.

PC Specialist recommends Windows Vista™ Home Premium



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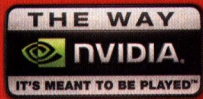


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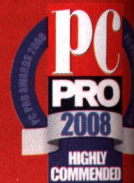
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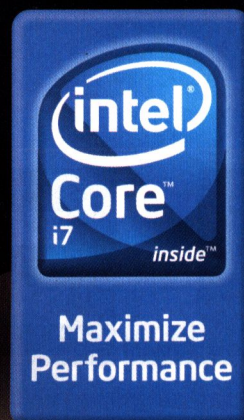
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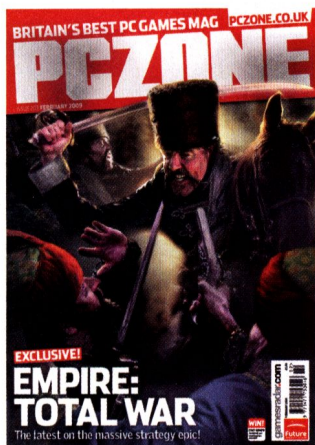
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LETTERS



Delving back into this month's virtual mailbag is **Steve Hogarty**



KING OF LETTERS



CRIMINAL RELEASE

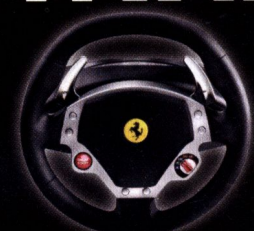
What a shit-storm *Grand Theft Auto IV* on the PC is causing. I've successfully installed it, and while I had to turn down what the game thought were the optimal settings for my machine, it now runs at 25-30fps, which is acceptable. While the graphics options are barmy, especially the 'resource usage' read-out which makes no sense at all, I appreciate the engine's tweakability. Even on low settings the game looks good.

The reaction on gtaforums.com to the game is staggering though. There are

people complaining whose systems don't meet the minimum specs. There's a guy who's trying to file a class-action lawsuit against Rockstar for releasing a game that doesn't run well on his PC! The forum as a whole believes that the PC release of *GTA4* was part of a conspiracy to drive people to buy Xbox 360s. How stupid can you be?

In the midst of all the moaning, people tend to forget what a groundbreaking game *GTA4* actually is. Empty vessels and all that. **Graham Dean**

WIN!



Want to be King of Letters? Then you'd better put pen to paper, or if you're at all PC-literate (which we're guessing you are) fingers to keyboard. The winner will get a Thrustmaster Ferrari F430 steering wheel worth £100. This 28cm replica of the real Ferrari F430 wheel is equipped with force feedback, and a paddle-shift unit as well as start-engine button.

To give them their credit, it's the wild rantings of enraged gamers that compel many developers to patch their badly optimised games.

We've received a tonne of angry emails about *GTA4* underperforming on PCs that are well above the minimum specs - though on both our machines it ran fine. But we're not ready for tinfoil hats though.

FAT SHITE POO

You need to look into questioning Log's sanity: 93% for *Far Cry 2*? Is he fucking mad? It's the biggest piece of consilified shit to tarnish my hard drive since *Halo*. I suggest you smack him upside the head with a rolled-up newspaper and educate him in the error of his ways. Or at least make him play *Crysis*.

Speaking of consolification and the heat over *Deus Ex 3* being what it is, when are you going to start slapping devs over this?

Bill Ryder

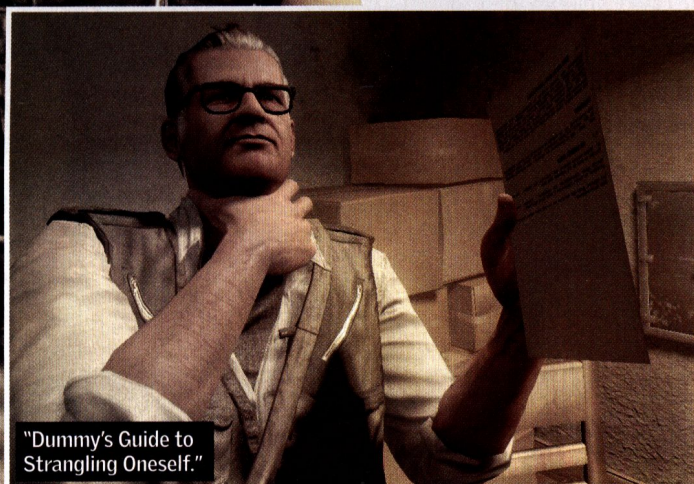
We won't be baited into an argument, Bill, but we will hit Log in the head

with a rolled-up newspaper if it so pleases you.

When it comes to consolification: we're hardly being short-changed to the extent we were five years ago. We'll roll out *Deus Ex: Invisible War* as the prime example of the damage console influences can do to a game, but your perceived problems with *Deus Ex 3* have very little to do with Xboxes and PlayStations.

INTERNOT

I read with interest your feature on Stardock's Gamer's Bill of Rights several months ago and went and looked at it online when I got a chance. It seems to





omit one important factor. Section nine of the manifesto states "Gamers shall have the right to demand that a single player game not force them to be connected to the internet every time they wish to play".

The problem is I don't have the internet at all. I use public access computers for email and such, and while in the future this might change, for now I can forget about playing *Left 4 Dead*, *Dead Space*, *Red Alert 3* and *Spore* at least! It seems so ridiculous on the part of games developers to assume you have the internet. Not everyone does!

As for the whole DRM situation, anyone else feel a little worried that we no longer buy our software but lease it, and once we have installed it three or give times, we need permission to use it again? Certain developers should change their old advertising tagline to "Own everything!"

I'm not just here to grumble though. I'd like to say thanks for including the information in your reviews on whether I need to authorise games online.

David Mackenzie

Online activation can be hell, not just for internetless gamers but those behind university firewalls and roving gamers who live on buses and

steal WiFi. We try our best to flag up any online authentication in our reviews, though sometimes publishers change tactics at the last minute and whack internet activation in there without us knowing. Cheeky bastards.

But EA at least are trying to make amends. A recent patch for *Spore* lets you de-authorise a PC when you uninstall the game, giving you back

an installaton. Of course if EA hadn't put that ridiculous install limit in place to start with, they would have saved themselves lots of hassles.

LADY LUMPS

Who's in charge of checking *PCZ* for nudity? I still remember the fiasco in *NeverQuest* where it looked like Hill was holding a cock. And I don't know if you recall the



ASK THE TXTPERTS

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

Hey you guys at *PC ZONE*! Just wondering, if you had to choose... zombie attacks on the land of England or a full 24 hours on the *Little Britain* game?
Anon

Zombie attacks, zombie attacks, a million times zombie attacks.

I've got an Xbox 360. Will the controllers work on my PC?
Steve

Yup, *Windows* will download the drivers when you plug the thing in.

I've just finished *Fallout 3*. What a rubbish ending. It was poo.
Jeremy

Yes, it's a terrible ending indeed. In fact, both of them are poor.



SEND US YOUR REVIEWS WIN A FREE GAME!

FALLOUT 3

Sent in by Alex Bussey

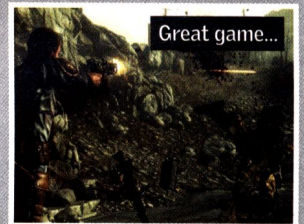
PC ZONE score: 91%

The longer I played *Fallout 3*, the faster the initial sense of disappointment wore off, to be replaced with savage joy of face-melting laser combat (literally in the case of one poor raider), and a sense of awe at the suitably sensible plot hooks and story angles. Much as I'd hoped, rattling on the antics of a crazy posh man, did indeed bring the sheriff running to arrest him, and even got him shot during the ensuing kerfuffle.

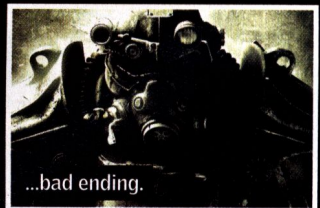
While it may not be haute cuisine, it's still a suitably beefy chunk of steak. More to the point, it may not be good enough to be a benchmark in gaming history, but it is certainly good enough to make you forget all about that as you gleefully mutilate mutant cows with a home-made rocket launcher.

Alex Bussey

Your shout: 88%



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



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

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



World of Warcraft: can you kick the habit?

exposed nipple in the article about the *Warcraft*-themed porn, *Whorecraft*.

Anyway, Issue 203, bottom right of page 87... clearly visible vulva!

Better do something before the *Daily Mail* takes notice.

C. Bruce

Congratulations are in order for Steve Hill. He did a stellar job in your previous issue covering up the various nipples and

penises that invariably peppered your magazine. However, I think the man has been shirking his duty of late.

On page 87 of issue 203, while he managed to obscure both mammary papilla admirably, he left the woman's most precious of lady bits exposed to the world!

You should be ashamed, *PC ZONE*! Ashamed I say!

Connor Hempstead

Brucie and Connor, if you look closely (and we did, for a long time) the supposed "precious of lady bits" is really just an optical illusion - an intermingling of light and shadow playing across the surface of her scant garment to give the suggestion of genitalia.

At least that's what we're telling our publisher.

STANDING TALL

Why is Zavvi full of horrible statues of game characters? Today I saw a *Fallout 3* Brotherhood of Steel guy, a *BioShock* Big Daddy from, and Lara Croft. They all seem to be made out of the same shoddy material too: all soulless and cheap. It makes them look awfully wistful.

Is this where the money I spend on games is going? Wistful statues? Well count me out.

Jack 'Jacqui' Smith

The Brotherhood of Steel statue is particularly bad. It looks like it was painted by eight year-old girls with silver glitter pens. Are these statues everywhere now?

COLD ITCH

So BioWare are planning on putting the story back into MMORPGs. Thank God for that.

Having finally quit *World of Warcraft* it's plain to see that it's not a game: it's a bad habit. I don't think that, past the first 10 levels of my first character, I was being entertained in a real way. Using map plug-ins to guide me to the next quest and skipping dialogue was mindless and tedious, yet I loved it. But I was scratching an itch Blizzard had itself created.

People argue that *WOW* isn't an addiction, but it is. Hopefully BioWare can create something worthy of our time.

Wayne Corzier

PCZONE AROUND THE WORLD

(with thanks to Paul Johnson)



We want photos of you with *PC ZONE* in the most exotic or inappropriate locations, preferably with celebrities. Each one printed wins a prize.



Big Daddies hate being touched.



We love it when *World of Warcraft* gets referenced in pop culture, except for that episode of *The Simpsons*, which was rubbish.

CONSOLE POWER

I was formally a PC owner back when games like *Deus Ex*, the original *Civilization* and *FreeSpace* were new. Even after hours of cursing and bashing a PC to get them to install and run, they were worth the effort so I could lose a weekend in a game.

However, not being in the same financial league as Bill Gates and needing a PC capable of running new games, I did some research into purchasing a new one and with horror saw that it would cost me well over £1,000 to purchase a new rig. Yearly updates would run into the hundreds to keep it up-to-date.

Compare this to an Xbox 360. It costs about £170, with no hardware updates, no compatibility issues and no installing of games. I thought it was a no-brainer and opted for the console.

Eurgh, what's that smell?
Oh, it's a PlayStation 3.

I played *Wrath of the Lich King* for 29 hours straight before my boss called to fire me. I've also become ill.

What I want to know is: what is Blizzard going to do about it?

Emmanuel Kerr

I was watching *Judge Judy* and on it there was a girl who was leaving her boyfriend or something, and one of the things she complains about was him playing *WOW*! When I heard that I jumped up and shouted "Hooray! I love *WOW*! Keep up the great work guys!"

Walter Barack

I feel that for your money a console is a much more sensible purchase and a much cheaper way to play games, especially when you consider that a PC can only be played by one person at a time. If I want up to four mates round for a console session all I need to get is four controllers.

If you have loads of time and money and no friends to play with, buy a PC. If you want a quick, easy, pleasurable gaming experience still with the best games around on a 42in TV rather than a measly 19in monitor, buy a console.

David Thompson

If you want our honest, balanced opinion: consoles give you an



LOST IN THE POST

LETTERS FROM SIX YEARS AGO, ANSWERED TODAY

THE FUTURE, NOW

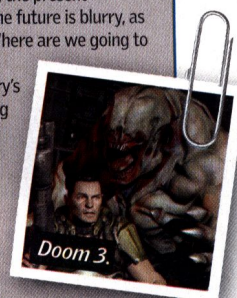
The past evades us, the present envelopes us and the future is blurry, as far as games go. Where are we going to go in the future?

What is the industry's next big curve going to be? Look at games such as *Unreal II* and *Doom III*. They're so real they make you feel as though you're part of a living, breathing world, but that's where it stops. We've run into the wall of reality and don't seem to know where to go without crossing it.

What I'm asking is, in the future will games be fully interactive, with voice sensors that can determine everything down to our tone? Or how about holographic imaging, making the world appear around you as opposed to on your TV?

Only time will tell.
Joshua McMullene

Hark at you, six years ago, thinking your graphics are the belle of the ball. We'll have you know that nothing's changed, except now our graphics really are as good as graphics could ever possibly be.



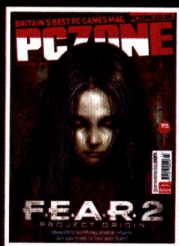
increased chance of cancer and have been shown to directly fund terrorism. And we once saw a PlayStation 3 confusing an elderly man, before giving bad directions to a lost woman in a car, while nearby an Xbox 360 was drowning kittens. **PCZ**

"Consoles give you an increased chance of cancer and have been shown to directly fund terrorism"

COVER STORY

FEAR 2: PROJECT ORIGIN

Monolith's horror shooter is back, and it's as unbelievably violent as you could hope for



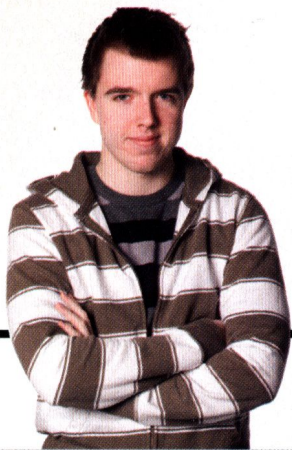
YOU'D BE SURPRISED at the number of blood decals in our magazine's art library. We've got blood specks, spurts, splatters, spatters, splashes, splotches, sprinkles, spumes, sputters, splats, squirts, smatters and smears to name but a few. So to say that we're well prepared when it comes to designing a bloodied *FEAR 2* cover would be a massive understatement.

Gore and violence is the theme of the month, and Monolith's sequel doesn't fall short of its gratifyingly visceral promises. Amid the flying limbs you'll find the original's horror themes are still very much intact. Alma's back, she's all grown up, and she'll happily tear your face off for a laugh.

PAGE

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PCZONE

UPFRONT

Everything that matters in the **world of PC gaming**

35 Ways...

A S CATHARTIC AS it might sound, starting a list of pet hates about PC gaming for an epic *35 Ways to Make PC Gaming Better* feature is difficult. "But we loooooove PC gaming," we whined at a blank page, "it's pretty much fine the way it is!" Then, slowly, the first point forms itself in your mind. The one about games installing themselves all over the hard drive, like somebody setting off a nail bomb inside your PC. "I'll just jot that one down as a starter..."

That's when the opulent tower of PC gaming becomes a fragile house of cards. "Take that, barrels!" we'd scream as we hammered point after point into an increasingly lengthy feature, "and some of this, lack of an alt+tab function!" By the halfway point we'd ensured that almost no game to date wasn't guilty of offending our senses in some way. Writing this feature wasn't just cathartic, it was retro-actively poisonous, and we suddenly hated everything about our PCs.

But now our hate is safely held in said feature; our fear is wrapped up in our lead review; and our memories are locked up in our 2008 retrospective. And as everybody knows: hate, fear and memories are the three key components of an excellent issue of *PC ZONE* magazine, the only magazine guaranteed to taint your soul, sour your mind and transform you into a husk of your former self. LOL!

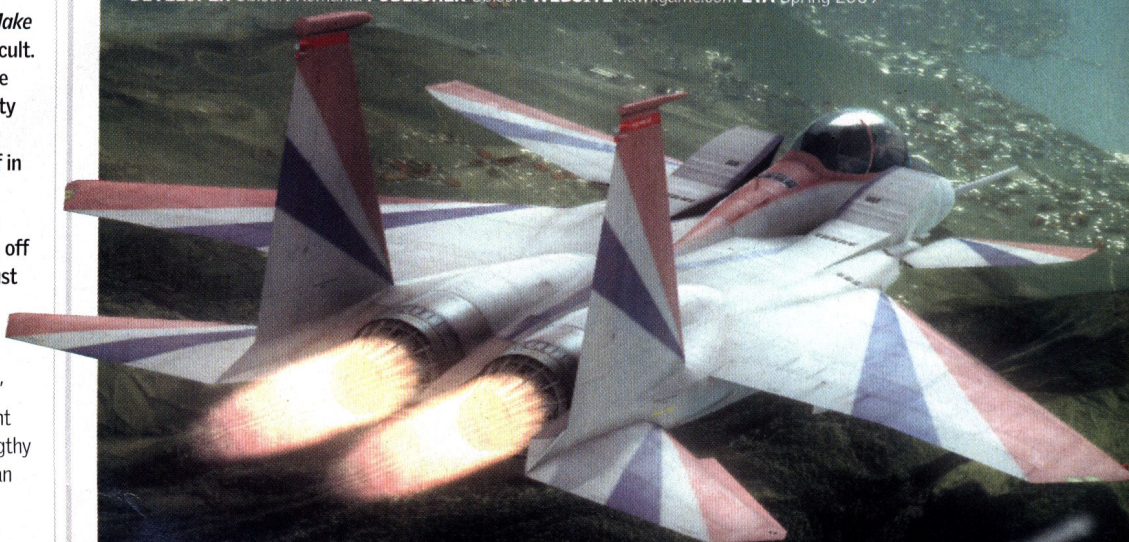
Steve Hogarty

Steve Hogarty, deputy editor

HAWX TAKES OFF

The *Tom Clancy* brand takes to the air

DEVELOPER Ubisoft Romania PUBLISHER Ubisoft WEBSITE hawxgame.com ETA Spring 2009



"Take my breath
ah-waaaay..."



It won't all be long-range
missile fighting, thankfully.



Neeaaoooww!



Take the fight
to the US.

**STOP
PRESS!**

FREE INSTALLS!

Spore can now be installed as many times as you like, as EA have released a tool that allows you to de-authorise your PC whenever you uninstall it.

AFRICA WIDE

Owners of widescreen monitors have been forced to put up with a cropped version of *Far Cry 2* since release, but now they can quit moaning as the 1.02 patch fixes it.

RIDDICK TWO

Assault on Dark Athena is heading our way. But Starbreeze has said another Riddick game is in the works, but it won't be with us for a couple of years yet. Hurry up, damn it!

30

Escape from Dark Athena

Riddick makes a bloody return to our gaming hearts.



43

PC Zone 2008 Scrapbook

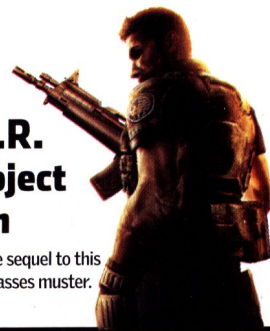
What's happened to PC these past 12 months.



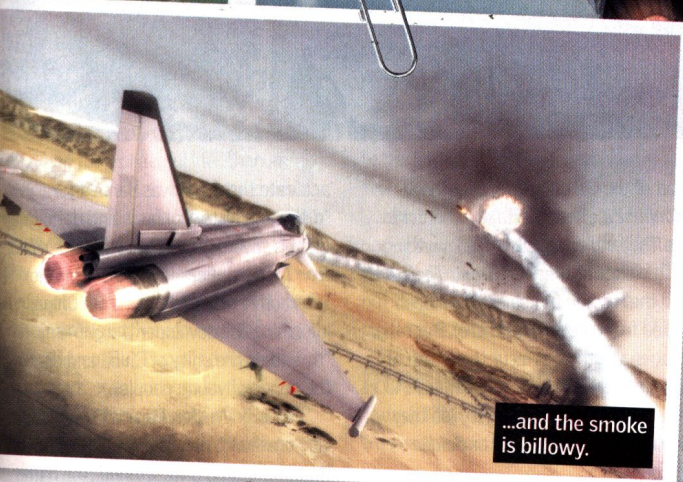
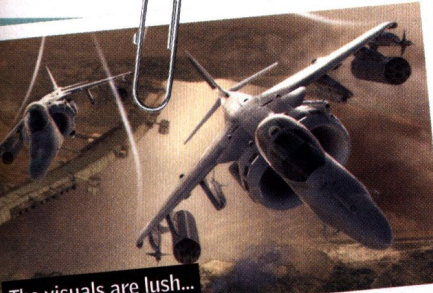
56

F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin

Find out if the sequel to this classic FPS passes muster.



The visuals are lush...



...and the smoke is billowy.

FLIGHT COMBAT SIMULATORS have become more unpopular in the current games industry than a comb salesman at a Telly Savalas Lookalike convention. Things for amateur knights of the sky are looking bleak. There is one shining beacon of hope, though. Ubisoft have decided to take the *Tom Clancy* licence into the skies with the rude pun-friendly *HAWX*, a near-future plane game that looks at how the world might end up if private military companies (the polite term for 'mercenaries') get too big for their boots.

Ubisoft Romania are definitely pulling out all the stops to make this the most gorgeous flight sim ever made.

Using high-res satellite imagery supplied by a private satellite image provider, the 12,000km² maps are looking luscious, as are the plane models. Ubisoft are also gambling on flight sim fans having more than one or two friends, as *HAWX* has eight-player 'teamdeath' matches and a four-player jump in/jump out co-op mode, which allows you and three others to play the entirety of the single-player game together.

Ubisoft say that the objectives of a mission change dynamically as people drop in and out, which could make for interesting (and potentially frustrating) situations.

HAWX is certainly looking like it could be a winner, so keep 'em peeled for our review very soon.

STUFF

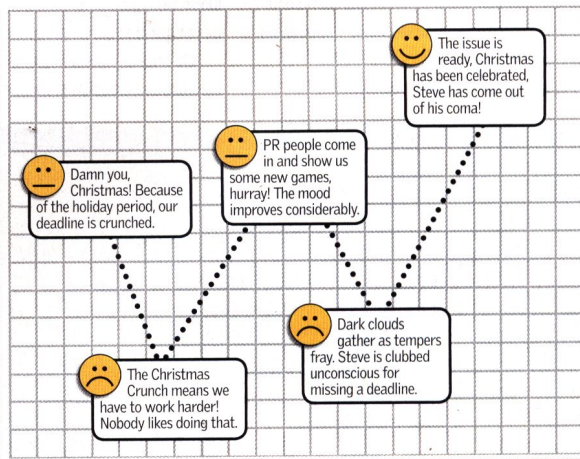
Have EA been telling porkies? It appears that, way back in September, Glen Schofield – the head of EA Redwood Studios – said *Dead Space* had been banned in Germany, Japan and China. Unfortunately for EA, people decided to check the facts and discovered that the game had, in fact, not been banned at all! It appears EA were trying to make people buy *Dead Space* because it was too violent for some countries, when in fact it wasn't. Very sloppy, EA. If you're going to trick us, make sure we don't find out about it.

Life is a roller coaster

GOOD TIMES

ON THE FENCE

BAD TIMES



IT BEGINS AGAIN

SHIT! HOW LONG LEFT?

DEADLINE

CENSORED

THE FIRST CUT IS THE DEEPEST

Should developers censor their own games to avoid being banned? *Pavel Barter* fucking well finds out



Reporter
Pavel Barter

IN STREET PARLANCE, *Fallout 3* is da bomb. Not in the East, though. A few months ago Bethesda said there would be a

number of changes to the Japanese release of the title. This followed an outright ban in India (game's mutated cows risked offending Hindus), and a reprimand from Australia that nearly saw the game banned.

Australia's Office of Film and Literature Classification (OFLC) forced

association with the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The fact that *Fallout 3* has the potential to cause wide offence, due to being set in a post-nuclear apocalypse world, makes these changes rather trite. They also raise a moral conundrum: should a developer censor a game's content according to each country of release? For their part, Bethesda are staying schtum. "Sorry, but we don't get into commenting on differences between territories," says Bethesda's marketing manager Erin Losi.

According to Lawrence G. Walters, a Florida-based First Amendment attorney

"Developers are censoring their games to avoid being banned before release"

Bethesda to remove all references to real-world drugs in the game (like morphine) and replace them with fictional counterparts (eg Med-X). Animations of drug use were also taken out, which meant these changes made to please Australia's censors would affect versions of the game released all over the world.

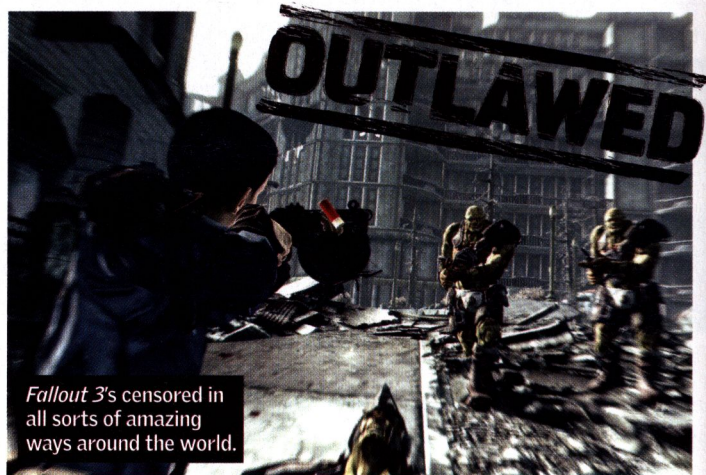
OFFENSIVE HISTORY

So when the game was gearing up for its Japanese launch, the scissors came out again. This time, a side-quest – involving the detonation of a nuclear bomb – was snipped over concerns about its

who specialises in the games industry, developers are increasingly censoring their own games to avoid being banned before release.

"Different countries have unique sensitivities, be they social, political or legal," he says. "Developers may find themselves tempted to self-censor in order to broaden their games' potential marketplace. As the market for new releases becomes more global in nature, the idiosyncrasies of other countries will likely be taken into account when developing future game content."

Of course, game censorship tends to be associated with sexy shenanigans or



Fallout 3's censored in all sorts of amazing ways around the world.

a bit of the old ultraviolence – the *Manhunt 2* effect. Certainly, countries like Thailand are quick to ban anything with bullets or breasts (*Grand Theft Auto* and the *Hitman* franchises have been pulled from the shelves there). But other images and themes incur the wrath of regional censors, such as Germany's sensitivity over Nazi imagery (so they don't get *Wolfenstein 3D* or *Soldier of Fortune*).

"Some restrictive nations censor any media – including games – which depict their government in an unflattering fashion," says Walters. "Brazil banned *Counter-Strike* and *EverQuest* because they 'encouraged the subversion of public order'."

The People's Republic of China also bans games for similar reasons. Titles affected include *Command & Conquer: Generals* and *I.G.I.-2: Covert Strike*. Even sports games aren't in the clear: *Football Manager 2005* was banned in China, as it included Tibet and Taiwan as independent nations. But the Swedish World War II strategy series *Hearts of Iron*, caused more controversy in China.

The original game includes Tibet, Sinkiang, and Manchuria as independent states, and Taiwan under Japanese control. Despite this being historically

accurate the game was banned for "distorting historical facts and damaging China's sovereignty". And when *Hearts of Iron III* was released in 2008 Paradox Interactive received a fax from China, informing the developer the game "threatens the unity of China and distorts the minds of young people".

Frederik Wester, Paradox's executive vice president, recalls his reaction: "We thought it was really strange. The game is based on the official borders from the United Nations – or rather, the then League of Nations." So did the *Hearts of Iron* team consider changing the game's content to appease the censors in China? "No," says Wester. "That is against our company policy – we would not change our game to please one single nation."

"I personally did not really care all that much, as 99.99% of every game played there is pirated," says Johan Andersson, *HOI's* lead programmer. "But part of me was extremely proud that a communist dictatorship didn't like one of my creations."

Wester believes that Paradox's experience is only the start. "I can see this happening in other countries in the future. I strongly believe it is important for the games industry not to change their creative expression in games for

RuneScape: daring to be swearing.

OUTLAWED



Command & Conquer: Generals featured China in an unsavoury light.

political reasons. This strengthens the oppression in countries that are already seen as non-democratic."

Developers have to be careful in choosing their battles. Since the dawn of gaming, many have struggled to portray content responsibly. "It was more for an 'anything for a peaceful life', than an 'if they sue me, I'll have to sell my shoes' reason," says Richard Bartle – co-creator of *MUD*, the game that pioneered the MMO genre. "MUD characters had three main attributes: strength, dexterity and stamina. Originally, men were stronger than women. But I boosted female characters' stamina and dexterity to compensate. Was this self-censorship? Well, I wouldn't have been breaking any

laws if I hadn't balanced the genders, but I'd have had the university's professional feminists on my case if word got out that the female characters were physically inferior to the males."

Development decisions are often made at the behest of the money men. In the late '80s, Nintendo wrecked everyone's heads with their 'Seal of Quality'. Amongst the publisher's silly decisions was the removal of the Venus de Milo statue from *Maniac Mansion*, but they overlooked the bit where you put a hamster in a microwave.

RUINING SWEARING

Today's MMOs – like *RuneScape* (runescape.com) – make a case for

profanity filters. "We decided to block some words to protect those who may be offended," says Kris Jones, of *RuneScape*'s community support team.

"With such a large amount of viewable public chat and a large percentage of young teenagers playing, there was always going to be some players who would push the boundaries of decency. Therefore, we block the most common offensive words to make it a safer environment."

MMO word filters can be frustrating: players can get banned for writing "hob", when they meant to write "noob". Yet hilariously, *PURE*, Disney's off-road racer, stores its prohibited words as a text file in the game's install directory. So junior racers have access to an exhaustive list of profanity, from "rumpranger" to "jizz".

Jones continues: "The difficult balance is making sure you don't upset players, who might feel we're controlling what they can and can't say in a free chat, MMO environment."

Self-censorship with age restrictions in mind is commendable, but bowing to political or social pressures less so. This is a lesson, perhaps, some publishers might take to heart.

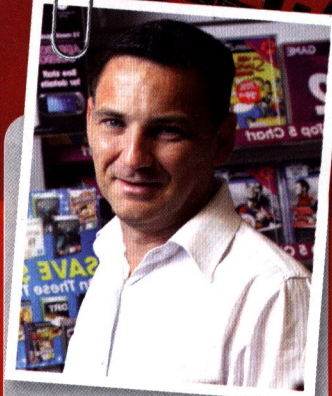
Is there anything you want Pavel Barter to investigate? (Warning: some jobs might be considered too big or too small...)

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



Hearts of Iron angered China by being historically accurate.

"Players get banned for writing 'nob', when they meant to write 'noob'"



Thunder down under

What's the story with Australia's harsh censorship of videogames? Ron Curry, CEO of the Interactive Entertainment Association of Australia (IEAA), explains...

Q Australia has a reputation for banning videogames. How stringent are the censorship laws?

A Australia is the only developed nation without an adult classification rating for videogames, which means games that fall above the MA15+ category (not suitable for under-15s) are refused classification, so can't be sold.

The number of games each year varies but in 2008, seven games were refused classification. The IEAA (ieaa.com.au) are working with the government and wider community to promote the introduction of an R18+ classification for videogames that will address any imbalance.

Our latest study found the average age of Australian gamers is 30 years old, so it's unfair that only games suitable to children are available here. We want to introduce an R18+ certificate, so our classification scheme will better reflect who gamers are.

Why is Australia so harsh when it comes to videogame censorship?

When the certification legislation was made in the mid '90s there was a belief that videogames were for children, so they weren't included in the adult certification categories.

Implementing an R18+ rating requires unanimous agreement of the Attorney Generals from each state. Unfortunately one – Michael Atkinson (South Australian Attorney General) – has maintained a long-standing opposition to the proposed system. But from our research Australians support the introduction of an R18+ certificate and oppose game censorship.

Beyond the usual gore and sex is other content censored?

No, I expect that Australia's attitude is much in line with the guidelines for other developed nations.

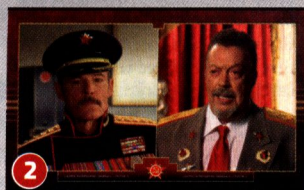
The Classification Board has very clear guidelines about what level and type of content is appropriate for each rating category. You can find more information at classification.gov.au/special.html

PCZONE Charts

Official data compiled by



- 1 **FOOTBALL MANAGER 2009**
Issue 202 - 90%
- 2 **COMMAND AND CONQUER: RED ALERT 3**
Issue 201 - 86
- 3 **CALL OF DUTY: WORLD AT WAR**
Issue 202 - 84
- 4 **NEW GRAND THEFT AUTO IV**
Issue 203 - 91%
- 5 **WORLD OF WARCRAFT: WRATH OF THE LICH KING**
Issue 202 - 86%
- 6 **FALLOUT 3**
Issue 201 - 91%
- 7 **SPORE**
Issue 199 - 95%
- 8 **LEFT 4 DEAD**
Issue 202 - 93%
- 9 **FAR CRY 2**
Issue 201 - 90%
- 10 **THE SIMS 2: APARTMENT LIFE**
N/A
- 11 **TOMB RAIDER: UNDERWORLD**
Issue 202 - 76%
- 12 **THE SIMS 2: DOUBLE DELUXE**
N/A
- 13 **WORLD OF WARCRAFT: BATTLE CHEST**
N/A
- 14 **NEW PRINCE OF PERSIA**
Issue 203 - 75%
- 15 **NEW DEAD SPACE**
Issue 200 - 81%
- 16 **NEED FOR SPEED: UNDERCOVER**
Issue 203 - 68%
- 17 **CALL OF DUTY 4: MODERN WARFARE**
Issue 188 - 89%
- 18 **CIVILIZATION IV COMPLETE**
N/A
- 19 **RE CRYSIS WARHEAD**
Issue 199 - 92%
- 20 **FIFA MANAGER 09**
Issue 203 - 67%

**COMMAND AND CONQUER: RED ALERT 3**

Gemma Atkinson doesn't get her norks out, but this remains a phenomenal game.

**GRAND THEFT AUTO IV**

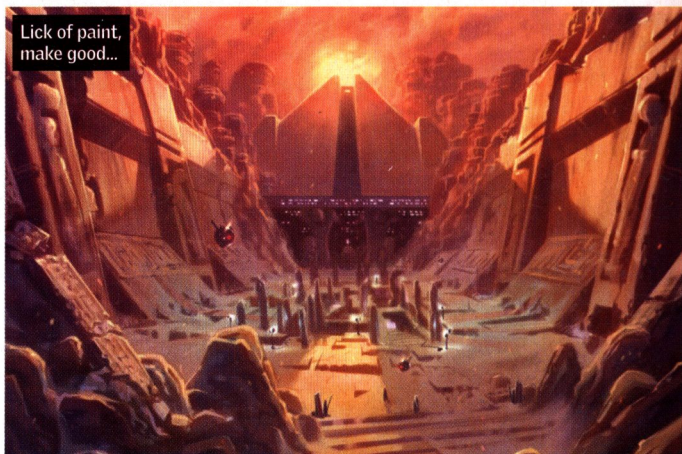
Drugs, random violence, murder, people smuggling, prostitution! Of course we advocate none of those things...

**CALL OF DUTY: WORLD AT WAR**

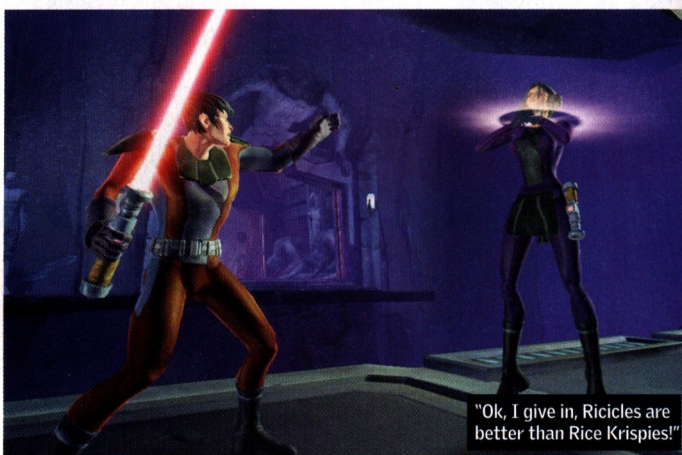
What would happen if *Call of Duty 4* had flamethrowers, tropical weather and trees. 'Nuf sed.

**SPORE**

Still clinging in the top 10. Like stubborn dried-on dog turd that stays in the crevices of your trainer for weeks on end.



Lick of paint, make good...



"Ok, I give in, Ricles are better than Rice Krispies!"

NO PENNIES IN STAR WARS

Microtransactions in *KOTOR* MMO denied

WEBSITE bioware.com ETA 2010

VARIOUS SOURCES of an internet-related persuasion have been talking about John Riccitiello, the CEO of EA, and his recent comments at an investor call.

Speaking to the people who give EA money, he let slip that BioWare's upcoming *Star Wars* MMO *The Old Republic* might be funded through microtransactions, and promised to reveal more about the game in February.

Does this mean that *The Old Republic* would be a *Guild Wars*-esque non-subscription-based game, or will it just be cheaper than the rest, with the

shortfall made up by offering players the chance to buy bigger lightsabers, nicer coloured robes and Wookiee followers in its in-game stores?

EA responded by saying Riccitiello's comments were misinterpreted and that "no statements have been made about the *Star Wars*' business model." Some might call this good public relations; we call it being a tad revisionist.

So we'll just have to wait and see what February holds, although we'll hazard a guess and say the game will come out with some form of subscription fee in place. It might not be pricey, but we'll be surprised if there wasn't one at all.



You won't be able to buy this robe. Maybe.

KIDS PREFER MMOS TO UNI

WOW blamed for college drop-outs

WEBSITE fcc.gov/commissioners/tate

ONE OF THE UNITED STATES' Federal Communications Commission commissioners has accused *World of Warcraft* of causing students to quit college early.

Deborah Taylor Tate, responding to concerns originally voiced by officials at the University of Minnesota Duluth (www.d.umn.edu), said: "You might find it alarming that one of the top reasons for college drop-outs in the USA is online gaming addiction – such as *World of Warcraft* – which is played by 11 million individuals worldwide."

She also said more parents were becoming disillusioned with the internet as a positive educational tool for their children, citing a 2006 survey that indicated only 59% of parents believed



Deborah Taylor Tate,
FCC Commissioner

this to be the case (down from 67% in 2004).

If you're going to drop out of university, surely there are cooler reasons than trying to level up in an MMO? Kids these days, wouldn't have happened in our-day, etc.

GET STONED

Warhammer Online to honour players

WEBSITE warhammeronline.com

YOU MIGHT BE an elite *World of Warcraft* player but you won't have the ultimate MMO accolade: an in-game statue.

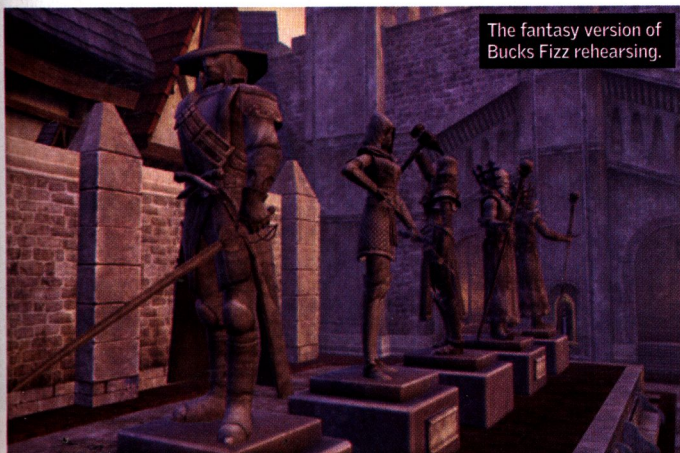
This is what the best *Warhammer Online* players have to look forward to, as their likenesses will be appearing in key cities across the game's servers.

Unlike Nelson in Trafalgar Square, a player's presence on a plinth won't be permanent. If another player tops

them in the rankings, their statue will get pulled down quicker than an effigy of President Bush Jr in Baghdad.

Warhammer Online's 1.1 patch, which should be with you by the time you read these words, will see the statues being introduced into major cities.

All you have to do to get recognised in stone is beat the other 800,000 or so players competing for the same honour. So there's no pressure.



The fantasy version of Bucks Fizz rehearsing.

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Dear Steven,

Writing about *Waxworks* in Retro Zone (page 104) got me thinking. Are games scary any more? I don't think so. I remember soiling my pre-teen pants when I played *Waxworks* way back when, but *F.E.A.R. 2*? Barely raised a gasp of surprise, let alone terror.

Dave Brown

Dear David,

I don't even know what *Waxworks* is. It sounds stupid. When are you suggesting that games stopped being scary? *Doom 3* was scary, as was *Thief: Deadly Shadows*, and while *F.E.A.R. 2* doesn't have many frights it's one of the most tense and sphincter-tightening games about.

Steve Hogarty

Steve,

If you can nail your opponents to a wall or climb into a big mech and stomp all over your enemies, there's no real terror there at all. In *Waxworks*, every enemy is deadly and the locations are claustrophobic and terrifying. Alma is a soppy old bint who never hurts you.

DB

Dave,

She does hurt you! Towards the end of the game she starts pouncing on your face and scratching away at your eyeballs and you've got to give her a smack. And the mech bits don't try to be scary, *F.E.A.R.*'s always had a knack for juggling horror and action. But back to scary games in general: surely you were bricking it the first time you encountered the Witch in *Left 4 Dead*?

SH

Steve,

The Witch isn't scary at all. She just sits there and you virtually always manage to get around her without incident. The last time I was truly scared in a game was when faced with the facehuggers in *Aliens vs Predator 2*. Things gluing themselves to your screen are scary, spindly women who can be easily avoided aren't!

DB

Dave,

I think your problem is that you don't play enough games in the dark. Personally, I drag my PC into the woods before I start a game of *Left 4 Dead*, it really is the only way to play. You've got to want to be scared. It's far too easy to remain aloof in a brightly lit bedroom surrounded by pink teddy bears, which is how you play games.

SH

Steve,

I'll have you know I only have one teddy bear. He's over 6ft tall, called Jimothy and he's electric magenta. Playing *L4D* with him in the room is a test of mental strength – one mistake and he'll give me a beating so savage, my eyes will fall out. If you saw him coming towards you in those woods of yours, the Witch would be the least of your worries.

DB

CRYPTIC WRITINGS

Online vision gathers pace!

WEBSITE crypticstudios.com, uk.atari.com

ATARI HAVE PIPPED Ubisoft to the post to acquire MMO developer Cryptic Studios for \$28million (£18.75m), after Atari president Phil Harrison admitted he believes the future of gaming is online.

The acquisition strengthens the company's position in the MMO market but also gives the publisher ownership of Cryptic's in-house engine, development tools and online servers.

The deal means Atari will publish Cryptic's three upcoming games over the next three years, including *Champions Online* in 2009 (previously under the watchful eye of 2K Games), followed by *Star Trek Online* in 2010, and then an unannounced MMO in 2011.

Going forward, Cryptic predict the model they're working to could see MMO games created on 18 to 24-month cycles. Atari won't know what's hit them.



HERO QUEST

Simutronics' platform for *Star Wars: The Old Republic*

WEBSITE swtor.com, play.net

BIOWARE HAVE CHOSEN to partner with Simutronics to use their HeroEngine for its *Star Wars* MMO *The Old Republic*, using their expertise in online gaming and virtual world development.

The engine was specifically created for building MMORPGs. "It allows for a great amount of flexibility in the way our entire team collaborates," said BioWare co-studio director, Gordon Walton.

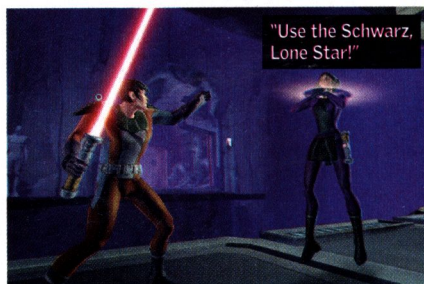
Simutronics have invested "years of experience and passion for virtual world entertainment into developing HeroEngine," and are confident the decision will go down well with fans.

Despite this, there are no games on release that use the HeroEngine. Even Simutronics' own MMO, *Hero's Journey*, has yet to appear.

News first hit in 2006 that BioWare were to use the HeroEngine for the

development of a new MMO, details of what that would be have been scant until now.

This could offer a hint to how *The Old Republic* will play. Simutronics have said *Hero's Journey*'s quests and gameplay will adapt to a player's decisions and actions. This system could blend well with *TOR*'s moral system.



FEAR ALMA
AGAIN



F.E.A.R. 2

PROJECT ORIGIN™

FRIDAY 13TH FEBRUARY 2009



PLAYSTATION 3



Games for Windows



XBOX 360 LIVE



MONOLITH



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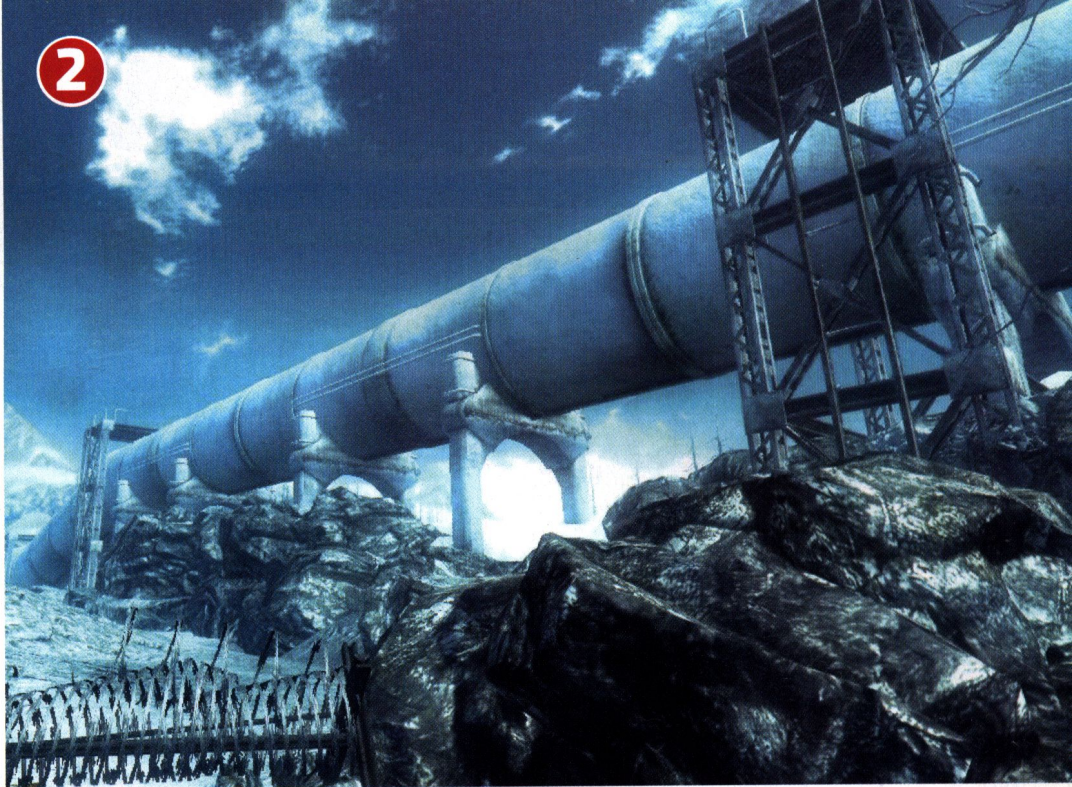
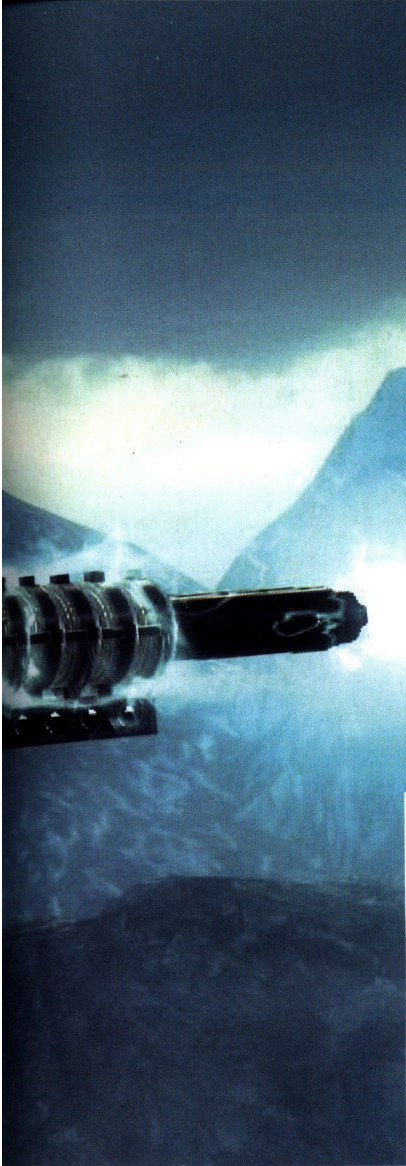
FALLOUT 3 OPERATION ANCHORAGE

DEVELOPER Bethesda Game Studios PUBLISHER Bethesda Softworks WEBSITE fallout.bethsoft.com ETA Out now

BETHESDA HAVE CERTAINLY come a long way since releasing the oft-mocked Horse Armour extension to *Oblivion*. With *Operation Anchorage*, they've really pushed the boat out in terms of downloadable content. Taking around five hours to finish, it will actually take longer to complete than *Call of Duty 4*'s

single-player mode. It also allows *Fallout* fans to visit a legendary period in the lore of their beloved series, finding out what really happened (according to Bethesda) when the Chinese decided to attack the land of ice and Sarah Palin. And there's not a single piece of horse armour in sight.

6



The Bigger Picture

1 RED SKY AT NIGHT

The Chinese are the enemies that need to be dealt with in *Operation Anchorage*, invading Sarah Palin's backyard. Push them back and take out their bases to achieve victory.

2 ANCIENT HISTORY

Operation Anchorage is a famous event in the lore of the *Fallout* series, made playable here via a simulation-within-a-simulation situation. Any level of character will be able to access it, as soon as they leave the Vault.

3 INSPECTOR GADGET

There'll be plenty of exotic gadgetry, armour and weapons to pick up and use in *OA*, plus you'll also be able to control Strike Teams as the conflict unfolds.

4 MORALLY GREY

Bethesda are focusing on combat/stealth with *OA*, but that doesn't mean there won't be some of the normal multiple path quests around for you to find.

5 COLD BLUE

The art style will be radically different from the desolate wastes of the main game, all icy hues and frozen tundra, with new weapon effects that will suitably complement this change in stylistic direction.

6 ARTIFICIAL LIFE

The AI characters in *OA* will be able to interact with each other far better in the four or five hours it lasts. Will they still start conversations with you while standing behind other people? Probably.



ETA
APRIL
2009

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 2009

DEVELOPER Beautiful Game Studios **PUBLISHER** Eidos **WEBSITE** championshipmanager.co.uk **PREVIOUSLY IN** Issue 203

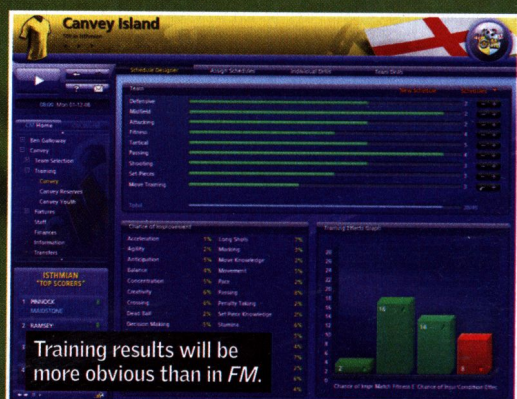
REFRESHINGLY, Roy Meredith, general manager at Beautiful Game Studios, is refusing to make the same old promises about *Championship Manager 2009*. There aren't any more proclamations of greatness, no more laying down the gauntlet to Sports Interactive, or anything like that. Instead, he just wants to talk about what BGS are trying to do with the new version and how he thinks the new *Champion Manager*'s shaping up. We think it is looking very promising and, coincidentally, so does he.

There's still a long way to go until the game makes it out in the public eye, so the version we saw had some rough edges, as you'd expect. What was immediately obvious is that the interface is looking like a swisher version of that used in *Football Manager*, yet doesn't seem to be sacrificing anything to the double-edged sword of accessibility. It also doesn't seem to be heading down the road of just sticking pointless gimmicks in for marketing purposes; all the options we saw looked like they could well be useful to the average player.

This doesn't mean there aren't any graphical niceties to differentiate the game from its rival – for example, there's a Sky Sports News-style info

Match engine looks great

- | | |
|--|---|
| Match engine looks great | ✓ |
| Training more transparent | ✓ |
| Should match FM for database depth | ✓ |
| Features not included just for marketing value | ✓ |
| Still no multiplayer | ✗ |



“Champ Manager will stand or fall on how realistic its simulation of soccer is”

THE STORY SO FAR... BEAUTIFUL GAME STUDIOS

CHAMP MAN 5
Eidos' first post-SI split
football management
game wasn't great.



2005

CHAMP MAN 2006
BGS got hardcore fans,
but most stuck with
Football Manager.



2006

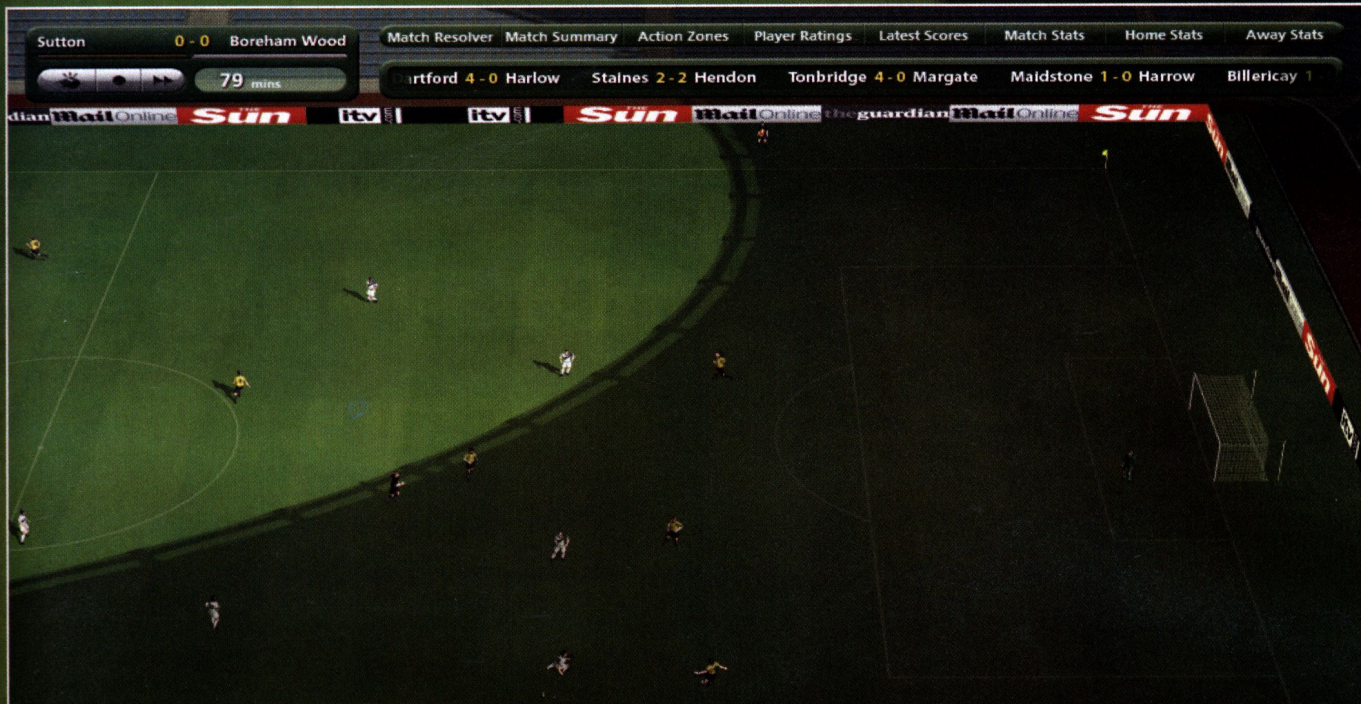
CHAMP MAN 2008
*Championship
Manager* was still seen
as the lesser title.



2008

CHAMP MAN 2009
Can CM make the leap
to be a real challenger
to SI's *FM* series?

2009



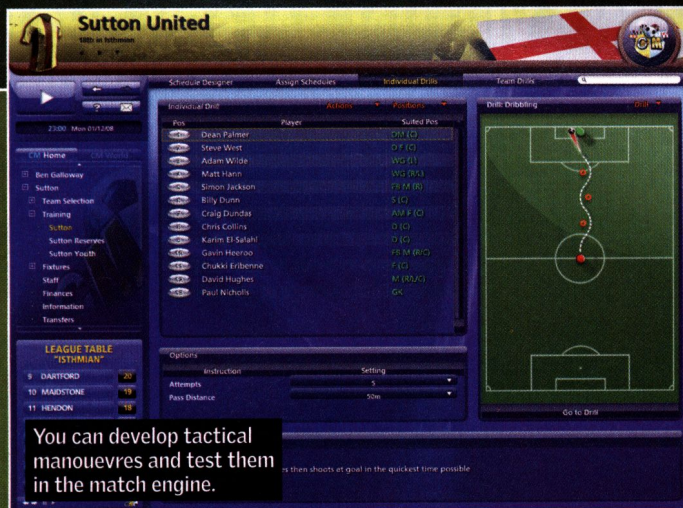
Sutton and Boreham Wood were surprise Champions League finalists in 2010.

panel, giving rolling stats on top league scorers, tables and so on. It's just a nice touch rather than anything massively important, but it's indicative of where BGS are coming from – it isn't about quantity of features, it is about putting the right ones in. At least that's how it seems from what we've seen so far.

FREE RUNNING

Tactically, things are looking better than last year too. We didn't get a chance to have a proper grapple with this aspect of the game, but there were still some interesting things that came up. Firstly, there's the With/Without Ball panes, where you can assign individual player runs, passing channels and movement depending on what the situation is in the game. The Without Ball pane could be very useful as it allows you to set up a tactic solely based on defence, which the players will automatically switch to when they don't have possession. It has been done before, but never before has it looked like being actually useful.

Training is another aspect that, every year, has the words "completely reworked from the ground up!" attached to it in all



You can develop tactical manoeuvres and test them in the match engine.

the game's press releases and promotional blurb. Usually this proves to be less-than-interesting and only of use to people looking for a long career game. BGS are trying to address that, and their training system may be the first to cater to analytically retentive detail whores and those people who barely glance at training stats.

Meredith speaks of creating a game that has more 'cause and consequence' moments in it (ie do something, and you know that it's actually having an effect somewhere down the line). In the training mode, BGS are trying to make the results more transparent, so you can easily

see what is changing. It might not be 100% realistic, but at least you know something is happening.

As for the match engine, it basically dumps on *Football Manager*'s from a great height, at least visually. There are no one-texture stands in the background, the pitches look great, the players look more human than SI's offerings – the whole thing just looks better. Of course, looks are irrelevant in the long run – *Championship Manager 2009* will stand or fall based on how realistic its simulation of soccer is. Each player will have 500 motion-captured movements (less for goalkeepers) and BGS have got

Solitary Confinement

Unfortunately, you'll be playing on your own...

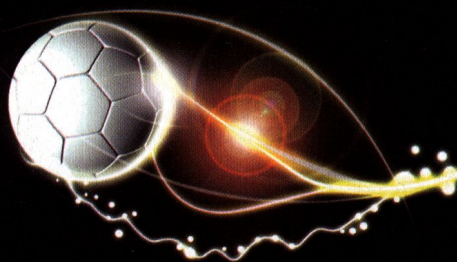
One bit of bad news we did learn from our meeting with Beautiful Game Studios was that there will, again, be no genuine multiplayer element in *Championship Manager 2009*.

While this won't impinge upon the quality of the game in any real way, it's a big shame that BGS have made the decision not to include some kind of option for people to play with each other over the internet.

Playing against human players adds so much to the feel of a game, so we will admit to being a bit crushed by the continued omission of multiplayer features in the *Championship Manager* series. Perhaps we'll see multiplayer *Championship Manager* in 2010, BGS?

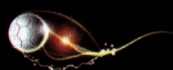
the help of Brian McClair, Mervyn Day and Graham Poll to make the experience authentic. Unfortunately, the match engine wasn't in a playable form when we saw it, so we can't say whether the actual football lives up to expectations. It does look the part, though.

If BGS can live up to this impressive first showing, they could have a winner on their hands. It would be fantastic to have a genuine challenger to the football management crown for a change, as sometimes you feel SI are getting a little bit complacent in some areas. Here's hoping BGS can nail it this time out. **PCZ**

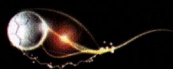


★ **FOOTBALL** ★ **SUPERSTARS**

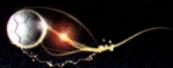
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The Daily Telegraph

"FOOTBALL SUPERSTARS IS A BRILLIANT CROSS BETWEEN SECOND LIFE AND TRADITIONAL FOOTBALL GAMES SUCH AS FIFA, PES AND FOOTBALL MANAGER"

theguardian

"ON PAPER, COMBINING REAL FOOTBALL WITH AN MMOG SOUNDS LIKE A REAL WINNER, AND THE BUZZ OF FORMING A TEAM WITH YOUR MATES IS UNDENIABLE. FOOTBALL SUPERSTARS IS A REAL INNOVATION AND DESERVES A FAN BASE ALL OF ITS OWN."



CYBERSPORTS
VIRTUAL SPORTS. REAL COMPETITION

PLEASE DONOT
WASH YOUR
BOOTS IN THE
SHOWERS.
THANKYOU

12

8



CYBERSPORTS

VIRTUAL SPORTS. REAL COME BACK.



PTAIN

5

★ FOOTBALL ★ SUPERSTARS

A GAME OF TWO LIVES

THE ZEROES ATTACK...

BATTLESTATIONS PACIFIC

"Can you be more Pacific?", enquires a seafaring *Jon Blyth*

DEVELOPER Eidos Hungary PUBLISHER Eidos WEBSITE battlestations.net

WHEN A GAME develops a vocal following, it's a blessing and a curse. On one hand, a lot of people love your game; on the other, they've all got ideas and demands about the sequel, and if it goes tits up they'll say it's because you didn't use the awesome idea they had where the soldiers wear wedding dresses and use them like parachutes.

Battlestations: Midway picked up its community in early 2007, with a decent and original blend of arcade simulation and strategy game. This community let its opinions be heard and with *Pacific*, Eidos Hungary are trying their damndest to give them what they want. Except wedding dresses.

The Americans will pick up their battle where they finished the first

game, the Battle of Midway, whereas the new Japanese campaign sees them playing catch-up.

HABOUR ASSAULT

The Japanese campaign will start at the Battle of Pearl Harbor, where WWII kicked off for the US. It's a much beefier single-player game, responding to criticisms from reviewers and players that the first game lacked longevity. Eidos Hungary have researched the real Japanese plans for the war effort, and their campaign lets you play out WWII as Nippon's forces intended it to go.

Giving a longer boost to the game's time on your hard drive are the

enhancements to the multiplayer. Three of these – Escort, Duel and Island Assault – weren't on display, but were described. Escort and Duel are quick dip-in games, lasting from 15 to 30 minutes each. In Escort you protect an important vessel while the other team attack, while Duel is a type of deathmatch. The third mode – which will have its own press event in the coming weeks – is Island Capture. This sounds more like the fusion of long-term strategic thinking and the action from the single-player campaign.

The two modes that were available for a playthrough at this preview were Siege and Competitive.

Each of these modes has eight maps, with the main difference between them being the units and payloads available to both sides. The Japanese units shown included the kamikaze Zero-sen planes (which weren't as suicidal as you might think) and new American units, including landing boats that can drop off marines and give them artillery support as they storm beaches.

The Siege mode has a defending team repelling attacks on their base. The US planes (bumped up with Allied craft) included the nippy Hurricane (of Battle of Britain fame) with an optional 200lb bomb, and the ponderous Dauntless Divebomber that carried a 1,000lb bomb that was probably nicknamed "The Big Bastard". The Dauntless' payload makes it incapable of dogfighting, so it's best to drop your load before you decide to engage other aircraft.

THE LOWDOWN

Larger game servers, with more maps	✓
A convincing new Japanese campaign	✓
All multiplayer maps can be played co-op	✓
They've listened to the community	✓
More of the same	✗
Better of the same	✓



THE STORY SO FAR... HUNGARIAN GAMES

CODENAME: PANZERS
Made by StormRegion, this was a very tank-happy sim.

2004



RUSH FOR BERLIN
Decent RTS, which lets you shoot Hitler in the face.

2006



CRYSIS: WARHEAD
Crytek Budapest moves Hungary away from WWII.

2008



BATTLESTATIONS: PACIFIC
The game Midway should have been.

2009

ETA
**MARCH
2009**

Doctor, my trajectories are skewiff.

The map can be used to issue basic fleet orders.


Destroying anything reduces the enemy's resources. The bigger the target, the higher the reduction, and, naturally, the greater the risk (for instance, fortresses are well armed, being surrounded by anti-aircraft guns). But destroying buildings is just one tactic: you can also pick off the gunboats, landing ships, and the rest with your machine guns and bombs, or fend off aircraft. It's not the most immediately transparent system, but it seems well-balanced, with some teeth-gritting near-zero finales.

FRIENDLY FIRING

The Competitive mode pits members of the same army against each other, whilst trying to achieve a common goal. It's occasionally hilarious, as you position your hull broadside to a friend, just to shoot the golden bonus plane.

You can see how friendly fire incidents happen, as everyone is just so excited about killing stuff. But it's worth keeping in mind that this kind of competition will damage your overall chances of completing the mission.

Another resounding demand from the community was a Skirmish mode (see 'It's a kind of co-op'). Each of the five multiplayer modes can effectively be played co-op, by setting one side to bots, and joining in with a friend. This should make up for the absence of co-op in the single-player campaigns, which are unapologetically solo affairs.

We weren't completely won over by the first game, but this is looking like a great improvement, with plenty going on and a well-developed multiplayer aspect. After playing through the new multiplayer, I've just started looking forward to *Battlestations: Pacific*. 

It's a kind of co-op

A friendly fire compromise

Apart from the Japanese and American single-player campaigns, and the multiplayer battles, there's a third mode to suit any co-op fans who just want to play nice – Skirmish.

Any of the multiplayer maps – and their unique allocation of units – can be played in Skirmish. Your side's numbers will be made up by bots and the enemy's will be completely AI. It's a good balance for anyone not wanting to subject themselves to the world of hurt and humiliation that is online multiplayer gaming, and a bone that's been thrown to anyone who wanted more co-op goodness from the strictly single-player aspect of the game.



The Skirmish mode gives you a quick dose of multiplayer.

BALDY'S BACK...

THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK: ASSAULT ON DARK ATHENA

David Brown sharpens his shiv and prepares to talk in a very deep voice

DEVELOPER Starbreeze Studios PUBLISHER Atari WEBSITE riddickgame.com PREVIOUSLY IN Issue 203

THAT THE TINY cabal of games journalists who got a chance to sneak their way through various stages of this game were consistently wincing at the savagery of some of the attacks is a testament to the brutality of Starbreeze's new Riddick adventure. If you were to believe the *Daily Mail* you would think we'd be numb to the killing perpetrated by Vin Diesel's gruff anti-hero. Not so – there was some genuine wincing going on, and I was one of the chief winners.

Those of you who loved wending your way through the ahead-of-their-time environments and settings of

Escape From Butcher Bay will be like pigs rolling in their own filth when you play *Assault on Dark Athena*.

HOW TO POLISH

The game feels just like how we wanted it to. While Starbreeze have been chipping away at *Butcher Bay*'s rough edges and trying to refine what was already an excellent game model, it hasn't slipped and carved out a big chunk of goodness.

At this stage, everything seems to be present and correct, which is probably the best news you might want to hear. The opening menu is even the same

spinny cube thing that proved so popular from *Butcher Bay*. Some things will have changed (eg the collectable cigarette packs have gone, to be replaced by security card-type things). The combat is still as visceral as before. Punch somebody in the face and a bruise appear. Slash a blocking foe with a blade and his arms will get cut up.

The weapons are a mixture of the basic (fists and knives) and the fantastical (Ulaks – strange hand-scythe things that you wouldn't want to get anywhere near). Other nice graphical touches, other than the

obvious texture and environmental improvements, include blood from your enemies staining your weapons and fists after a gruelling bout of combat. One negative is that the depth-of-field effect might need a little bit of polishing, as the version we saw didn't get it right.

The game follows directly on from the original's fortress-fleeing escapades, with Riddick spending the majority of his time (though not all) lurking in the environs of the titular Dark Athena, an intergalactic slave ship of evil.

While most of the game will involve you avoiding the enemy, before cracking

**ETA
SPRING
2009**

"This gun smells like elderberries."

THE LOWDOWN

Sequel to <i>Butcher Bay</i>	✓
New 10+ hour campaign	✓
Hand-to-hand as brutal as before	✓
Fully revamped <i>Butcher Bay</i> free!	✓
Multiplayer	✓
Cubic menu!	✓
Will people buy it this time?	✗

"Aiee! Not the dry ice gun!"

THE STORY SO FAR... STARBREEZE

KNIGHTS OF THE TEMPLE
Starbreeze's hack 'n' slasher wasn't great.

2004



ESCAPE FROM BUTCHER BAY
Riddick's first game was a surprise hit.

2004



THE DARKNESS
This well-received horror game didn't make it to the PC.

2007



ASSAULT ON DARK ATHENA
Diesel returns to brutalise prison staff.

2009

Acting schmacting

"The dark is afraid of me"



The cast for *Dark Athena* will be as impressive, if not more so, than the one from *Butcher Bay*. Vin Diesel is reprising his role, and is exactly as you'd expect him to be – gravel voiced and moody. Perhaps the show-stealing performance will be delivered by Lance Henriksen, who you might know from shows like *Millennium* and films such as *Aliens* (above).

Starbreeze have done an excellent job of capturing the mannerisms and affectations of the voice actors, so you genuinely feel Vin Diesel is in conversation with the evil guy from Brian Bosworth's early '90s action epic, *Stone Cold*.

"Loads of money has been invested in getting character animation and voice acting just right"

their heads open like boiled eggs, there will also be moments of human contact. Just like with *Butcher Bay*, loads of money has been invested in getting character animation and voice-acting just right. We don't know if Starbreeze got Vin Diesel acting classes, but they have accurately replicated the mannerisms of the actors (at least the famous ones) in the game. At the preview, we all identified Lance

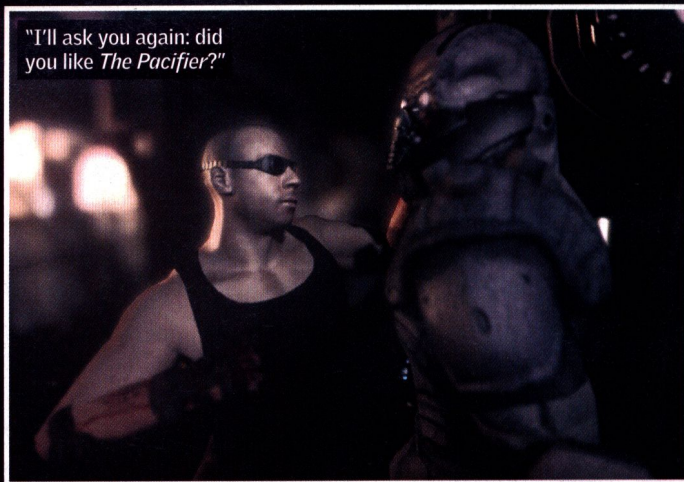
Henriksen from his character's movements before we were told he was in it. As with *Butcher Bay*, this attention to performances adds up to creating a movie-like atmosphere and feel to the game.

JAGGED EDGE

PC owners should also rejoice in the fact that the game looks like it could actually be more suited to our chosen system than it does to the current generation of consoles. Ranged combat should be much easier with a mouse, as should navigating through your collection of weapons. Also, the whole thing should look much better too, with the somewhat jagged edges of the non-antialiased console version being replaced with the smooth lines we know and love.

This time out, there'll also be a multiplayer component, although very

"I'll ask you again: did you like *The Pacifier*?"

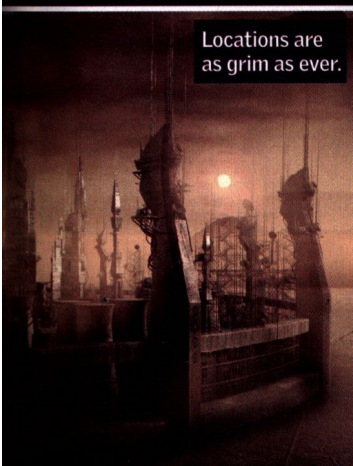


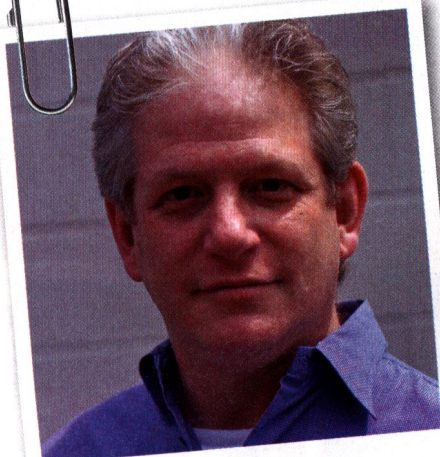
little has been said about that. The nature of the engine and the game design indicates to us that it won't be going down the 64 players-per-server route and could be more in keeping with *Doom 3*'s more minimalist approach, but there's nothing yet out there to confirm our feelings just yet.

There's one more important thing you need to know about too. If you do

choose to buy *Dark Athena*, you'll also be getting the full version of *Escape from Butcher Bay* with it, absolutely free. This is more than just a cheap marketing gimmick though, as the entire of the first game has been redone in glorious hi-def-o-vision and, even more superbly, it has a few of *Dark Athena*'s new features worked into it. Fan, as they say, tastic. **PC4**

Locations are as grim as ever.



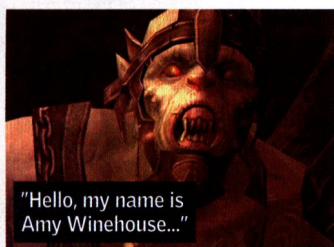


Jeffrey Steefel,
Lord of the Rings Online Executive Producer

WHERE THE DWARFS ROAM...

TURBINE CHARGED

David Brown ventures into Moria, to quiz Jeffrey Steefel and fight goblins in the dark



LORD OF THE Rings Online has been described by some wags as the best MMO they've never played. Jeffrey Steefel is hoping the *Mines of Moria* expansion will go some way to addressing that. He spoke to David Brown about his hopes for the future, his thoughts on the past and what would be more popular – a LOTRO restaurant or a LOTRO pub? Balrog Burgers, anyone?

Q What's been the response of the fans to the new classes, specifically the new magic-using Rune Keeper in *Mines of Moria*?

A Well, so far the response has been great. Overall, I think people are psyched. We're seeing a lot of adoption of both classes.

We originally thought there was going to be a giant flock to the Rune

Keeper and the poor Warden was going to be left to his own devices, but it's been even as far as I know. People are having a great

time with it. It seems to be doing what we wanted to accomplish. It gives people new ways to engage in battle, giving people new roles to play with groups and giving people ways to solo differently.

I've also seen a number of people create new alts built in through the game and feel like they wanted something a little more challenging for a class. We've certainly been getting the response that it's served that purpose, so a pretty positive response overall.

With the Balrog, how did you manage to keep your own minds clear on what you wanted to do, rather than getting tied into a 'you've designed something – oh hang on it looks like the film' situation?

In some ways it's something that just happens naturally, because if you think about it, the books cover all of Middle-earth. Some of the other materials that we look at, such as the appendices and things like that, cover even more of the history – the books are a giant repository of information and events and points in Middle-earth's time.

The movies had to focus on the really key iconic points in the books, so the things that they're covering are very, very deep and important – the Balrog, Rivendell, Moria, Gandalf – things that, for the most part, Tolkien described in tremendous detail in the books.

So if you have two talented teams that are working on recreating something that is pretty specifically described in the books, those recreations are going to have some similarities. Gandalf is a

guy with a specific type of hat and clothing and a long beard – so he's going to look like Gandalf. The Balrog is less specific, but there's still a whole bunch of things that the movie and the game are going to have. In fact, if you look across all the games, they're very similar in that respect.

But in the other 70% of the world, that's not covered in the movies or in LOTRO so far, we've got tremendous freedom there to do all kinds of things right. Everything from building Isengard from the ground up, to bringing to life the nameless creatures of the deep and the fiery depths of the Balrog's lair. We've got a bit of freedom and, in the places where we don't, it's simply because Tolkien has been very specific about the way things need to look.

Are you going to include horse combat, for the riders of Rohan?

I'd be scared to go into Rohan without horses! Mounted combat is a short sentence to say, but a very complicated thing to do well. If and when we do mounted combat someday we're going to make sure we do it well. It's not something that has been done particularly well yet because it's very hard to do.

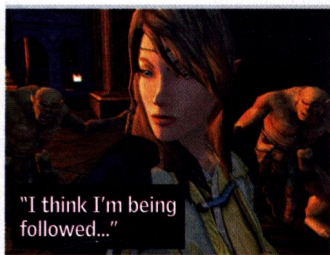
Warhammer Online is introducing in-game statues to commemorate the best players in the game. Have you ever thought about introducing that sort of feature into LOTRO?

That's really cool. The whole category of acknowledging players' achievements is something that we're very excited about and are starting to spend lots of time on. Whether it ends up being statues in the world or whatever, I'm not sure.

We already have the ability for you to take some of your trophies you've gotten

Goblins like showing off a bit of leg, the teases.





"I think I'm being followed..."

in some of the battles you've been in and put them out in front of your house and things like that, you already have titles you can get for your character. There're also specific titles you can create for your legendary items.

But our whole system is built to support tracking what the players are doing relative to each other, and we have all kinds of interesting ideas of how to surface that in the game.

I also read that a *World of Warcraft* restaurant has opened in China. Do you think that *LOTRO* would be popular enough to warrant such treatment?

I didn't hear that, that's amazing! I don't think we have the merchandising rights for restaurants yet, but now I'm going to have to add that to our wish list for our business development guys. I wonder what they serve?

No-one's seen the menus yet, although apparently they're themed on recipes in the game.

We can only hope. We'd probably be more likely to have a couple of themed pubs in Britain and Germany. **PCZ**



"By the power of Grayskull!"

"We don't have the merchandising rights for restaurants yet, but I'm going to add that to our wish list"



"Gimli, you are the weakest link..."

"But babe, I can change!"



WAYS TO MAKE PC GAMING BETTER

Our step-by-step guide to improving

the state of PC gaming forever...

PC GAMING IS SO GREAT, we do a magazine all about it. But games are riddled with niggling problems, which amount to great heaps of horrible stress. The shocking thing is that all of this is avoidable! These so-called games developers just have to follow our simple 35-step program to better PC gaming. From installation issues to egregious endings, we've red-penned our way through gaming's most repeated blunders!

1 When we tell you to install a game to our Program Files folder, that's where we want to find you – not strewn about our hard drive like digital confetti. You're in our My Documents folder, you've invented a My Saved Games folder – you're everywhere we told you not to go, you silly little game.

2 Speaking of which, tell us where you've put our saved games so we can pick the things up and move them to other PCs or send them to our mates. We suggest a folder called 'Saved Games' inside of the game's installation folder, not the My Documents folder, and certainly not buried away in a hidden folder on the moon.

3 Keep it simple, leave your shortcut in the Start menu under the game name. Not under the publisher's name, or even the developer's name. This counts double for EA, who like to install games under both 'Electronic Arts' and 'EA Games', inexplicably.

4 When we attempt to join a random lobby, we never want to see a "Connection to host failed" message. There are thousands of hosts and we don't care which one you connect to, so just try another one. If you insist on telling us these things, mention it as you attempt to connect to a new host.

5 Don't print the game's serial key on the disc. If you do, make it so that when we put the disc back in the drive having taken it out to input the serial key, the disc doesn't autorun for a second time. Or print the serial key on the box or the manual, or anywhere else, as well as the disc. And while we're on the subject: print your serial keys in a legible font, and not one where O looks like 0 and 8 looks like B.

6 Make auto-detect work. We don't care how you do it. Let us give you a target framerate, then we'll go away and make a cup of tea while you run through all the different possible combinations of graphics settings available to get the game looking it's best with the hardware we've got. Don't just whack everything on low. That hurts, you know.

7 **AND STOP ASKING US TO REGISTER OUR PRODUCT, YOU BUNCH OF BAREFACED, EMAIL ADDRESS-FARMING SUITED ARSEHOLES.**

8

You've had your fun with depth-of-field focusing effects, now give it a rest. It's worse than lens flare, and it makes it look like we've got something terribly wrong with our eyes.



Remember: reloading Uzis can harm your eyesight.

9

NEVER ASK US TO INSERT DISC ONE AGAIN. YOU ALREADY HAD DISC ONE. YOU SHOULD'VE GOTTEN WHAT YOU NEEDED FROM DISC ONE WHEN YOU HAD IT.

We love you Patrick, but get out of our games.



10

It's only applicable to some genres, but better storytelling and longer playing time will make your games stick in our minds forever. Employ decent scriptwriters, plan out the story before you start designing levels, avoid hiring movie actors like Patrick Stewart who can't work with microphones, invest in your plot, give us a decent twist and some neat exposition. Learn how to tell stories throughout your games, and don't pile it on top as an afterthought, like shit on a wedding cake.

11 When we uninstall a game, give us the option to hold on to our saved games. Also, give us the option to completely eradicate your game from our hard drive. If we see so much as a leftover config file we'll flip.

12 And locked doors. Especially ones with big red lights above them, or ones that are textured badly to indicate that they're not working doors. Don't think you can get around this by having doors that open just a bit but get stuck on a barricade or something. That still counts as a locked door by our standards.

13 And in your quest to make our escapist hobby more and more like real life, you're forgetting to make things look fun. These past few years have seen an incredible spectrum of browns and greys – has everybody forgotten what primary colours look like?

14 Let's have cooler gifts too. Remember when *Frontier: Elite II*'s manual was a real user manual for the ship you started in? You also got a letter from a solicitor explaining you'd been left the ship in your father's will. And a short novel. Do more things like that. Like the old days. Let's all go live in the old days.



GETTING BETTER ALL THE TIME

How things have become better since issue 140...

DVD

Gone are the days of games coming across seven CDs. Here to stay are games coming across two DVDs.

SHARING

It doesn't happen on a huge scale, but Valve are happy to chuck Steamworks at whoever will have it.

GAMES FOR WINDOWS

Microsoft are trying to push for PC games standards with a few sensible criteria, including Alt+Tab support and gamepad support.

TIM CURRY

Against all odds, Tim Curry was in an FMV in *Red Alert 3*, signalling new heights of PC gaming excellence.

PHYSICS

We're finally over the hurdle of novelty with corpse physics. Now it's just a mostly dependable feature of a game.

15 Never tell us how to crouch or jump. That's the control key or the C key, and the Space key respectively. We can tell you that without even knowing what game we're talking about – that's how obvious those two things are, you patronising bastards.

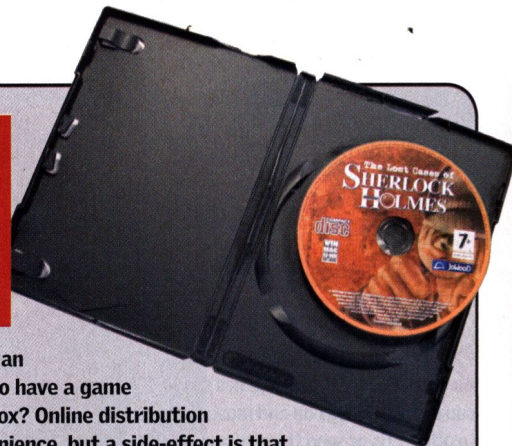
16 Did you know that NAMCO BANDAI hold the patent on minigames during loading screens? Could somebody wrestle this from them in the courts and fill our loading screens with quick-fire puzzle games and *Point Blank*-style shooters? Please?

17 And with the vast amounts of RAM available to games these days, why are we still experiencing the phenomenon of loading at all? Everything should be instant, and everything should make a whip-cracking sound when we click it, to emphasise the speed at which things are happening.

18 Every game should have a quicksave option. We want to be able to stop playing whenever we want because we're very important. Also, we hate dying.

21

Why is it becoming an uncommon luxury to have a game appear in a lovely box? Online distribution is a fantastic convenience, but a side-effect is that far less money is being spent on spangly new packaging designs. Games like *World of Warcraft* buck the trend with their flaps and velcro and varnished art – but for the most part, we're left clutching flimsy plastic DVD cases. If we're lucky the case hasn't broken and the game disc isn't rattling around inside. Bloody nuisance, this modern stuff.



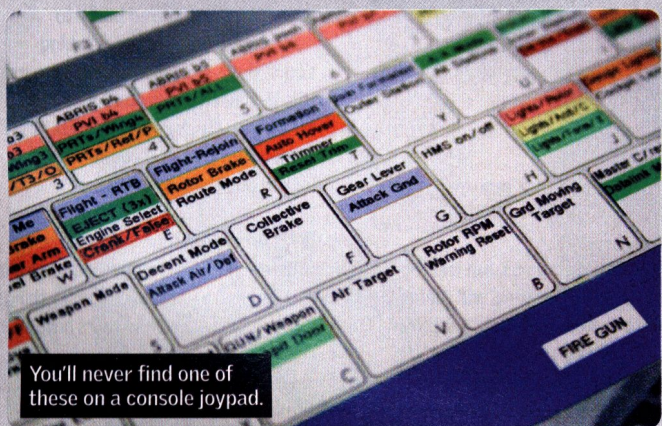
22 Standardise your graphics settings. Why do some graphics options go from 'low' to 'high', while others (in the same game) go from 'low' to 'highest' or 'extreme'. We want to be able to tell at a glance which settings have been maxed out, rather than have to rummage around each one for that hidden 'super high' setting.

23 Don't ever make us have to restart a game before our chosen settings take effect. Yes, we realise there are certain reasons why games have to be restarted, but you can automate this process entirely with no extra effort needed by us.

24 Every game should run in a window if we want it to. Alt+Enter should flip between windowed mode and full-screen mode. Alt+Tab should switch between the game and our desktop. We should be able to do this without the game crashing. As long as we're being wishful, we should be able to do this without everything flickering and spacking out as well.

26 The *Windows* key should be disabled during games. Nobody ever wants to quickly access their Start Menu in the middle of a game of *Left 4 Dead*. Unless they need to see the Character Map really quick. In fact,

19 BRING BACK KEYBOARD OVERLAYS. OR AT LEAST GAMES SO WONDERFULLY COMPLEX AS TO NEED A KEYBOARD OVERLAY.



You'll never find one of these on a console joypad.

25

Here's a hard-and-fast rule: if you're designing a game and you find yourself considering placing exploding barrels throughout your levels, stand up and leave your desk. Go home, run yourself a bath, sink beneath the water and never come back up. Why every shooter features science-defying exploding containers is far and away the biggest mystery in games. *Crysis*, *Far Cry 2*, *Half-Life 2* – they've all got them, and they're indicative of the laziest game design imaginable. Stop it, right now. This also goes for keycards.



We secretly like barrels...

20

UNSKIPPABLE TUTORIALS ARE ACTUALLY CONSIDERED TORTURE UNDER THE GENEVA CONVENTION. EVERY TUTORIAL SHOULD HAVE A MASSIVE "I ALREADY KNOW THIS SHIT" BUTTON IN THE CORNER.

most of the keyboards in the *ZONE* office have had their Windows keys prised off in rage.

27 Ditch SecuROM now. Look at it like this: if The Pirate Bay offers me a version of your game which installs and works without a problem, and HMV offers me a version which I can only install three times, on one PC, where I have to be online each time I want to play – well, I'm going to download your game. It's as simple as that. Pirates are offering a better product, legitimate consumers are being hassled by ridiculous authentication measures, and potential customers are being given fewer incentives to buy your game. Invest some money and time into finding a better solution, and never, ever limit our number of installations.

30 If you've made your HUD, maps and dialogue text huge for the

29

If you can't do bloom effects properly, don't do them at all. In *Oblivion*, when a sheep turns to face perpendicular to the setting sun, we should not be blinded by the brightness of its fleece. Real life doesn't work like that. We asked farmers. And Will.



28

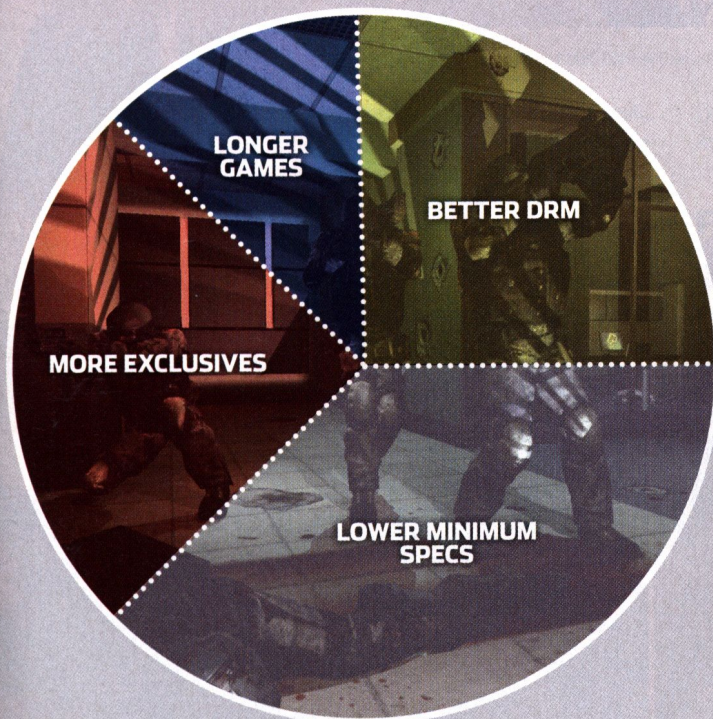


POWERED BY
gamespy

WE NEVER, EVER WANT TO INSTALL GAMESPY ARCADE OR COMRADE OR WHATEVER IT'S CALLED THESE DAYS. PLEASE STOP ASKING US TO.

YOUR THOUGHTS

How do you reckon can PC gaming be improved?



"Less ports that take six to 12 months extra to reach the PC, (I'm looking at you lot, *Assassin's Creed*, *Halo 2* and *Mass Effect*) it's so bloody annoying it makes me want to tear the head off a small furry animal."
JOWWO

"We need more originality. I'm sick of the sight of first-person shooters, especially set in World War II, or tedious franchise jobs (*GTA*, *EA Sports* games etc)."
GAVPOWELL

"Back in 'Ye good olde days' a single game would last you a few weeks, if not longer. These days I find myself finishing a lot of games within two days. *Fallout 3* strikes to mind most prominently here."
YE OLE SAREVOK

benefit of console owners playing on a TV on the other side of the room, adapt your game to work on a 19in monitor two feet from our faces. You know how many pixels *Deus Ex* used to show the letter E? Twelve. We went and counted.

31 Stop populating your game with forgetful characters who leave their PDAs and voice recorders lying about the place. Have you ever heard of an prominent, important person leaving highly sensitive documents just lying about? Perhaps on a train? No, we didn't think so.

32 Also, give your games a proper ending. If your game has moral choices, have the choices you made along the way contribute to the game's ending. Don't, as some games do, determine which ending we get based on whether or not you kick a puppy in the last five minutes.

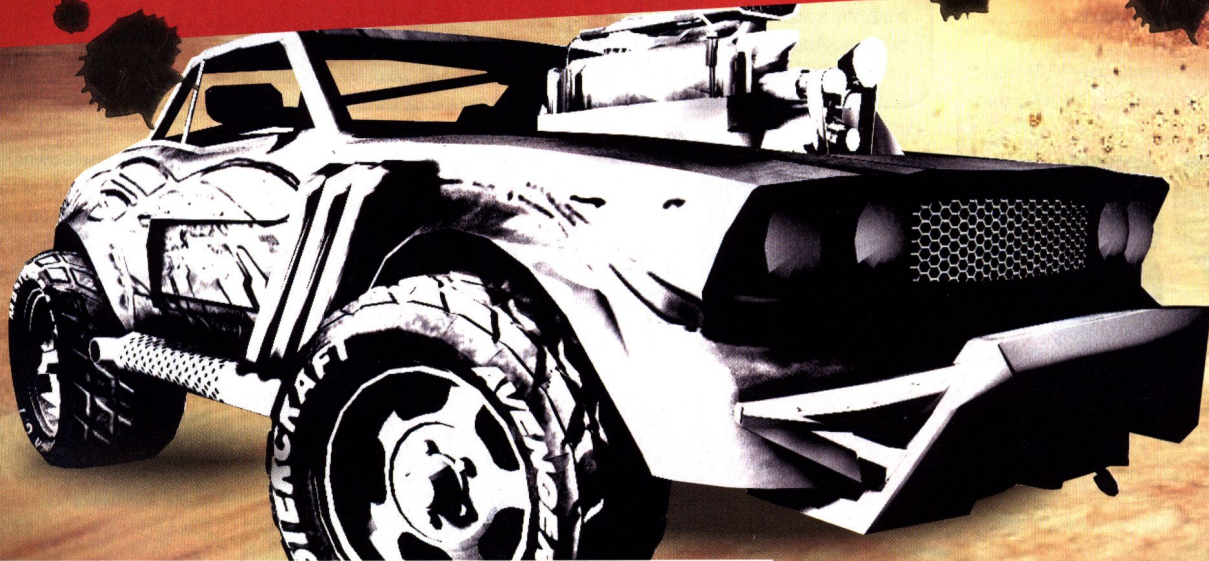
33 A simple "well done" doesn't cut it either. We want closure, preferably some exploding closure. Maybe even some nice music.

34 More nice music please. The average game tune is atrocious, or just heinously mismatched. Are all you developers tone deaf?

35 Stop getting Bond wrong! There have been, what, 30 years of Bond movies to draw on, loads of novels, and the new Bourne-ified version with Craig, yet you developers still can't beat a game that was made on the N64!

IT'S A BIG, BIG WORLD...

FUEL



THE LOWDOWN

- Absurdly large world ☒
- Varied race action ☒
- Plenty of cars, bikes, quads, buggies and trucks ☒
- Free-roaming exploration ☒
- Could it be needlessly big? ☐

My wax arms...
they're melting...



It looks post-apocalyptic. But
it's just post-global warming.

ETA
AUTUMN
2009

Jon Blyth develops an emasculating sense of scale

DEVELOPER Asobo Studios PUBLISHER Codemasters WEBSITE snipurl.com/fuelgame

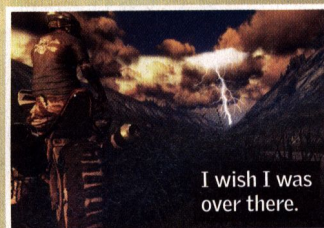
FUEL IS SET in a massive world. David Dedaine – the co-founder of Asobo – sets off an aerial cinematic that takes us from one corner of the map to the other. It sails effortlessly past the point where you think “Jesus, that’s big”. Then it goes on, until you get that lost feeling you get when you walk with your eyes closed. And still, it goes on, until you’re forced to laugh at the sheer dumbfounding enormity of the terrains, the number of distinctive landmarks, and the fact that it’s still flying by.

By the time the cinematic had completed the 170km diagonal journey, I’d involuntarily muttered “Fuck off!” to myself in cheerful incredulity. But *FUEL* wasn’t always going to be 120km by

120km of open-world arcade racing. At one point, it was going to be five times bigger.

FUELING BIG

“First and foremost, *FUEL* is about the sense of scale,” says Dedaine. With a view distance of 40km, there’s always something you can see in the distance to entice you away. Whether that’s the searchlights of a quad bike tournament being held nearby, a snow-capped mountain you fancy biking over, or whether you’re just exploring for the game’s unlockables and occasionally absurd Challenges, Asobo are doing everything they can to make sure that “huge, open world” doesn’t translate into “empty, lonely world”.



I wish I was over there.

That’s part of the reason they brought the landscape down from that original, supermassive plan. “We wanted there to be something to catch your eye every couple of minutes, but things were too spaced out. It was realistic, but not fun,” explains Sebastian Wloch, another co-founder. So, when someone asks how long it takes to drive from one corner of the map to the other, the answer is: “We don’t know. We always get distracted.”

In creating a world of this scope, you can’t ask a human to place every tree, and sculpt every square inch of land. A lot of the detail in

“FUEL wasn’t always going to be 120km by 120km of open-world racing”

U!S!A!

FUEL's abbreviated road trip

Now it's OK to like America again and throw your shoes at President George W Bush, it's fitting that the *FUEL* map is a homage to a condensed version of the USA.

YELLOWSTONE PARK

This forest area has plenty of off-road shortcuts, but it also has plenty of trees to drive into. You pay your money, you take your choice.

UTAH SALT FLATS

It's famous for polygamy and sodium chloride. And in terms of racing, it's an unhillly and sparsely featured expanse.

MOUNT RAINIER

Although the roads of Mount Rainier have enough grip to play, if you roam off the trails, you'll be skidding like an overweight seven year-old doing PE.

GRAND CANYON

Probably the first thing that comes to mind when you think about motorbike stunts, it's worth bearing in mind that if you go down the quick way, you'll explode.

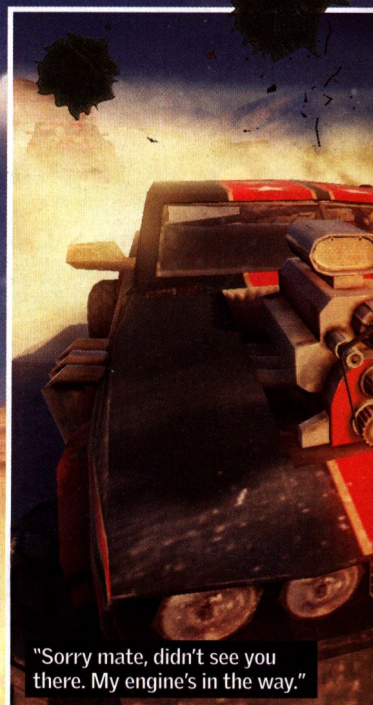
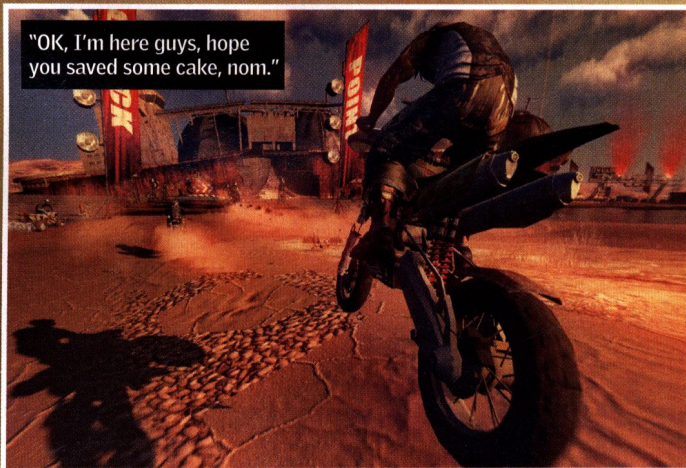
FUEL's world has been generated from algorithms – from the roads, to the terrain, to the obstacles that litter the highways. The skill has been generating the rule sets that place these items – it certainly never feels generated – and the hardest work has been playtesting the areas, to make sure they're realistic, and fun to drive in. So, if they notice that a tree is being a frustrating obstacle during a race, they simply set up a no trees rule on that patch of grass. And the mission hubs have a lot more manual attention lavished onto them, to sculpt them into better racing tracks. There's only so far you can trust a formula.

The whole world is open from the outset, so explorers won't find a bridge that's under construction, or a curiously unpassable roadblock. There's no need to keep areas hidden from you, for two reasons: first, they've decided against

a storyline beyond accumulating fuel. You're a petrol-head adrenaline junkie, who finds that global warming has turned the world into a giant metal playground. You're collecting fuel, but for no more noble purpose than to unlock more cars and races – seriously, you don't need to worry about a storyline. *Auto Assault* tried that path, and look where that ended up.

Secondly, you'll be kept in check by the career races. You'll unlock the higher races by earning fuel. This is earned, with a kind of irony, by winning races. Going for a gold medal requires a knowledge of the map's shortcuts, while going for bronze (which means your competitors will be slower, not that you rank third) you always have to win to earn the fuel and keep progressing.

"OK, I'm here guys, hope you saved some cake, nom."



Whilst Asobo aim to fill their world with spectacle and events, racing games are more instantly suited to MMO-style multiplayer than story-driven games like *Grand Theft Auto IV* or *Oblivion*. The MMO route was one they considered, but performance issues has led them into a compromise.

So, the number of player-controller cars sharing the world at any one time is limited to 16. That might sound like a desolate wasteland, but when you drive away from one crowd of people, the game will take them out of your world, and replace them with a new set of racing buddies. We didn't see this in action, but Asobo assure us that this feels naturally like a full world. You just won't see many people at once. It sounds like a logistical nightmare, and it's something that can only play out in the fullness of a well-populated release.

DIY RACES

The race editor is a great addition, and it's something that'll add an appealing tinge of infinity to the game. You can drop up to 30 checkpoints on the game world, wherever you like, and challenge the game's AI – or any of the people currently sharing the world with you – to compete in your race. Other players will have the option to keep the race in their own banks to play later. Make a particularly fun event and it might proliferate – you might even get challenged to your own race.

The weather and day cycles add variety to the world. Fog rolls across the



**SPECIAL FORCES:
NEMESIS STRIKE**
Like *Army of Two*. But
less homoerotic.

2005



GARFIELD 2
Garfield is a cat who
likes lasagne. Feelings
on racing unknown.

2006



RATATOUILLE
Something about a
rat who wants to be a
Formula 1 race driver.

2007



WALL•E
It's a leap from this
to *FUEL*. We're still
excited, though.

2008



Ah, the testicle crushing
gesture. A popular choice, sir.

GIPIS!

How satellites can
put you off driving

One aspect of the game that needs a fair amount of refinement is the on-screen GPS system. A solid set of arrows in the sky, the animation was so fast that it became the busiest thing on the screen, drawing your eyes away from the action. Moreover, it was constantly recalculating itself so quickly that you could see it changing its mind during the tighter circuit races – it was far less stressful to turn it off.

However, the GPS is also designed to adapt to your racing skills, alerting you to more hazardous routes, once it thinks it can trust you. There's plenty of months left to file down the GPS into something less obtrusive and more helpful, so let's hope they sort that out.



The wheelie that
lasted forever.

"There's a four-hour race designed to induce dry-eyed epilepsy"

land in the morning, and the ravaged environment throws sandstorms, rain, blizzards and tornados out during the day. In some races, these moments are scripted – abandoned trucks are reliably launched at you, and the same pylons will topple across your path every time. But in the free-ride aspect of the game, it's all generated.

That I'm talking about a four-letter Codemasters racer and I haven't mentioned the racing aspect yet says something about the game. That's because there's so much new stuff to talk about, the racing element – as enjoyable as it is – feels like the least surprising

part of the game. But it'd be approaching unprofessional to ignore it, so here we go.

FUEL is no simulation. It's not a pure arcade racer, either – the lead character may have a tattooed-dude attitude look about him, but this isn't overpowered trick-driven gameplay where you earn boost by shunting and drifting. In fact, there's no boost button. Its inclusion was considered (as were a lot of things, including cross-platform play) but eventually decided against. For some games, the replayability comes from mastering these tricks. In *FUEL*, the replayability comes from the world, the flexibility, and the shortcuts.

The vehicles open to you are diverse – from motorbikes, quad bikes and buggies, to muscle cars and trucks. The 10km diameter lake in the centre of the map causes an instant reset of your vehicle, if you drive into it, so it's natural to ask if there'll be any vehicles designed for water. "We are not saying yet," says Dedaine. But his pride briefly gets the better of his professional PR facade, and he adds, "But there is something. Just ask yourself what the coolest thing you can do in an area like this would be." He might mean yachts. He might mean you get to freeze the lake, get out of your car and ice skate around.

Even without boost and drift, the courses we played are highly entertaining, providing a fluid and enjoyable driving experience. Driving paths range from wide roads to goat paths, each with a type of vehicle best suited to it. For this reason, some races will be limited to a particular vehicle. Others related to a class of vehicle, still others to the two genus of off-road and on-road. Some races will have no restrictions at all, and the multiple paths available to players will be a triumph of balancing. If they work.

Challenges are designed to add a bit of variety, and they range from finding and destroying a car to chasing a helicopter. There's a long raid challenge, which is a four-hour race designed to induce dry-eyed epilepsy in a player's shredded nerves. The saving grace of the long raid is that it's completely optional.

In terms of difficulty, the gold medal AI is unforgiving, and even though trailing cars are given a boost, that only takes you so far. There's certainly no power-ups. "You make one mistake, and you can recover from it – make two, and you'll lose," says the QA guy behind me, as I make my seventh mistake. And this is the silver medal difficulty. It can be more punishing.

FUEL is looking audacious, gorgeous and strange. There are elements that throw up a bit of doubt – mainly how and whether the online multiplayer will work – but the proof of concept that we've seen and played is a good reason to look forward to summer **PCZ**

DRAKENSANG

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FOR YOUR ENEMIES WILL BE NUMEROUS INDEED!



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THE
HIGHS AND
LOWS OF
2008



PCZONE 2008 SCRAPBOOK

WELCOME TO THE PC ZONE round-up of 2008. A lot can change in a year, as you know – just 12 months ago we were commuting to the office on our custom-built PC ZONE hovercraft and enjoying fine dining every lunchtime. Now we're lucky if we can afford a bus ticket home and a soggy sandwich from the canteen.

Looking back over the year, it's been an excellent one for games, even if someone decided it would be a good idea to release 457 amazing ones all in one week. As for our Game Of The Year, you'll just have to read on to find out what that is!

Ali Wood

Ali Wood
Editor

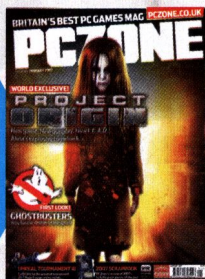


PCZONE.CO.UK



JAN

COVER STAR: Project Origin
DEVELOPER: Monolith
PUBLISHER: Warner Bros

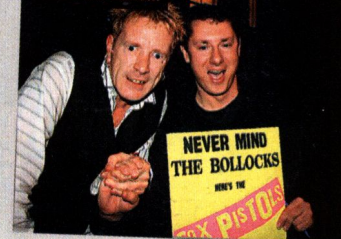


Highlight: Steve Hill met Johnny Rotten at the *Guitar Hero III* event and couldn't stop laughing.

Low point: Johnny Rotten showed us his nipples.

Highlight: Martin Korda travelled to Dallas to get a first look at *Ghostbusters*. It might finally get a release in 2009!

Never mind the bollocks...



...have some man-teats instead!



BEST REVIEW: UNREAL TOURNAMENT III
SCORE: 90% - FRAG-TASTIC

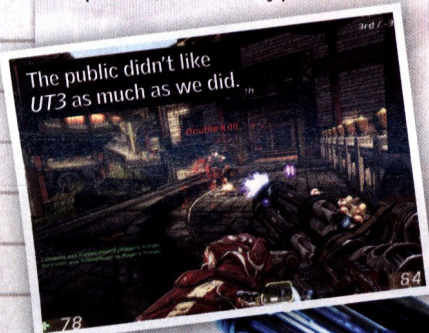
We said: "No other game on the market can equal its thrilling and frenetic nature, and while there may be larger, more populated and tactically adept virtual-battlefield games out there, as a pure multiplayer fragging and vehicular FPS experience, *UT3* is utterly peerless."

CLOSE SECOND: SUPREME COMMANDER: FORGED ALLIANCE
SCORE: 86% - BACK IN COMMAND

We said: "If you're not a master multitasker, you may want to ditch the Red Bull and play something less intense, but until then we'll keep our bastard-massive UFO hovering right over your base..."

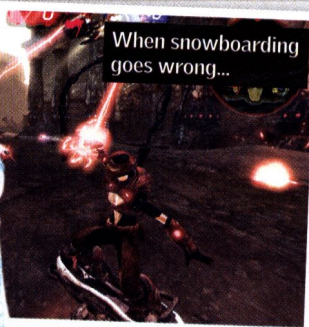
WORST REVIEW: F.E.A.R.: PERSEUS MANDATE
SCORE: 29% - FRANKLY EMBARRASSING

We said: "I hate it, and I think I hate the developers too. Luckily I'm good at remaining objective, despite my raging emotions."



In the future, nobody will ever wear armour like this.

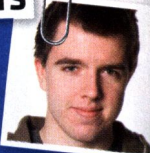
When snowboarding goes wrong...



OUR THOUGHTS

Steve Hogarty

Deputy Editor



What's your highlight of 2008?

Visiting GSC Gameworld in Ukraine to play *STALKER: Clear Sky*. I was picked up from the airport in a crazy Soviet-era car with no seatbelts and those wooden bead seat covers. The driver went very fast, and he was a bit mental. I thought I was going to die.

What's your game of the year?

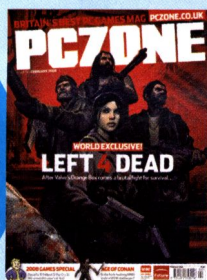
Left 4 Dead, easily. Though *Far Cry 2* and *Grand Theft Auto IV* are up there too. And *Fallout 3*.

What's your New Year's resolution?

By being blatant, rude, and asking every single developer I meet, I'm determined to get my voice in a game.

FEB

COVER STAR: *Left 4 Dead*
DEVELOPER: Valve
PUBLISHER: Valve



Highlight: We predict *Left 4 Dead* will be one of the greatest games of 2008.

Low point: Jon Blyth almost gets covered in vomit in *Left 4 Dead*.

Highlight: Steve Hogarty admits to loving deer hunting. Not Bambi. Obviously.

BEST REVIEW: VIVA PIÑATA
SCORE: 85% - DELICIOUS

We said: "There's so much to do, and so many things to discover, that you'll be wandering around the gardens for many a moon. Just forget that this game has a multicoloured horse on the cover, close your eyes, and get lost in the madness."

CLOSE SECOND: rFACTOR
SCORE: 80% - BEAUTY BENEATH THE BONNET

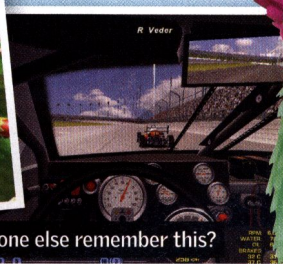
We said: "So although *rFactor* looks like a step back in time, the intangible feel of things is spot-on and everything you see around you has the potential to become something entirely different. You just need to download it or cook it yourself. It's essentially *Garry's Mod* for cars."

WORST REVIEW: CHEGGERS' PARTY QUIZ
SCORE: 10% - CHEGGERS PLAYS PLOP

We said: "The worst thing about this bottom-feeding attempt to draw nourishment from the Chegwin name is that enough idiots will buy it to make it worthwhile."



Not enough whacking.



Anyone else remember this?



OUR THOUGHTS

Jon Blyth

Medium-time Zoner



What's your highlight of 2008?

Realising that all my ill-feelings in life were born from comparing myself to people who are better than I am, and discovering that I can only be content if I bitch about them all behind their backs

What's your game of the year?

World of Goo and *Far Cry 2*.

What's your New Year's resolution?

At least one sit-up per pie.

MAR

COVER STAR: *World Of Warcraft: Wrath Of The Lich King*
DEVELOPER: Blizzard
PUBLISHER: Activision
Blizzard



Highlight: Shodan from the *System Shock* series wins PC ZONE's best conceived characters in PC gaming.

Low point: Publishers don't release any games at this time of year.

Highlight: Norton Mapes from *FEAR* is crowned worst gaming character of all time.



Best. Character. Ever.

BEST REVIEW: UNIVERSE AT WAR: EARTH ASSAULT

SCORE: 79% - MANIC, SIMPLE, FUN

We said: "If you're looking for a strategy game to fill the void until the next great RTS, *Universe at War* fits the bill."

CLOSE SECOND: JUICED 2: HOT IMPORT NIGHTS

SCORE: 67% - TEPID XBOX-PORT DAYS

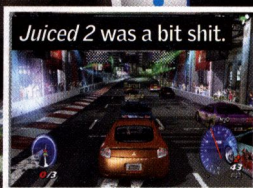
We said: "Beyond the go-faster stripes, there's little sense of ownership as such. So instead of putting forward this year's *NFS* as an alternative, just get last year's."

WORST REVIEW: DEAL OR NO DEAL: THE OFFICIAL PC GAME
SCORE: 3% - DEAL WITH IT

We said: "Giving this piece of heinous excrement anything but a snide, cruel lambasting would be too generous."



Universe at War's shelf life wasn't very long.



Juiced 2 was a bit shit.

OUR THOUGHTS

Steve Hill

Long-time Zoner



What's your highlight of 2008?

Chas & Dave in Camden Town.

What's your game of the year?
Grand Theft Auto IV.

What's your New Year's resolution?
To finish writing my memoirs.

APR

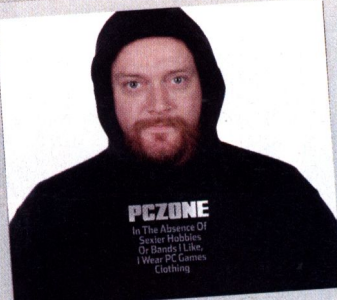
COVER STAR: *Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3*
DEVELOPER: EALA
PUBLISHER: EA



Highlight: We start giving away awesome free PC ZONE hoodies for subscribers!

Low point: Steve ditches Bitey, his beloved *World of Warcraft* pet velociraptor.

Highlight: We visit NCsoft to talk with MMO community managers – they're a lovely lot!



Sex on a stick.

OUR THOUGHTS

Chris Capel

Brand new Zoner

What's the highlight of 2008?
 Having a winter release schedule absolutely packed with great releases, and all the best ones were on PC.

What's your game of the year?
 I've always had a soft spot for the *Red Alert* series, so *Red Alert 3* was always going to get this prize. However, it should've been *Ghostbusters* – damn you Activision!!

What's your New Year's resolution?
 To finish all of the games I bought this year. Yes, I promise I'll finish *The Witcher*.

BEST REVIEW: PUZZLE QUEST: CHALLENGE OF THE WARLORDS
SCORE: 86% – PUZZLINGLY GOOD
 We said: "Because of the deep sense of planning, strategy, story and general slickness, it'll probably suck you in."

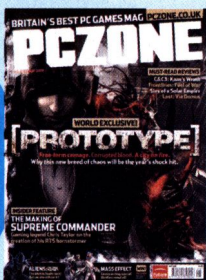
CLOSE SECOND: SAVAGE 2: A TORTURED SOUL
SCORE: 82% – SAVAGERY CIVILIZED
 We said: "Buy this with four friends, make a team and watch in awe as an excellent FPSRPGRTS unfolds around you."

WORST REVIEW: STRANGER
SCORE: 12% – ENOUGH OF THIS
 We said: "With so many other games to ape, it's unbelievable that any developer could deliver something this diabolical."



MAY

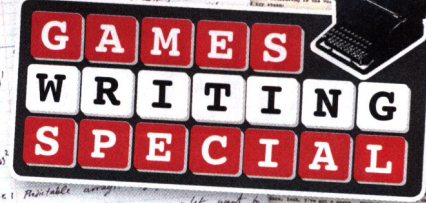
COVER STAR: *Prototype*
DEVELOPER: Radical
PUBLISHER: Activision
 Blizzard



Highlight: Our games writing special – what a treat!

Low point: Audiosurf saps up all of our spare time.

Highlight: Teensiest laptop ever, the EEE PC arrives in the office. We all feel like giants.

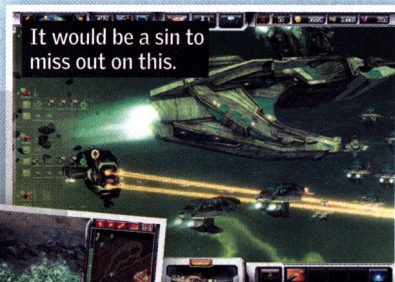


We dun rote a gaym!

BEST REVIEW: SINS OF A SOLAR EMPIRE
SCORE: 91% – UNREPENTANT
 We said: "*Sins Of A Solar Empire* is light years ahead of the competition and to miss it would be unforgivable."

CLOSE SECOND: COMMAND & CONQUER: KANE'S WRATH
SCORE: 82% – KANE IS ABLE
 We said: "There's no doubt that the Nod campaign will frustrate all but the purest and most masochistic of C&C nuts, but *Global Conquest* manages to whip in and save the day."

WORST REVIEW: HOUR OF VICTORY
SCORE: 18% – WAR IS HELL. THIS IS WORSE
 We said: "The mere thought of booting up *Hour of Victory* ever again is making my balls hurt."



OUR THOUGHTS

Martin Korda

Veteran Zoner

What's your highlight of 2008?
 Finally moving house after 10 months of buying/selling hell.

What's your game of the year?
Grand Theft Auto IV.

What's your New Year's resolution?
 To stick to my resolutions.



JUN

COVER STAR: *StarCraft III*
DEVELOPER: Blizzard
PUBLISHER: Activision Blizzard



Highlight: Double-sided cover with *Starcraft II* & *Mafia II*. Wowser!

Low point: Ed Zitron punches a dwarf – all in the name of *Warhammer* of course.

Highlight: Oooh *Fallout 3* we love you! Some tasty screens reaffirmed this.



"Dogmeat... I think we're being followed."

BEST REVIEW: RAINBOW SIX: VEGAS 2 SCORE: 83% – THRILLS AND SPILLS

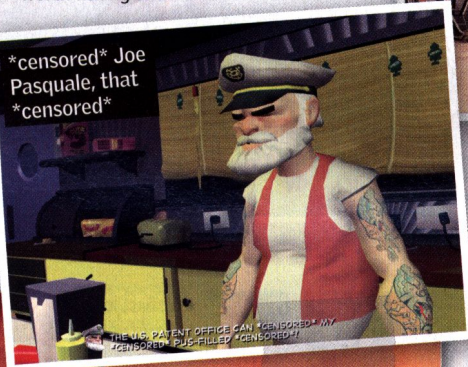
We said: "If you're new to the *Rainbow Six* series and tactical squad shooters on the whole, this is an entertaining entry point. Just don't expect to get all the glitz and glamour that the title implies."

CLOSE SECOND: SAM & MAX 2.04: CHARIOTS OF THE DOGS SCORE: 81% – PEDIGREE CHUM

We said: "If you want in on even half the jokes, don't start here – but if you've followed the sine wave of quality that brings us all to this 10th episode, *Chariots Of The Dogs* will quickly become one of your favourites."

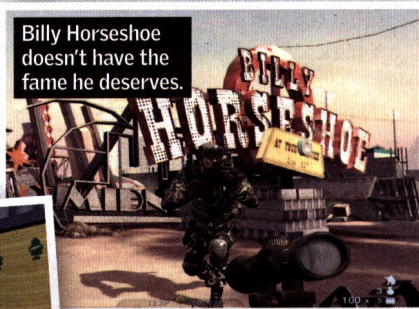
WORST REVIEW: TURNING POINT: FALL OF LIBERTY SCORE: 59% – WASTED OPPORTUNITY

We said: "If you happen to find yourself walking past a bin in the street, and there's a copy poking out of the top, then it's worth fishing out."

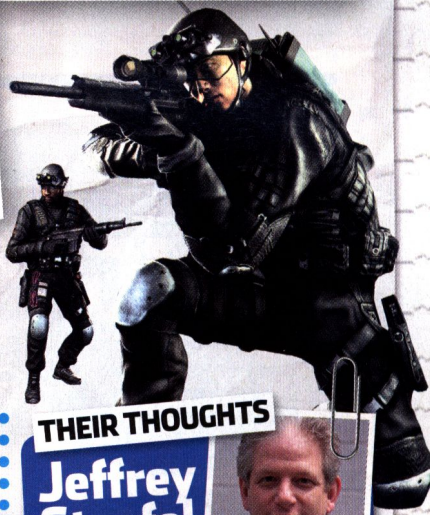


censored Joe Pasquale, that *censored*

Billy Horseshoe doesn't have the fame he deserves.



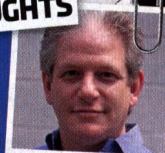
Insert clichéd pants joke here.



THEIR THOUGHTS

Jeffrey Steefel

Turbine



What's been your highlight of 2008?

Completing *Lord of the Rings Online: Mines of Moria*. This is kind of goofy, but if you find yourself on the edge of a really big cliff in Moria and you jump off, you fall for ever and ever and ever.

What's your game of the year?

Some of the stuff in *Warhammer Online* is really, really cool and exciting to play. Likewise with *Spore*. It's been fun to see the PC industry experiment with new types of gameplay.

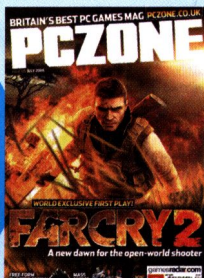
What's your New Year's resolution?

Making sure we're noticing what's changing, what's evolving and making sure *Lords of the Ring Online* will be a franchise that's around for a long time.



JUL

COVER STAR: Far Cry 2
DEVELOPER: Ubisoft Montreal
PUBLISHER: Ubisoft



Highlight: A monkey came to the office! A monkey came to the office!!

Low point: Ed Zitron is so audacious he holds an annual party called Zitronapalooza. For shame.

Highlight: Steve has a lovely time in Montreal, and discovers fettuccine alfredo! Can you believe he'd never had fettuccine alfredo?

BEST REVIEW: MASS EFFECT
SCORE: 92% - MASSIVELY EFFECTIVE

We said: "If you are a fan of what BioWare's done in the past, like action with a hefty dose of sci-fi and want something new, or just like playing a really good game, then you owe it to yourself to pick up this fantastic title."

CLOSE SECOND: RACE DRIVER: GRID
SCORE: 88% - THE CAR'S THE STAR

We said: "Apparently, there's something called *Gran Turismo* coming out on the PlayStation 3. We simply won't be there. You'll find us on the *GRID*."

WORST REVIEW: THE GOLDEN HORDE
SCORE: 35% - ELIZABETH PUKE

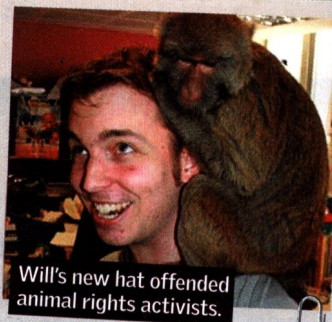
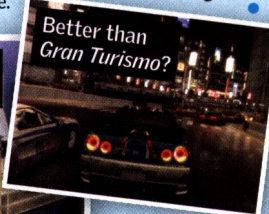
We said: "In the end, the middling graphics, the hilariously bad voice acting, and AI that's erratic enough to sever any immersion you might be feeling, all combine to make *The Golden Horde* patently uncommendable."



Your AI buddies were a bit dumb, if we're honest.



Better than *Gran Turismo*?



Will's new hat offended animal rights activists.

THEIR THOUGHTS

Miles Jacobson

Sports Interactive

What's your highlight of 2008?

Still having the opportunity to make games that entertain people. We're really lucky to be able to do that, and particularly making games that we love to play ourselves.

What's your game of the year?

The games I've played most this year are *LEGO Batman* and *Peggle Nights*. I haven't had much time to get stuck into *Fallout 3* or *Fable 2* yet, but hopefully I'll get some time over Christmas.

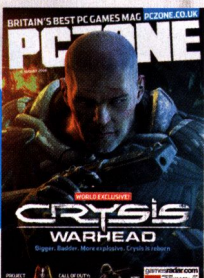
What's your New Year's resolution?

To spend some more time with my friends and family. And to be number one in my Gameworld in *Football Manager Live* - without cheating.



AUG

COVER STAR: Crisis: Warhead
DEVELOPER: Crytek
PUBLISHER: EA



Highlight: Our first look at *Call of Duty: World at War*. Yes please!

Low point: Will gets sick on his trip to Budapest to see Crytek and vomits a lot.

Highlight: A YouTube video of Kasparov being harassed by a flying penis delights the office.

BEST REVIEW: TRACKMANIA
UNITED FOREVER

SCORE: 84% - KEEP ON TRACKIN'

We said: "*TrackMania* I love you, but there's a reason most games stick with pumping out sequels and year-tagged updates. Next time, stop this shit and just give us *TrackMania II* (For free, maybe)."

CLOSE SECOND: LEGO INDIANA JONES: THE ORIGINAL ADVENTURES
SCORE: 80% - PLASTIC FANTASTIC

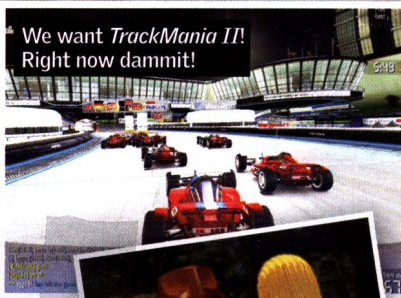
We said: "Old-school, classic, nonsense joy based around possibly the finest trilogy of films ever made."



WORST REVIEW: BUS SIMULATOR 2008
SCORE: 22% - NOT IN SERVICE

We said: "This game is exactly as terrible as you might expect. In every aspect - which is a form of achievement, I guess."

We want *TrackMania II*! Right now dammit!



"Damn, you're ugly."



Terrorist attacks aren't what they used to be.

THEIR THOUGHTS

Dave Matthews

Monolith

What has been your highlight of 2008?

Watching the number of games that have been released and industry innovations that have occurred this year. It's a good time to be a video game fan.

What's your game of the year?

I think *Fallout 3* and *Grand Theft Auto IV* are certainly top contenders for that position. But there are so many great games out right now it's really hard to settle for just one.

What's your New Year's resolution?

To finish playing all of the games that I'm picking up this holiday season!

SEP

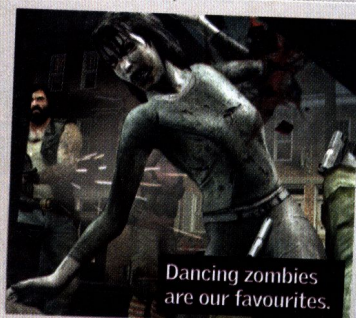
COVER STAR: *Fallout 3*
DEVELOPER: Bethesda
PUBLISHER: Bethesda



Highlight: Another look at *Left 4 Dead*. We just can't get enough of those zombies.

Low point: Steve's sick on the Tube. In his bag. He reckoned it was the politest way.

Highlight: Lara Croft proves she can still cartwheel.



Dancing zombies are our favourites.

OUR THOUGHTS

Phil Wand

Hardware Editor



What's your highlight of 2008?

The return of multiplayer co-op. It's only been, what, 15 years?

What's your game of the year?

Team Fortress 2. Again.

What's your New Year's resolution?

To cancel my Sky subscription and build a Media Center worthy of replacing a Sky+.



BEST REVIEW: *DEVIL MAY CRY 4*
SCORE: 83% - DANTE'S IN FUN, NOW!

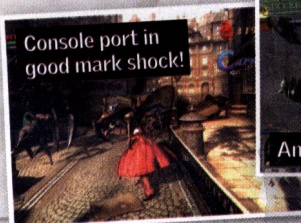
We said: "*Devil May Cry 4* comes highly recommended to anybody who wants to play an action game and not some namby-pamby talkathon. Yeah RPGs, feel the burn."

CLOSE SECOND: *CRAZY MACHINES 2*
SCORE: 82% - INVENTIVE

We said: "*Crazy Machines* is like finding a tennor in the pocket of a new pair of jeans. Go out - or even stay in - and buy it, as that's all it costs."

WORST REVIEW: *TERRORIST*
TAKEDOWN: *CONFLICT IN MOGADISHU*
SCORE: 15% - TRIPE

We said: "You'd be well advised to buy an indie game or a budget classic, and avoid cynical sweatshop shit like this."



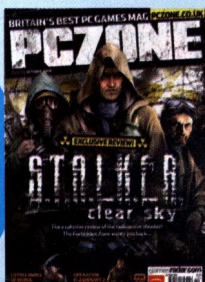
Console port in good mark shock!



An incredible machine.

OCT

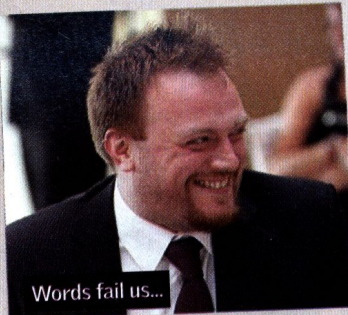
COVER STAR: *STALKER: Clear Sky*
DEVELOPER: GSC Game World
PUBLISHER: Deep Silver



Highlight: *The Political Machine 2008* depicts politicians as bobble heads.

Low point: Log in a suit. WHAT? WHEN? HOW?

Highlight: *Dwarf Fortress* hysteria reaches critical mass. Conversations about mining are rampant.



Words fail us...

OUR THOUGHTS

David Brown

Staff Writer



What's your highlight of 2008?

Having a midnight curry with various legends from the history of *PC ZONE* after the 200th issue celebratory party was a personal highlight.

What's your game of the year?

The Witcher: Enhanced Edition. When you start feeling guilt when the consequences of your decisions are playing out in front of you, it hits home that this is light years beyond other games that offer you moral choices.

What's your New Year's resolution?

To help the mighty *PC ZONE* empire rise again, crushing its enemies and slitting the throats of its foes.

BEST REVIEW: *STALKER: CLEAR SKY*
SCORE: 88% - ENRICHING

We said: "That it's a successful melding of RPG-style inventories and an extremely solid-feeling shooter in a semi-free-roaming and original world is in itself enough to make it worth playing."

CLOSE SECOND: *SPACE SIEGE*
SCORE: 83% - HR-VING A GOOD TIME

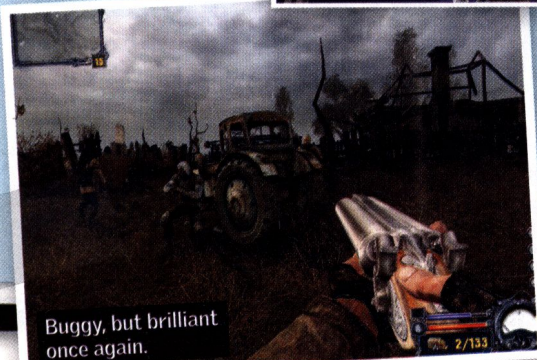
We said: "Although the first half of the game falls into a lull of mundane and repetitive baddies, it definitely becomes more interesting, difficult and intense toward the closing acts. But don't expect brilliant innovation."

WORST REVIEW: *RACING TEAM MANAGER*
SCORE: 15% - CAR CRIME

We said: "The already dismal experience is hampered further by tooth-grindingly slow loading times."



"Message from the Big Giant Head..."



Buggy, but brilliant once again.

NOV



COVER STAR: Warhammer
Online: Age Of Reckoning
DEVELOPER: Mythic
PUBLISHER: GOA



Highlight: Sefton has a baby. Well his missus does.

Low point: Trying to keep a thousand appointments at massive games fest Leipzig. It's physically impossible.

Highlight: World of Warcraft: Wrath of the Lich King hands on! Weeeee!



Lots of people, lots of games, too many appointments.

BEST REVIEW: *SPORE*
SCORE: 95% - GODLIKE

We said: "This isn't a return to old-fashioned gaming. It's an incredible, never-to-be-repeated journey. The only thing greater than *Spore*'s ambition and scope is its near-perfect execution."

CLOSE SECOND: *CRYSIS WARHEAD*
SCORE: 92% - PERFECTION IN MINIATURE

We said: "*Warhead* honestly is the finest burst of action gaming released so far this year, and if you're canny then you'll be able to pick it up for a mere £15 from online retailers."

WORST REVIEW: *DR. DAISY: PET VET*
SCORE: 10% - LOUSE M.D.

We said: "Casual gaming can be good. This, however, is a symptom of the flood of low quality, but probably profitable, shit that's turning *Steam* into a £5 spinning rack in Tesco."



The Korean Mr Bean.



Warhead: not as brutal to your system as before



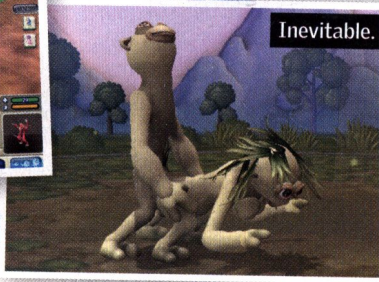
Spore: did Log give it too high a score?



Killing them was much simpler.



Inevitable.



THEIR THOUGHTS

Ken Turner



Creative Assembly Australia

What has been the highlight for you in 2008?

Hearing that *Spore* was downloaded 1.7 million times by bittorrent.

What's your game of the year?

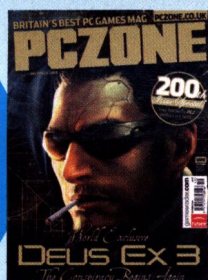
Mass Effect, though I'm hoping to spend some time with *Fallout 3* over the holidays.

What's your New Year's Resolution?

To beat *Spore*'s download record with *Stormrise*!

DEC

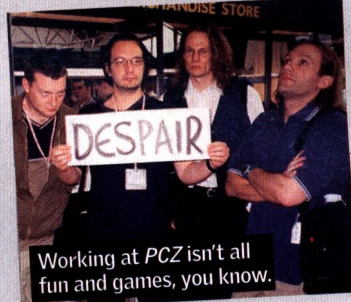
COVER STAR: *Deus Ex 3*
DEVELOPER: Eidos
 Montreal
PUBLISHER: Eidos



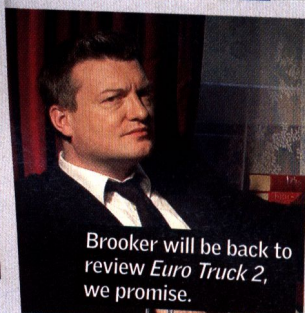
Highlight: *PC ZONE's* 200th issue!

Low point: Charlie Brooker fills his bit with lies, LIES!!

Highlight: Finding out most of the staff used to have long hair. Hippies.



Working at *PCZ* isn't all fun and games, you know.



Brooker will be back to review *Euro Truck 2*, we promise.

BEST REVIEW: *WARHAMMER ONLINE:*

AGE OF RECKONING

SCORE: 92% - *WOW'S RECKONING*

We said: "If servers are stable, players are listened to, and expansion content is as well tweaked, inventive and superbly written as its launch material, this could be the game that savages *WOW's* subscription numbers."

CLOSE SECOND: *CIVILIZATION:*

COLONIZATION

SCORE: 88% - *POCAHONTAS OF STRATEGY*

We said: "In the end, *Colonization* is not quite as awesomely mind-blowingly epic as *Civ IV*, but it's not far off."

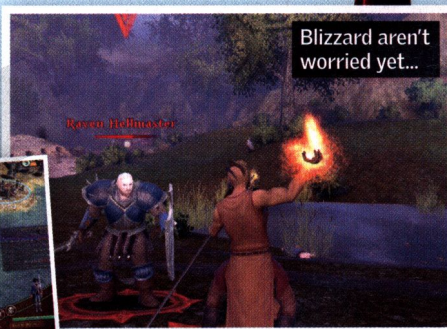


WORST REVIEW: *EURO TRUCK*

SIMULATOR

SCORE: 40% - *TRUCK TRUCKITY TRUCK*

We said: "I left the experience more resentful of mankind than when I started, which indicates this game isn't aimed at me."



Blizzard aren't worried yet...

OUR THOUGHTS

Ali Wood

Editor



What's been your highlight of 2008?

Being made queen of *PC ZONE*! And going to a friend's 30th birthday in West Wycombe's Hell Fire Caves, dressed in '80s ski-wear was pretty cool. Especially when 30 takeaway pizzas arrived. Yikes.

What is your game of the year?

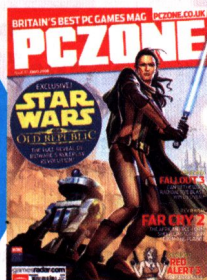
Left 4 Dead.

What's your New Year's resolution?

I don't like giving things up, so in January I'm taking up drinking sherry. But I will try and stop getting lost in Soho after nights out with Activision Blizzard.

XMAS

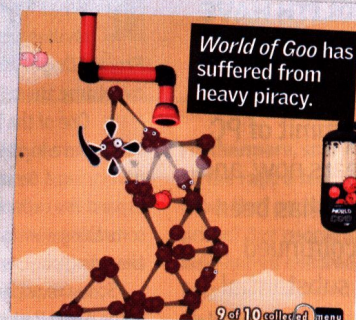
COVER STAR: *Star Wars:*
The Old Republic
DEVELOPER: BioWare
PUBLISHER: EA/LucasArts



Highlight: *World of Goo* wins Log's heart.

Low point: Our back page takes us 300 years to read.

Highlight: The economy is falling apart. Only a few more years until *Mad Max* is true!



World of Goo has suffered from heavy piracy.

BEST REVIEW: *FALLOUT 3*

SCORE: 91% - *LEARN TO LOVE*

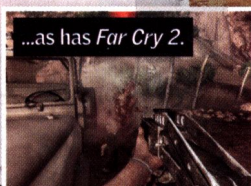
THE BOMB

We said: "For a pure-hearted escapist adventure, and what I consider the meatiest and most satisfying combat system around, you can't go wrong with *Fallout 3*."

CLOSE SECOND: *FAR CRY 2*

SCORE: 90% - *OPEN WONDER*

We said: "There's nothing like it around, and even with its flaws, it's a game you certainly grow to love."



WORST REVIEW: *HINTERLAND*

SCORE: 45% - *HINTERBLAND*

We said: "*Hinterland's* cheap; but that's no excuse for a game this poor."



Fallout 3 has split the community...

OUR THOUGHTS

Ed Zitron

Wannabe American



What's your highlight of 2008?

Good Old Games (gog.com) bringing old, classic PC games back into the market at good prices is frankly beautiful.

What's your game of the year?

Fallout 3. It's engrossing, beautiful and strange in a way that other games haven't quite done in a while.

What's your New Year's resolution?

Gym. Oh, and to actually beat *GTA4*.

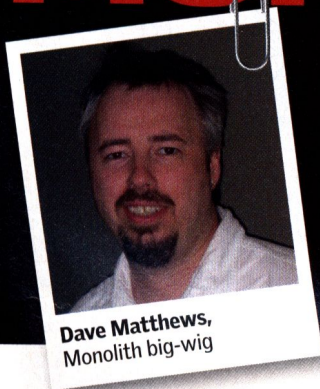




NO ONE LIVES FOREVER
Monolith's spy kitsch classic.



MONOLITHIC, BABY!



Dave Matthews,
Monolith big-wig

Ali Wood hides in a cupboard with Dave Matthews, grilling him about scary children, mechs and sound effects



BLOOD
Sadly eclipsed by *Doom*, but still one of the great FPSs.

MONOLITH HAVE BEEN on or around the snowbound summit of PC gaming for years now, and Dave Matthews has been part of their continued success for a substantial period of time. Responsible for the look of the original *F.E.A.R.* and *Condemned: Criminal Origins*, he certainly knows a thing or two about office interiors.

Ali Wood did her best Alma impression before talking to him about the past, the present and the future of this granddaddy of PC game developers.

Q What have been the main challenges with *F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin* and how did you overcome these?

A One of the first challenges you have to overcome when developing a sequel of any kind is how to expand the experience and provide something new to fans while not alienating players new to the experience.

So we've added collectable objects in the game that will alleviate some of that, plus the fact that you're playing as a new character allows us to continue the story without having to retread ground from the previous game.

What new elements are there in *F.E.A.R. 2*, and does the PC version offer anything the console versions don't have?

The technology we've used to build *F.E.A.R. 2* has come a long way since the first game, so right away players are going to have a better experience. The world of *F.E.A.R. 2* is larger, has more detail, and it feels more alive. We've also built upon what was so successful about the AI from the first game, and made enemies far more aware of their

environment and the player, which has increased their threat and believability a great deal.

What inspired the *Shogo* references in *F.E.A.R.*? Are you simply re-using ideas, or are you fleshing out a larger, consistent universe?

The world *F.E.A.R.* occupies is not the same as *Shogo*, so there isn't any notion of a single universe that these stories exist in.

However, there are a few references that have carried over, the largest being the name of the Armacham Corporation, which was one of the three companies featured in *Shogo*.

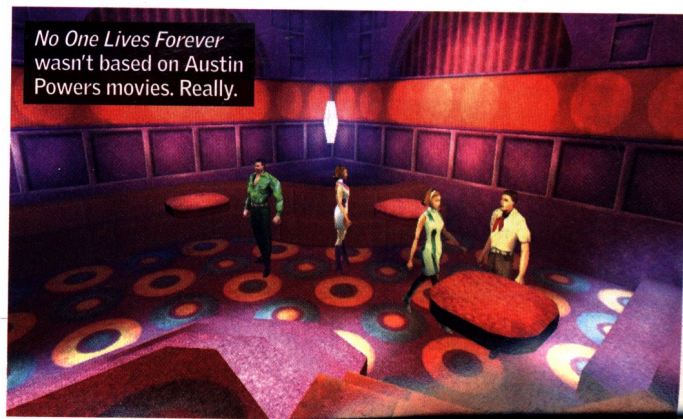
That said, there are some influences there, but we haven't explored how far that rabbit hole goes.

How important are your games' communities? Do you respond to their feedback?

The community for *F.E.A.R.* is very active, and we often listen to what they have to say. The power armor is a direct result of our fans wanting to get into mechs and really do some damage. The title of the game also came from the fans. Before getting the *F.E.A.R.* title back, our game was known only as *Project Origin*. That title came from our fan base who participated in a contest to create a new name for the next chapter in Alma's life.

How do you go from the light-hearted whimsy in *No One Lives Forever* to the dark, blood-soaked world of *F.E.A.R.* without completely losing your sanity?

No One Lives Forever wasn't based on Austin Powers movies. Really.





TRON 2.0
Not as good as the film, but loveable.



ALIENS VS PREDATOR 2
This game made us pee our pants. Repeatedly.



SHOGO: MOBILE ARMOR DIVISION
Shogo had mechs and plenty of blood.

"Creepy things happening in places that should be mundane and safe is a great way to scare people"

Monolith prides itself on its diversity of ideas, and *NOLF* and *F.E.A.R.* represent this extremely well. Cate Archer was a great character to create and the whole series is something that we look back on fondly. *F.E.A.R.*, while very different, was no less exciting and fun to create. I don't think Monolith likes to limit what kinds of projects it undertakes.

What's your main inspiration for *F.E.A.R.*, and have you been influenced by any other games?

F.E.A.R. and *F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin* draw a majority of their inspiration from Japanese horror cinema. The notion of creepy things happening in places that should be mundane and safe is a great way to scare people.

Alma is obviously a representation of this vengeful ghost inspiration as well. Her name was inspired by Peter Straub's *Ghost Story*.

Our action is influenced by those great moments in John Woo's Hong

Kong action films, like *The Killer* and *Hard Boiled*. The list goes on.

Any plans to bring *Condemned 2* to the PC?

Right now we are focused on getting *F.E.A.R. 2* into consumers' hands, but I guess anything is possible!

Speaking of which, do you do your own sound recording? We wonder how you get the sound of somebody's face being smashed into a TV.

Monolith have a top-notch, award-winning sound department. They're awesome. The sounds that they craft can come from the most unusual of places. I'm constantly amazed that what may sound so disturbing, so inhuman, so unnatural, could have started at such a normal place like cutting fruit, but when applied to some nasty visual and taken through some serious augmentation by the department, a sound can take on a whole new dimension.



Ethan Thomas – the homeless hero of *Condemned*.

A history of Monolith

Monolith have been around almost as long as PC gaming

A company with one of the most sterling records in PC gaming history, Monolith have a reputation for producing games that interest the community, even if they don't always break sales records.

Creators of much-loved classics like *Blood*, *Shogo: Mobile Armor Division*, *No One Lives Forever*, *Aliens vs Predator 2* and *Tron 2.0*, Monolith can always be relied on to bring something different to the table.

Even now, there's not much that beats a bit of *No one lives Forever 2* co-op, especially when you break out the remote-controlled explosive robot cats, banana skins and tasers.

In recent years, Monolith have gone down the horror route with the *F.E.A.R.* and *Condemned* series, scaring us with evil girls and department store mannequins that spring to life. What could be next? If we were to have our way, new *Blood* and *NOLF* games would be in the pipeline. Failing this, just a PC conversion of *Condemned 2* would be nice – we can but dream...

Do Monolith actively try to be on the pulse of popular culture? For example, *No One Lives Forever* appeared alongside spy kitsch and *Austin Powers*, while *F.E.A.R.* arrived alongside a swathe of Japanese horror movies featuring scary children. Would looking at trends at the cinema give us an idea of what you're working on next?

I think the fact that Cate Archer bears a passing resemblance to *Austin Powers*, or the Japanese influences that inspired *F.E.A.R.* are more coincidental than anything else.

We, like all entertainment companies, are inspired by a variety of sources, and popular culture is definitely one of those. But remember, we've also done *Shogo: Mobile Armor Division*, *Blood*, *Tron 2.0*, *Aliens vs. Predator 2*, the *Condemned* series, amongst others. At least with *Blood* and *Condemned*, it's harder to say that our inspiration lies with the popular culture of the day.

Furthermore, scary little girls were all the rage a few years ago – do you think that perhaps Alma's past her prime? Are people still scared of lank-haired children?

From the very beginning we knew that if we just brought Alma back as a scary little girl it wouldn't have the same resonance that it did in 2005. Gamers would be expecting that and, as a result, she wouldn't be as scary. The challenge was how to evolve Alma beyond that and make sure that she remained as terrifying as she was in the first game. What we ended up doing is expanding on her character, much like the narrative of the game expands on her history.

What's next on the agenda for Monolith? Or are you taking a well-earned break?

We've got some amazing projects that we're working on right now. Players are going to be really excited when they see what we're developing. **PCZ**



A sorry Log

I HAVE AN apology to make. Last month, I reviewed *Grand Theft Auto IV*. I got my usual complaints out of my system – all that shit about the core gameplay having not moved on since *Carmaggedon*, or something. But because I only had access to one PC, which handled the game admirably, and no complaints came from those playing it in the PC ZONE office, the reports of beyond-*Crysis* demands on the PC passed without comment.

This shows Rockstar's arrogance, and the absolute fucking nonsense of the *Windows Vista Experience Index*. I've since seen a rig rated 5.6 – above Rockstar's required and recommended levels – unable to run the game, unless you turned the settings down so far you might as well have been running the game on a PlayStation 1.

There are some excellent bonus features in *GTA4* for the PC – the film editing stuff is a fantastically judged bonus. But, that the punishing graphical requirements went unmentioned on, thanks to my PC being lucky – well, that's a shoddy do, and I'm sorry. PC gaming – why aren't you easy?

Jon Blyth

Jon Blyth
Freelancer

Must Buys!

PC ZONE Classics are hard to come by, and when you see one you should drop to the floor and refuse to move until someone buys you the game...



Fallout 3 Left 4 Dead Red Alert 3

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F.E.A.R. 2: PROJECT ORIGIN

Alma's back. But can she still terrify us, after all this time?

The PC ZONE Awards



CLASSIC (90%+)

Games scoring in this bracket are air-punching, heart-soaring triumphs. Buy them.



RECOMMENDED (75-89%)

Head-turning, if not eye-popping, games. But then, who wants their eyes popped?



DUMP (0-19%)

PC ZONE's dirty protest. If a game is bad, we won't shirk our duty.

AND THE REST



ONLINE ONLY

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



EXPANSION PACK

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



ON THE DVD

Good news! Check out the cover DVD for a playable demo or movie.

The PC ZONE gaming machine

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



PCZONE REVIEWS



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PURE

Will the quad bike racer be a hit on the PC?

56 F.E.A.R. 2: PROJECT ORIGIN
Three years ago we entered a concrete corridor and were terrified by a lank-haired girl. Can this action/horror sequel match its predecessor's status?

64 MIRROR'S EDGE
You've seen the trailers, and you've read the hype. Now find out if this first-person runner really is a gaming revolution.

70 SILENT HILL: HOMECOMING
The franchise that won't die comes back to the PC. And it hasn't forgotten the very wrong-sexy zombie nurses.

72 IFLUID
You thought being a parkour courier was original? How about being a sentient drop of water that can telekinetically possess fruit – that's original!

73 PUZZLEGEDDON

74 PURE

75 STRONG BAD: EPISODE 5

76 STATE OF PLAY: GUILD WARS

78 BUDGET

80 BUYER'S GUIDE

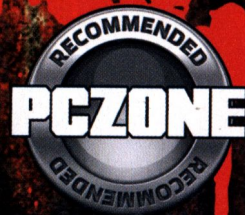
64

MIRROR'S EDGE

Faith has arrived. So what does she bring with her?

PCZONE SWEARS...

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



FEAR 2: PROJECT ORIGIN

STEVE HOGARTY IS CHASED BY A TERRIFYING, NAKED OLD WOMAN AROUND A PRIMARY SCHOOL

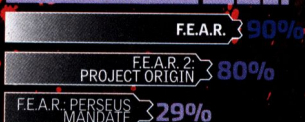
DEVELOPER Monolith
PUBLISHER Warner Bros.
WEBSITE projectorigin.warnerbros.com
ETA 13 Feb
PRICE £34.99

AT A GLANCE...

Monolith are back with the most horrifying and bloody shooter this side of *The Suffering*. But smeared bodily fluids doesn't do it for us these days.

Minimum system requirements: 2.6GHz processor, 1GB RAM (2GB for Vista), and a 256MB video card.

HOW IT STACKS



BACK IN 2005, little girls with lank, greasy hair were terrifying. Across the country, crowds of cinemagoers would stream out of showings of *The Grudge* and *The Ring Two*, kicking children in the face and then tipping over prams as a precautionary measure. It was riotous madness, and in the midst of it we were graced with *FEAR* – Monolith's arse-clenchingly scary, spectacularly violent and needlessly bloody shooter. It was a fantastic, if voyeuristic, sideways glance at the artistic elements involved in shooting a man in slow-motion so that he does a back flip, while a scary little girl points at baddies to make their heads explode.

This classic wasn't without problems though. *FEAR*'s second half let the tempo drop and the game slowed to a lull. It would dawn on you that you'd been scurrying about the same concrete



corridors for the past five hours, and the visceral magic would fray at the seams. The subsequent two expansions (not developed by Monolith, it must be stressed) would extrapolate on the worst and most concrete corridors parts of the original, adding little new content to the mix and fumbling the expert pacing of the first game.

Which brings us to *FEAR 2: Project Origin*, Monolith's return to the franchise. Can the sequel innovate with

varied and exciting new locales? What crazed scares can they concoct this time? Does it even need to be anything drastically new? We'll settle for searing a man in half with a laser beam, as long as we never see another series of featureless grey corridors.

Set slightly before and then mostly after the nuclear blast at the close of *FEAR*, the locations you'll visit will be mostly trashed. Though the piles of rubble and debris



**"F.E.A.R.'s second half let the tempo drop
and the game slowed to a lull"**



Project Origin's weapons feel meaty and powerful, just ask this guy here.

act as convenient ways of guiding you through the urban environments, *Project Origin* feels less linear than the first game by virtue of a handful of open arenas dotted about the place. Outdoors bits revolve around the ruined city's streets (not original, but easily the game's most graphically pleasing areas) and the addition of daylight does little (thankfully) to dissolve the heavy and dark atmosphere of the game.

You'll slap yourself in the forehead during the game's opening, which sees you try to enter a luxury apartment block, only for the main entrance to be

blocked and you to be forced to enter through a maintenance area. Cinder block walls, metal shelves packed with cleaning products – *Project Origin* doesn't put its best, least-concrete foot forward with its opening level. But thankfully the environments become a great deal more colourful (and better lit) as the story progresses.

Though *Monolith* fall back on their beloved concrete corridors on a few occasions, *Project Origin's* environments are varied enough to maintain your interest for the 10 hours it'll take you to come out the other end. An elementary

school and a factory with lots of yellow bits will entice the cones and rods of your eyes out of their greyish-brown-induced stupor. These locations amounts to a considerable reduction in the overall number of concrete levels in the game, which we celebrate.

BACKFLIPS

Of course, you'll still be shooting men so that they do a back flip. And most of the time you'll be doing this in slow-motion. Your ability to slow down time in the original was a consequence of you having been cloned from the magical Alma (the terrifying little girl who stalks you throughout both games), though

this time you've been experimented on by Armacham: the game's insidious high-tech megacorp responsible for Alma being so pouty in the first place.

The differences here aren't apparent on the face of things: you'll slam the slo-mo key in the heat of battle to transform the action to a sluggish, crawling dance. Bullets ripple through the air before connecting with your almost frozen enemies, the force of the impact lifting them from their feet as they enter the all-important back flip. Their clenched trigger finger causes their weapon to fire uncontrollably as they spin, creating a Catherine wheel of hot lead arcs from floor to wall to



"Say what you see, say what you see..."

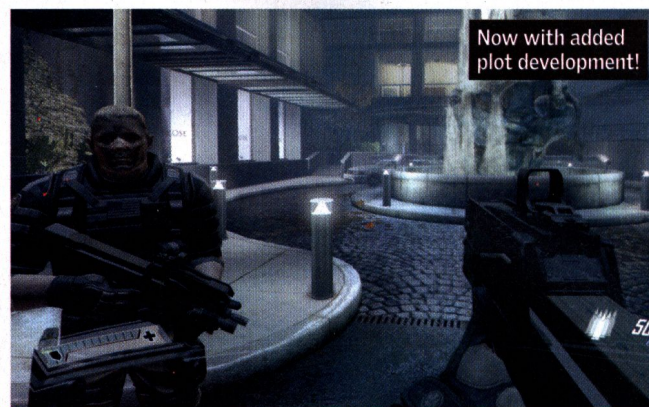




To the very end, she never let go of that Johnny Cash CD.

Story time

Are you sitting comfortably? Then *Project Origin* will begin...



Now with added plot development!

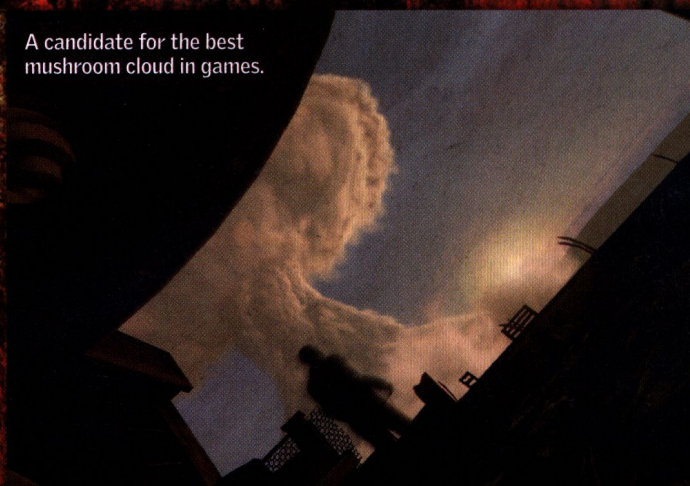
Give yourself a pat on the back if you came out the back-end of *F.E.A.R.* with any idea of the plot. Genevieve Ladybird, the Armychamp corporation – it was a carelessly cast drape of a story loosely resting on the meaty action of the game.

Project Origin contains a coherent narrative. Events in the first game are

clarified, while those of the second unravel through emails. The characters are better explained and acted, and have a far better script. There's even a human antagonist – Colonel Vanek.

Project Origin's script won't win Monolith any Oscars, but it lends a bit of spine to proceedings.

A candidate for the best mushroom cloud in games.



"The game's appeal is the Hong Kong gunplay and first-person martial arts"

ceiling, tearing away lumps of masonry and filling the air with concrete dust. Your slow-motion ability expires, sound tears back to normality from its underwater glug, and the corpse of your enemy falls to floor with a thud.

That's the game's primary appeal: the cinematic violence coupled with Hong Kong gunplay and first-person martial arts. So it was with the first

game, and so it is with the second. Even the weapons are largely similar affairs – though your dual pistols have been replaced with a single, oddly futuristic looking weapon you'll rarely want to use. Your common submachine gun has a wide spread which makes using iron sights almost essential, but it makes a wonderful clattering noise, feels weighty and has real impact.

ARMED AND DEADLY

Beyond the basic guns Monolith have included some treats – the laser gun has returned, and with it comes the ability to sear enemies in twain (only at certain pre-ordained points though), such as the neck or waist). The nailgun's back, allowing you to pin enemies to walls by

their faces using foot-long spikes. There are some new faces in the armoury too: an awful napalm gun which gives you no sense of how it's working or where it's firing (and the resulting underwhelming "Help me I'm on fire" animation gives no feeling of satisfaction), and some sort of energy cannon jobbie. This fires an orb of blue energy, which explodes on contact with an enemy – like a shit rocket launcher. Initially you'll be wary of using it due to the scarcity of ammo, later you'll become wary of using it because it's shit. Hardly an inspirational weapon rack then, with Monolith wheeling out the old favourites in lieu of anything decent and new.

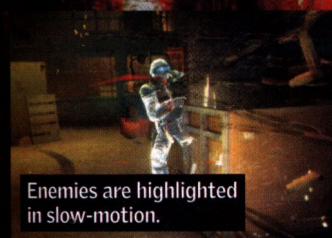
Usually a last resort brought on by an untimely reload, the importance of melee attacks has been downplayed. Your repertoire of kicky-fighty moves



Helicopters deliver troops.

has been greatly pared down to include a whack of your gun butt, and a flying kick (lethal as ever, thankfully).

I might also mention a pet annoyance here, as it won't really fit anywhere else: grenades no longer explode on contact with an enemy. Instead – like real grenades – you need to prime one and hold on to it, before throwing it at the last second. I think you'll agree, this isn't as much fun. Pah!



Enemies are highlighted in slow-motion.

Grenades are plentiful in the primary school...

The character animations are strangely brilliant.

Feeling queasy yet?

I don't know art, but I know what makes me want to be sick.

AMMO ACQUIRED
COMBAT SHOTGUN

Using the sights becomes essential for quick kills.

Hurrah, no school today!

Lauded in previews was your ability to tip over shelves and kick tables on their sides to use them for cover. An excellent idea on paper – it's something the enemies of the original game did to great effect, earning themselves the reputation of being some very clever AI routines indeed. With this ability now in your hands, furniture can be at first pulled away from a wall with the E key, before being kicked over with a second tap. This sequence can take up to five seconds to carry out. Meanwhile, your enemies gradually fill your face with round after round while you struggle to upturn a futon.

The simple, underlying fact here is that even on the hardest difficulty setting creating cover for yourself isn't effective. Your time would be better spent returning fire to your enemies while making use of pre-existing cover. Certainly it's a feature you can ignore but in doing so you begin to reduce *Project Origin* to a basic continuation of the original *F.E.A.R.* – a direction you can see this review heading in.

Another complaint comes into view here too: *Project Origin* just isn't a challenging game. Health packs and armour flow like honey, ammunition (for the main weapons at least) is bountiful,

and great big HUD icons highlight any pick-ups. The removal of a quicksave option prevents you throwing yourself into those wonderfully impossible-to-win situations you're forced to fight your way out of – instead regular checkpoints ensure your safety from start to finish. Ramping up the difficulty setting does seemingly little, besides increasing the damage you receive.

And it was through repeating your fights that the original *F.E.A.R.*'s AI shone. Only by watching how the enemy's tactics changed to reflect your actions did you properly appreciate their flanking manoeuvres and clever

grenade avoidance techniques. *Project Origin*'s foes are a verbose lot for sure, shouting their thoughts and opinions back and forth like gun-toting masters of debate, but they lack a killer instinct. It's in there, we're sure of it, but with the difficulty so diluted we're just not getting a chance to see it.

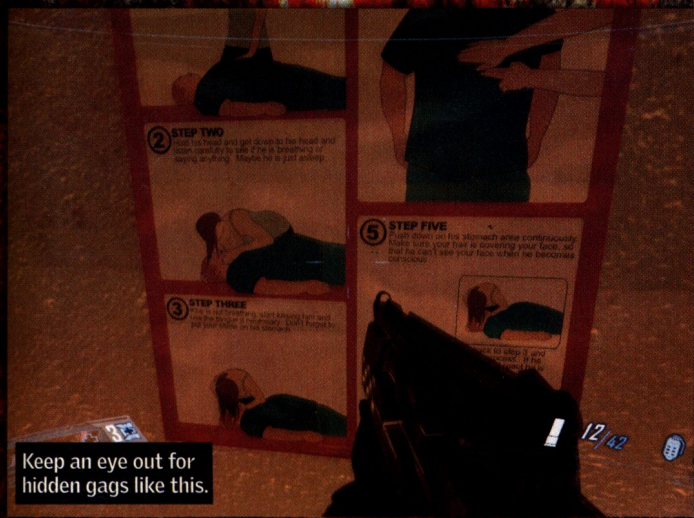
MECHS APPEAL

So it seems a mite unnecessary to let you pilot one of the armoured exoskeleton mechs through two sections of the game – gunning down anything with a heat signature and tearing through the remains of the city with rockets that make lovely spiral smoke effects as they scream through the air.

These sections stomp on any sense of tension or fear, replacing it with explosions, noise and death. But that's fine by us. Just getting

Monolith make their views on fast food known.

"Project Origin's foes are a verbose lot for sure, but they lack a killer instinct"



Keep an eye out for hidden gags like this.

TAPPA-TAPPA-TAPPA

Quick-time events? Well no, not really...



Bit late for cabinet-flipping now.

Each time Alma jumps on your face, a mutant pounces on your chest, or you have a boss battle, you're greeted by a frantic looking HUD icon suggesting you hammer the melee key.

Whether you're struggling, Riddick-style, to force a gun under a man's chin before pulling the trigger, or just kicking


wildly at an enemy, the button-mashing action feels somewhat disconnected to the on-screen results. Thankfully, these console leanings are few and far between, and you'll mostly just be hammering the melee key, which is fine considering you're engaging in some melee combat.



That's no flesh wound.




Looks like Ironside's shat himself again.



E
PRESS
PICK UP KEYCARD

Oi! That's stealing that is.



Setting folks on fire is one of
the least satisfying deaths.

into the power armour is an exciting experience: you pull the cockpit down around you and for a moment you're in the dark. Then the video feed kicks in, the displays flicker into life and a lady computer says something like "Hello and welcome to the mech bit". (I really should note these things down.)

The ensuing carnage is gloriously well-rendered. Your powerful cannons rip through walls causing enemies to erupt into limbs and your rockets deliver some of the game's finest explosions. You feel invincible (you're not, though

"Project Origin falls short of delivering the kick provided by the original game"

Old grenades and mines from *F.E.A.R.* are back: incendiary, proximity, the lot.



Project Origin's lost some of the original *F.E.A.R.'s* subtlety and timing – whereas the first game created an air of tension before popping a balloon in your face, *Project Origin's* about grinding you into a nervous pulp through the use of unending apparitions and hallucinations.

And when it's not using spooky visions to wear you out, it'll chuck some high-tech *Predator*-style ninja men or the well-publicised wall-climbing mutants (failed experiments of Armacham) at you.

The skittering mutant freaks are an unexpected joy to fight, as they move along ceilings and walls, swinging from railings in entirely unpredictable ways and forcing you to make use of your slow-motion abilities.

The partially invisible, technologically enhanced villains you'll see towards to close of the game employ the use of

some clever visual techniques too. In a similar fashion to the *Predator's* not-quite invisible suit, their camouflage glitters as they move, sparking with primary colours which remain static on your monitor as a sort of odd ghosting effect. It's not conveyed in screenshots at all, but it's a strangely unnerving effect which makes fighting them all the more distressing.

FEEL THE MAGIC

The magic of the original *F.E.A.R.* is buried in here somewhere, and occasionally it will rear its bloodied head to say hello, but *Project Origin* falls short of delivering the kick provided by the original game. PC shooters have evolved in great leaping bounds over the past three years (just look at *Crysis*, *Far Cry 2*, *Left 4 Dead* and *Fallout 3*), and while it's unfair to think we can blithely wash our hands of the concept of shooting people in corridors, *Project Origin* retreads the same horror territory we've seen time and time again. It's not bad horror territory, mind, it's just the same, and there are some players whose fires just won't be stoked by it in the slightest.

What it adds – the more capacious level design, the daylight, the mech bits,

the cover system – doesn't amount to much more than a garnish of new ideas on an old chicken salad of a game. But as I said, the magic of *F.E.A.R.* is certainly in position. That basic pleasure of time slowing, of watching a death ballet unfold as glass shatters, masonry crumbles and bodies cartwheel with morbid elegance – it's all intact, and it's as incredible to behold as ever. **PCZ**

I defy you to die during these sections), and the level forces you out of your mech before you get a chance to tire of the action.

Does such gratification undermine the psychological horror slant the rest of the game promotes? Of course not – you'd been nailing people to doors only two minutes ago – this is still very much within the remit of the *F.E.A.R.* universe. And it's undeniably fun, if mindless.

The psychological horror itself is wheeled out at almost every other opportunity, with constant, unrelenting terror leaving you drained and inescapably on edge. You can't turn a corner without a psychic projection of a grown-up Alma flashing her bedraggled tits at you and running away. Likewise, you'll become numb to the sight of blood-smeared walls and piles of rotting intestines.



PCZONE

Graphics Outdoor bits look amazing
Sound Some incredible music
Multiplayer It's here, nothing too special

- ✓ Fantastic action
- ✓ Coherent plot
- ✗ Cover system doesn't work
- ✗ Environments still samey
- ✗ Far too easy

80

Lacking original *F.E.A.R.*



The city has no name, but we like to think it's modelled on Basingstoke.

MIRROR'S EDGE

David Brown hurls himself off a building for your pleasure

DEVELOPER DICE
PUBLISHER EA
WEBSITE mirrorsedge.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £34.99

AT A GLANCE...

Sprinty-jumpy action set in the cleanest city ever envisaged. Vertigo sufferers need not apply.

Minimum system requirements:

3GHz processor, 1GB RAM, and a 256MB graphics card with Pixel Shader 3.0.

HOW IT STACKS

DARK MESSIAH OF MIGHT AND MAGIC **84%**

PRINCE OF PERSIA **75%**

MIRROR'S EDGE **71%**

I'LL BE HONEST and tell you right now this is one of the trickiest reviews I've had to write for a substantial period of time. You see, *Mirror's Edge* is a game that will (and has) split the community down the middle. I can imagine the comment pages on various websites right now, the fevered defence of the fanboys and sarcastic jibes of the trolls. The thing is, both of these groups are right in their own way. Every good point is balanced out by a bad one, every thrilling escape from the 'blues' (cops) matched by an infuriatingly placed checkpoint.

Mirror's Edge involves a young woman (Faith) struggling to clear her cop sister (Kate) of a murder charge. A mayoral candidate has been executed in his office, the murder weapon being Kate's gun. Faith is on the opposite side

of the law, part of a group of 'runners' – couriers who deliver secret messages by the rooftops of the city, thereby evading the Big Brother-style surveillance of the ruling totalitarian regime.

You do this by running and jumping a substantial amount, and when you get into the flow of things, all this athletics is really exhilarating. When the bullets are flying and the police are hot on your heels, there's a distinct feeling of pressure, panic and excitement that builds up as you get closer to that big jump onto the next



"And this is my hand puppet of a rooster."



A leap of Faith (sorry).

"When the bullets are flying and the police are hot on your heels, there's a distinct feeling of pressure, panic and excitement"

Run her arm through a barcode scanner and you'll get the price of a frozen pizza.

building. Elation follows when you've cleared that final hurdle by the skin of your teeth, but herein lies the game's first problem.

STRAIGHT LINES

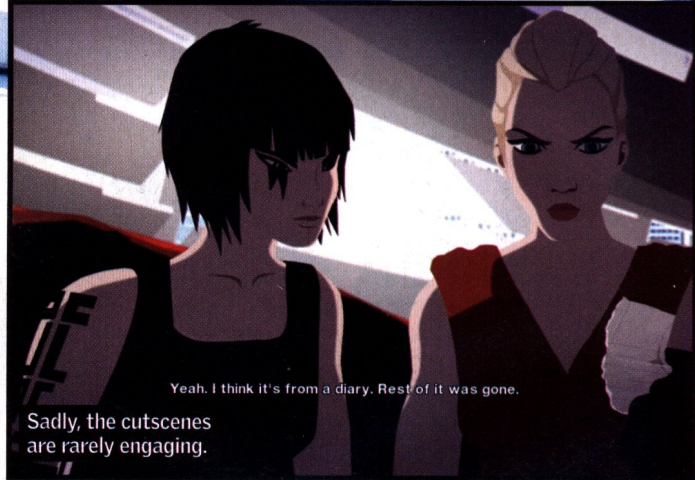
If you don't make that hurdle, you're left to the mercy of the checkpoint system. Now, I've never been an advocate of checkpoints, much preferring the good old quicksave. Some say it makes games too easy, I say you don't have to actually use it if you think that's the case. Certainly, *Mirror's Edge* could have been improved by the presence of an easily tapped F5 at an opportune moment. The problem with arbitrary checkpoints is that they have to be placed perfectly to be effective. If they aren't, frustrations quickly mount up and mice get thrown out the window.

One of the things most likely to put someone off a game as a result of this is being forced to repeat the same section time after time. In a title like *Mirror's Edge*, where the excitement and thrill of the chase is the primary ingredient, doing the same bit again completely negates that. Due to the uneven dispersal of the checkpoints, you often have to start a substantial distance away from the place you died and, if this happens to be a tricky part (there's a group of cops or a helicopter shooting at you, for example) you're going to be quickly grinding those teeth down to bloody stumps.

This is where *Mirror's Edge*'s signposted linearity becomes both a blessing and a curse. You see, when you're running away from gun-toting

"Mirror's Edge's signposted linearity becomes both a blessing and a curse"

police officers, you have mere seconds to decide which direction to run. The advantage of *Mirror's Edge*'s linear model is that, most of the time, you know exactly where to go and everything clicks into place to produce brilliant action sequences. The game is at



its very best when the split-second decisions go your way, when you make that leap between speeding trains or smash through the door just in time to avoid being cut to pieces by gun fire.

Where the linear model falls flat on its face is when things aren't immediately obvious, leading to moments of confused frustration as you're trying to figure out where to go as the cops are shooting you up. Couple this with the awkward checkpoints and you have a recipe for disaster. There's also no option to quickly restart from the last checkpoint (at least none that I saw), which can lead to problems when you clear one in the middle of a difficult section, but then mess up afterwards, falling back down or regressing to a point before the checkpoint. In the trickier platforming sections towards the end, you either have to do them all again or quit to the main menu and reload that way, which is hardly ideal.

Thankfully, these moments don't occur too often (though, as you'd expect,

the further you go, the more likely they are to crop up). Usually, Runner Vision guides you in the right direction. Runner Vision (not available on the hardest difficulty) highlights important areas of the landscape that you can use to jump off, cling on to or manipulate by colouring them in (usually bright red). It isn't a foolproof system though – sometimes the important areas aren't highlighted at all, which can be frustrating when indoors. The danger with the Runner Vision feature is that it can make the game feel too linear, like it is on rails, but as we saw above, by having these signposts all over the place, you at least avoid the frustration of getting lost and dying repeatedly.

Runner Vision is one of the most prominent examples of *Mirror's Edge*'s unique visual style. As you can see from the screenshots, the environments are post-



Nice gloves.

modern in their stark colour schemes. At first, you'll be worried that all you'll do is play about on rooftops, surrounded by the gleaming white buildings and primary coloured Runner Vision objects. Thankfully, DICE have done a good job of varying the design of the locations, while sticking to their 'slabs of colour' template. It really does make for some striking visuals, even when indoors, which makes a refreshing change from most games. What you will also notice is how resolutely clean everything is – even the sewers are devoid of dirt or grime.

The lack of visual clutter means the game will perform really well on mid-range machines, even with a smidge of anti-aliasing chucked in. The slab-like nature of the colours and architectural design makes anti-aliasing particularly important, as crisp edges make the visuals look a lot more impressive. That said, I did get one or two moments of inexplicable system crunching at random times and I couldn't find a way of un-letterboxing the game, but on the whole, things ran as smooth as silk. Having it in letterbox wasn't a hassle either – in fact, I didn't even notice it until somebody pointed it out.

SLO-MO BULLETS

As a first-person game, there are also a few moments when you're forced to fight back against the cops, mainly through hand-to-hand combat and disarming moves. When your crosshair turns blue, you have access to a bullet time-esque slo-mo ability, which makes it much easier to time your attacks and disarm your opponents. If you do succeed in stealing a gun, you can use it to defend yourself for a short period.

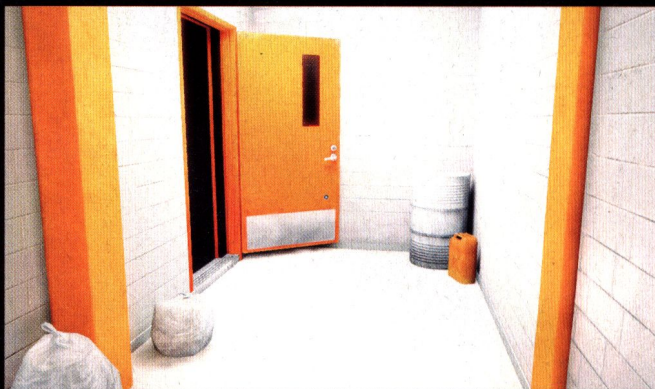
What you can't do is pick weapons up off the floor or obtain extra ammunition for the one you are holding. This might annoy some, but the game wouldn't really work if you were allowed to tote weaponry around all over the place. One of the best things about *Mirror's Edge* is that it makes you not want to kill the police – all you want to do is have it away on your toes. In any case, you'd also miss out on the opportunity to deliver a flying kick to a cop and send him flying off a building.

Once you do get into hand-to-hand



This is one of your fellow runners. You won't care too much about her.

Art Nouveau Games don't have to be brown



STEP 1 *Mirror's Edge* often uses stark colour contrast in order to make a great visual impact on the player.



STEP 2 Some of the interior locations use a '60s kitsch design, with strong colours again contrasting with the whiteness of the exterior.



STEP 3 Objects shaded red can be used to aid your progress, by jumping on it or using it to jump onto something else.



STEP 4 It isn't all primary colours. Go down in the sewers and subway systems and things become more realistic.

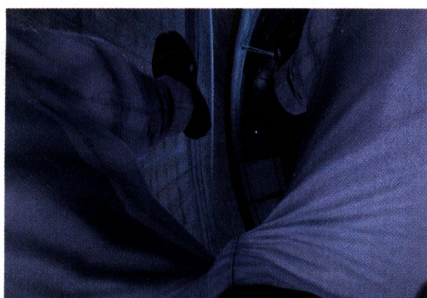
I know Kate wouldn't be capable of something like this. But my Captain's asking some difficult questions and I can't even get in to see her.

"Are you all white, inspector?"

This got a B in GCSE Art.

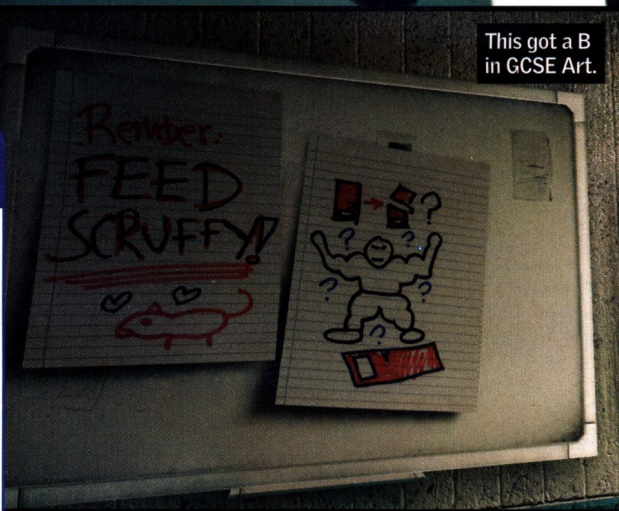
The Crying Game

Faith's alarming secret, discovered first by PC ZONE!



Faith is undoubtedly a strong woman. We wouldn't tell her to get back in the kitchen and whip us up a roast dinner, that's for sure. But, alarmingly, we've come across evidence that might explain why she is so capable of beating up armed police officers and smashing doors open.

Study the picture alongside and you'll be so shocked that it is only a matter of time before you write a letter to the *Daily Mail*, asking why our children have to be exposed to this filth. Or you could just write to any newspaper, whatever.



combat, you can deliver punches to the face, crouch-punches to the groin if you duck or various flying/sliding kicks depending on your momentum. You can even wall-kick by jumping off a wall, spinning and then executing a flying kick. It would have been interesting to see a Riddick-esque system employed, with more context-sensitive moves and actions available, but you usually don't want to get anywhere near the police, so it isn't really something you ever truly miss. Most of the time, combat is actually a bit fiddly and you'll often end up being killed while faffing about trying to pull off a move. Curiously, Faith can also get hit by more bullets than she can take violent shoves from the enemy.

Fortunately, the rest of the game feels perfectly suited to the mouse and keys, which is good news to us PC players.

DICE haven't ignored those of us who have a particular disdain for using pads and *Mirror's Edge* is perfectly playable without one. I'd even go so far as to say it was better, but that's purely a matter of personal choice. What is certain is that movement is smooth and natural and you'll soon be leaping off buildings with

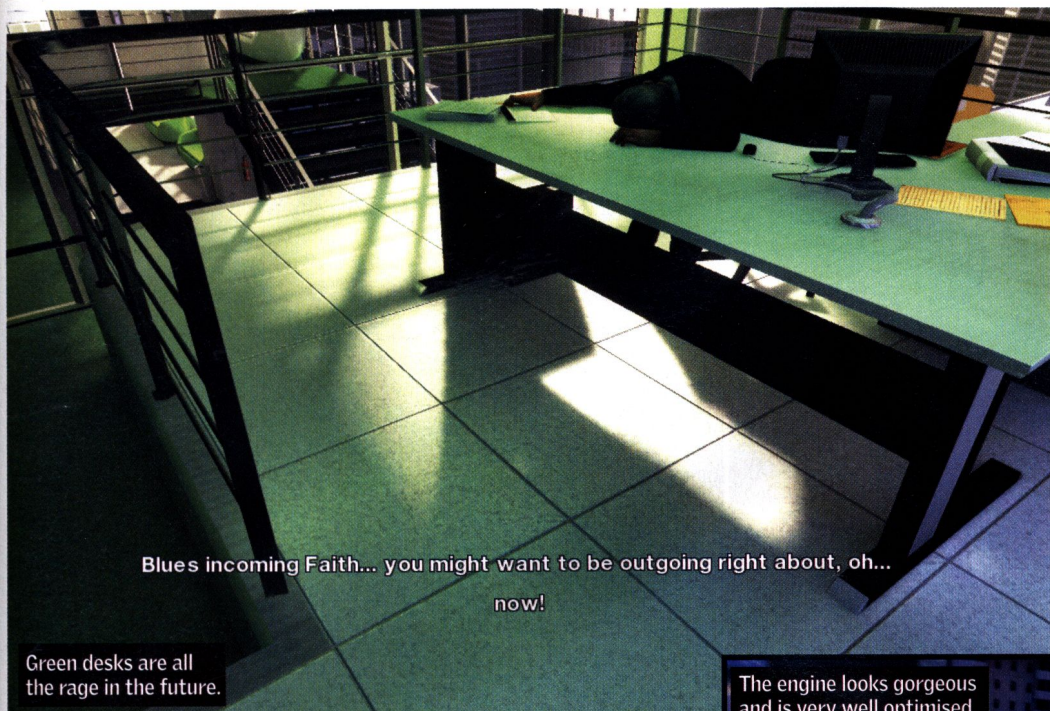
the best of them. You won't necessarily be doing it for very long, though. *Mirror's Edge* is definitely on the short side, with approximately seven hours or so to get through before you reach the end. It's possible to finish the game in two sittings if you really burn through it. Once you've finished the single-player mode, you can

venture online to compete for supremacy on the Time Attack leaderboards, but that's about it. Yes, there are hidden items to collect and secret paths to discover, plus a hard mode that gets unlocked, but you've basically had your lot once you finish it.

Some will doubtless complain about this and may be justified in asking why they spent £25 for a few hours of jumping about. On the other hand, if you doubled the content in *Mirror's Edge*, you'd probably find you were getting bored halfway. At the moment, seven or so hours feels about right. After all, there's only so many times you can jump from building to building before the novelty wears thin. That said, given that DICE are

If you're on something red, you're going the right way.





Blues incoming Faith... you might want to be outgoing right about, oh... now!

Green desks are all the rage in the future.

"Much as I was thrilled by the action, I was equally nonplussed by the lack of emotional connection"

aiming for *Mirror's Edge* to be the first in a trilogy, the more cynical could be forgiven for thinking the game has been artificially shortened to keep the player wanting more from the next game.

The story is also a bit patchy, at least in its execution. While the idea of a squadron of high-flying runners skipping merrily across the rooftops is a good one (although it does get a bit clichéd at times), the game never lets the player get involved with this. You only get one 'normal' mission before Faith's sister is set up and you embark on a series of

"find man, talk to man" tasks. A few regular missions would have been nice to play through before the main story kicked in, just so we could explore the surrounding world a bit more. You don't feel connected to the story as much as you should as you rarely enter the world that gives the plot context. Without context, there's little reason to care what happens to Faith's sister. It's a shame, because, as I say, there's an interesting world out there to explore – we just don't get a chance to do it.

CUT BELOW AVERAGE

The inter-mission cutscenes aren't done very well either, not grabbing the attention of the player or making them eager to reach the next one. What you want to do is get back to the action instead of watching them, which is a sad indictment of the failure to connect the player with the events around them.

The action often feels disconnected from what you're trying to achieve. In one mission, you have to find a person

The engine looks gorgeous and is very well optimised.



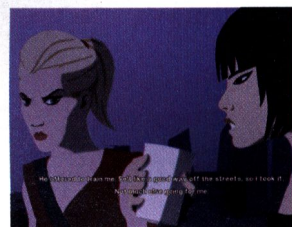
[LEFT SHIFT] to dismount from things like this zipline. Try to land on the soft red object below – it will break your fall

called Jackknife, a former runner. Unfortunately, there isn't really anything differentiating this mission from any other, other than the bit at the end where you chase him. Yes, environments change and you visit new areas, but you could just as easily take the level out of the game, isolate it and you'd have exactly the same experience playing it 'out of context' as you did before. The plot is essentially irrelevant when playing the game and, considering a lot has been made of the story, it's disappointing when you realise it. It's not even the plot that is the problem, more that the action never feels connected to it.

Mirror's Edge is a good game, no question, but sadly it doesn't deserve to be recommended. Much as I was thrilled by the action, I was equally nonplussed by the lack of emotional connection to the characters and the plot. There's a lot of potential here if DICE can put the action into context – perhaps make all the cutscenes in-engine and allow us to fully take in what Faith does rather than have it read to us in staid animated sequences. You won't be

Paint pastel princess

DICE – hire better actors



As a way of getting the plot across to the player, the animated cutscenes fail spectacularly. Regardless of whether you like that sort of animation, the leaden nature of the acting means you care little for the life of Faith and her pals, as they have as much emotional impact as a bacon sandwich. If DICE are looking for ways to improve any sequel, this would be an excellent place to start.

disappointed if you do decide to shell out for *Mirror's Edge*, but neither will you be playing it in a few months. There's a classic game here waiting to get out. Let's hope DICE can unearth it next time.

And no, you can't see Faith's breasts if you look down. **PC7**

PCZONE

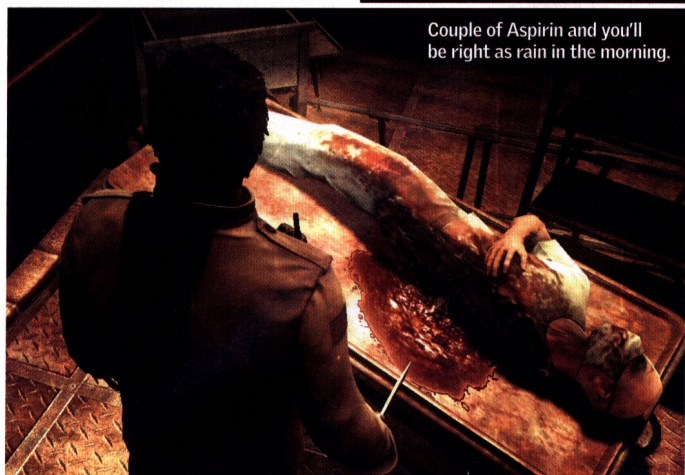
Graphics Unique
Sound Bland voice acting
Multiplayer Online leaderboards

- ✓ Exciting visual style
- ✓ Exhilarating action
- ✓ Linear
- ✗ Linear
- ✗ Annoying checkpoints
- ✗ Cutscenes ineffective

71

Falls short

These guys are harder to take out than regular cops.



Couple of Aspirin and you'll be right as rain in the morning.



So wrong, yet so right...

SILENT HILL: HOMECOMING

Laurence Elliott grabs a steel pipe and heads into town

DEVELOPER Double Helix
PUBLISHER Konami
ETA Out now
WEBSITE snipurl.com/silenthillhome
PRICE £34.99

THE *SILENT HILL* franchise has always been the blossoming antithesis of its survival horror rivals. Where *Resident Evil* has the player desperately foraging every drawer, chest and corpse for ammunition to fire at hordes of flesh-eating creatures, *Silent Hill* immerses the player in a macabre and enigmatic world of suspense, panic and uneasiness filled with nightmarish aberrations and the most flaccid of weapons to fight them with.

All the more disappointing that, with all this horror ancestry behind it, *Silent Hill: Homecoming* rarely does any of these things, and it is half-arsed and arbitrary when it does.

The environments at first seem to convincingly capture the atmospheric and claustrophobic mood that you expect from this franchise, but the illusion is almost immediately exposed by the obvious linear nature of the game. You'll spend a lot of your time wandering aimlessly up and down corridors and streets, fruitlessly trying door after door, only to be continually presented with that blasphemous profanity of action/adventure gaming:

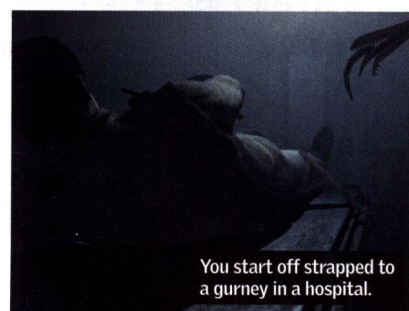
"This lock is broken". You are thus left with the aneurism-inducing task of trying every door to figure out which predetermined path you're supposed to be following.

DODGE A DOG

In terms of combat, the clunky system of the previous games, which limited your capacity for fighting, was an endearing weakness that genuinely added to the sense of desperation and helplessness. This has been somewhat lost in *Homecoming* with the inclusion of a dodge button making a lot of the encounters with skinless dogs and spasmodic faceless nurses a little too easy and formulaic.

Homecoming is more of a *Hostel*-nodding, *Jacob's Ladder*-winking

attempt at emulating the *Silent Hill* movie, rather than the original game. We're left with something that looks like a genuine tribute to its thriller heritage, but its mediocre and clichéd story, as well as linear and more combat-centric gameplay, means that *Homecoming* is too old-fashioned and lacks the originality and tension that made the previous games so enjoyable. **PCZ**



You start off strapped to a gurney in a hospital.

AT A GLANCE...

Another console port of the latest instalment of the morbidly chilling thriller franchise.

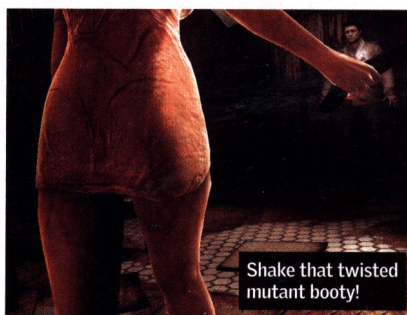
Minimum system requirements: 2.8GHz processor (3.2GHz Vista), 1GB RAM (2GB Vista), and a 256MB graphics card.

HOW IT STACKS

RESIDENT EVIL 2 **90%**

SILENT HILL 3 **72%**

SILENT HILL: HOMECOMING **60%**



Shake that twisted mutant booty!

PCZONE

Graphics **Bleak and monochrome**
Sound **Acceptable, but poorly synced voice acting**
Multiplayer **Nope**

- ✓ Keeps some elements of the original
- ✓ Story-driven
- ✗ Does little new
- ✗ Too obviously linear
- ✗ Not overly scary

60
Silent applause

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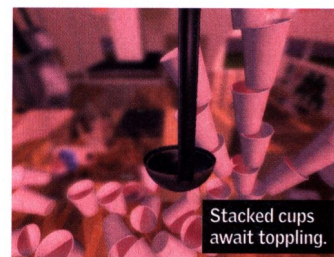
THQ[®]

Warhammer 40,000: Dawn of War 2 -- Copyright © Games Workshop Limited 2009. Dawn of War, the Dawn of War 2 logo, GW, Games Workshop, the Games Workshop logo, Space Marine, 40K, Warhammer, Warhammer 40,000 Device, the Double-headed Eagle device and all associated marks, logos, places, names, creatures, races and race insignia/devices/logos/symbols, vehicles, locations, weapons, units and unit insignia, characters, products, illustrations and images from the Dawn of War 2 game and the Warhammer 40,000 universe are either ®, TM and/or © Games Workshop Ltd 2000-2009, variably registered in the UK and other countries around the world, and used under license. All Rights Reserved. Developed by Relic Entertainment, THQ. Relic Entertainment and their respective logos are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of THQ Inc. All rights reserved. All other trademarks, logos and copyrights are the property of their respective owners. Windows and the Windows Vista Start button are trademarks of the Microsoft group of companies, and 'Games for Windows' and the Windows Vista Start button logo are used under license from Microsoft.

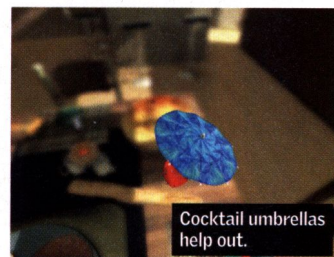
 Games for Windows[®] LIVE



You'll absorb moisture from oranges, and attain a zingy aftertaste.



Stacked cups await toppling.



Cocktail umbrellas help out.



Victory messages are suitably assuring.

I-FLUID

Steve Hogarty thought he'd drop in to your kitchen

DEVELOPER Exkee
PUBLISHER Steam
WEBSITE i-fluid.com
ETA Out now
PRICE \$10 (about £7, inc taxes)

AS A SPECIES, humans are easily bowled over by originality. Just look at what happened when the world encountered *Spore*: otherwise ordinary people would press the game into your face and shriek "GENIUS!" until they collapsed in exhaustion, weeping salty, jubilant tears. The brazen originality of *i-Fluid* is its most alluring

feature: you're a sentient water droplet in a *Micro Machines*-style kitchen.

The game takes place in a world in which orange slices tower over you like citrus skyscrapers. Pencils and paperclips become obstacles, while rulers and books form platforms and bridges. Absorbent surfaces such as paper or biscuits will soak you up, while impermeable surfaces such as varnished wood, plastic and (this

one caused some arguments in the office) pancakes, will afford you safe passage. Moist objects such as fruit will let you rehydrate. The absorbency mechanic works intuitively so rather than signposting materials that'll soak you up, *i-Fluid* makes demands of your common sense.

DAMP FUN

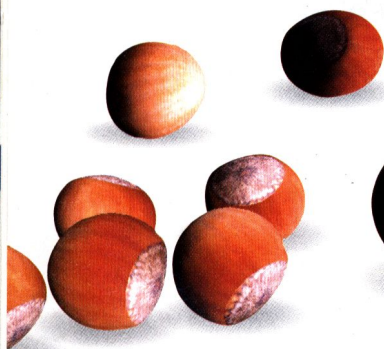
Coming into contact with a sponge will have expected results, although common sense failed me in some situations. Surely untreated wood would soak you right up? Surely the dried seaweed wrapped around sushi wouldn't? *i-Fluid* makes you wish you'd spent more time spitting on random objects around your kitchen.

Powers are bestowed as you progress: the ability to jump, to double-jump, to climb, and then finally to wrap your fluid form about small objects to take control of them. Here's where my only real problem with *i-Fluid* lies. The jump ability precedes dire platforming levels in which you may as well be controlling an anthropomorphic wise-cracking cat, and from there on the game seems to run dry on clever ideas.

This undesirable platforming slant pervades most of the game, a shame considering your little watery being is so

much more worthy than these levels allow for.

The wildly original concept of controlling a drop of water belies any real substance to the game beyond the soaking-up mechanic, and much like the game's protagonist the experience comes across a mite shallow. That said, it's a charming indie outing that's kind on the wallet – you'll feel you've had your £7's worth after the first few levels. **PCZ**



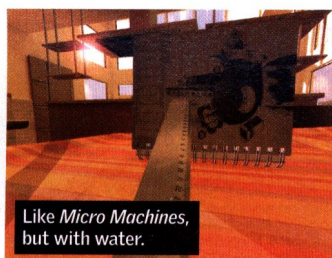
AT A GLANCE...

You're a droplet of water, who for unknown reasons must chase down chequered flags dotted about a physics-powered world.

Minimum system requirements:
1GHz Pentium 4, 512MB RAM, and a Radeon 9700 or equivalent graphics card.

HOW IT STACKS

I-FLUID 65%
MICRO MACHINES V4 57%
PIPEMANIA 52%



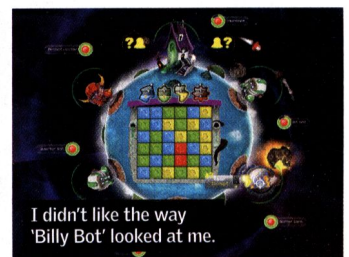
Like *Micro Machines*, but with water.

PCZONE

Graphics Crisp, high-res textures
Sound Odd music
Multiplayer No

- ✓ You're a drop of water
- ✓ Lovely, giant world
- ✓ Clever use of oranges
- ✗ Turns into a platformer...
- ✗ ...and a dull one at that

65
Wet wet wet



PUZZLEGEDDON

Laurence Elliott brawls with blocks



DEVELOPER Pieces Interactive
PUBLISHER Pieces Interactive
WEBSITE puzzlegeddon.com
ETA Out now
PRICE \$14.95 (about £10)

WHEN YOU THINK of match-3 puzzle games, the first two words that spring to mind are 'blood' and 'stone' – it's one of the most over-milked formulas in retro gaming history and has appeared on nearly every platform and Flash gaming website you can think of, and even on Sky TV. Yet even now I still get an odd sense of puerile satisfaction seeing triplets of similarly coloured bubbles or blocks explode and collapse, whilst being rewarded for triggering such comical chaos with twinkly noises and words like 'Combo!' and 'Great!'.

Puzzlegeddon is a refreshing new take on the well-established colour grouping genre. Similar to titles such as *Jewel Quest* and *7 Wonders*, *Puzzlegeddon* sees you horizontally and vertically sliding blocks to match them into groups of five. Unlike the previous games, however, this fills up several colour-respective meters that grant powers that can be used to attack or defend against other AI or human-controlled players. It is here that *Puzzlegeddon* sets itself apart from its bubble-bursting predecessors. This competitive element makes the game strangely addictive, as your goal is not merely to clear the board or get a high

score, but to group enough tiles to fire big fat rockets at your opponents who are occupying other islands on the bright and colourful planet.

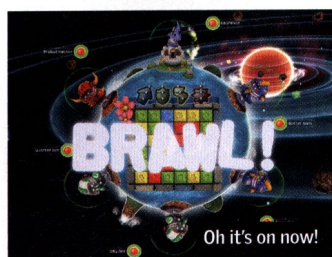
ARMS RACE

This gets better: the more tiles you match, and the bigger the combos you get in the process, and the more powers you can unleash on your foes. The most gratifying moment in the game is when you group enough green blocks to reflect your opponents' own rockets back at them. Other powers include black holes that disrupt your enemies' attempts at block-matching and counter-measures that destroy their incoming rockets.

There are two similarly challenging battle modes that you can play both off and online with up to six other players: the time-based Deathmatch and the last

man standing Battle Royale mode. The solo Poison Peril mode feels a little tacked on, but the slim \$15 price tag makes the other modes worth the money.

As far as puzzlers go, this mix of traditional colour matching and a frantic party game is a fun distraction and definitely worth a bash if you're in the mood for procrastinating, or an extremely long coffee break. **PCZ**



AT A GLANCE...

Multiplayer and weaponry makes an original take on the match-3 puzzler.

Minimum system requirements:
 2GHz processor, 512MB RAM, and a 128MB graphics card.

HOW IT STACKS

PUZZLE QUEST 86%

PUZZLEGEDDON 75%

LUMINES 73%

PCZONE

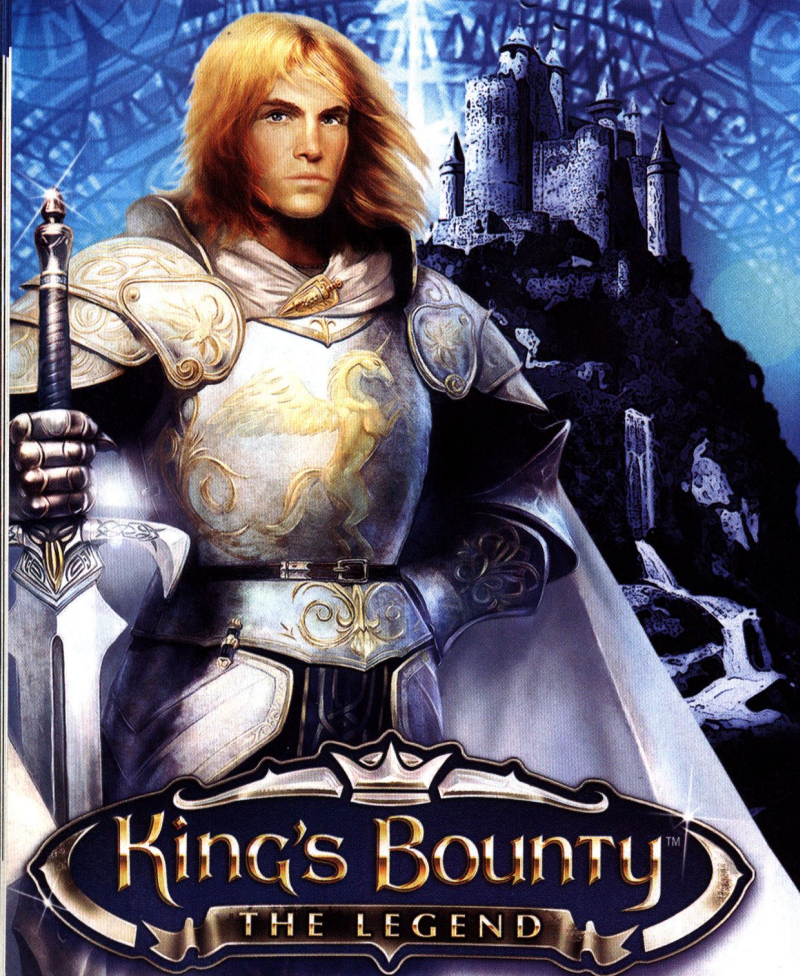
Graphics	Colourful and cartoony
Sound	Basic
Multiplayer	Up to six

- ✓ Classic match-3 gaming
- ✓ Competitive battle modes
- ✓ Colourful graphics
- ✓ Multiplayer
- ✗ Online players are scarce

75

Armageddon, but bright

TURN BASED STRATEGY AND RPG BECOME ONE



King's Bounty™ THE LEGEND

Real-time map exploration
and turn based combat

Embodiment of one of 3 heroes,
upgrade weapons and spells
to become all powerful



- Dynamic RPG adventure and tactical turn-based battles
 - Move freely across the game world
- 3 playable character types: Warrior, Mage and Paladin
- Recruit uniquely skilled creatures to fight in your army
 - Dozens of different battle arenas
 - Unique arenas for castle sieges
 - Traps and bonuses to influence combat
- Ability to start a family, find a wife and have children!

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NOBILIS



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PURE

Muddy, messy, mayhem on bikes

DEVELOPER Black Rock Studio
PUBLISHER Disney Interactive
WEBSITE disney.go.com/disneyinteractivestudios/pure
ETA Out now
PRICE £29.99

Minimum system requirements:
2GHz processor, 1GB RAM, and a 128MB graphics card supporting Shader 3.0.



A SOLITARY WHISTLING accompanies your rocketing descent towards the ground. Trying to play the air guitar whilst standing on your handle bars, you notice the mud is approaching far more rapidly than you'd calculated. You hold your breath and wince as you watch your mangled body strike the race track at lethal speed, get thrown from your quad bike and subsequently trampled like a flimsy ragdoll. But you don't care; all your bones are miraculously still intact, and so with newly acquired Conan-levels of adrenaline you kick your ATV back into gear, zooming off towards the next ludicrous, physics-defying jump in a furious splatter of mud.

This is the general template that Black Rock's *Pure* follows – a trick-heavy, high-jumping dirt racer on par

with *SSX* or the PlayStation 3's *Motorstorm*. The sweeping, gratuitous landscapes are graphically impressive and make the 30-odd tracks a joy to ride and familiarise yourself with. Listening to Pendulum whilst flying through the air at 150ft above mountainous Thailand, doing over-the-top things that aren't be physically possible is sometimes breathtaking, even if you then stack it and land face first in the mud at 50mph.

Infuriating loading times are a major issue. The 5:33 wait (yeah, seriously) I encountered at one point had me certain I'd crashed the PC. However, if you've got the patience of a sedated Ghandi and a gamepad to replace the fiddly keyboard controls, then *Pure* is a fun, easy to pick up and genuinely addictive racer.

Laurence Elliott



A gratuitous mountainscape. Beautiful, ain't it?

PCZONE
68
Fast and frantic



STRONG BAD EPISODE 5: 8-BIT IS ENOUGH

2D or not 2D? That is the question

DEVELOPER TellTale Games
PUBLISHER TellTale Games
WEBSITE telltalegames.com
ETA Out now
PRICE \$35 (about £24 + tax) or \$8.95 (about £5 + tax)

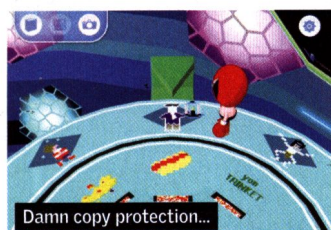
Minimum system requirements:
1.5GHz processor, 256MB RAM, and
a 32MB video card.

THE FINAL *Strong Bad* episode continues on after the end of *Dangeresque 3*, which saw dimensions tear apart and reality and videogames become mixed.

References to games like *Mega Man*, *Doom* and *Super Mario World* abound in *Episode 5*, with several new videogame locations sporting old-school graphics. Telltale clearly knows how to please their audience of videogame geeks.

This is helped by some of the most polished and laugh-out-loud writing that Telltale, or any developer, have made for a game since LucasArts in the '90s. Most of the joy comes from Homestar's inclusion as a Help Assistant, and him and Strong Bad arguing.

There's one complaint with this game: *Episode 5* is easy. The puzzles'

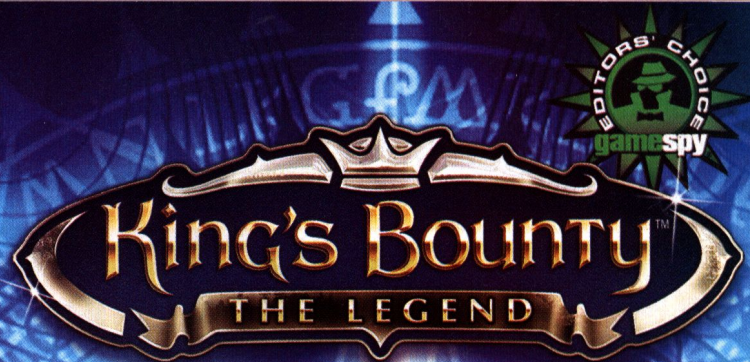
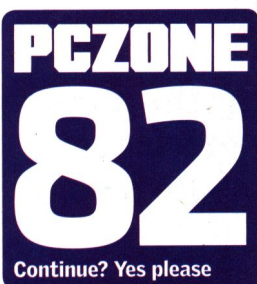
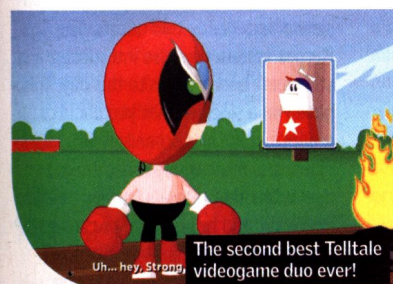


solutions flow so naturally, you're more likely to overlook something than be challenged. Still, *Episode 4* was a fun adventure, and despite the straightforward puzzles, this is the same. Except the writing is far funnier.

There is one other problem with *Episode 5*. Well, it's more of a "WTF?". You can't buy *Episode 5* on its own – you have to get the entire season which costs \$35. But if you've got *Episodes 1-4*, you can get *Episode 5* for free. And if you've bought less than four episodes, you'll be able to buy a Season Pass for the cost of one episode (\$8.95).

Despite this wacky pricing thing, we'd freely give Telltale another coin to continue Strong Bad's adventures – whether it was in 8-bit or glorious 3D.

Chris Capel



EDITOR'S CHOICE!

91%

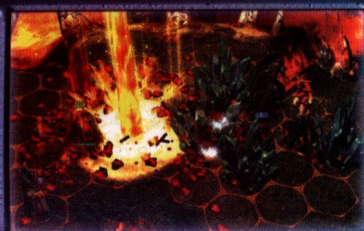
"YOU SIMPLY MUST TRY THIS GAME"
- Worth Playing



** Collector pack also available

The perfect mix of
TBS and RPG

Colossal monsters, fantasy units,
awesome abilities and Rage Powers



"AN INCREDIBLY DEEP AND
ENJOYABLE STRATEGIC EXPERIENCE"

90%

game spy

"THE GAME I'VE
ENJOYED THE MOST THIS YEAR,
BY A COMFORTABLE MARGIN"

88%

PC GAMER

ON SALE NOW
AVAILABLE FROM

PLAY.COM

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STATE OF PLAY

Developers tinker with their games after their release. With this in mind, every month we cast fresh eyes on the changes seen in long-running games...



Midgets will do anything for a pair of tits.

THIS MONTH... GUILD WARS

PUBLISHER NCsoft Games WEBSITE eu.guildwars.com
PRICE £34.99 (Complete Edition)

IS *GUILD WARS* even an MMO? Probably not, but in this zany world where we have to give everything a genre, it's naturally compared to *World of Warcraft* and *EverQuest*. In reality, *Guild Wars* – with its lack of a subscription fee and its expansion releases – has been much more like a mishmash of the latter days of *EverQuest*, *Diablo II* and a dash of *Unreal Tournament*. Then again, a chunk of additional content has been focused on telling the intricate storylines that shape *Guild Wars'* world, and it's here where the game has changed the most. The saga's ending was remarkably satisfyingly for a genre that has a strong series of narrative failures.

Bizarrely, all of *Guild Wars'* expansions, bar *Eye of the North*, were playable on their own – but considering

that you can buy them all for £35, this is somewhat of a moot point. *Factions*, the first expansion, scored 78% with us on release (issue 169). It brought in two new professions: the Assassin and the Ritualist. The former is (as in every other game involving rogues) a high-damage class that stabs things, but can't use armour; the latter is a healer-meets necromancer that summons pets with short lifespans that thrash wildly at the enemy. These additions, amongst various tweaks and changes the missions, set the

"Guild Wars is all about the gaming experience and that experience is one of absolute pleasure from moment to moment"

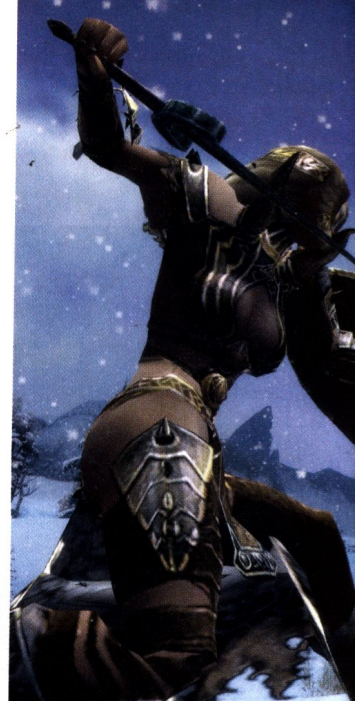
94% – PC ZONE #156, July 2005

Golems run on a mixture of snot and pee.



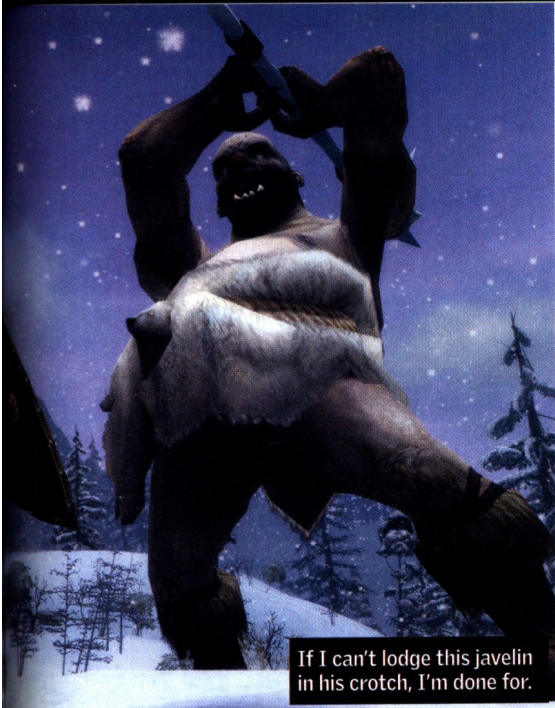
scene for how *Guild Wars* shaped up since 2006. The most interesting aspect was the PvP/PvE Factions system, that let players side with the Kurzick or Luxon, and complete quests or participate in Alliance events (groups of guilds sided with a faction). Players could spend faction points on items and skills specific to each faction – a concept that led to a lot of inter-faction trading and grinding. I suppose it is an MMO, then.

The third part of the Prophecies saga, *Nightfall*, scored 89% in issue 176 – a remarkably high mark for an expansion. This was because ArenaNet hit their groove, and made *Guild Wars* about fun, addictive dungeon crawls (well, forest, mine, temple and dungeon crawls) rather than trying to overcomplicate things. This meant that the Prophecies story was brought to an end superbly, with a slew of excellently told quests. The Heroes system was also introduced, and still hasn't been beaten to this day. This gave you a sidekick that you could order around, equip, and organise with upgrades. You can even send them to duel with other player's heroes, a bit like *Pokémon*, and bring them into some PvP arenas with you. The two new professions – the Paragon (a melee



Steam version 0.1.





If I can't lodge this javelin in his crotch, I'm done for.



Guild Wars' art direction is fantastic...



The fertile lands of Nightfall.

character that can group-buff) and the Dervish (another damage class, that uses a scythe) – were fun to play, but the highlight was rushing into battle with a team of NPC minions.

Eye of the North was the most traditional expansion for *Guild Wars*, and the first that required one of the other games to play. Rather than add a slew of professions and an over-arching storyline, *The Eye of the North* finished the *Prophecies* saga, as well as giving players more dungeon crawls. Rather than make its own separate tale, it told a series of acts that continued where *Prophecies* left off, concluding with a large-scale battle that ending the *Guild Wars* storyline (at least, according to ArenaNet). The dungeon crawls were a lot of fun, and far more traditional than in other MMOs; with keys, bosses, chests and loot to be had for all at the end – a refreshing, no-bullshit approach that fits well into *Guild Wars*' easy-going levelling curve.

The truth of the matter is that *Guild Wars* is not long for this world. As we

go to press, it's approaching the time that we're going to start to see more about *Guild Wars 2*, a game that ArenaNet will probably use to shut down the original. This is good and bad news, considering how many have invested in multiple characters in *Guild Wars*, but it's the natural way of things in the non-subscription based world. They've already laid the ground in *Eye of the North* for players to transfer something – we don't know what – to *Guild Wars 2*, where Hall of Monuments will also reside.

This is a strange time to play this game, but one that's a win-win situation. Even a few hours dipping in and out of the professions and races will be rewarded with fun quests and some of the more cerebral MMO groupers around. We still enjoy *Guild Wars*, and so should you.



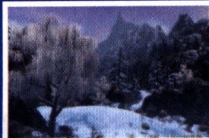
...well, when they don't try and make a fantasy Lemmy.

VERDICT

Don't expect it to mature with age or blow your socks off with its intricate MMO structures and you'll find that *Guild Wars* has blossomed into a cheap and addictive dungeon crawl toolbox.

Ed Zitron

THE STORY SO FAR... GUILD YORE HOW GUILD WARS HAS PROGRESSED IN ONE COLUMN



2000 BACK OF THE ARENANET

ArenaNet is founded by former Blizzard employees who decided to make their own addictive Nancy Boy Wizard Simulator.

2005 PROPHECISE THIS

Guild Wars: Prophecies is released in a confused market aroused by *World of Warcraft*, flashing a bit of thigh with its graphics engine and effectively nip-slipping by offering subscription-free MMO gaming to the masses.

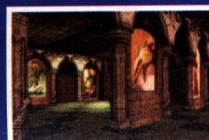


2006 FACTION ENGINE

Guild Wars: Factions appears, letting players side with two distinct sides with different rewards, and make alliances with up to nine other guilds. The expansion also added two more professions.

2006 NIGHTY NIGHT

Players enter the continent of Elona in the second *Guild Wars* expansion, to stop a crazed general summoning a god to end the world. If we had a pound for every time this happened, we'd be a pound richer.



2007 IT'S COLD OUTSIDE

Eye of the North is released, with 18 dungeons, 150 new skills, and – in what some called a blatant advertisement for the upcoming *Guild Wars 2* – the Hall of Monuments.



2008 THE COAST WITH THE MOST

ArenaNet violently shatters under the weight of the newly created NC West, controlled by ArenaNet owners NCsoft. Jeff Strain and Patrick Wyatt would leave to found this company, leaving Mike O'Brien to create *Guild Wars 2* alone.

BUDGET

David Brown gets splinters in his hands from scraping the budget barrel

MEDIEVAL II: TOTAL WAR

PUBLISHER SEGA WEBSITE totalwar.com PRICE £9.99

WITH *EMPIRE* - ITS young, more attractive relative - ready to drop anchor in early February, *Medieval II: Total War* has had its price slashed, presumably in order to entice holdouts who weren't bothered with revisiting post-Battle of Hastings Europe. Shame on you if this was the case.

Medieval II is easily as good as *Rome: Total War* and, in some ways, surpasses it by a country mile. The battles feel more epic and sprawling, the campaign is more engaging and, graphically, things are still damn sweet. Things weren't all rosy though when the game was first launched with bugs and the campaign AI being dumber than a

village idiots' convention. Thankfully, most of these issues have been fixed through patches.

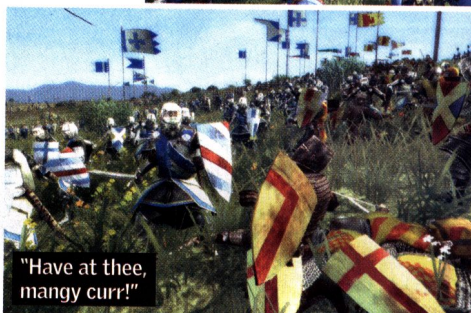
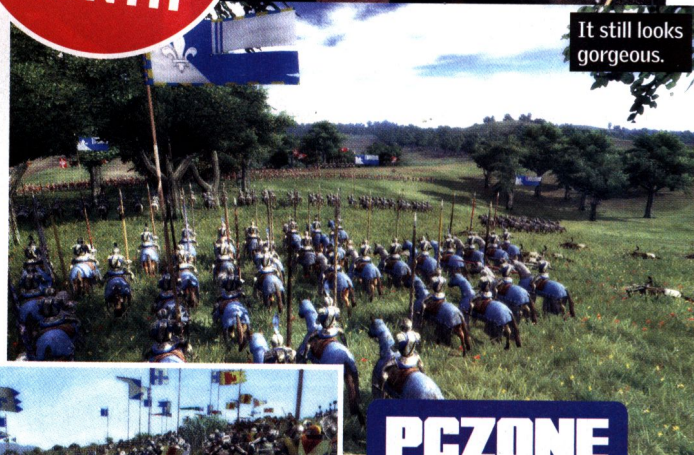
If you also happen to spot a copy the *Kingdoms* expansion lying around (it can be had for £6 online), you've got potentially hundreds of hours of gameplay. And there's a large modding community who offer plenty of unofficial expanded content.

As we wait for *Empire* to arrive *Medieval II* is worth £10, especially if you don't relish the idea of gunpowder combat.

**BUDGET
GAME
OF THE
MONTH**



It still looks gorgeous.



"Have at thee, mangy curr!"

**PCZONE
88**
Authentically epic warfare

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



Dave bought cheap chicken wraps at Marks & Spencers.
Saving: **£20**



Ali walked to work, avoiding the disgusting oily suit-people on the Jubilee line.
Saving: **£6 a day**

Steve 'accidentally' receiving Ed's LOVEFILM subscription.
Saving: **£30**



HISTORY CHANNEL: GREAT BATTLES OF ROME

PUBLISHER Focus Multimedia WEBSITE focusmm.co.uk PRICE £9.99

GREAT BATTLES WAS only £20 when Richie Shoemaker reviewed it back in issue 183, but it hasn't got any better as a budget release. Essentially a tribute to the infinitely superior *Total War* series, *History Channel: Great Battles of Rome* fails to capture the charm and sense of epic conflict that the rival franchise exudes.

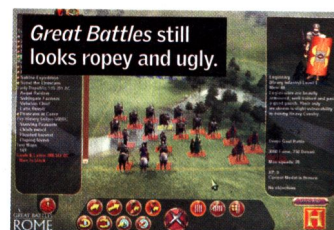
Great Battles gives you such gameplay highlights as being forced to wait for your order bar to recharge each time you give instructions to your units. It says a lot when the best parts of the game are before and after the supposed 'great battles' themselves. The pre- and post-conflict sequences offer a much

more interesting experience than that contained within the, what should be, exciting parts.

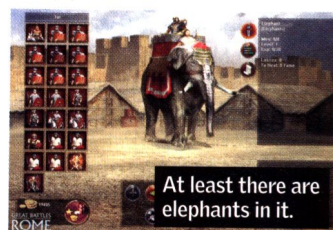
Graphically, things haven't aged well at all, with larger scale battles seeing your highly trained soldiers blurring into one big blob of colour as they pile into the enemy.

Perhaps the next game in the series (yes, there'll be others, it seems) will attempt to make the battles worthwhile. But we should be honest: if you want to get your gladius dirty, get *Rome: Total War* instead, as there's just no reason to buy this attempt at a deep RTS.

**PCZONE
19**



Great Battles still looks ropery and ugly.



At least there are elephants in it.

MEDAL OF HONOUR: PACIFIC ASSAULT

PUBLISHER Mastertronic WEBSITE mastertronic.com PRICE £9.99



A LOT OF water has passed under the bridge since *Pacific Assault* first graced our screens with its bugs, irritating characters and lack of any emotional impact. Nowadays, we've got more *Call of Duty* games than we can shake a stick grenade at, with *Call of Duty: World at War* taking *Pacific Assault*'s key selling point and doing it a lot better.

Pacific Assault reminds us why we're bored with WWII games: ludicrous numbers of stationary gun missions, American soldiers, the same missions again and again and again... If you've suffered a form of brain injury that has wiped your memory of playing too many WWII FPS games, then *Pacific Assault* provides a generic introduction to the genre. If you haven't, buy *World at War*.

PCZONE
60

BIRTH OF AMERICA

PUBLISHER Steam WEBSITE steampowered.com PRICE \$14.99 (£10 + tax)

BIRTH OF AMERICA is bewilderingly accurate. So much so that all but the most dedicated individuals will find themselves weeping tears of confusion as they struggle to find the End Turn button. If you think people who play *Europa Universalis* games are posers, you'll love *Birth of America*. If you think graphics are for sissies, playing *Birth of America* will be like meeting a beautiful girl who obsessively adores hardcore strategy games as much as you.

If you don't, you'll find *Birth of America* impenetrable and dull.

PCZONE
63



And the rest...

The other cheap releases out now



EIDOS COLLECTOR PACK
\$99.99 (£68 + tax), Steam
Some great Eidos games (*Hitman: Blood Money*, *Thief: Deadly Shadows*) and some shite ones.

PCZONE
73



THQ COLLECTOR PACK
\$99.99 (£68 + tax), Steam
Unlike the Eidos Pack there are no real duds here, apart from *Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights*.

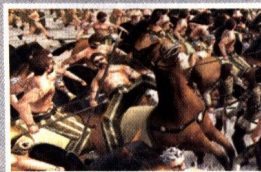
PCZONE
83



VALVE COMPLETE PACK
\$99.99 (£68 + tax), Steam
Every Valve game released on Steam, including *Left 4 Dead*. A whole lot of Valve lovin' for £70.

PCZONE
90

PCZONE Top 5 budget games



ROME: TOTAL WAR - GOLD EDITION II

PRICE £15, Sega

This is huge-scale RTS warfare at its very finest. Imagine thousands of people hacking each other to shit and back.



FAR CRY

PRICE £5, Sold Out

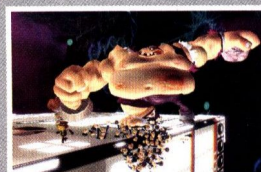
With *Far Cry 2* out it's time for the rock-hard original to take the spotlight again. The second-best FPS ever made.



THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND

PRICE £5, Mastertronic

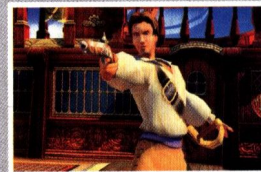
If RPG is your favourite genre, you could do a lot worse (or, in *Oblivion*'s case, slightly worse) than this epic, sprawling classic.



PSYCHONAUTS

PRICE £10, Steam

Here's Tim Schafer's psychological platform adventure. You won't have more fun until *Brütal Legend* comes out. If it ever does.



SID MEIER'S PIRATES!

PRICE £5, Sold Out

That's all the genres covered, isn't it? RTS, FPS, RPG, platformer and pirate. Yep, that's really everything.

BUYER'S GUIDE

Don't stop buying them until they're bought



PCZONE Top 5 OLD & SCARY GAMES

- 1 SYSTEM SHOCK 2**
(Chronenbergian sci-fi body horror)
- 2 DARK SEED**
(Gigerian haunted house)
- 3 THE LEGACY: REALM OF TERROR**
(Lovecraftian haunted house)
- 4 ALONE IN THE DARK**
(Lovecraftian haunted house v2.0)
- 5 SHADOW OF THE COMET**
(Lovecraftian haunted town)



PCZONE Top 5 INSECT-BASED GAMES

- 1 SIMANT**
("The Electronic Ant Colony")
- 2 IMPOSSIBLE CREATURES INSECT INVASION**
(Make up your own bugs)
- 3 IT CAME FROM THE DESERT**
(Classic giant ant RTS)
- 4 A.I. WARS: THE INSECT MIND**
(Battle robotic insects)
- 5 CENTIPEDE**
(OK, it's not an insect. But we ran out)



PCZONE Top 5 SIDEKICKS WE ADORE

- 1 DOGMEAT**
(Fallout 1, 2 and 3)
- 2 ZOXY**
(Left 4 Dead)
- 3 MINSC**
(Baldur's Gate series)
- 4 JOEY**
(Beneath a Steel Sky)
- 5 MAX**
(Sam & Max)



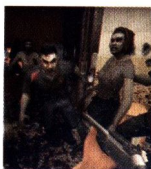
FPS

Must buy!



HALF-LIFE 2 + EPISODES
PCZ Issues: 148 (97%), 170 (91%), 187 (82%)

Excelling in terms of action, storyline, emotion and ingenious set pieces, the continuing adventures of Gordon Freeman have yet to be equalled. Yes, a moderate amount of the action has faded through repetition by the time the episodes kick in, but with its Combine-defying freedom fighting, this is still the most finely crafted shooter experience ever released on PC. Gordon's alive, and long may he remain so.



LEFT 4 DEAD
PCZ Issue: 202 - 93%

The only thing the PCZ staff enjoys more than shooting zombies is shooting zombies as a team. And that's what *L4D* has - endless killing of mindlessly murderous plague victims, while you chortle and scream with your buddies.



TEAM FORTRESS 2
PCZ Issue: 187 - 93%

Beautifully balanced and engaging, Valve's update of the classic mod is a triumph, bringing together everything that's good about online shooters and topping it all off with superb animation that rivals the best Pixar's films.



CRYSIS WARHEAD
PCZ Issue: 199 - 92%

The standalone expansion may only take a few hours to complete, but it reins in the harsh system demands of the original, and contains a few moments of fantastic action storytelling, and improved alien AI.



FAR CRY 2
PCZ Issue: 201 - 90%

A triumph of non-linear gameplay, *Far Cry 2* offers an astounding chunk of Africa in which to play with guns, flames and explosions. The residents are too tenacious, but in a world this well-realised, you won't care.



CALL OF DUTY 4: MODERN WARFARE
PCZ Issue: 188 - 89%

Big, brash and extremely loud, Infinity Ward's latest ultra-intense shooter offers some strikingly original military action. With superb multiplayer in tow, it's often an utter delight to play.



BIOSHOCK
PCZ Issue: 185 - 96%

The psion of *System Shock 2*, *BioShock* will suck you right into its intricate, art deco world. A destroyed Utopia under the sea, terrifying characters and emergent combat make this an unmissable experience.

Strategy

Must buy!



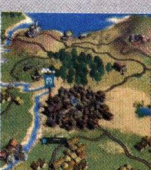
COMPANY OF HEROES
PCZ Issue: 173 - 93%

Despite hailing from that most overpopulated of genres, the WWII RTS, *Company of Heroes* is still number one as a testament to how utterly refined and slick it is. Relic have taken the best bits from strategy games and stripped out the crap, leaving you with a game that's fun, intelligent, accessible, taxing, tactical and exciting. And with so many positives in one sentence, you know it must be good.



WORLD IN CONFLICT
PCZ Issue: 186 - 92%

A stunning RTS set at the height of the Cold War, offering innovative online play, a solid single-player campaign, jaw-dropping graphics and the best nuclear blast you've seen.



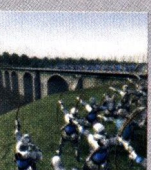
CIVILIZATION IV
PCZ Issue: 162 - 92%

A Buyer's Guide without a *Civ* game would be a sorry place, and the latest version is the greatest yet. Now with added warmongering and diplomacy thanks to the expansion packs.



SINS OF A SOLAR EMPIRE
PCZ Issue: 193 - 91%

This startling beauty came from nowhere, and quickly converted us from indifferent idiots into grateful idiots by surprising us with accessible complexity.



MEDIEVAL II: TOTAL WAR
PCZ Issue: 175 - 91%

A blend of manic plotting on the strategic map and cheering with delight as your warriors collide spectacularly with your opponents' armies. Middle Ages war fun.



RISE OF NATIONS: RISE OF LEGENDS
PCZ Issue: 168 - 91%

Takes the great gameplay of *RON*, improves on it with elements from *Civ IV* and wraps the whole lot in a gorgeous sci-fi setting. An RTS bursting with innovation.



SUPREME COMMANDER
PCZ Issue: 179 - 88%

Huge battles of thousands of air, sea and land units? Giant stompy robots and a superb tactical map? One of the most original RTS titles around? Check, check and check.

Action/Adventure

Must buy!



GRAND THEFT AUTO IV
PCZ Issue: 203 - 91%

We PC users have had to wait a while before we could return to Liberty City with Niko Belic, but the delay has been worth it. This version of *GTA4* adds graphics that are a cut above those on consoles, expanded multiplayer modes, and an exclusive video editor to Liberty City's free-roaming world and the sure-to-be classic storyline of Belic's American dream becoming an American nightmare.



MAX PAYNE 2: THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE
PCZ Issue: 136 - 93%

Showing its wrinkles a bit now, but it shows how to do bullet-time right. Noirish tone, a glowering voice-over and remarkable gun action mean that Payne is still a force to contend with.



GEARS OF WAR
PCZ Issue: 188 - 90%

GOW's tactical battles and toughness make you fear the bullets flying around you. With the climatic Brumak battle, the PC has the best version of this excellent shooter. Shame we'll never see *GOW2*.



FAHRENHEIT
PCZ Issue: 159 - 90%

Murder most foul, and you're the killer. Boasts a twisting, turning, brilliantly told story, featuring multiple character control, split-screen tension, branching scenes and several endings. From the brains behind *The Nomad Soul*.



BUDGET

PSYCHONAUTS
PCZ Issue: 156 - 90%

Clever, witty, impeccably detailed and absolutely off its rocker - *Psychonauts* is proof that the anarchic edge of LucasArts hasn't completely left us. A slightly flawed game in some respects, but still a dazzling feat.



BUDGET

BEYOND GOOD & EVIL
PCZ Issue: 138 - 89%

We heap praise on this game on a monthly basis, but it's for a reason. Michel Ancel's superb journey through the strange land of Hillys is nothing short of storytelling magic. It's cheap now, so go out and buy it.



DEVIL MAY CRY 4
PCZ Issue: 197 - 82%

Best played on a pad - but entirely comfortable on the keyboard - this is long hours of insane hack 'n' slash action and doolally cutscenes. Expect huge boss fights and an exhilarating slog through massive crowds of demons.

MMOs

Must buy!



WORLD OF WARCRAFT
PCZ Issue: 152 - 95%
Blizzard's recreation of Azeroth doesn't disappoint. Beautiful to watch, absorbing to play and with more content than you can shake a magic stick at.



LOTR ONLINE
PCZ Issue: 182 - 87%
A near-perfect recreation of Tolkien's tales, with solid combat and engaging plots, in a tasty MMO bundle. Meet Gandalf! Play as a hobbit or a spider! Middle-earth awaits...



WARHAMMER ONLINE
PCZ Issue: 200 - 92%
Mythic slips *Warhammer* into their realm vs realm template. Even the most reluctant PvPer will launch themselves into huge open warfare scenarios. Brilliant.



GUILD WARS
PCZ Issue: 156 - 94%
How to make a gaming accessible to the masses. A lot of thought has been applied, and there are no subscription fees. Newbies can feel at home, thanks to a totally skills-based setup.



EVE ONLINE
PCZ Issue: 130 - 88%
Elite online has been a long-held fantasy, and this space sim has come the closest yet to making it a reality. A slow pace belies the options on offer, from mining to trading to piracy.

Sport



FOOTBALL MANAGER 2009
PCZ Issue: 202 - 90%
Another season passes and another *Football Manager* appears. This time a 3D match engine and dealing with PRs and the media are new to this addictive football manager sim.



PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2008
PCZ Issue: 188 - 87%
Still in a different league to *FIFA*, *PES* lacks the official stamp but offers amazingly lifelike football. Whether it's end-to-end stuff or a nil-nil slog, it's always compelling.



NBA 2K9
PCZ Issue: 203 - 87%
Basketball will never be as popular as football in the sports games stakes, but *NBA 2K9* deserves to be played. This is a superb recreation of America's second-favourite sport that won't disappoint on any front.



FIFA 08
PCZ Issue: 188 - 80%
A veritable compendium of all that is football, and a good sports game too, the recent *FIFA* still lags behind *PES*, but benefits from layers of EA spit and polish. A decent variant of the beautiful game.



NHL 08
PCZ Issue: 187 - 80%
Bringing the American sport we get (it's like *Speedball*) to our PCs, the latest *NHL* is chock-full of large Canadians knocking seven bells out of each other. Exciting, fast, smooth and exhilarating.

Simulation

BUDGET



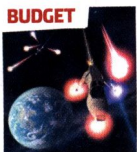
X3: REUNION
PCZ Issue: 162 - 92%
Finally, a space sim to better *X3: The Threat*, and it just happens to be the sequel. This is possibly the best-looking game ever to appear on a PC. Oh, and it plays pretty well to boot. Why not get reunited?



IL-2 STURMOVIK: FORGOTTEN BATTLES
PCZ Issue: 128 - 92%
While flight sims are getting rarer and rarer, at least the quality remains high. None are more impressive than this ultra-classy WWII combat sim. Chocks away, comrade!



MICROSOFT FLIGHT SIMULATOR X
PCZ Issue: 175 - 89%
This latest iteration in the *Microsoft Flight Sim* series is the biggest since they started using actual polygons. What's more, the visuals may just sear your eyeballs.



FREELANCER
PCZ Issue: 128 - 84%
If *X3* is too slow for you, *Freelancer* should fit the bill. Plenty of trading, bounty-hunting and space piracy, but with the emphasis on action rather than realism. Space has never been this much fun.



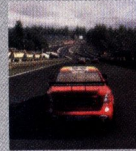
SILENT HUNTER 4: WOLVES OF THE PACIFIC
PCZ Issue: 181 - 82%
If a life beneath the waves tickles your fancy, then this submarine simulator fits the bill. Tactics, torpedoes, sonar and sailors combine to make the ultimate ship-sinker.

Driving/Racing

Must buy!



GTR2
PCZ Issue: 173 - 92%
Pick up this scarily realistic driving sim and race the car of your dreams. It comes with an improved driving model, new game modes and many other improvements.



RACE DRIVER: GRID
PCZ Issue: 195 - 88%
Codemasters moves the series from its historical simulation roots, strips off the *TOCA* and creates a Hollywood-realistic game with plenty of play modes and global challenges.



LIVE FOR SPEED
PCZ Issue: 158 - 90%
Online racing at its best, *LFS* has realistic handling, hilarious crashes and a racing community second to none. A remarkable achievement by such a small and talented team.



COLIN MCRÆ: DIRT
PCZ Issue: 183 - 88%
This time the rallying legend treats us to a host of other off-road events, an excitable Travis Pastrana and some of the best-looking graphics to grace any driving game on PC.



GT LEGENDS
PCZ Issue: 161 - 92%
While *GTR* takes care of modern-day racing, *GT Legends*, a successor to *Grand Prix Legends*, does the business for historical driving. It's like the swinging '60s never ended.

Oddball

Must buy!



SPORE
PCZ Issue: 199 - 95%
This is four charming mini-games and an excellent space strategy game, glued together with a bunch of creation kits. It's also a beautiful one-off that is so well-realised that you should experience it yourself.



WORLD OF GOO
PCZ Issue: 201 - 90%
A stroke of indie genius, *World of Goo* is a puzzler in which you erect fantastic goo-based structures across a myriad of unique and intriguing levels. Novel at every turn, *World of Goo* is simply irresistible.



PORTAL
PCZ Issue: 187 - 89%
Ingenious and absurdly funny, *Portal* is a four-hour slice of perfect puzzles and discovery. Hurling yourself through floors and walls sounds odd, but modern games are rarely more delightful.



GARRY'S MOD
PCZ Issue: 179 - 88%
The god game-like *Garry's Mod* gives you the tools to create almost anything you can think of in the Source engine, from working robots to saucy ragdoll JPEGS. Fun and easy to use, try it out and see for yourself.



VIVA PIÑATA
PCZ Issue: 190 - 85%
Madder than a mercury-blooded clown, *Viva Piñata* looks simple but is a ridiculously addictive animal-raising sandbox game. Don't be put off by the kiddo-looking graphics - it's a keeper.

Role-playing games

Must buy!



THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION
PCZ Issue: 167 - 95%
Oblivion's sublime graphics, intuitive character-creation and massive freeform gameplay put paid to the myth that you have to own a beard to enjoy RPGs.



MASS EFFECT
PCZ Issue: 195 - 92%
Possibly BioWare's best game since *KOTOR*, with a new combat system that makes it feel a bit less RPG. Great story, fine action, brilliant dialogue and space sex - it's a modern must.



THE WITCHER
PCZ Issue: 188 - 88%
Adult and intelligent, the world of *The Witcher* is as fascinating as it is violent and corrupt. With moral bite and an epic story, this has come out of nowhere to revive an ailing genre.



THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND
PCZ Issue: 116 - 94%
This could be the most intimidating, yet wonderful, game we've ever played - the breadth and depth of *Morrowind* remains a remarkable achievement.



DEUS EX
PCZ Issue: 93 - 94%
This is the benchmark in FPS RPGs. A twisting plot, exciting freeform levels and some moments of pure exhilaration and drama ensure *Deus Ex* remains the alpha male of gaming.

INCOMING!

All approximate monthly dates are correct at the time of going to press

February

F.E.A.R. 2: PROJECT ORIGIN
THE GODFATHER II
THE SIMS 3
STREET FIGHTER IV
WARHAMMER 40,000: DAWN OF WAR II

WARNER BROS
EA
EA
CAPCOM
THQ

March

ARMED ASSAULT II
COMPANY OF HEROES: TALES OF VALOR
EMPIRE: TOTAL WAR
MIRROR'S EDGE
OPERATION FLASHPOINT 2: DRAGON RISING
SAINTS ROW 2
VELVET ASSASSIN
WHITE GOLD

505 GAMES
THQ
SEGA
EA
CODEMASTERS
THQ
GAMECOCK
DEEP SHADOWS

TBC

ALAN WAKE
ALPHA PROTOCOL
BATMAN ARKHAM ASYLUM
BURNOUT PARADISE
CHAMPIONS ONLINE
DC UNIVERSE ONLINE
DEUS EX 3
DIABLO III
DRAGON AGE: ORIGINS
MAFIA II
METRO 2033
STARCraft II (three of them)
STAR TREK ONLINE
STAR WARS: THE OLD REPUBLIC

MICROSOFT
SEGA
WARNER BROS
EA
2K GAMES
SONY ONLINE
EIDOS
BLIZZARD
EA
2K GAMES
THQ
BLIZZARD
TBA
EA / LUCASARTS

**SIGN UP
TODAY** AND BE
ENTERED INTO
THIS **GREAT**
COMPETITION

Game 4-a-date

Love & Prizes!



Want to get your hands on a brand new next-generation console and a range of blockbusting games to go with it? Well Game 4 A Date is offering you the chance to do just that and find love at the very same time! Now tell us, where else in the world can you do this? **Game 4 A Date**, that's where!

Game 4 A Date is an online dating site that wants to connect you with people just as passionate about games as you are. It doesn't need to be a confusing and cumbersome process. It will only take a short while for you to set up your profile by logging on to **www.game4adate.com**. As an exclusive offer you can **join for just £1***, just enter the offer code **GAME1** when prompted. Once you have logged on, registered and filled in your profile data, a world of possible partners is made open to you.

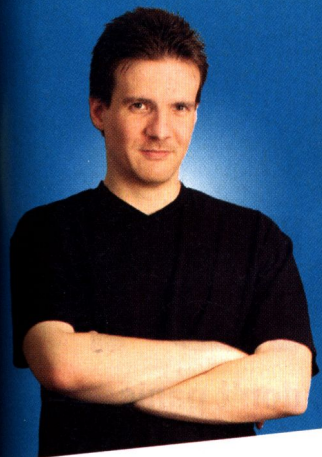
And who better to share your awesome prize with than your one true love that you discovered on **Game 4 A Date**? So, to be in with a chance of winning this great prize register at **www.game4adate.com** and follow the links to the competition. *Good luck!*

visit: **www.game4adate.com**

**Game
4-a-date**

* Normal monthly subscription rate is £9.99. You may cancel your membership at any time.

Terms and conditions: By entering this competition you are agreeing to receive details of future offers and promotions from Future Publishing Limited and related third parties. The winners will be drawn at random from all entries that answer before the closing date 15/02/09. Prize draws will take place on 16/02/09 and the winner will be notified within 28 days of the draw. Only UK residents aged 18 and over may enter. No employees of Future Publishing Ltd or any company associated with this competition, or any member of their close family may enter. No photocopies will be accepted for postal entries. Prizes are as stated and no alternatives, cash or otherwise are available. Future Publishing Ltd accepts no liability for any loss, damage or injury caused by any prizes won. Publicity may be given to any competition winners and/or entrants and their names and/or photographs printed. The editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. Where prizes are offered on behalf of an associated company these prizes are provided in their entirety by these associated companies. Future Publishing Ltd cannot be held responsible for any failure to provide prizes as specified and all enquiries relating to such prizes will be referred to the associated companies. All entries must be received by the closing date. No purchase necessary. Copies of competition entry forms and winners list are available by written request from Future Publishing Ltd, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW.



PCZONE HARDWARE

Better gaming through technology

iPhone troubles

WELL, IT'S THAT time of year again. My mobile contract is up for renewal, I have my PAC, and I'm looking for a new phone. The only problem is, all new phones are crap.

Yes, I've looked at the iPhone. As well as making me look easily deceived, the device lacks features that lead me to question the sanity of Apple devotees and Apple themselves.

For example, until recently it's not been possible to SMS multiple recipients. That's a ridiculous, Big Bang-sized omission similar to the lack of copy and paste when the phone was released. There's also no built-in instant messenger, no MMS, no video recording, piss-poor Bluetooth support, and no to-do list. But it does look nice.

Battery life isn't anything to write home about – particularly when compared to my ageing BlackBerry's standby of 22 days. And the fact Apple's battery isn't replaceable by the user is reason enough to avoid it. But I dare say, it looks nice.

As with *Windows Mobile* rivals, the iPhone's interface runs at roughly the same speed as continental drift. If you prefer to have a two-second ping when playing online, you'll adore the way Apple have used an asthmatic fat kid gulping at his inhaler as their performance benchmark.

I guess what I'm trying to say is: thanks, but I'll keep my BlackBerry. Technology is about more than just looking nice.

Wand

Phil Wand
hardware editor

GOT THE QUAD

Double-decker GTX 295 paves the way to Quad SLI

DUE FOR LAUNCH early in 2009, the GTX 295 is the card that NVIDIA hopes will wrestle back the benchmarking crown from AMD's all conquering Radeon HD 4870 X2.

The new GeForce is a Quad SLI-capable sandwich of two graphics processors sharing 1792MB DDR3 RAM and two 240 stream processors. The specifications suggest the newcomer isn't just two existing cards lashed together with an internal connector and a new cooling apparatus – together the Siamese twins draw almost 300W – but instead appears to be the result of mating a GTX 260 with a GTX 280.

This is certain to be the best card for enthusiastic gaming, with NVIDIA unlikely to introduce a flagship card that will at least match the performance of its rival's flagship.

What remains unknown is the 295's cost. While it's likely the card will

be positioned to both outperform and undercut the £400 HD 4870 X2, the card may well be less expensive to make and the launch price pitched nearer to £300.

Though it should be remembered that while AMD are making great strides, NVIDIA still dominate the desktop market and don't yet need to organise a Woolworths-style giveaway for their cards to be successful.

nvidia.com

Will the new GeForce succeed where the GX2 failed?



News round-up

Andrew Grove, erstwhile CEO of Intel, has urged the company to get into the manufacture and design of automotive batteries. Grove sees huge potential in a market likely to quadruple in size in the next few years. "Strategic objective is tackling big problems and turning them into big businesses," said Mr. Grove in an interview.
intel.com

Alongside Samsung, the American manufacturers OCZ and Super Talent are releasing solid-state drives with similar hard disk drive-trouncing specifications. Look out for them – and your system feeling much faster – early next year.
ocztechnology.com
supertalent.com

KHRONO LOGICAL

Use every processor in your PC

Backed by some of the biggest names in the business, the OpenCL 1.0 specification allows

software creators to write code that runs on both a CPU and a GPU.

AMD, Intel, NVIDIA, Samsung, Apple, IBM, Motorola, Nokia and Texas Instruments are just some of the companies behind the world's first open, royalty-free parallel computing standard that

K H R O N O S
GROUP

will put programs on both your processor and graphics cards.

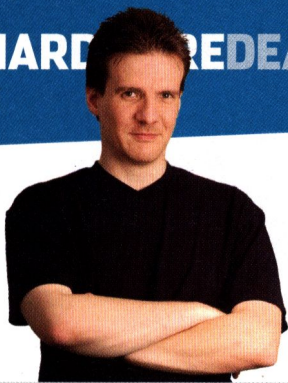
The involvement of teams from EA and Activision Blizzard should lead to the emergence of game-specific tools and libraries, and the instant acceleration of titles released from next year.

khronos.org/opencl

**WARNING:
THIS MONTH'S
HARD WORDS**

BY STEVE HOGARTY

KHRONOS: Evil master of time and clocks, Khronos is the arch-nemesis of Professor Space (evil master of space and blank A4 sheets of paper).
HERCULES: Shamed strongman turned speaker manufacturer, Hercules spends his time running in circles to test the benefits of 5.1 setups. **17:** Trendy new replacement for the regular integer, seven. Huge new marketing campaign shows a silhouette of the number seven dancing to Jim Noir.
SEASONIC: Rubbish SEGA mascot who hasn't been in a good game since the second one on Megadrive, but for some reason people still give a toss about his games and get annoyed when they're invariably terrible. Except in the ocean!



DEAR WANDY

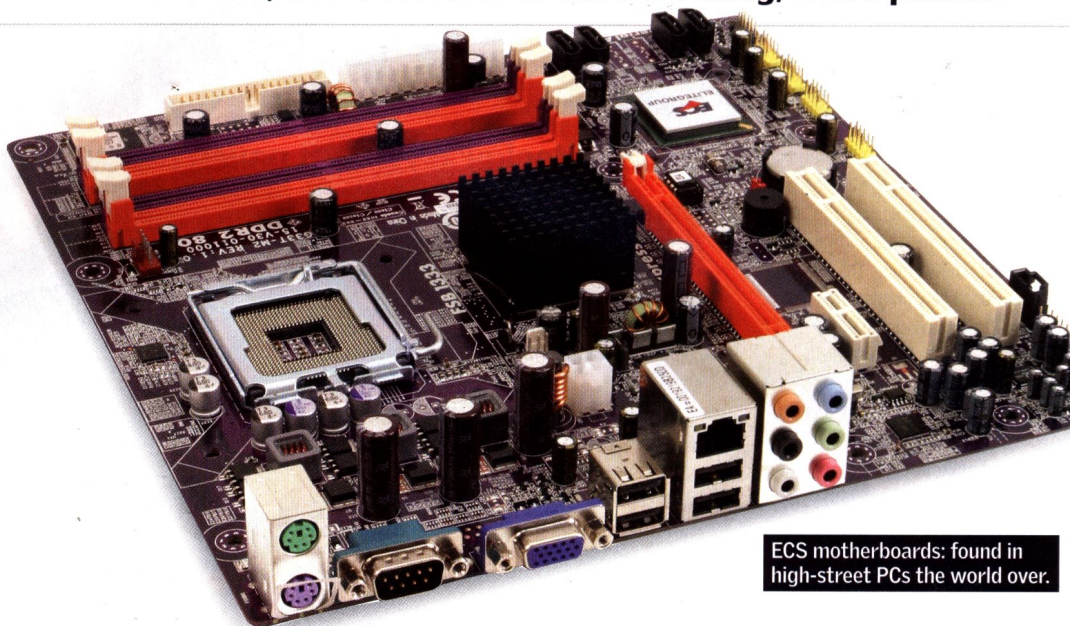
If it ain't broke, don't fix it. If it ain't working, don't panic...



PROBLEMS?

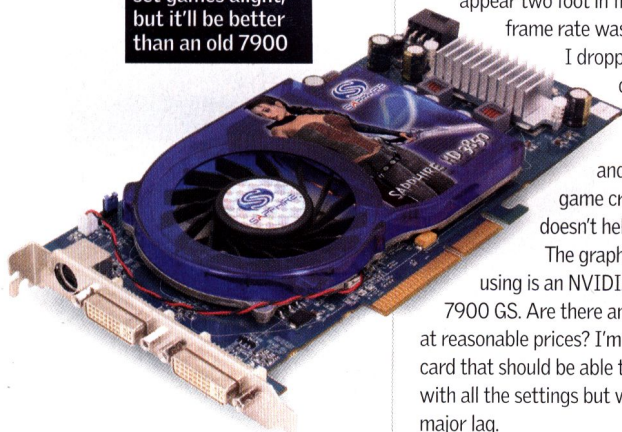
Mistook your wardrobe for the toilet again? Local shop stopped stocking your favourite

blue-flavoured Pringles? Been playing *WOW* so long your partner's left you? We can't help with those setbacks (no, not even the Mighty Wandy), but we can solve all of your hardware hassles. Wandy knows everything and he's willing to help if you email him at: wandy@dearwandy.com, including as much info as you can and system specs where applicable.



ECS motherboards: found in high-street PCs the world over.

The HD 3650 won't set games alight, but it'll be better than an old 7900



Q PLAN OF ATTACK

Recently I bought *Fallout 3* and thought my PC could run it happily on high detail, but when I loaded the game I was shocked to see that with 'Enemy Fade' set to a level where you could actually plan an attack, rather than have bandits and supermutants suddenly

appear two foot in front of you, the frame rate was not very high.

I dropped to medium detail but I feel as though I'm missing out, and the fact the game crashes a lot doesn't help.

The graphics card I'm using is an NVIDIA GeForce 7900 GS. Are there any better cards at reasonable prices? I'm looking for a card that should be able to run *Mafia II* with all the settings but without any major lag.

Also, my computer is running out of space - I'm wondering if I connect an external USB hard drive, will I be able to store and play games on it?

Sean McLeod

A You haven't given me a budget, but I can tell you there are plenty of cards better than the 7900 GS. Many of which are available for less than the cost of a new game. For example, the Radeon HD 3650 can be

had for under £50, and while it's still yesterday's hardware it should make yesterday's games shine. It's certainly quicker than your limp-wristed GS. All that said, I'd be looking to spend a little more on a new card.

The Radeon HD 3870 is only about £80 and represents far better value to a gamer. If you'd like to stick with NVIDIA, you can find GeForce 9600 GT cards online for a fiver less or, even better, a few using the 8800 GT chipset for just a fiver more.

If you find yourself laden with cash at Christmas, you'd be best off with a Radeon HD 4850 for just over the £100 mark, or a Radeon HD 4870 for a whiff under £200. But when you're spending that sort of money you really need a decent processor to accompany it. So before buying a high-end card, you should consider lashing out on your whole system.

As for connecting an external USB drive, you're free to hook one up and use it however you like - your games won't care whether they're inside or outside the chassis. You can even move Steam if you like (snipurl.com/movesteam). However, I think there's little sense in doing so.

An external drive is going to be more expensive than an internal unit, as you're paying for an additional power supply, case, USB interface, and so on. You'll also find that whenever the drive letter assignment changes, everything you installed stops working. And unless you pay serious money for decent, processor-driven network-attached storage (NAS), such as the £350 Thecus N3200PRO, you won't get any performance or reliability gains.

Q WHERE'S WALLY?

I want to upgrade my PC. I want to be able to play all games on the highest settings and all upcoming games in at least the next year.

I have got an E4500 Core 2 Duo which I can easily overclock to 3GHz. Is this enough?

I also want a 4870 X2. Will my motherboard be fine? It is an ECS G33T-M2.

Also, will I need a cooler for this graphics card and what power supply unit would I need?

I also have 2GB of RAM, is it worth getting more?

What is this rig like?

DRIVER WATCH

GRAPHICS

MANU	DESC	RELEASED
ATI	CATALYST 8.11	12 NOV 08
NVIDIA	FORCEWARE 180.48	19 NOV 08

SOUND

MANU	DESC	RELEASED
CREATIVE	X-FI BETA 218.0004	30 JUL 08
CREATIVE	CREATIVE ALCHEMY 1.20.04	01 AUG 08
CREATIVE	AUDIGY BETA 218.0001	17 JUL 08

"Unless you pay serious money for processor-driven NAS you won't get any performance or reliability gains"

"I can't tell whether a 3GHz CPU is enough for you because no two people have the same expectations"

Will this work or do you have any recommendations or things to mention?
Thanks Wally.

Marko

A There's no way I can tell whether a 3GHz CPU is enough for your needs because, when it comes to PC performance, no two people have the same expectations. I would say that the E4500 will easily go past 3.2GHz, but your ECS board will need to allow you to change the processor's core voltage (Vcore) for it to remain stable at those speeds.

You'll also need to take a long, serious look at your cooling apparatus as the stock cooler won't be able to deal with the extra heat of an overclocked, overvolted chip. The Thermalright

Ultra 120 eXtreme or Noctua NH-U12P recommendations from last month should do you nicely.

If you buy the double-decker Radeon, the rule of thumb for that card is a decent power supply that meets or exceeds 650W. Your best bet is to visit ati.amd.com/products/certified and find an approved PSU for the card you intend to buy. My own preferred brand is Seasonic because I've never had one go wrong. They are pricey, but as I said last issue, you remember the quality long after you've forgotten the price.

Given the price of memory, you may want to consider doubling your existing 2GB to 4GB, paying particular attention to the fact you intend overclocking the E4500. Go for PC2-6400 or PC2-8500 RAM rather than the PC2-3200 you probably have already.



Intel's £200 DX58SO 'SmackOver' is one of the better value LGA1366 boards for Core i7.

Q STUCK IN A MUDDLE

I've been toying with the idea of upgrading my current PC. It's starting to lag behind on the newer games being released, and I'm really noticing the drop in fps rates even at lower settings. Rather than upgrading a couple of parts though, I've decided to do a complete overhaul of my system.

The majority of my PC is pretty outdated by now, but I've bought a new hard drive, DVD drive and sound card recently, so I want to keep those. So it's

just the CPU, motherboard, PSU, memory and graphics card I need

to replace.

I have around £600 to play around with, but I'm really stuck on what to actually buy. Do you have any suggestions for me?

Lee Hewitt

ELEMENTARY LESSONS IN PC TECH...



The £30 Cyber Snipa Stinger uses an infrared laser.

10 OPTICAL MICE

Like most PC owners, you've probably asked yourself, what exactly is that light doing underneath my mouse? And why is it red?

The red LED is there to bounce light off whatever surface your mouse is on, back up onto the CMOS sensor opposite it. The CMOS is the same sort of light detector you find in some cheaper scanners and digital cameras. The mouse then decodes the sequence of pictures of the surface received when the mouse moves, and lets the PC know where it needs to move the cursor.

The truth is the LED is red because red LEDs were always the cheapest to make, not because they have any special properties. A CMOS sensor can be tuned to detect any colour or type of light – some gaming mice use infrared light, which is invisible to the naked eye.

Many things govern a mouse's accuracy. A larger CMOS sensor receives bigger images, and a higher resolution makes that information more detailed. In addition, if the sensor is able to read more images more often, the mouse will feel more sensitive.

A If you're thinking of replacing your motherboard, you need to ask yourself a couple of questions. First, how long do you envisage keeping it? If you're thinking this upgrade is merely to tide you over until next year, I'd devote much of your funds towards the graphics card – not only does it move between systems more easily than memory or a CPU, it's also a big factor in your gaming.

I've been consistently impressed with the Radeon HD 4870 X2, which can be purchased online for between £350 and £400. Make sure you have 2GB RAM and read my response to Marko

regarding which power supply to choose. Stuff what's left over into your mattress.

If you're looking to the long term, I'd invest in Core i7 as it's the platform for next year and beyond – spend £280 on a Core i7 920, £200 on one of the cheaper LGA1366 motherboards, and £100 on 2GB of decent PC3-10666 RAM. Get a high-end graphics card to partner it next year and be chuffed that you have something both fast and current.

The alternative is to spend £230 on a Core 2 Quad Q9550, £25 on 2GB of PC2-5300 RAM, and £300 on a Radeon HD 4850 X2. **PCW**

FORUMS:
DIRECT FROM
DEARWANDY.COM

(djmagique) I just built a new system with these parts from ebayer: Core 2 Duo E8400 and a MSI P43 Neo-F iP43 Socket 775. My problem is I can't get the thing to start. If I connect the 12V supply for the CPU and try to turn the PC on, it turns on for about half a second, with all fans turning, then shuts down. (Wandy) That CPU isn't supported. There's no way to update a board's BIOS without using a recognised processor. Either buy a Celeron 420 from eBay for around £10 to get the board working, flash the motherboard with an updated BIOS, and then flog the processor back on eBay, or return the board to Ebayer for a refund or exchange.

AMD VS
INTEL CPU
CHALLENGE

HOW WE TESTED

We used X58, X48 and AMD 790FX motherboards, with 4GB of 1066MHz RAM, running a clean installation of 64-bit *Vista* to test these CPUs. Any automatic overclocking settings were left on mobos and Core i7 chips. CPUs were scored by the fps rate they delivered, so graphics settings on all the games were set to low to ensure the CPU was the bottleneck, not the GPU.

INTEL CORE i7 920

PRICE £270 MANUFACTURER Intel WEBSITE intel.com

AT PRESENT THE Core i7 CPUs come in three flavours. The current flagship is the Extreme Edition 965, 3.2GHz out of the box, but at £850 its price is a little steep for anyone not looking to achieve ridiculous overclocks. The Core i7 940 opposite is pricey too.

Which leaves us with this: the baby i7. It's a little more expensive than a similarly clocked Core 2, and although it doesn't give the same value for money as a Q6600, it does demonstrate the strengths of Core i7 design beautifully.

The only real area of the 940's architecture in which it's deficient to the outgoing Q9000 design is the on-board cache. But as the core-to-core-to-system links from memory and the prefetching algorithms have been improved, that shouldn't be an issue. Yet there were a couple of tests where it didn't match the Q9450. This was a little surprising as the Core i7 has an expanded range of media-specific instructions which should help it.

But in every test where the Q9000 design has the advantage, it's a small one,

and more than compensated for by Core i7's stellar gaming performance – just £10 more delivers nearly 20 per cent faster framerates. And things get better.

Admittedly we used an enormous heatsink, but even playing around with the X58 motherboard's many BIOS options, the 940's running temperature barely rose over 50°C. This means there's a lot of headroom here for stable overclocking on air alone.

You might be advised to wait until the launch price comes down a bit, but sooner or later everyone is going to want an i7 920.

SPECIFICATION

Socket: L366
Speed: 2.66GHz
Cores: 4
Total Cache: 8MB

PCZONE
90

The next big thing

INTEL CORE 2 Q6600

PRICE £154 MANUFACTURER Intel WEBSITE intel.com

WE'VE WRITTEN SO many words about this chip that it seems pointless to say more about it now. But the truth is if we were standing in the CPU shop with a wallet full of cash we'd have two choices: the Core i7 920 or the Q6600. But for the price, nothing comes close to the Q6600.

The newer Core 2 Q8200 may be a bit cheaper, but it's slower and has a smaller

on-board cache. And the Q6600 still overclocks as well as it ever did: providing your motherboard can take a faster front-side bus than the default 1066MHz, there's no reason you shouldn't get this up to 3GHz.

With the Q6600's price at just over the £150 mark it's more of a bargain than Intel's Dual Core CPUs. The only cheaper Dual Core that'll outperform the Q6600 in games with just two threads running is the E8200.

While this CPU costs £20 less it's older and its base technology is less futureproof.

Of course, the Q6600 won't be around for ever – this ageing CPU is already vanishing from some outlets – so this is probably our final tribute to a much loved chip. Expect it to be phased out altogether as prices for even faster Core 2s come down over the next few months, due to the pressure from the new Core i7s.

SPECIFICATION

Socket: 775
Speed: 2.4GHz
Cores: 4
Total Cache: 8MB

PCZONE
91

Get it while you can

AMD PHENOM 9600

PRICE £130 MANUFACTURER AMD
WEBSITE amd.com

AS FAR AS Quad Cores go, AMD will have to have to wait until the Phenom II's release to compete against Intel's line-up. The money saving from buying an AMD CPU isn't worth the performance lost.

SPECIFICATION

Socket: AM2+
Speed: 2.3GHz
Cores: 4
Total Cache: 4MB

With graphics settings turned up the gap between the 9600 and the Intel Q6600 is a little closer, but whichever way you cut it there's no reason to choose this chip.



PCZONE
50

INTEL CORE i7 940

PRICE £470 MANUFACTURER Intel
WEBSITE intel.com

EVEN IF YOU want supreme performance you'd be mad to consider getting the Core i7 960 at £850.

The cheaper 940 shows just how well the i7's Nehalem architecture scales: with that built-in memory controller, there's nothing to hold it back as clockspeeds rise. It runs 10% faster than the 920, and you can feel it. Our advice: buy the cheaper chip, overclock it, and save yourself a few quid.



PCZONE
85

AMD PHENOM X3 8750

PRICE £100 MANUFACTURER AMD
WEBSITE amd.com

DESPITE THE ODD three-core configuration this AMD CPU has something to recommend it: you get more gigahertz for your cash than a Quad Core, and it's better

at multithreading more than two tasks than a Dual Core.

These things combine to make the X3 a strangely compelling chip, if you're on budget.

SPECIFICATION

Socket: AM2+
Speed: 2.4GHz
Cores: 3
Total Cache: 3.5MB



PCZONE
75

INTEL CORE 2 Q9450

PRICE £266 MANUFACTURER Intel
WEBSITE intel.com

THE DIRECT ANTECEDENT to the Core i7, this Q9000 design CPU holds its own well.

Significantly faster than the original Quad Cores – like the Q6600 – on a clock-for-clock basis, and armed with an enormous 12MB of

on-board cache, the Q9450 delivers in a sterling performance, despite the limitations of the front side bus. If prices fall it could well become our new favourite.



PCZONE
82

BENCHMARK RESULTS

Processor	World in Conflict	Crysis	Half-Life 2 Map Build	Memory Bandwidth
AMD Phenom 9600	40fps	18.64fps	3m 30s	5.6Gbps
AMD Phenom X3 8750	42fps	25fps	3m 1s	6Gbps
Intel Core 2 Q6600	74fps	50.78fps	2m 28s	6.48Gbps
Intel Core 2 Q9450	85fps	54.63fps	2m 18s	7.16Mbps
Intel Core i7 920	110fps	61.73fps	2m 20s	19.07Gbps
Intel Core i7 940	120fps	66.16fps	2m 9s	20.48Gbps

All graphics settings on test games were set to 'low' prior to benchmark tests. Memory bandwidth tested with SiSoftware SANDRA (sisoftware.net).

REMEMBER:
KNOW WHAT YOU
NEED BEFORE
YOU BUY

PC hardware is expensive stuff, so before you upgrade your PC, speak to someone in the know before buying anything. And if you buy the wrong thing, be nice to the retailer – yelling at them won't help you get your money back.

HARDWARE DIVIDE

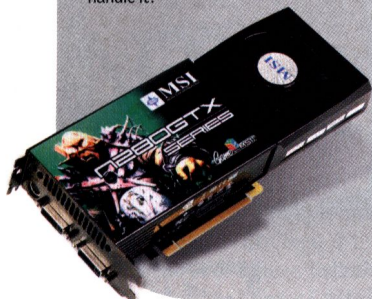
We see plenty of new gear at *PC ZONE*, but these are the bits we just adore

LOADED?

GRAPHICS

N280GTX
PRICE £420
MANUFACTURER MSI
msicomputer.co.uk

Fast graphics don't come cheap, and NVIDIA's 200-series flagship is reassuringly expensive. There are four power modes on offer, PhysX support, and a batting average better than any other. Plus there's 1GB DDR3 and many other enhancements that deliver performance around 1.5x faster than any predecessor. Can your credit card handle it?



PROCESSOR

CORE 2 QUAD EE QX9775
PRICE £1,000
MANUFACTURER Intel
intel.co.uk

A silly price makes for awesome power and magical performance. Not only will your Extreme Edition chip cost you the same as several entire PCs, but like everything else in your PC it'll be obsolete within two years. If you've got the money, go crazy and give your PC a hot rod CPU.

SCREEN

SM226BW
PRICE £219
MANUFACTURER Samsung
samsung.com/uk
The Samsung SM226BW is

handsome and fast (it has a grey-to-grey refresh rate of just 2ms) and has no hint of the motion sickness that plagued LCDs just a few years ago. It produces a bright, evenly lit image that's full of reverberant colours, sharp edges and dark blacks.

MOTHERBOARD

D975XBX2
PRICE £155
MANUFACTURER Intel
intel.co.uk

Everything we adored about our long-time fave D975XB, only with a thick coat of overclocking goodness. Intel's flagship desktop product represents all that's good about their products: solid, reliable, no-nonsense and fast. Saddle up with a Core 2 Duo and away you go!

SOUNDCARD

SOUND BLASTER X-FI FATALITY FPS
PRICE £130
MANUFACTURER Creative Labs
uk.europe.creative.com

This is a slightly bonkers soundcard for audiophiles. With support for EAX 5.0 and 64MB X-RAM delivers top-quality sound effects in your games. CMSS-3D works magic on a stereo signal and makes headphone gaming crystal.

HDD

WD7500 AAKS
PRICE £109
MANUFACTURER Western Digital
wdc.com

Almost as fast as the 150GB Raptor, but with five times the capacity and half the noise. Products like the WD7500AAKS and Hitachi's Deskstar 7K1000 are now so quick that you don't need to spend extra on 10,000rpm drives. So don't.

SPEAKERS

Z-5500
PRICE £195
MANUFACTURER Logitech
logitech.co.uk

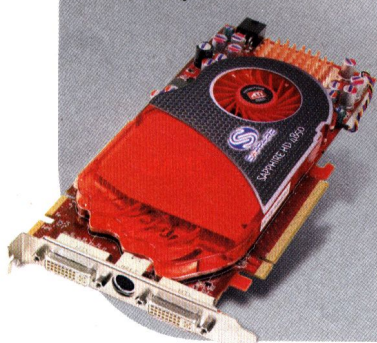
The price has dropped below £200 and these speakers are simply the best we've ever tested. The soundtracks from both games and movies ravish your ears, and you'll soon find yourself dusting off your old CDs just so you can sit in the middle of the sound and revel in it.

SKINT?

GRAPHICS

HD4850
PRICE £145
MANUFACTURER Sapphire
www.sapphiretech.com

This is the card that had arch-rival NVIDIA slashing prices in an effort to be competitive. Just £140 buys you a mainstream monster with performance that matches a GeForce 9800 GTX and snaps at the heels of the new N280GTX. Put the magazine down and buy one.



PROCESSOR

CORE 2 DUO E2180
PRICE £55
MANUFACTURER Intel
intel.co.uk

At the budget end of things, it's a tough choice between the E2180, E4500 and E8200. Unsurprisingly, things get faster the more you pay, but the E2180 here is a flexible engine that's great for gentle gaming or an overclocking frenzy.

SCREEN

VA903M
PRICE £118
MANUFACTURER ViewSonic
www.viewsonic.europa.com/uk
The VA903m is a

better bet than any of the similarly-priced widescreen variants as there are more pixels on its 19in screen: its 1280 x 1024 pixel panel offers greater depth than the standard 1440 x 900 panels of its peers.

MOTHERBOARD

CONROEXFIRE-ESATA2
PRICE £60
MANUFACTURER ASRock
asrock.com

Paired with an E6300, this ASRock motherboard can wring high-end performance from a budget rig. It features a 1066/800/533MHz FSB, SATA II with RAID, 7.1 HD audio onboard, CrossFire support, Gigabit LAN and ASRock's easy overclocking features.

SOUNDCARD

SOUND BLASTER AUDIGY 2 VALUE
PRICE £20
MANUFACTURER Creative Labs
uk.europe.creative.com

The cheap Audigy features EAX 4.0 and Dolby Digital EX support. This card makes an awful lot of sense for casual gamers, as there's little point throwing half a mortgage payment at your soundcard.

HDD

CAVIAR 1600AAJS SATA-II
PRICE £30
MANUFACTURER Western Digital
wdc.com

A 160GB hard drive remains more than enough for the casual gamer to do a spot of casual gaming. A few good titles, Steam, a couple of thousand music files and the odd porn flick still leaves plenty of room for Windows to manoeuvre.

SPEAKERS

X-530
PRICE £55
MANUFACTURER Logitech
logitech.co.uk

Logitech's X-530s have the edge on quality and are available just about everywhere. This Swiss-designed 70W, 5.1 surround sound system offers Logitech build quality with superb sound in games, movies and music. And for £55 their value can't be beat.



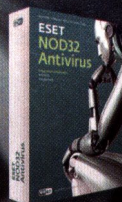
we protect your digital worlds®

LESS LAG MORE FRAG™

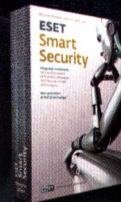
You need antivirus software that's better for gaming. That offers faster performance with a higher frame speed and no interruptions. Experience why ESET NOD32 and ESET Smart Security is better for gaming.

For a free extended 60-day trial, visit www.eset.co.uk/download and use promotional code ZONE204 - valid until 18-02-2009.

Now with customised gaming configuration



ESET®
NOD32
Antivirus



ESET®
Smart
Security

A New Way To Think Smart



Antivirus + Antispyware + Antispam + Personal Firewall



PCZONE FREEPLAY



For the man who has nothing

Huzzah for puns!

EVERYONE WHO HAS a brain loves a good pun, so brain-carrying people should lap up *Herbert West in Carrion Re-animating*, the lovable zombie-raising effort from Zombie Cow featured in Freeware. When I first saw this floating in the digital ether, it got me thinking there really aren't enough games that have puns in their title.

Just like the neglected Western genre, PC games with bad titular puns are rare. Just where are today's *James Ponds*? Why is it that developers stick to sensible titles or ones with a colon in the middle, followed by "*Siege of Honour*" or "*Fist of Destiny*"? This is a wrong that must surely be righted in the coming years. A call to arms then, developers – we're counting on you for our punny goodness.

Yet we must beware of the terrible pun coupling with a terrible game – *Leisure Suit Larry: Love for Sail*, for example – so eternal vigilance is necessary. The best recent examples are Telltale's *Sam & Max* games – *Moai Better Blues*, *Ice Station Santa* and so on – so we know it can be done in this glitzy modern world of ours.

Anyway, I think I've run that idea into the ground, so let's see what else we have to look forward to in the Freeplay section this month. Of interest to fans of the bizarre is *Minotaur China Shop*, a game that involves destroying items of Oriental pottery for the insurance money.

Sadly, the game doesn't have a terrible pun in the title. If it did, it might just be the best game ever made (maybe). Still, there's a lot of great fun to be had with it and *Carrion Re-animating* – so much so, you need never spend money on a game again.

David Brown
Staff writer

INTEL'S FREE FAR CRY 2 MISSIONS

Extend your game by three whole hours

WEBSITE game-on.intel.com MAPS FOR Far Cry 2

WHILE THE NEWS is still sinking in that Ubisoft are preparing to release *Fortune's Pack*, a *Horse Armour*-esque expansion for *Far Cry 2* that delivers three new weapons, some multiplayer maps and a couple of vehicles for \$10 (although we're not sure whether it will be coming to the PC) Intel have come to the rescue and given us all two free new missions to play through. Hurrah for processor manufacturers!

The missions are The Moroccan and The American, and are the first of seven that will be made available over time.

The Moroccan involves venturing into the heavily fortified and guarded region of Leboa-Sako, where a mysterious Moroccan (hence the title) holds information that could help you on your quest to locate the Jackal. The second mission, The American, involves (yes, you guessed it) finding out what information



"The missions are the first of seven that will be made available over time"

an American informant divulged to your predecessor. Combined, these new missions should give about another three hours of gaming.

The only onion in the ointment with Intel's offer is the fact you'll have to use Intel's Game On program to get the new maps. If you are one of those people who likes to keep a tight rein on what goes on your hard drive, you might not be too pleased with this.

Still, it could be worse – you could be paying \$10 for a few new guns and some multiplayer maps you're unlikely to ever play on anyway. You might have to put up with the Game On thing, but you do at least get some new missions to play in one of the best games released this year.

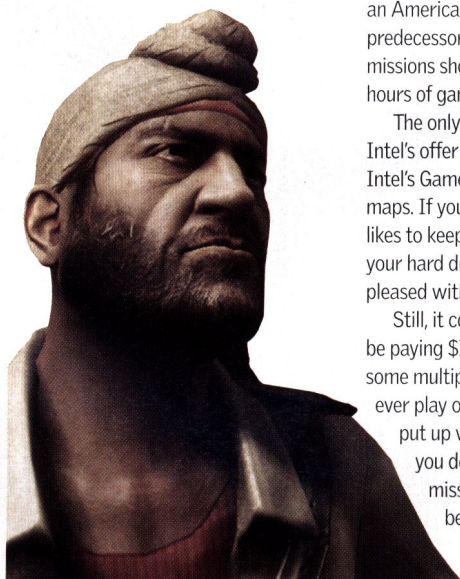
Maybe it will even spark a wave of official extra free

...especially in a game as good as *Far Cry 2*.



missions being made available for various other games (the key word there being 'free' Bethesda). As we always say here in the Land of the Freeware, we'll never turn our noses up at the chance to get free stuff.

Legally, of course, we hasten to add, in case any of our lawyers are reading this and getting worried.



PCZONE
FREE-O-METER



0
HOURS

*Approximate amount of completely free stuff this month



481
HOURS*

2D JOKE GETS REAL

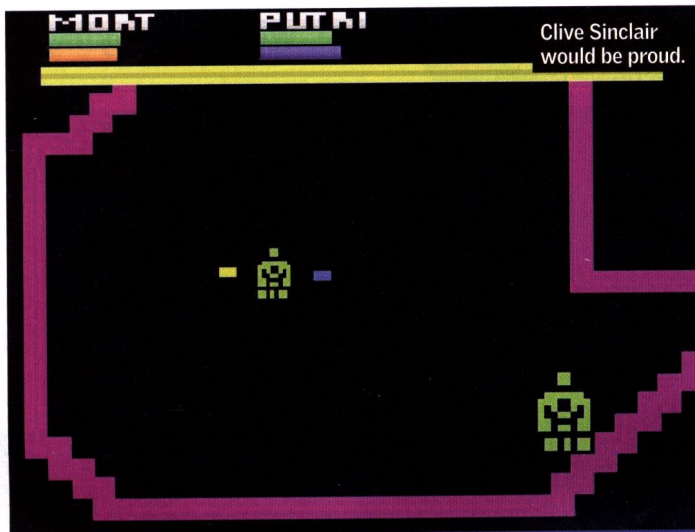
A joke which started the whole of Azeroth crying

WEBSITE snipurl.com/moltencore

WHEN BLIZZARD RELEASED its spoof ad for *Molten Core* – a Spectrum-esque version of *World of Warcraft* – as an April Fool's joke, everyone had a giggle and promptly forgot about it.

Apart from the folks at Gamers University, who've gone and made the game themselves. It requires 2MB of hard disk space, which even the most technologically backwards among you should be able to ponying up.

If the first pages you read in this magazine are Retro Zone, you'll surely need to get this faux-Specy action right onto your Quad Core-powered system. You'll then be able to show off to all of your friends, spitting into their puzzled faces as you race through Azeroth in glorious Sinclair Vision.



SEE YOU AT THA CROSSROADS

Classic horror flick comes to *Left 4 Dead*

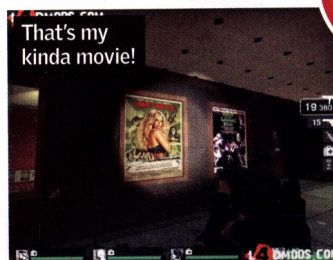
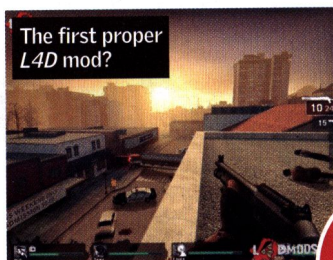
WEBSITE l4dmods.com

LIKE A PLAGUE of the Infected after a mass Boomer vomit attack, it hasn't taken long for the first raft of *Left 4 Dead* mods and maps to appear. First up we have *Dead Before Dawn*, a four-map attempt to recreate *Dawn of the Dead* in *L4D*. You start in the city, and work your way through the Crossroads Mall and Consumer World, until you escape.

This is definitely the most complete of the projects we've seen, morphed as it has been from a *Half-Life 2* mod. Others that are snapping at its heels include a

cinema-based level, where the premise is you've just finished watching a zombie movie marathon and find yourself actually stuck in one upon leaving the building! Wowzers!

Another interesting one we've managed to find is set in a Japanese dojo-style house, which could be interesting if it is fully stocked up with samurai swords and so on. Hey, if you're one of the guys doing it, how about letting us use said blades as weapons? You know you want to, mod people.



SNIPPETS



INFECTED FORTRESS 2

WEBSITE snipurl.com/infectedfortress2

It hasn't taken long, and modders have started to convert *Team Fortress 2* and *Counter-Strike: Source* maps into zombie-infested areas for *Left 4 Dead*, as you can see by looking at the video link above this text.



FALLOUT FREED

WEBSITE fallout.bethsoft.com

When you read this, you may well have already got the G.E.C.K. – the official set of modding tools for *Fallout 3*. Bethesda are also going to fix some of the problems people are having with the game.

Bug-Fix of the Month

THIS MONTH
PIRATES OF THE
BURNING SEA
1.10.30



"Pardon Me! The ship cabin appeared to be on the moon. It now exists in a more appropriate environment."

MOVIE OF THE MONTH DAWN OF WAR II

Relic is changing the template of its *Warhammer 40,000* franchise and this video shows us how their new ideas work. Those of you who like base-building might want to look away now, but for the others, this should be like suckling from the Emperor's personal gaming teat.



SNIPPETS



GTA FIXED?

WEBSITE rockstargames.com/IV
People have been having problems getting *GTA4* working and running at a decent frame rate. A patch to fix the situation should be out as you read this. But we think it might take a little bit more to solve the problems properly.



OIL BE BACK

WEBSITE snipurl.com/oilgarchy
Oiligarchy, a game of petroleum pillaging and peasant persecution, lets you dominate the black gold market, to make sure America's soccer moms are kept on the road.



TOO DAMN LONG

WEBSITE jonas-kyratzes.net
The Strange and Somewhat Sinister Tale of the House at Desert Bridge has a very long name, but a very quirky sense of humour that is somewhat British. A recommended play.

NO CHARGE FOR VISITING PARADISE

Play *Burnout: Paradise*, without paying – LEGALLY!

WEBSITE criteriongames.com



Could this be the first of many 'free trial' games?

WHILE IT'S ONLY free for a bit, Criterion has taken one step into a potentially brave new world for PC gaming. Mind you, pedants will argue this is actually a return to traditional values of shareware, but don't let's not spoil Criterion's thunder. Essentially, you and

everyone else in PC land will be able to play the full version of *Burnout: Paradise* for no pounds, no pence, but for a limited amount of time.

To us this looks like an admirable method for combating the "I only pirated it to see if it worked" crowd. If their motives are truly what they claim, these inquisitive lawbreakers will begin downloading and playing *Burnout: Paradise* as soon as it is released in February.

The game will have all the added material made available for console owners over the past

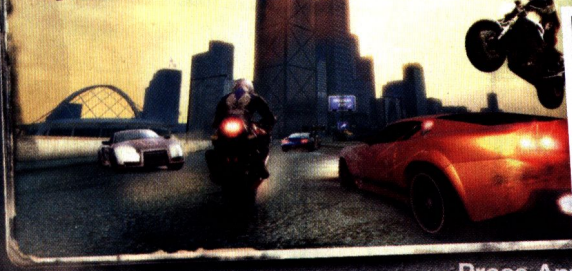
few months included, like the Cagney, Bikes and upcoming Park packs.

Criterion promises that the whole game will be available to downloaders, including the multiplayer modes. Those concerned with burning a hole in their download usage allowance will be pleased to hear that Criterion will also be putting the 'trial' out on disc, copies of which can be used as many times as you want and shared with as many people as you like. If you want to continue playing after the trial expires, you can visit the in-game store and 'unlock' the game.

We're hoping Criterion's experiment works, as it could be an effective new method of whittling away at piracy numbers, and it also shows a refreshing attitude towards the embattled consumer.

All the bonus content will be included...

BURNOUT Paradise
Trial Version



ONLINE INTERACTIONS NOT RATED BY THE ESRB

Burnout(TM) Paradise © 2009 Electronic Arts Inc.

Press Any

PARADISE CITY

LEADERBOARD

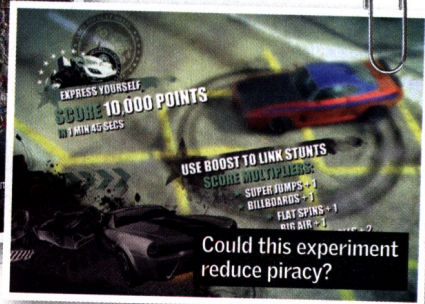
DISPLAY

PERCENTAGE COMPLETE

TOTAL TIME PLAYED

DISTANCE TRAVELLED

...including the Cagney pack.



EXPRESS YOURSELF
SCORE 10,000 POINTS
IN 7 MIN 40 SECS

USE BOOST TO LINK STUNTS
SCORE MULTIPLIER

SUPER JUMPS +1
BILLBOARDS +1
FLAT SPINS +1
HIGH AIR +1

Could this experiment reduce piracy?

I AIN'T GOT TIME TO PLAY!

Videlectrix spoof Telltale games

WEBSITE homestarrunner.com/dangeresque.html

WILL THERE BE a new season of *Strong Bad* games now that Telltale and Videlectrix have fallen out? At the time of writing, it's looking unlikely that their differences will be solved, especially after Videlectrix has released a send up of Telltale's games, making fun of the way the latter has gone about animating *Strong Bad* and his chums. The new game – a Roomisodic experience – features *Strong Bad* attempting to finish off a case for the Chief, never moving from one location (hence the name).

Telltale aren't too happy with the behaviour of Videlectrix, saying in a press release that they wished the latter "could have been a bit more grown-up about the whole situation". It seems the crux of the matter was Videlectrix's unhappiness about Telltale's decision to use 3D and VGA graphics in their games.

Fans of Telltale's *Strong Bad* games won't be happy with this, if it means the end of the series. Of course, it could just be a big joke/marketing exercise to promote the game.

The question is what Roomisodes could come next. Could we perhaps have a Doomisode, where you take on the minions of Hell in a closed room with no escape? Just think of how many classic franchises could be revived, room-by-room. Readers, let us know what your thoughts are.



SNIPPETS



PLAIN SAILING

WEBSITE plainsightgame.com/beta
Like robots and swords? Then download *Plain Sight* by the indie people at Beatnik Games. Not only does it look good in its cartoony goodness, it has plenty of swords and robots. There's even a beta you can sign up to using the link above.



USERS IN CONFLICT

WEBSITE massgate.net
Cold War RTS hit *World in Conflict* has received the user's touch this time, with two new maps (Airport and Bocage) being readied for your pleasure as you read these words.



MULTIPLAYERS TOTAL WAR

WEBSITE totalwar.com
After *Empire: Total War* gets released, buyers will get access to a one-on-one multiplayer campaign! The bad news is this release will be a beta version, so prepare for bugs.

SONIC BOOM

SEGA to make lots of games free on website

WEBSITE playSEGA.co.uk

THINGS ARE GETTING freakish in the world of free games. Criterion say they'll let everyone have their game for free (technically) and now SEGA have gone and Flashed us all with a new games website where you can play, among other things, some *Sonic*-related titles for nothing. Even for us grizzled PC veterans, PlaySEGA is good news.

The site currently caters to fans of arcade, puzzle, *Sonic* and sports titles,

among other things, most of a strongly casual nature. Two of these might catch your eye in particular – *Brain Assist*, which was only recently released on the DS, and the mobile version of *Sonic at the Olympic Games*.

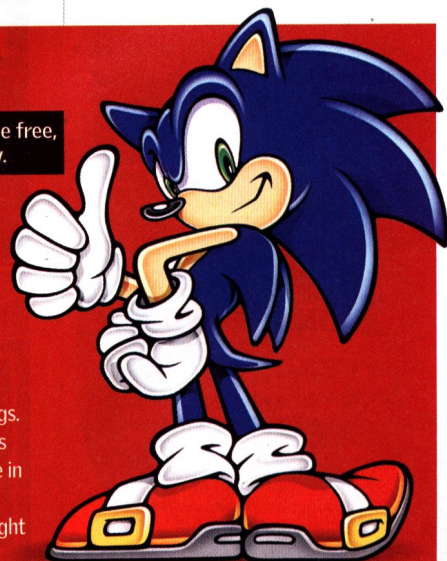
Unfortunately, us folks who like free things will be forced to cough up a nominal fee for some of the more established games, which will, in the future, include the classic *Sonic the Hedgehog*, as well as other old

Megadrive titles. Damn you, SEGA, damn you!

As you'd expect from a community-oriented social gaming place, there'll be leaderboards and small achievement-type things to collect – in this case, PlaySEGA Rings.

To recap: PlaySEGA is free, it has some decent games on it (and more in the future, we assume) but it does charge for some of the ones you might actually want to play.

Sonic won't be free, unfortunately.



FREEPLAYDEMOS

Demos

David Brown guides you through your free DVD

COMMAND & CONQUER: RED ALERT 3

Fight for Tim Curry and Mother Russia!

WEBSITE commandandconquer.com

IF YOU'VE MADE a New Year's resolution to buy the games you missed out on over the Christmas period, and *Red Alert 3* happened to be one of the ones you failed to purchase, perhaps this demo will act like a strong dose of Soviet vodka and provide the stimulant necessary for you to venture into the freezing wastes of a Great British shopping centre and get it. Or you could stay at home and buy it online. Your choice, of course. First, you'll be wanting to see what all the fuss is about.

In this demo, you have two missions – *Krasna-45: Circus of Treachery* and *Heidelberg: The Famous Liberation* – that give you a taste of the Soviet and Allied campaigns. It also gives you a little snippet of the woeful-yet-fantastic video interludes that mark the game out from the pack. Alongside you will be an AI general/sidekick, taking the pressure off you slightly when things get tough.

There's a surprising amount of stuff to do in this demo, so you should have a great idea what the game is all about once you've ploughed through it.



PCZONE

ON THE DVD

Having problems getting something on our DVD to work? Phone our helpline on **01225 442244** and ask for cover disc support. Or email support@futurenet.co.uk, including as much information as possible about your system and the Nature of your problem.



NIET! NIET!

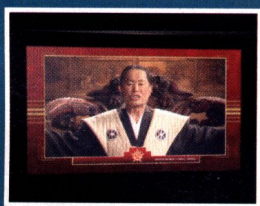
Tim Curry and his Soviet pals aren't doing too well in the war against the Allies. So poor has their performance been, they're besieged within the Kremlin and moments from defeat.



LET'S DO THE TIME WARP!

Until they remember the convenient time machine in the basement. A trip back to the past gives them the chance to alter history to save their empire and themselves.

"YEDINY, MOGUCHY SOVETSKY SOYUZ!"



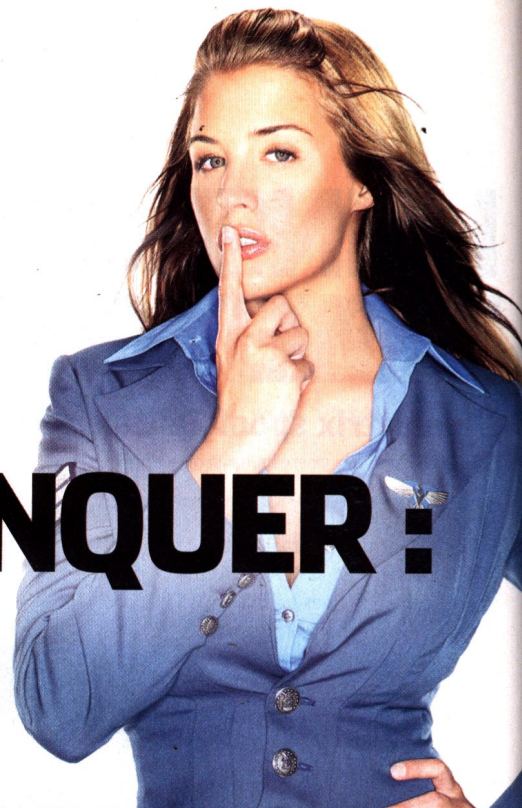
UH-OH, SPAGHETTI-OHS!

But George Takei doesn't like the Soviets getting too powerful, so he's launched a full assault on their weaker Eastern front. Looks like Curry's made a bit of a boo boo!



BACK TO THE FUTURE

When they return, the situation is looking much better. The Allies are almost defeated and the chaps are getting ready to sit down for a bit of celebratory vodka.



RHIANNON: CURSE OF THE FOUR BRANCHES

Flick my screen, scary adventure lady!

WEBSITE rhiannongame.com

WHILE IT ISN'T the most exciting of games, *Rhiannon: Curse of the Four Branches* still holds a little bit of rural charm for the older gamer and ones who enjoy a more sedate experience.

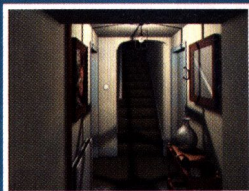
The portents and omens aren't good for those of you who like to blast zombies with big guns, but if you want to just relax and explore a ghostly Welsh farmhouse and its spooky surroundings, where else can you go but Rhiannon? Nowhere, that's where!

We've got two demos of it here, so you can see what happens at the beginning and, er, what happens a bit later on. Happy haunting, folks!



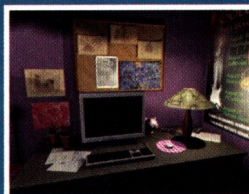
"Rhiannon? Are you in there?"

SPOOKY



THE FARMHOUSE

Your first task is to explore the farmhouse and feed the cat. Yes, you read that right.



AN OFFICE

The second demo is all about finding clues to the mystery in an office, among other things.

A VAMPYRE STORY

The adventure game bites back!

WEBSITE vampyrestory-game.com

THEY KEEP SAYING that the adventure game is dead. Well, in a sense they're right with *A Vampyre Story*, being that the main character is deceased.

Mona won't accept she is a vampire (sorry, vampyre) despite all the evidence to the contrary (pale skin, sucking blood

and turning into a bat), and she's determined to get out of her current predicament (trapped in a gothic castle), so she can make her way back to Paris to once again perform on the stage.

Can you think laterally enough to help her in this resolutely old school point-and-clicker?



1 Background

The environments are lavishly illustrated, creating an excellent atmosphere and being genuinely interesting to look at.

2 Interface

Along with the more traditional commands, Mona can change into a bat and fly to out of reach areas.

3 Mona

Our vampire is sultry yet innocent all at once, refusing to believe she is a bloodsucker.

CHIROPTOPHOBIA

Planning escapes, with a bat



FRODERICK

Mona isn't alone in her quest for freedom. Perched on her shoulder is Frederick the bat, her constant companion.



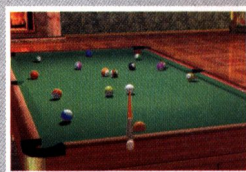
VON SHROWDY

Why is Mona in the castle? Because of this weasely fellow, who kidnapped her from Paris and made her his undead prize.

BEST OF THE REST



What is on the pages opposite is not the whole of our cover disc's content. Here are the other demos and movies that you can enjoy. Or not, if that's your will.



LIVE BILLIARDS

WEBSITE livebilliardsgame.com

There's more to this game than just billiards – you get to play pool too! There aren't many potting simulators around at the moment, so this might just sink your pink.



PRISM: GUARD SHIELD

WEBSITE prismthegame.com

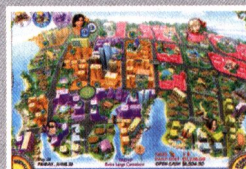
Ever wanted to be a soldier, but couldn't get to grips with *America's Army*? Well, *PRISM* is the game of the National Guard! You get to fight, but you don't have to be any good.



PROFESSOR HEINZ WOLFF'S GRAVITY

WEBSITE gravity.deepsilver.com

Deep Silver have crowbarred a physics professor-turned-TV celebrity into a Newton-frenly puzzle game, just for you.



FLOWER STAND TYCOON

WEBSITE flashbangstudios.com

This might not be one of the 'Best of the Rest', but let's face it: all the good games were released a few months back. Still, for fans of kooky *Tycoon* games, this might float your boat.

HOT DOWNLOADS
PCZONE

HOTEL GIANT 2

www.nipurl.com/hotelgiant2



"Taking management games to a new level!" That should've been the slogan for *Hotel Giant 2*, even if it's cobbles. Still, for a bit of *Sims*-style micro-management, you can't do much better.

RED ALERT 3 PATCH 1.05 AND WORLDBUILDER



www.commandandconquer.com

If you have *Red Alert 3*, head over to the official site and get the latest patch, which includes the Worldbuilder map creation toolkit.

Freeware

Scrooge-a-like *David Brown* searches out cheap games



Freeware is dedicated to bringing you the best free games content from across the world of the internet. You want free games? We got free games. You want movies? We got free games. Shreddies for breakfast? You betcha, free games. This month, we enter the world of H.P. Lovecraft twice, slide blocks of cubes into each other, follow the life of a badly drawn bird, watch a blob take drugs, and help a mythical creature smash plates.

HERBERT WEST IN 'CARRION RE-ANIMATING!'

Have fun playing around with rotting corpses

DEVELOPER Zombie Cow WEBSITE zombie-cow.com

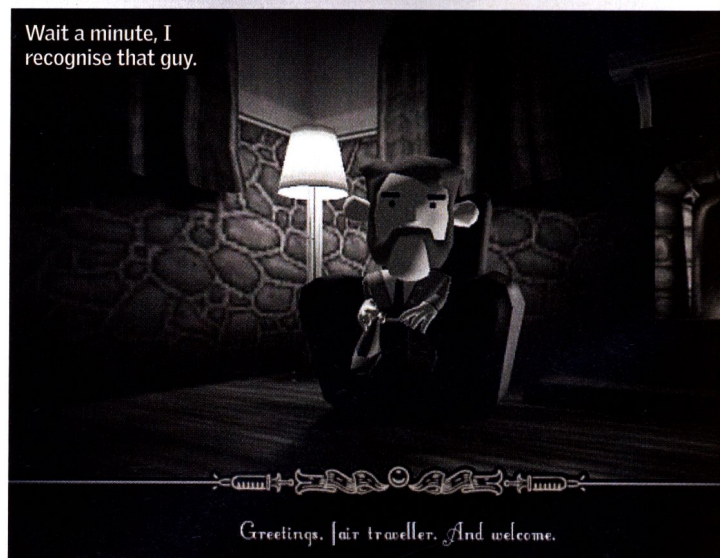


H.P. LOVECRAFT IS responsible for two games in this month's Freeware section, and this is the good one. Dan Marshall's lads (who also made *Ben There, Dan That*) have made an excellent kooky platformer out of the just-as-silly H.P. Lovecraft short story (and so-bad-it's-good movie) *Herbert West: Reanimator*.

And what do we have here? A bit of PC ZONE alumni action? Yes, Log is the main man in the chair, providing a ghoulish narration, Gelliant Guttfright-style, and introducing us to the world of Herbert West, whose macabre experiments are about to get him into some hot water with the coppers. In his house he has three zombies, all of which are sought after by members of the public, eager to verify their friends are still alive. So what is a budding zombie fetishist to do? Carry out a *Weekend at Bernie's*-esque charade, of course!

Moving over an inanimate corpse and pressing CTRL will wake them from their torpor temporarily. They'll then shamle

Wait a minute, I recognise that guy.



Greetings, fair traveller. And welcome.

AKRASIA

DEVELOPER AHA Studios
WEBSITE snipurl.com/akrasia

EVER WONDERED WHAT a strange blob might experience if he (or she) were ever to eat/ingest a curious pill he (or she) knew nothing about? *Akrasia* explores this most perplexing of chemical conundrums.

The game is very short, but it does feature a number of different outcomes that can be achieved by downing said pills while you pootle about in the game's maze.

Once you've eaten enough of the drugs/vitamin supplements, you have to chase down a ghost (I think it's a ghost, anyway) and ram it. The screen changes colour and the previously inoffensive ghost turns into an acid demon, who slowly and inexorably hunts you down - unless you can use your head start on it to make good your escape through a yellow portal.

Basically *Akrasia* is an advanced form of *Pac-Man* nothing else to it - take drugs/vitamins and escape a ferocious and menacing trip demon. Experiment with it, see how many endings you can find.

about your maze-like house, only changing direction if they come up against an impassable obstacle. You, as Herbert West, have to answer one of the many door knocks and guide the required zombie towards the member of the public waiting there.

This is very easy at first, but it doesn't stay that way for long. Soon you'll have three or more people hammering down your doors, demanding to see their friends. Juggling the position of the zombies and guiding them all to the correct door gets increasingly difficult and requires

some quick thinking and even quicker button-pressing to pull off.

If one of your zombies goes to the wrong door, it'll kill the member of the public, who'll turn into another zombie for you to deal with.

If you don't answer the door or deliver a zombie on time, the suspicious person will run off to get the police. Once a policeman is in your house, you need to keep him away from all your zombies, which is very difficult. If he finds one, it's curtains for Herbert.

There are a couple of little issues that could do with addressing. The Options bit of the menu doesn't work and lifts sometimes don't work the first time a zombie steps on them. Other than that, this is as good a freeware game as you are going to get at the moment.



Herbert West being chased by Terry-Thomas.

"Log is the main man in the chair, providing a ghoulish narration"

AWFUL LOVECRAFT GAME

What it says on the tin

DEVELOPER Cactus WEBSITE snipurl.com/awfullovecraft

THIS GAME WON'T

be winning any awards. Yet it's still a bit of fun for five minutes, even if it is just to laugh at the silent movie-style text interludes when you get killed. There isn't much that beats being told you were killed by a Faceless Colossus.

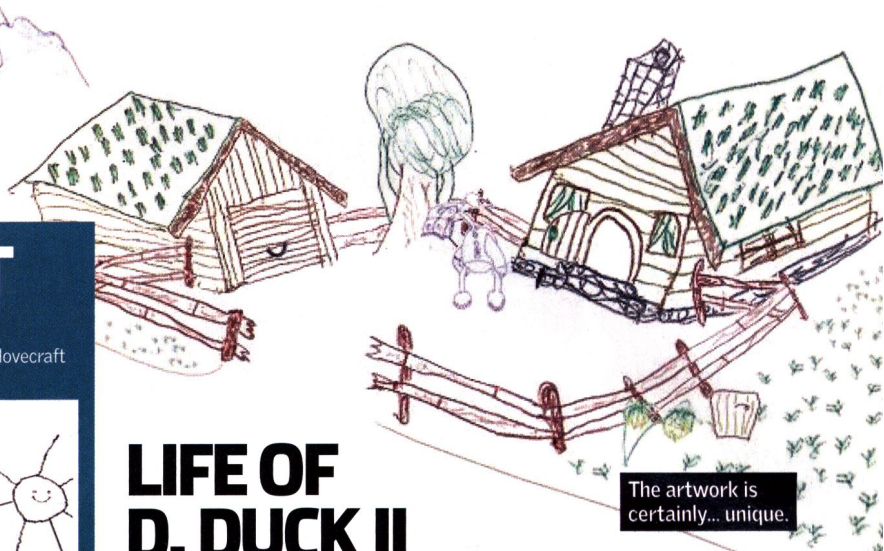
There are also vampire dogs and the walking dead to contend with, as well as some NPCs whose purpose I was unable to divine. The main compulsion with the game is purely one of "what else is there here?" You don't know if there is anything at all left to discover, but the

Graphics were a priority, obviously.



way it has been designed, you do feel like having one more go, just to see.

As Cactus himself said, the game is awful, but it has still found an unusual cult following, so if you want to see what it is about, don't let this shambling horror stop you.



The artwork is certainly... unique.

LIFE OF D. DUCK II

Complete and utter madness

DEVELOPER Audunsoft WEBSITE bjornarb.com

THE FIRST THING you'll almost certainly say when you start to play *D. Duck II* is "What the hell is this?" This is certainly one of the strangest freeware adventure games we've ever seen. It might even be the strangest.

It is also a matter of taste as to whether you like it or not. There doesn't seem to be much going for it – the graphics are 'interesting', the music is atrocious, and the dialogue is a hideous

mess of mistranslations and woeful grammar and spelling. In short, it's a bit of a mess.

Despite these glaring problems though, *D. Duck II* still has a certain amount of charm that might keep you playing – there's loads of content if you do – and, perhaps most importantly, the developer has nicked the icons and interface from *Sam & Max: Hit the Road* (and other games later on).



COLK-CUBE

Japanese block fun mania!

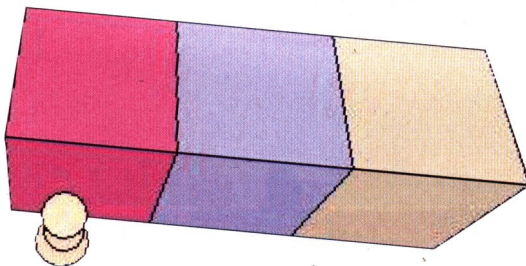
DEVELOPER TERU-soach WEBSITE snipurl.com/colk-cube

CAREFUL WHEN YOU go to download this one (and why wouldn't you? We're recommending it in here and you should, therefore, do everything we say!) as it is a Japanese game and is

hosted on a Japanese website. So, you might have a bit of difficulty actually downloading it once you get there.

That said, the download is worth

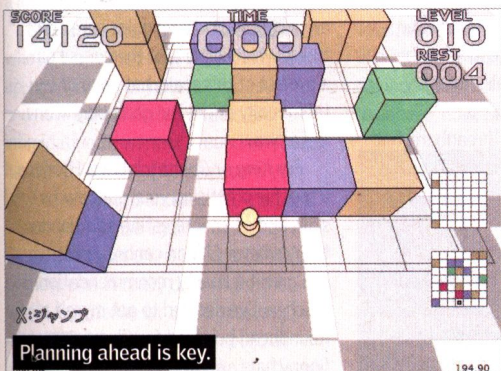
persevering with as the puzzle game contained within the Japanese text is pretty good, involving a sideways-oriented *Tetris*-style game, where you push bricks about on a grid, matching them in threes or more to clear them from the game. Dilly-dally and you end up either trapped or unable to match bricks together.



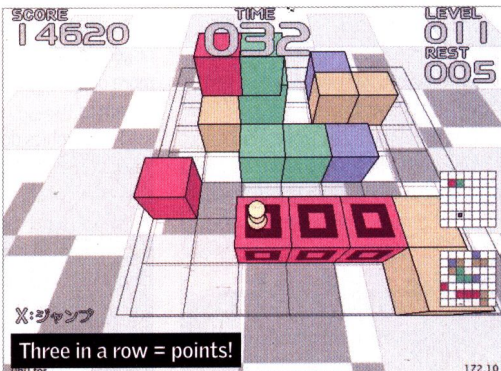
Also, it's worth noting that you push each brick as far it can go, until it hits the edge of the board or another cube. You can't just nudge one slightly to create a link – you have to think ahead. As the bricks build up, stacks form and you can knock the bottom brick out to lower them, potentially creating new point-scoring opportunities.

If you like *Tetris* clones this might be right up your alley, as it offers an interesting twist on the traditional falling blocks gameplay.

"It offers an interesting twist on the traditional falling blocks gameplay"



Planning ahead is key.



Three in a row = points!

WEBGAME OF THE MONTH



MINOTAUR CHINA SHOP

DEVELOPER Flashbang Studios
WEBSITE blurst.com

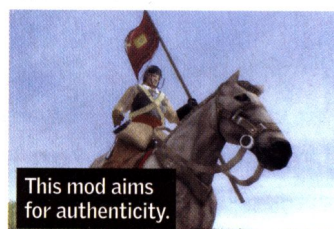
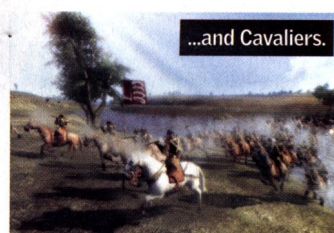
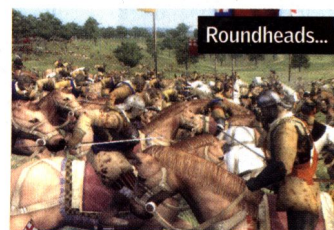
I COULD FIND out easily where the Greek tradition of smashing plates came from, but I'm too lazy. Instead, I prefer Flashbang Studios version of events: that it all started when the Minotaur flew into a rage and totaled a china shop. The beast was imprisoned, and when released he ironically found work in another kitchenware boutique.

There are two ways to play this game: the nice way (you fetch the china for customers and so earn money legitimately) and the nasty way (you destroy all of your wares and earn money from the insurance). Naturally, the most fun is had by smashing everything up and there's even a few roleplaying elements (upgrade your stock, buy extra moves etc.) with which to make things slightly more interesting.

Extend



David Brown checks out the hottest mods, maps and add-ons



FOR KING OR COUNTRY

Bridging the gap between *Medieval II* and *Empire*

WEBSITE forkingorcountry.com MOD FOR *Medieval II: Total War*

EMPIRE: TOTAL WAR might be coming soon, but if you're hankering for musket-based strategy, you may be interested in *For King or Country*. This ambitious mod turns the original *Medieval II* campaign into a fight between the Roundheads and the Cavaliers as you fight the English Civil War.



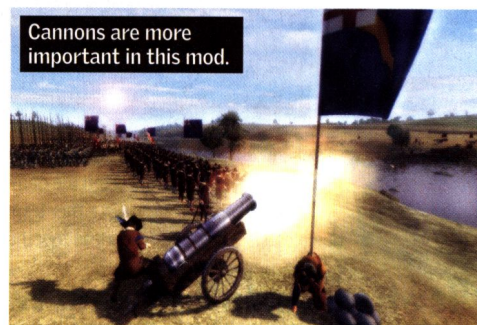
The first thing you notice is how much of a hybrid experience this period's battles are. They don't reach the heights of gunpowder combat that *Empire* will feature, but there are enough differences from *Medieval II*'s battles to make combat a very different proposition.

The developers have worked very hard to add authenticity to both the campaign and the individual battles, with the opposing armies led by their real commanders (at least at first) and random events occurring at the correct historical moments.

Most importantly for *Total War* fans, *For King and Country* gives you the chance to get a bit of practice in for the coming of *Empire*, perhaps even

developing some new tactics for the battles to come that are more reliant on musket troops and less on longbowmen. The action has also been slowed down to allow musket-bearing troops to be as effective as possible – the original *Medieval II*'s system wasn't built with gunpowder projectiles in mind, concentrating far more on traditional cavalry/infantry dynamics.

The graphics do feel threadbare, but you can't really attack the modders for this – they've changed so much and worked so hard, a couple of not-so-good character models are forgivable. Still, there does seem to be a lack of visual flair, with the different factions not offering as colourful an experience as *Kingdoms*' Native American troops.



Saying that, I'm being picky. There are a couple of little niggles here and there, which is part for the course on a project of this scale, but none of them really affect the gameplay in any major way.

For King or Country is useful both as a tool for practising your gunpowder skills and as an interesting addition to the *Medieval II* mod canon, and so we can give it a hearty recommendation. So much so I've decided to get myself a Roundhead bowl cut for Christmas – floppy hats are for cissies.

"An interesting addition to the *Medieval II* mod canon"

SUICIDE SURVIVAL

The mod that, until recently, said 'Ni!'

WEBSITE moddb.com/mods/suicide-survival MOD FOR *Half-Life 2*

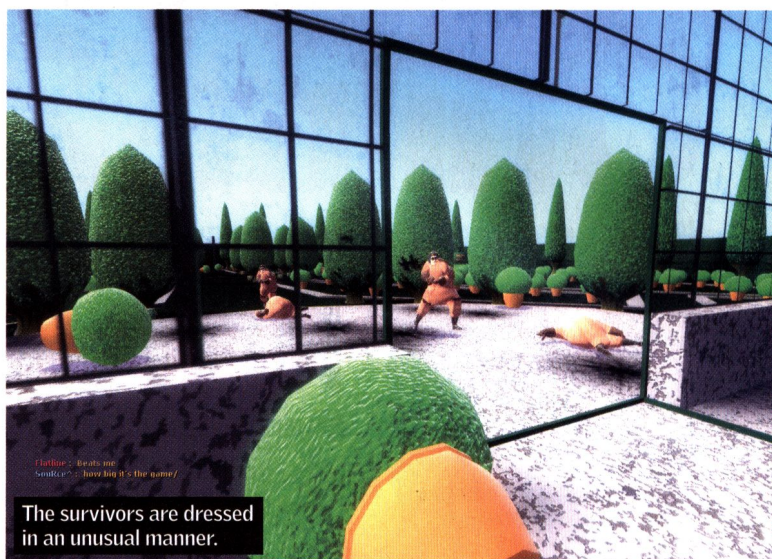
MOST OF US have hidden in a bush at some point in our lives, but far fewer have decided to hunt down human prey while wearing topiary as a disguise. Until today...

The premise of *Suicide Survival* is simple: you take the role of an explosive shrub or a human (at least, I think it's a human: the character model is a cross between a beekeeper and the Elephant Man.) As one of the bushes, you have to sneak up to the humans, Wile E. Coyote-style, before exploding, taking yourself

and the unlucky adversary out at the same time. Not politically correct, but whatcha gonna do?

At the time of writing there's only one map, but we can hope that more hedge-based locations will become available soon.

There aren't many other games that allow you to disguise yourself as a plant and attack people, so when one does come out, we need to applaud it. Especially when your main defence is a copy of a book by Barbara Bush.



The survivors are dressed in an unusual manner.

DREAMBALL

Like a rolling stone

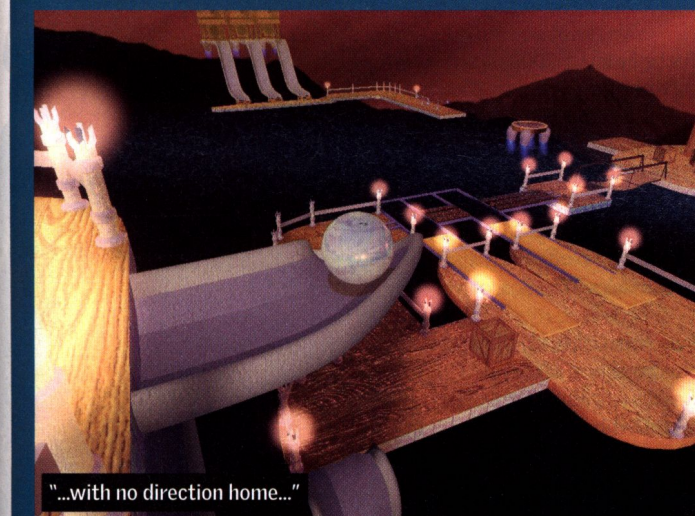
WEBSITE dreamball.synthasite.com MOD FOR *Half-Life 2*

I HAD A dream about some balls once, but that's another story. We're here to talk about *Dreamball*, a mod for *Half-Life 2* in which you control a rolling sphere making its way over various different courses. Essentially it's a *Marble Madness* clone.

There are three modes you can choose from, with more to come if the developers' promises are kept. The main one involves negotiating various obstacles, solving puzzles and making

your way across a map. This will probably be where you spend most of your time, as the other two modes – Orb Hunt and Race Attack – need a bit more work to make them interesting.

Dreamball's developers promise they are working on new maps (there isn't a great selection at the moment) and new play modes – one of which could involve multiplayer capabilities – which should do a great deal to improve this fun mod.



"...with no direction home..."

WELCOME TO THE WASTELAND

Making *Fallout 3* far less fun

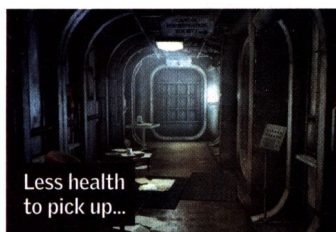
WEBSITE moddb.com/mods/welcome-to-the-wasteland MOD FOR *Fallout 3*

SAYING THIS mod makes *Fallout 3* 'less fun' is a little unfair, I suppose. This mod aims to make the game more of a struggle to get through – which, to a lot of people, will make it less fun.

Still, there are a lot of you out there who've bemoaned how easy it is to level up, how helpful objects are too plentiful and how the irradiated wastes aren't intimidating to wander around in. If you happen to be one of these people, you have to download and use this mod. Do so and you'll be struggling to stay alive for very long, let alone make it to the end of the game. It really does make the whole experience far more gruelling.

WTTW slows down the speed at which you earn experience, so you'll have

to do more quests to level up; you won't find Stimpaks everywhere; crippling injuries last much longer; medicines have weight; radiation penalties are higher and so on. In short, *Welcome to the Wasteland* aims to make *Fallout 3* more like its predecessors, with the developers saying the mod makes things more 'balanced' now. See for yourself.



Less health to pick up...



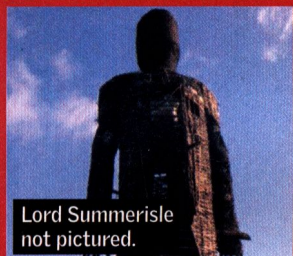
...makes the Wastes much harder to survive.

Online Zone

What's new on PC ZONE's forum, and in Fight Club and Zone Chat

This month, we've managed to be a bit more organised in online land, with a more sensible choice of Fight Club game and a proper Zone Chat which you lovely readers turned up to and proved beyond all doubt you're all mad as fucking brushes. We're also all full up on Christmas dinners and too busy playing all the lovely games we got over the holidays, so don't expect more from me. This is your lot.

PCZONE 2009 ON THE BLOG



Lord Summerisle not pictured.

IN OUR BLOG we often discuss the pressing issues of the day, like politics, the ramifications of falling house prices on the wider economy, and proposed changes to the LBW rule. Sometimes, we talk about games, specifically the ones we liked most from the year just past, 2008. This'll be the last time we mention that year again, though. We don't like to live in the past, much preferring the future. It's better, you know - all nice and shiny. Just look at *Mirror's Edge* for proof. Even the sewers are lovely, trust us.

Other than that, we've been too busy celebrating in a religious fashion. David was last seen at a shrine to Mithras, Steve was preparing for the Winter Solstice, Log went on a pilgrimage to Oslo to visit his Viking ancestors, and Will got confused and burnt himself in a big wicker man. Look out for more ravings at pczone.co.uk!

NOTES FROM THE FORUM

The best games of 2008, according to the forum dwellers

What are your top games of 2008? How long have you actually spent playing them in total over the year? Which of them, if any, do you consider a long-term classic, ie you will go back to in years to come? For me, *Counter-Strike: Source* will always have the replayability factor, followed closely now by *Left 4 Dead*, which is almost as easy to dip in and out of.

Caff

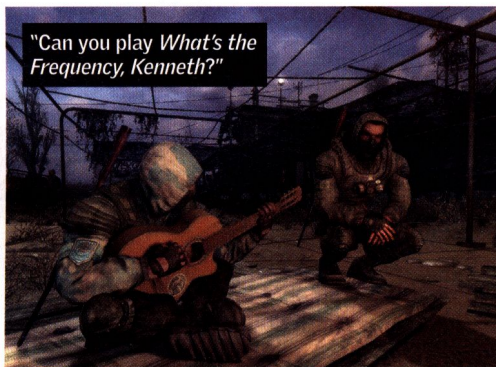
Even though they both came out in 2007, I didn't get round to playing them properly until this year: *The Witcher* and *STALKER: Shadow of Chernobyl*.

I wish I could erase these from my mind and play them all again fresh. On the whole, games this year have been a bit of a disappointment, other than *Left 4 Dead* and discovering *Trackmania*.

Apophis_dd

I haven't played that many games this year, but from what I've read I seem to be the only person alive who really, really liked *Assassin's Creed* (it came out in 2008 on the PC, so it counts).

Sturdygurdy



"Can you play *What's the Frequency, Kenneth?*"

The best game of 2008 was *Fallout 3*, but that isn't saying much. 2008 has been a year of big disappointing releases. *Fallout 3*, *Far Cry 2*, *Spore* - all games I massively anticipated, but sadly were nothing short of pants. *Spore* was the biggest rip-off of all.

Shakermaker07

I would definitely say the biggest disappointment of the year was *Spore*. I just never thought with all this potential it would have such a shoddy game. If only Will Wright had come up with the idea and somebody else had made it!

Thestalkinghead

"The best game of 2008 was *Fallout 3*, but that isn't saying much"

Well, the best game I played this year was *Psychonauts*, but I'm a bit late on that one! I'm loving *Left 4 Dead*, but it definitely needs some new maps.

Charliepreed

Given that I spent the first half of the year in the US, and only had my laptop with me, I probably ended up spending the most time playing *Defcon*.

Brax

Left 4 Dead, it's simply a sublime piece of cooperative

gaming and *Far Cry 2*. If you don't have an imagination, you will find it boring. Fortunately, I do have an imagination, and I'm yet to stop tinkering with the DIY action in this game.

JoWoo

I can honestly say there hasn't been a single 'big' release this year that I thought was a good, solid game.

Ye Ole Sarevok

Fallout 3! Got this a few days ago and it's passing all my expectations! Bethesda are truly gods of PC games! It's the best new PC game in I don't know how long and it's the best ever franchise revival I can think of.

Jonny_p66



Big shooty man no impress Shakermaker.

FIGHT CLUB



COME AND TAKE ON THE ZONE STAFF IN OUR MONTHLY ONLINE GAMING FREE-FOR-ALL!

Here comes the Heavy

WE WENT BACK TO our traditional selection for this month's Fight Club, with *Team Fortress 2* the game and 2fort the venue for our regular bout of reader-assisted suicide.

Work experience lackey Laurence filled in for Steve Hogarty, who had pressing showbiz matters to attend to, forming an at-times deadly *PC ZONE* partnership with David. Naturally, the readers did their best to ruin the party by destroying all of David's lovingly constructed sentry guns and dispensers.

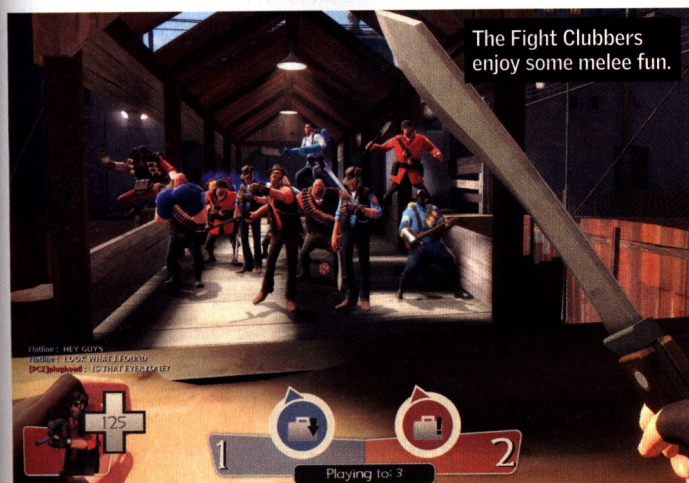
Assassin performed well for the Blues as a sniper, while Fight Club regular Flatline had a bit of trouble getting into the game, so decided to hide

in a corner. We lost sight of him for a while, so god knows what he was doing. Even forumite Jonny_p66 showed his face, which was instantly blown off by David with a precise sniper shot.

As is usual on 2fort, the bridge was the scene of many a titanic struggle for domination, with the tunnels rarely being used. Mr "Better Than Jesus" Monkey questioned Laurence's claim that he was a Bulletproof Smurf by riddling him with bullets, but as he finished as the highest-scoring player on the server, it looks like Laurence proved his case rather emphatically. Perhaps change your name to Semi-Impervious Smurf or something?

Credit is due to Mr Monkey though, who gave the rest of the server the dubious honour of being "Scum, but nice scum". Flatline then lamented the lack of dispenser customisation, asking why he couldn't get it to play the Circus of Values or El Ammo Bandito jingles from *BioShock*.

Valve, you know what you have to do.



ZONE CHAT



30 or so minutes of complete arse



THIS MONTH'S ZONE CHAT wasn't our most intellectually stimulating ever, what with the subject turning to scrotums very early on, something for which reader MILL5 was responsible.

Someone asked whether we were supposed to be talking about squirrel fetishes, but that joke got old a few months back, so he was ignored. As for where some of the elder Zoners were, Steve eloquently explained that the credit crunch had punched half of us out of the building.

Best name of the night went to The Slightly Festive Admiral, winning the so-new-I-just-made-it-up-now competition for best Zone Chat name. The only thing you win is a mention in the magazine.

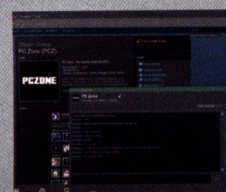
David admitted he had been busy this month ravaging in-game funerals in *World of Warcraft*, while

Bulletproof Smurf said he'd risked being castrated by the *ZONE* team for purposely avoiding MMOs.

The last words should go to our friend, Slightly Festive Admiral, who criticised *Fallout 3*'s ending for being "phail". He's right, you know.

How to join in!

To be a part of next month's Zone Chat, join our Steam Community group: *PC ZONE (PCZ)*. If you don't have Steam, first be ashamed of yourself, and then download it from steampowered.com. Keep an eye out for announcements in our Steam group for the date of the next chat and Fight Club events.



CAN'T MAKE FIGHT CLUB?

If you find yourself unable to make it to Fight Club – perhaps you're floating down the Ganges in a dinghy – then feel free to join fellow readers on these public servers. We might even join the rabble from time to time, you never know.

WHO'S WHO

Jon Blyth PCZ_Log
Phil Wand PCZ_People's Front Of Judea
Steve Hogarty PCZ_Escaped_Monkey
Will Porter PCZ_Batsphinx
Dave Brown PCZ_Plughead

- COUNTER-STRIKE: SOURCE**
cs.zonegames.co.uk:27015
cs.zonegames.co.uk:27025
- HALF-LIFE 2: DEATHMATCH**
hl2.zonegames.co.uk:27065
- DAY OF DEFEAT: SOURCE**
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- TEAM FORTRESS CLASSIC**
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- ENEMY TERRITORY: QUAKE WARS**
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Ali Wood

Ali Wood, Editor

**PCZONE
90**

**"The Cyborg has a body that can be
configured to fit your hand"** Phil Wand, issue 194

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Retrozone

Facing the wrong way since 1995...

Flashback

WAXWORKS

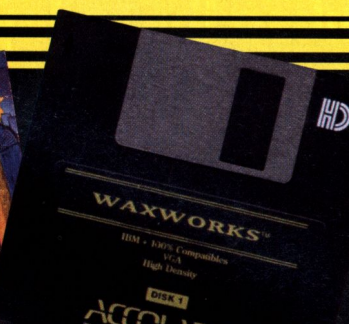
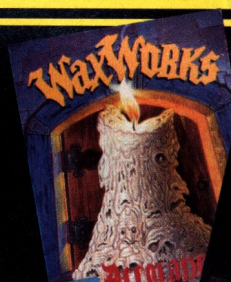
I'LL BE HONEST, when I was a kid *Waxworks* scared the hell out of me. In fact, it's probably the scariest game I've ever played. Even now, over a decade later, I look back at the screenshots and that little twinge of terror is still located somewhere deep in the core of my being.

Nowadays, with all your fancy 360° viewing and freedom of movement, games can't seem to deliver that same sense of pure claustrophobia and panic you got from navigating the Horrorsoft's boxy world. Yeah, these days flick-screen games are pretty much all rubbish, but back when they weren't, *Waxworks* always stood out for me, even though everybody else seems to hate it. But I don't care about those people, so I'm going to abuse my power

and write about a crappy flick-screen horror game I played 15 years ago.

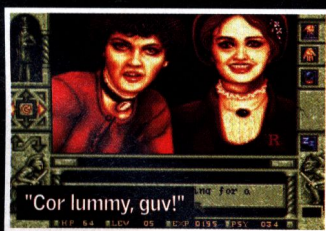
Basically, you played some bloke whose brother went missing in your uncle's waxworks years and years ago. Now, with your uncle's death and ghostly reappearance in a crystal ball, you find out that he's still alive, as a manifestation of pure, grotesque evil, controlled by a witch's curse. Your only choice is to head into five individually themed waxwork 'levels' and remove the malevolence within, before finally confronting the baleful witch and removing the curse.

This is easier said than done – as with most older games, *Waxworks* is rock hard and requires you, should you wish to beat the game, to manually map out the levels using a pen and paper! How retro is that? The individual levels are interesting – a graveyard, Victorian London at the height of Jack the Ripper's terror, a mine with hideous mutant creatures, and an Egyptian pyramid – and you can die in a vast number of hideous ways. Horror gaming has never been as spine-tingling since, and is unlikely to be again.



A plant creature has overrun a mine, and mutilated many workers.

Q1 EXP 0000 PSY Q10



"Cor lummy, guv!"

But how? Worth a play?

Being that *Waxworks* is a DOS-based game, you'll probably be looking at using something like *DOSBox* to get it working. Either that or you've got an old 386 lurking in the bowels of your house.

DOSBox is reasonably easy to use and there's plenty of documentation hovering around the website on how to use it.

Whichever way you do it, you'll either have to download of the game from a

despicable Abandonware site or blow dust off your own copy of the game and digging out the floppies needed for play.

dosbox.com

The download page of good old *DOSBox*.

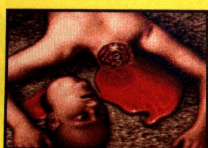
thehouseofgames.net

Read more about the game here. And do other things which we can't talk about.

Enter the House of Wax Six ways to die horribly in a flick-screen game



1 SLASH!
Get on the wrong side of Jack the Ripper and you'll get your very own Cuban Necktie.



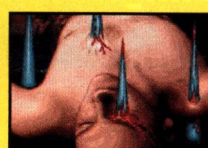
2 CHOP!
In Egypt, beware hidden traps or you'll get your head lopped off by falling blades.



3 HANG!
If the filth catch you, they'll mistake you for the Ripper and you'll be hung in the name of Queen Victoria.



4 RIBBED!
Act too slowly in the graveyard and you too can have your very own *Temple of Doom* moment.



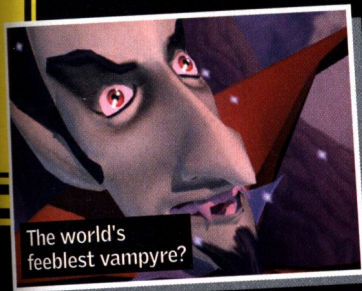
5 SPIKE!
One false move in the pyramid and you'll become a human pin cushion, just like that bloke in *Audition*.



6 BUBONIC!
The mines have some of gruesome death scenes. This one happens after you get sprayed with spores.

Now & Then

A VAMPYRE STORY vs THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND



The world's feeblest vampyre?

FOR YEARS NOW, we adventure gamers have been yearning for the halcyon days of yore, when clicking repeatedly in a game didn't fire guns or lasers, but made pixelated characters joke about rubber chickens and lead-melting grog. With *A Vampyre Story* helmed by an ex-LucasArts' boffin, this is the closest we've come to that Nirvana. However, despite Autumn Moon's best efforts, we doubt anything will beat the glory that was *Monkey Island*.

The sheer quality of *Monkey Island* means you can go back to it now and happily play it all the way through, early '90s graphics be damned. Very few games age as well as this, so I'm going to raise a slowly disintegrating pewter wad to LucasArts, while cursing them under my breath for selling out in recent years.



Guybrush, everybody's favourite wannabe-pirate.

Play it! Discover the arcane form of game distribution known as 'shareware'

If you've never discovered what the secret of *Monkey Island* is, hang your head in shame and question the meaning of your existence, then you need to...

- 1 Download *ScummVM* from scummvm.org and run the game through this handy emulator, if you have a legit copy of the game.
- 2 Break into a heavily armoured vault where the world's only remaining boxed copy of *Monkey Island* is kept and steal it.
- 3 Borrow some disks off your kindly friend/relative, promising not to emigrate to New Zealand to deprive them of their *Monkey* goodness.
- 4 Use an old 286 you've kept in perfect working order for nearly 20 years to play it, filling up its 10MB hard drive with the game and it's sequel.

MAMEframe

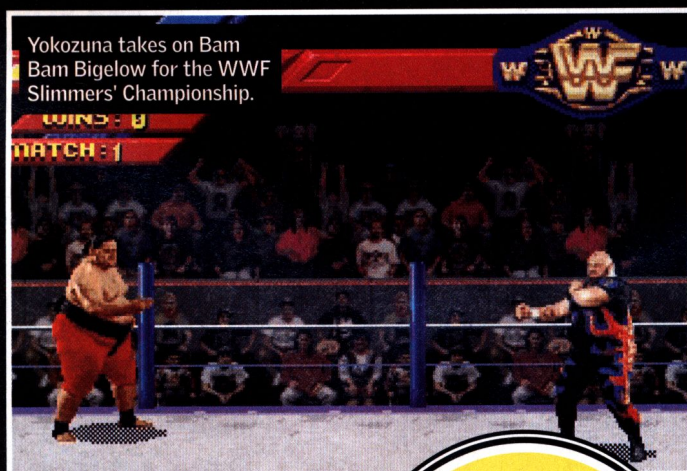
WRESTLEMANIA: THE ARCADE GAME

EVERYONE LOVES WRESTLING (Really? - Ed) but it took until 1995's *WWF*:

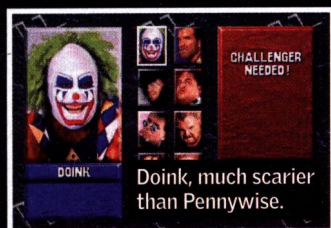
Wrestlemania: The Arcade Game for digital grapple enthusiasts to really get a full taste of the exhilarating bodyslamming action of the WWE (or WWF as it was before animal lovers got tetchy).

Most of that is a load of nonsense, but this was the first WWF game that allowed you the Undertaker to cast ghosts at people and for the late Yokozuna to throw salt in his foe's eyes. The roster was weak, with only eight characters to choose from, including Bret Hart, Lex Luger, Shawn Michaels, Bam Bam Bigelow and Doink the Clown. Mr Fuji was there too, as was Jerry 'the King' Lawler and Vince McMahon providing commentary.

Nowadays, the lack of chair shots, barbed wire and tub-of-scorpions death matches makes this look tame, but I'll always remember the day I defeated Doink with a 'ghost shot' to the face.



Yokozuna takes on Bam Bam Bigelow for the WWF Slimmers' Championship.



Doink, much scarier than Pennywise.

What is MAME?

The *Multiple Arcade Machine Emulator* currently emulates over 3,500 games. You can get it from mame.net - use *Mame32* for a nice front-end. Then you can download *Robby Roto*, which is legal. You can play all the others too, but not legally. So stop it.

Back in the day

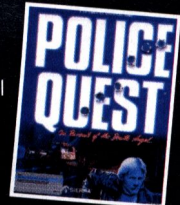
POLICE STORY

By David Brown

DOES THE NAME Sonny Bonds ring a bell? No, he wasn't married to Cher and didn't die in a skiing accident. Sonny was an upstanding member of California's Lytton police force, and was the hero of *Police Quest* (well, he was for most of the series anyway).

You got to control Sonny, accidentally breaking regs and mowing down suspects until you understood the game rewarded you for following proper police procedure. You also died a lot, as was the case in all Sierra's '80s/'90s adventures.

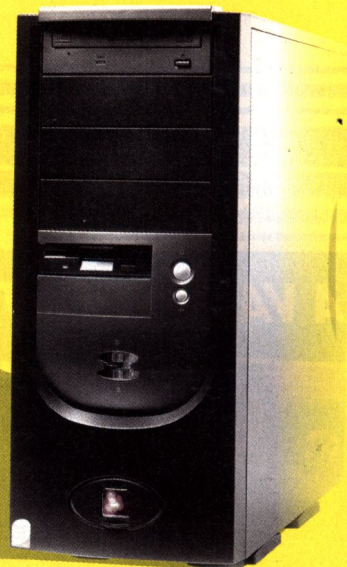
Considering how popular cop TV shows are, you wonder why us law and order fans get such short thrift from game makers. Sierra, come back from the wilderness and deliver us a new Sonny Bonds adventure, preferably one in which you get taken off the case by a stupid chief who doesn't like you being a loose cannon, despite still getting results.



CURRENT OBSESSIONS

ON THE PCZ HARD DRIVE

The games we're playing, and why we're playing them



GRAND THEFT AUTO IV

Fifteenth frame per second: **Steve Hogarty**

HOW MANY TIMES have you been playing *Grand Theft Auto IV* and had something astounding happen to you, only for nobody else to have seen it? It's the sort of thing that leads to you waving your arms about in the pub desperately trying to emote to your mates exactly how the helicopter blades were spinning when they lopped off the policeman's head. The confused, disinterested looks they give you as you make the sound effects can be disheartening. They should've been there.

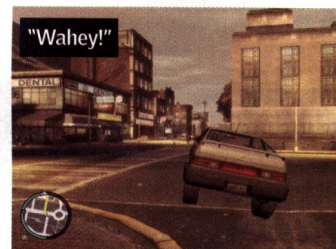
So GTA4's video editor is

a godsend. It's so incredibly versatile, and it ensures no moment of your game will ever go undocumented. Hit F2 at any time to save the last 60 seconds of gameplay, open up the video editor and cut together that minute of action from any angle you like, changing filters and slowing time if you so please. Then upload it to the Social Club TV, Rockstar's online YouTube-esque answer to watching other players' GTA clips.

MAKING MOVIES

If it sounds like I'm faultlessly pleased with the feature, it's because I am (and because I haven't used it long enough to get irate about its niggles – like out-of-bound cameras and no custom sounds).

The rest of the game is much as you'd expect, with all the terrible rumours you've heard being mostly true – whether this runs well on your machine is hit and miss. At the time of writing the first patch is yet to appear, so if it's some sort of messianic panacea then all the better.



I've been lucky enough to experience few problems besides a required troublesome *Service Pack 1* installation for *Vista*. The unspoiled fullness of Liberty City has made it, unexpectedly, one of my favourite games of 2008.

Often it feels wrong to enjoy a game so much when a great many people are having a hard time just getting it running. It's similar to being a scab during a strike. If Rockstar can get their shit together soon, maybe people can stop being blinded to *GTA4*'s goodness by the game's juddering framerates.

VERDICT Joy-filled crime spree



Back in fashion: fingerless gloves.

FALLOUT 3

Glowing ghoul: **David Brown**

I'VE A CONFESSION to make: I never played the original *Fallout* games. There's no real reason why, they just passed me by somehow.

I've played both of the *Baldur's Gate* games, *Planescape: Torment*, the first *Icewind Dale*, and both *Neverwinter Nights*, so why not *Fallout*? I really can't answer that question satisfactorily. So I wasn't one of the people fearing the integrity of *Fallout 3*, especially as I liked *Oblivion* more than *Morrowind* (you can spit on the floor and call me names now). However, I haven't been 'grabbed' at all by this one. At least I can have a stab at answering this one.

I don't think it's the scenario, as the radiation-soaked landscape and post-apocalyptic settings interest me. Maybe it's the potential of playing *Oblivion*, maybe it is the cool-but-lacking-in-any-required-skill VATS combat system? Maybe there are just too many other games that offer me an experience I haven't yet had before (which links back to the playing through *Oblivion* point).

I keep hearing tales of exciting setpieces and interesting locations to be found, so why do I go back to *Left 4 Dead* or *NBA 2K9*?

I think *Fallout 3* will be a game I complete to say "I finished it". But there isn't any other reason for me to do so. As an RPG, it's light years behind *The Witcher* in sophistication and, as an action game, VATS doesn't let me feel my ability to make an impact on the game. Maybe I'm just a cynical bastard.

VERDICT Lacking grab



A ghoul takes a beating.



Nothing a spot of paint won't fix.

DEAD SPACE

Wanting his mummy: **Chris Capel**

LOG COVERED THE buggered PC controls pretty extensively in his review, so just accept that I'm playing *Dead Space* with a 360 pad and we'll all be much happier.

I love horror games and in particular the *System Shock* series, so when I heard rumours EA were making a horror game in a seemingly-abandoned huge space ship a bit of wee came out. Fortunately for my laundry bill it turned out to be the original *Dead Space* instead of *SS3*.

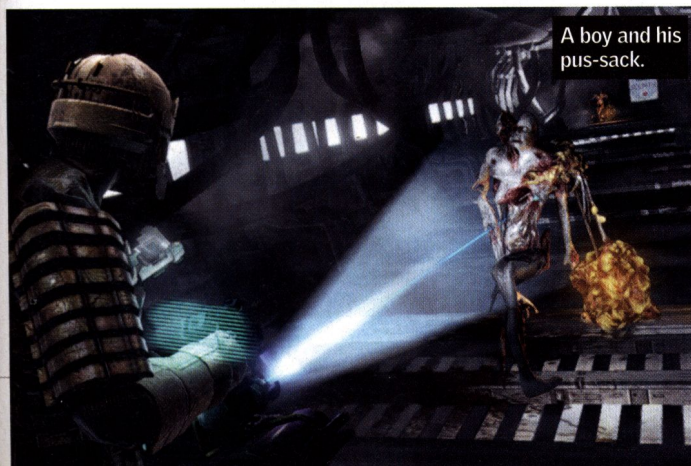
'Original' may be pushing it a tad, as EA Redwood have pinched from pretty much every horror movie and videogame ever made. Still, they've managed to craft an atmospheric and involving game nonetheless, with a few unique notions to make it all worthwhile. The necessary dismemberments ramp up the skill, the fun, and the gore all at once, while the holographic inventory system is nothing short of inspired. The zero-G bits are great too, with the soundless vacuum

hops bringing the game's only genuinely scary moments.

Now we've hit on the one area (besides the crap mouse/keyboard controls of course) where *Dead Space* really falls down, despite all the developer's best attempts, is that it's very rarely scary. There's tension and gore, but the attacks are telegraphed so far in advance that a message might as well pop up saying: 'Please wait, your monster is coming'.

It would've been better with a first-person perspective. There, I said it.

VERDICT Not *System Shock*



A boy and his pus-sack.



"Put 'em up."

WHAT'S ON YOUR HARD DRIVE?

Readers on their chosen poison

ZAARIN 2003 TIE FIGHTER

"Shooty space game heaven."

MONKEYMAN101 THE WITCHER ENHANCED EDITION

"After waiting for the *Enhanced Edition* patch to install (funnily abbreviated to *TWEE*) I started playing. After around 25 minutes I'd been called a pervert and told to go plow myself. Nice."

METHS LEFT 4 DEAD

"The most fun I've had with a multiplayer game for some time. Super pick up and play carnage in the *Team Fortress 2* style. Perfect stress relief this. Lights off and sound up."

JOHNNYWARMONGER TEAM FORTRESS 2

"Obviously."

DEVELOPER'S COMMENTARY

LEFT 4 DEAD

Will Porter gets some zombie lovin' from one of the minds behind Left 4 Dead

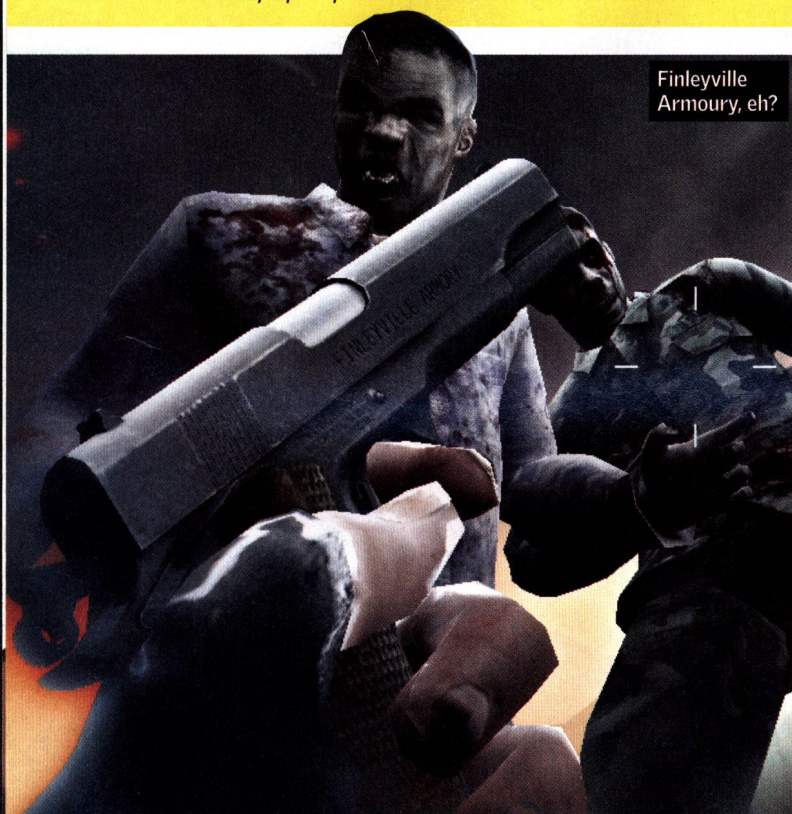
CHET FALISZEK FIRST boarded the Valve mothership when his prodigious writing talents, alongside those of his mate Erik Wolpaw, were spotted at famed gaming website *Old Man Murray* (oldmanmurray.com). Since then he's worked on the *Half-Life 2 Episodes* and *Team*

Fortress 2, working with new techniques of contextual dialogue and background storytelling.

Recently Chet's been the face of *Left 4 Dead*, the non-rotting one at least. Will Porter chased the developer through Valve's Bellevue mansions in search of answers.



Chet Faliszek, the man behind the Infected.



Finleyville Armoury, eh?

01 ONSET OF INFECTION

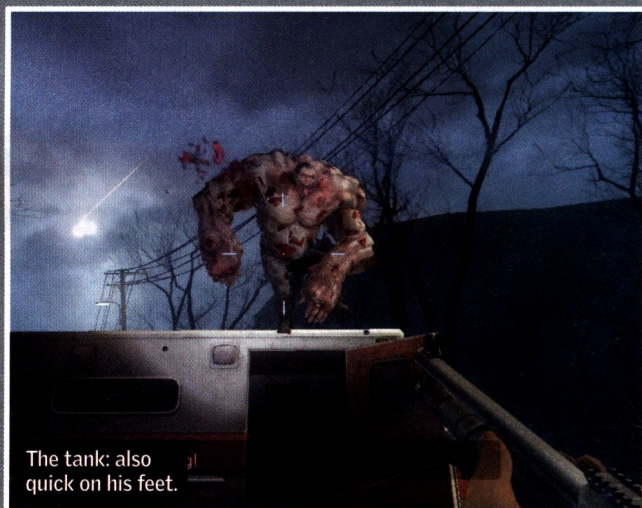
"Turtle Rock studios were the ones who started it. We'd been working with them on *Counter-Strike* for a while and every so often they'd come up and show us something new, and see if we wanted to work with them on it. The minute they showed us *Left 4 Dead* my reaction was the same as everyone's the first time the zombies rush: you put your head back a bit, you open your mouth a little – it just hit us.

"They already had the idea for co-op, Michael Booth was the guy who had done the AI for *Counter-Strike* bots so he really wanted to have AI at the forefront of the game. So, even when our companies were separate, we started working with them on the game. Gabe Newell was sitting with me and Erik Wolpaw at lunch and we were just babbling about the game to him. An hour later, he sent out an email that said, 'Hi Michael. Chet and Eric are going to help you with *Counter-Strike*'. We asked how much we could do, and he just said to work as much as we liked on it.

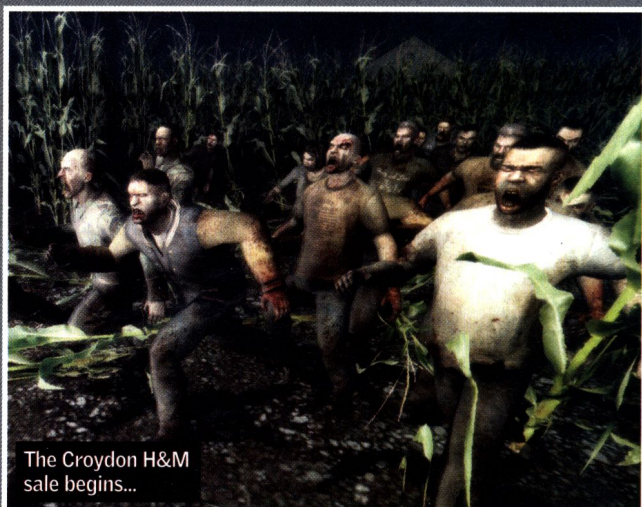
"Last winter Valve became one with Turtle Rock, and that opened up extra possibilities. That's where you saw the new art pass happen, the new character models... but that original seed was Michael Booth wanting to do this AI thing. Zombies are great for that."

02 FAST OR SLOW?

"There wasn't a debate. We had fast zombies in *Half-Life 2*, and I think the dynamic that they bring you, compared to that of slow zombies, is a lot more pulse-pounding. If you think of the first time you see a zombie horde in *Left 4 Dead*, then think about them if they were moving slow. You'd just think that you could take them down easily, when you should be thinking 'Oh shit. They're going to overwhelm me!'"



The tank: also quick on his feet.



The Croydon H&M sale begins...



"The dynamic that fast zombies bring you is a lot more pulse-pounding"

Chet Faliszek explains why *L4D*'s zombies run



The airport scenes remain a *PCZ* fave...

03 WRITER DUTIES

"The first thing we had to do was make sure that no-one put a heavy story in *L4D* and ruin it. Erik and I didn't want to dumb it up. A lot of zombie games have a big evil corporation, but we just didn't want that. We wanted people to passively enjoy the story. So some of the story is told through the graffiti, some of the story is told through the characters... we're going to keep having the story leak out.

"Me and Erik know how everything happened. Moving forward, some of the campaigns that'll be released on Steam may not take place after you get to Camp Echo. Some of it will be before, some of it may be even before *No Mercy* – the first chronological campaign. We can play with time and show you these different vignettes of what happened to these people during their journey."

04 ZOMBIE NODS AND UNDEAD WINKS

"Everyone on the staff are fans of horror or zombie movies. For example, for a while we were trying to work in an *Evil Dead 2* reference – if you remember they filmed a scene by putting the camera on a 2x4in piece of wood and running through the forest. The intro to *Death Toll* is a tribute to that. Also, as you've spotted, there's a reference to *Braindead* in *Blood Harvest*. The guy who does the destruction animation is from New Zealand, and he wanted the lawnmower and the pool of blood in there as a reference to Peter Jackson.

"There's non-movie references too – like the subway advert for the 'Erik's Autumn Flannel' event. If you see Erik Wolpaw today, he'll be wearing a plaid shirt. He's a big fan of plaid."



"Come 'ere and giz a kiss."

Middle zombie: Tom from *Father Ted*.



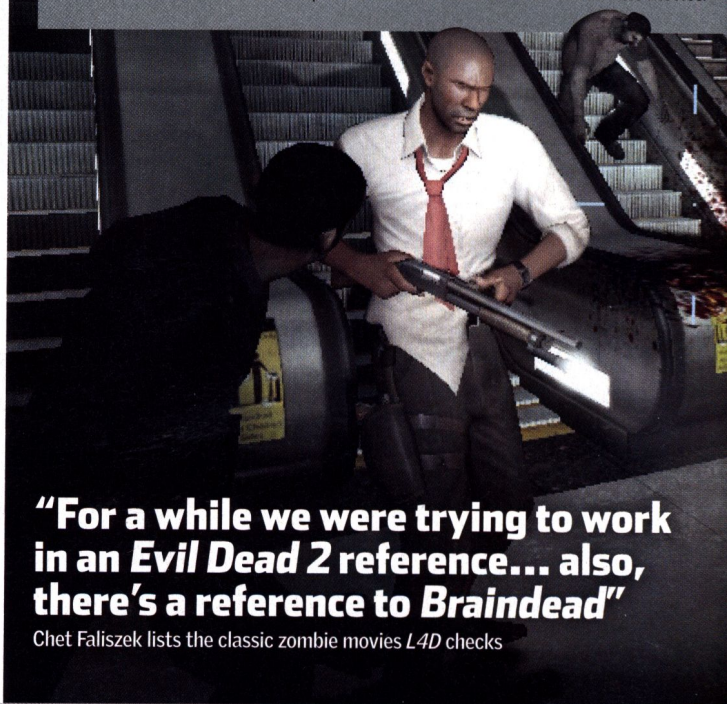
05 SPECIALIST INFECTED

"The specialised zombies came out of us thinking we needed to do certain things to the team. For example, if the team is super-tight together and really hard to get at, the Smoker can pull one of them out, and you've got this panicky event of 'We were all together, and crap – now we're not!'. A Boomer attack means that some of your guys are blind, everything's coming at them and so you've got to cover them. The Hunter, well if someone goes off on their own then he's going to own them. Then obviously with the Tank, everyone has to shoot him together as if you go one-on-one with him, you're going to die.

"All these things were built because co-op wasn't just tacked on – they're examples of us thinking of ways to reinforce it. We want you to have to help each other, we want to stop you from running off on your own. And, even if you are working together, we still want you to be fearful and have these moments when the chaos breaks everything apart."

06 JOSH AND BANTER

"We ended up recording 8,500 lines of dialogue, compared to *Half-Life 2: Episode Two* that had around 2,500. The released version of *L4D* has about 6,200 lines – some stuff didn't work out and some stuff we're holding back. A lot of it you won't hear unless you play a lot. There are a few references here too, for example in *Evil Dead 2* there's a pretty famous reference to shotguns, and if you play *L4D* enough you'll hear an exchange about that. Zoey and Louis both know those movies, this isn't a game where the rest of the world doesn't exist. Louis even talks about *Counter-Strike* at one point. Francis and Bill don't watch zombie movies."



"For a while we were trying to work in an *Evil Dead 2* reference... also, there's a reference to *Braindead*"

Chet Faliszek lists the classic zombie movies *L4D* checks

Just what has he been eating?

07 THE ZOMBIE LEFT BEHIND

"One Infected that was closest to getting in, but then got incorporated into another one, was the Screamer. The idea of the Screamer was that if you saw him you had to kill him, because he would be about to holler, and have all the zombies start rushing you. Really, he got incorporated into the Boomer, since when he vomits on you it does something similar. Also, originally the Smoker just smoked – he was simply about obscuring your vision and making you move slowly. The minute we gave him the tongue we thought 'OK, we've always had a problem with people bunching up and now we can break that...'"



Note the in-joke advert in the background.

08 ONLY THE BEGINNING OF THE END-TIMES

"There's a bunch of zombie types we've been thinking about, and ones that we've shot around that we may resurrect too. But really, the biggest thing about downloadable stuff would be new maps, new scenarios, new places. A big part of *L4D* is the initial exploration and we want to keep that going. Hopefully there'll also be a lot of user-made maps, and we're purposefully doing a lot of work to help people make them. In a way, I think it's a call back to the old *Doom* days, where everyone made their office, their home, and their school in the game. We want people to do the same thing, put their life in the zombie apocalypse."



One decapitation coming right up...

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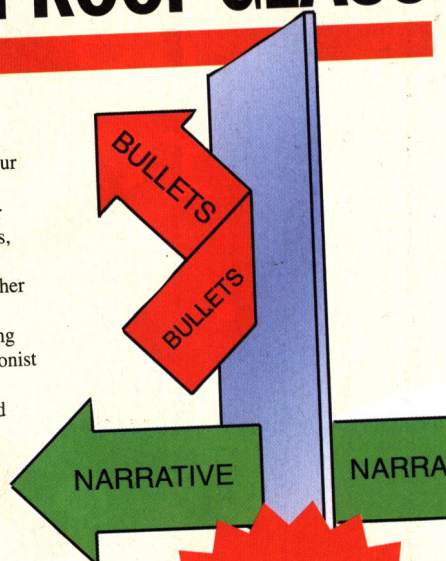
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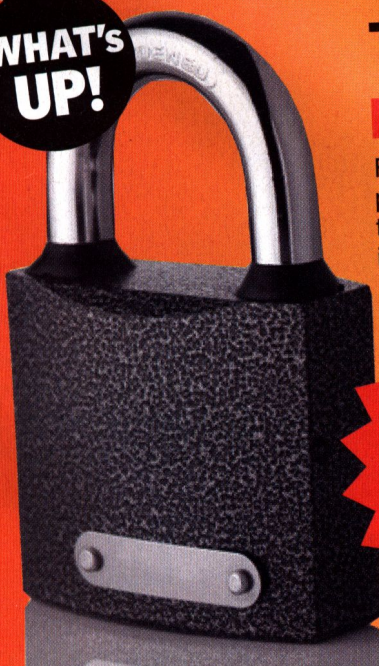
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