

BRITAIN'S BEST PC GAMES MAG PCZONE.CO.UK
PCZONE

ISSUE 210 SEPTEMBER 2009

DRAGON AGE ORIGINS

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BioWare's savage
RPG fully exposed!

WIN!
TINY COMPO
Puff, The Magic Dragon
is thought to allude
to which drug?

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Wolfenstein

7TH AUGUST 2009



PLAYSTATION 3



Games for Windows



XBOX 360



XBOX LIVE



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PCZONE

Contents

In this issue of the UK's best PC mag...

THE REBIRTH OF E3

THE MESSAGE FROM E3 2009 was clear: "We're back and better than ever before!" and the LA-based event had all the games, celebrity appearances and booth babes to prove it, including an obligatory porn star.

While in previous years the show was a mass of bodies that surged towards the latest free T-shirt, this year's E3 was on a slightly smaller scale, but that meant getting about was easier – providing you were smart and made appointments nearby each other, you could actually play on the games you wanted and there was plenty of food for everyone. Even if it was shit and overpriced.

While all you want to do at the end of the week is have a decent cuppa and a plate of beans on toast, at its best, this trade show is the greatest place on the Earth to see the next big thing in the gaming world.

An undisputed highlight was going behind closed doors with BioWare's Mike Laidlaw to get our hungry mitts on *Dragon Age: Origins* and explore a whole new area; it was a scoop genuinely exclusive to *PC ZONE* and only *PC ZONE*.

No one else in the world has played The Fade, and there was really no contest when it came to deciding whether to put this on the cover. *Dragon Age's* dark fantasy setting is more than living up to our expectations and we got completely immersed in The Fade. Enjoy the issue!

Ali Wood

Ali Wood

Editor

ali.wood@futurenet.com

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COVER STORY

DRAGON AGE: ORIGINS

So it has plenty of sex and violence, but can this game really be the next *Baldur's Gate*?



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LEFT 4 DEAD 2

Are the Valve haters justified in their anger about this sequel?



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inflatable chair!
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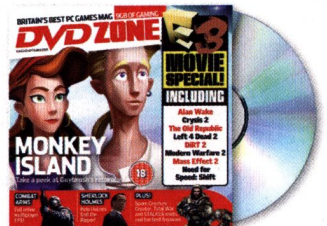
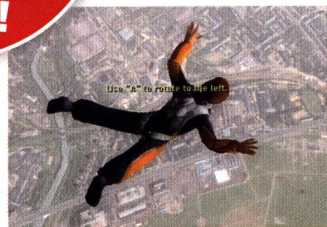
Combat Arms is free, and brilliant.



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ONLINE ZONE
FIGHT CLUB!
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60 FUEL

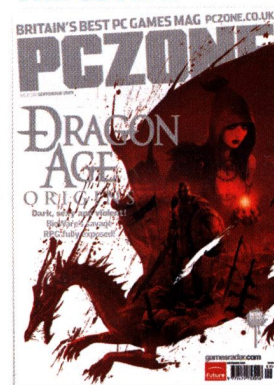
Can Codemaster's record-breaking open-world racer steal a podium finish?



98 FREEWARE

Find out whether Adam Glick liked playing with cats and fruit, Base jumpers, and a deluded penguin.

WHAT'S ON THE COVER?



50 DRAGON AGE: ORIGINS

Too busy? PC ZONE in 95 words...

The PC ZONE team were stuck in a rainy and overcast London, glaring at emails sent from LA from Steve Hill, Will Porter and Jon Blyth while they reported on everything PC-related at this year's E3. We were jealous, until we found out it was rainy and overcast in LA as well. Yay! Outside of our E3 special, we also give FUEL a road test, kill baby seals in Overlord II, beat up schoolgirls in Street Fighter IV, and watch Hogarty try to become his hero, Ben "Yahtzee" Croshaw, by making his very own game.



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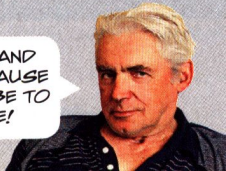
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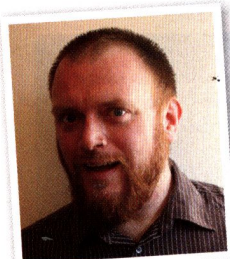
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Full offer details on page 44.

I'M YOUNG AND
VIRILE, BECAUSE
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Meet The Team

Here are the ones to thank for **PC ZONE**



JON 'LOG' BLYTH

Freelancer #1

AGE 34

LIKES Going out, staying in

DISLIKES Timewasters

FANCIES Anything where yetis
maim penguins

FAVOURITE GAME Dwarf Fortress

NOW PLAYING Blueberry Garden

After landing in LA to report on E3, Log left his passport at LAX. In order to retrieve it Log jumped on an bus (which Los Angelians say are filled with crazies and gangbangers) to head back to the airport. But he got a surprise when the bus driver told him to get out in Compton, as the bus had terminated. Fortunately, Log charmed the local gangstas into not terminating him, and returned unharmed to write the first of his new regular columns for us.

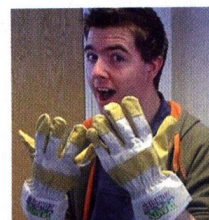


ALI WOOD

Editor

Ali sprinted out of the office when this issue went to the printers, dragging a suitcase behind her, laughing joyously, before leaping on a plane for an exotic holiday.

NOW PLAYING: *SF IV*



STEVE HOGARTY

Deputy editor

June's Tube strike caused a slight delay in Steve's commute to work: a four-hour delay. He denied accusations that he crawled the entire way from his home to work.

NOW PLAYING: *Team Fortress 2*

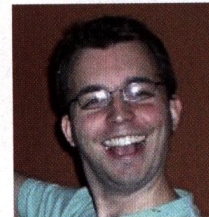


PHIL WAND

Baby daddy

Yes it's happened: Mr Phil Wand is now a proud (and sleep-deprived) father. He wants to name the infant either *Linux* or *Vista*, after vetoing his wife's suggestion: Mac.

NOW PLAYING: *Hide and seek*

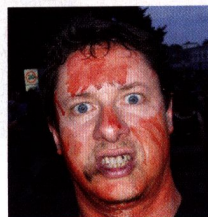


WILL PORTER

Freelancer #2

We have no idea how Will 'Nice Guy' Porter offended an American hooker and a wheelchair user, but he did. And we will never know because he denies the whole tale.

NOW PLAYING: *Fallout 3*



STEVE HILL

Freelancer #3

After a long absence, Steve Hill returns both to E3 and to the pages of *PC ZONE*. Sadly, his E3 experience was less Hunter S. Thompson than Emma Thompson.

NOW PLAYING: *Prototype*



DAVID BROWN

Staff writer

Between muttering about some guy called Ronaldo, cheering on people throwing eggs, and finishing *STALKER*, David did a bit of work.

NOW PLAYING: *Hearts of Iron III*

WHAT'S HELPED THIS MONTH... Steve Hill, Will Porter and Jon Blyth having passports and visas.

WHAT HASN'T HELPED THIS MONTH... E3 not being in May.

WHAT WE'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT...

HOW'D THAT HAPPEN? **8mins** Richard's bed collapsed at 5am on a Sunday morning. He blames IKEA.

E3 **10hrs** The planning to get three hacks there, and the gossip they heard.

JOYPADS **12mins** David's claimed that using a keyboard is just like using a joystick. He was justly slapped.

SEVEN! THERE ARE SEVEN?! 23mins Confirmation of the number of *STALKER*'s multiple endings means it'll have to be replayed.

"THAT'S DOCTOR WHO. HIM! HIM!!!" 2mins Richard frantically pointed out the new Doctor to a mate, who remained oblivious.

E3 BLACKMAIL 12mins Steve Hill rubbed his hands with glee, returning with nasty stories about people from E3.

GOLDEN GODS 24mins Ali went to *Metal Hammer*'s Golden Gods awards and gawped at Iron Maiden.

BNP AND EGGS 4hrs Should throwing eggs at Nick Griffin be a national sport? We say yes.

RONALDO 18mins David muttered to himself about football. No-one else cared.

SUSAN BOYLE LOST 1min She may have lost *Britain's Got Talent*, but she won YouTube.

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 Balcombe Street, London, NW1 6NW. The winner will be picked at random from all correct entries received and will receive a copy of *Empire: Total War*. The winner will be notified within 28 days of the closing date. Texts will be charged at 50p 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 want to receive this, include the word "STOP" at the end of your text or postal entry.

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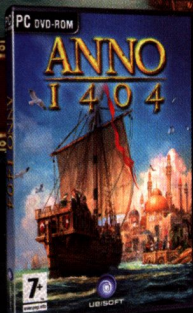


Ṣalam alaykum, stranger.

We have heard a lot about you. They say, you are a master builder, a skilful diplomat and a cunning trader in the Occident. We, the rulers of the Orient, welcome you and offer you our friendship. Do business with us, learn from us and discover the magic of the Orient.

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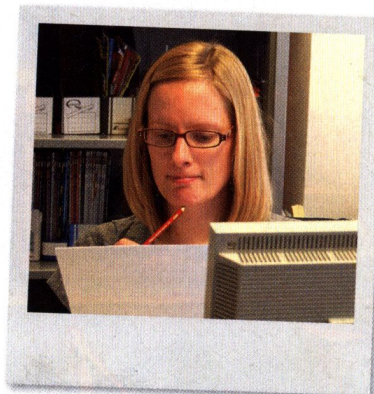


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Letters

After news broke of *Left 4 Dead 2*, Ali Wood was inundated with mail



KING OF LETTERS

NOT 4 ME

I'd always viewed Valve as a kind of anti-EA, with excellent deals like *The Orange Box* as well as cheap episodic content. On seeing the announcement of *Left 4 Dead 2* I'm not so sure. A sequel to a game that was released less than a year ago is a bit of a kick in the teeth, especially when you look at some of the gameplay footage.

Left 4 Dead 2 looks like the same game with new campaigns and weapons, and I doubt I'm alone in thinking this was stuff we'd get, at the very least, as a cheap add-on pack for the original game. Instead we got the Survival pack, which was should've been included from the beginning.

I'm also one of those that felt I didn't get my money's worth from the original. It's alright for a room full of game journalists with networked PCs to rave about co-op with mates, but



He looks like a chipmunk with those teeth.

for others a lot of time was spent just trying to find a game with some agreeable people.

For these reasons I won't be buying *L4D2*, unless it comes out with a significant discount to owners of the original game. Your move, Valve.

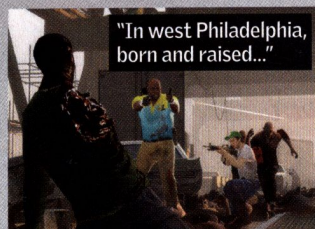
Drew Russell

You're not alone with your opinions. In fact a significant number of fans have set up online boycott groups to rebel against the sequel.

Valve have been strongly defending its decision to release the

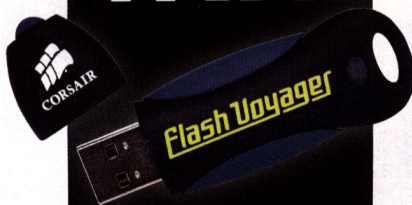
sequel so soon after the original, and truth be told, have they ever ripped you off? I'm giving them the benefit of the doubt at this stage and think they can be trusted not to completely screw this up.

This decision could also be a knock on effect of the recession; the developers have the content, fans will (mostly) want it, so why not release it now and make a few quid? Plus, I know I'm the eternal optimist, but have they actually said how much it will cost? There's the chance it will be fairly priced after all.

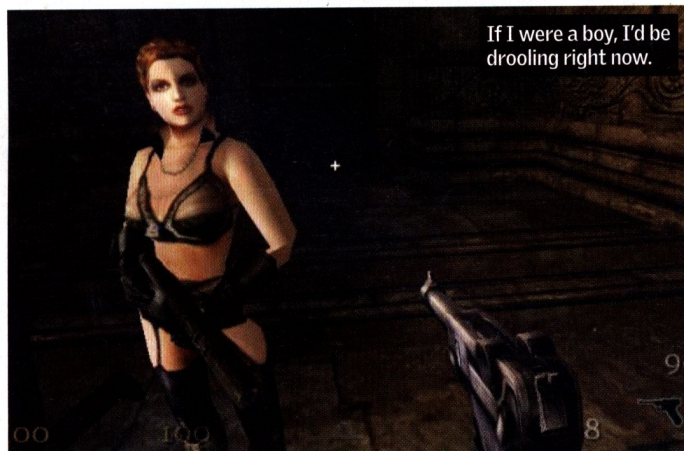


"In west Philadelphia, born and raised..."

WIN!



Want to be King of Letters? Then you'd better put pen to paper fingers to keyboard. The monarch will get a Corsair Flash Voyager memory stick. Corsair say these 32GB sticks were tested by being "laundered, baked, frozen, boiled, dropped, and even run over by a SUV" and still worked. So even the clumsiest PC user can't break one.



If I were a boy, I'd be drooling right now.

SEXY WOLFENSTEIN

Just wanted to thank you for putting *Return To Sexy Castle Wolfenstein* mod on your disc – rofl! Any chance of a mod to turn my gun into a (squirty) dildo?

Jonty Hawkes

Hang on, I'll need to consider this request very carefully. And... no.

WE WON!

Your electronic email address emerged as one of the Euromillion online winning email sweepstake program cooperation. Furthermore, your email address was attached to a cash award of

€1,000,000.00, (1 million Euro only) held on the 4 June, 2009. For further enquires and claims of your winning, please contact Mr Chistopher [sp] Weeks. Winning details below:

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Mrs Jenny Hugh

Hi Jenny. Imagine my surprise when I received this email! I never have and never usually put any money on the

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"I have *Steam* and because of my slow connection it's a nightmare"

UK's National Lottery, let alone the EuroMillions lottery.

Although I'm going to put these numbers on this Saturday and if I win, I'll let you know!

GOV PETITION

I really want *Gears of War*. I want its sequels. But it needs to make Epic and Microsoft a profit. Therefore I have started a petition to get it on *Steam*.

It has a big goal of 500,000 signatures but if we work together, we can achieve it. I need you to help promote it and to sign it yourself. It would help very much.

The address is www.petitionspot.com/petitions/gowsteam.

A loyal reader

If we can do anything to help one person achieve their dream, then we will. Vote away people!

GOOD POINTS?

I felt I had to respond to the 'good points' you attributed to Alex Denvir ('Steam Support', *Letters*, issue 209).

I wouldn't claim to be as tech savvy as Mr Denvir purports to be, however I must take issue with his somewhat patronising comments about *Steam* and the woes suffered by many people with that system.

As I'm sure he and you are aware, the speed of your broadband connection is not solely the result of the equipment in your PC. It's dependant on your local exchange. If it can only handle 1MB, that's all you get.

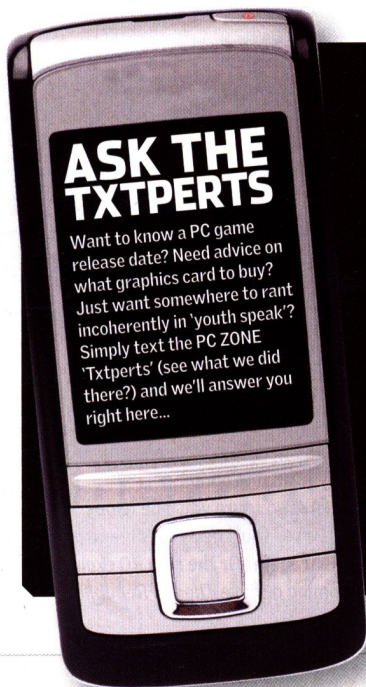
All my PCs are very high spec and up-to-date with everything installed (not by me – I pay geeks to do that for me). I have *Steam* on two of them and because of my slow connection – which is no fault of my own – it's a

nightmare. This has nothing to do with being 'tight' in any way it's simply to do with where you happen to live, and to imply that it's our fault for not spending money is a sweeping statement at best and at worst is plainly ridiculous.

If *Steam* works for you then bully for you, but don't patronise people for whom it won't.

Lee Curran

I think it's time to call an end to this particular *Steam* discussion. Every *Steam* user is going to have a different experience from others, depending what kit



I xpendd my lunch from kfc. Iz this wot u mean?
Mat B

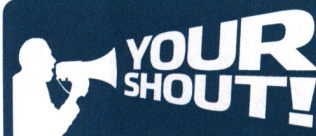
So long as it was a Family Bucket and you ate it all yourself.

WOAH! *MODERN WARFARE 2* LOOKS AMAZING!
Jonno Adams

Yes. It. Does.

valve r bein right ol' dicks with the new tf2 update. I don't want 7 ubersaws! I want a sniper or spy weapon. Next time u c them slap them in the
Anon

Answers on a postcard where this texter wants us to slap Valve... in the dictionary, perhaps?



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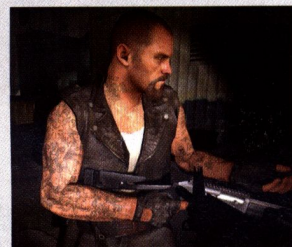
LEFT 4 DEAD

Sent in by Todd Ingram
PC ZONE SCORE 93%

During a zombie apocalypse conversation with my friends, one stated his weapon of choice would be his coat. Reasoning that "you could hide under it whenever a zombie came near and it wouldn't be any the wiser", unfortunately you're limited to firearms and explosives in *L4D*. Poor weapon implementation aside, this is an original and well-thought-out game.

The hype that every play through is unique rings true, where the fun stems from how your team reacts and adapts to what the game throws at you, as well as vice versa. To paraphrase Bruce Lee, the game is water.

YOUR SHOUT 85%



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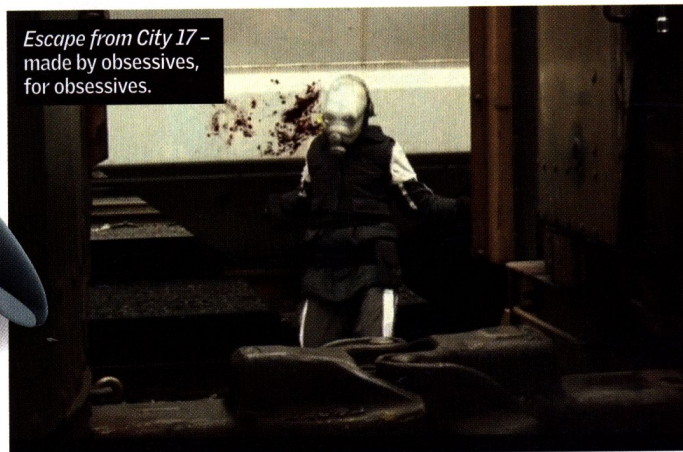
Die, horrible corporate shitbox!

they have, and how good their internet connection is.

TOP 5 GRIPES

I was reading your Top 5s section in issue 209's *Buyer's Guide* which gave me my usual titter. However I was disappointed at your choice of Top 5 Machinima Series. You chose all creations of the Roosterteeth studios where, don't get me wrong, I love *Red vs Blue* and *P.A.N.I.C.S.* which were great series, but there are much more on the internet that have been made with more care and attention.

On YouTube, the 'Machinima' page has a veritable palate of great machinima series like *Gman Squad* and *Xanatos'* other creations in the Source engine, *'Arby and the Chief in Halo 3* and *The Gmod Idiot Box* made in *Garry's Mod*.



Escape from City 17 - made by obsessives, for obsessives.

These series have more to offer than something like *Strangerhood*, so I'd recommend that people look at the Machinima channel on YouTube to find a great selection of machinima.

Also, projects like *Escape from City 17* (a live-action episodic serial set in *Half-life 2*) deserve plaudits for their efforts, contribution to gaming and keeping YouTube fresh.

Keep up the great work *PCZ* and keep on making me titter with your Top 5s.

Paul Burton

Thanks for your suggestions Paul. Should you see these printed some time in the future, they were all our own ideas, OK?

BYE-BYE PC

I've been a staunch advocate of PC gaming for years, especially as such great games like the *X2* and *X3* series are only available on the PC, and the whole keyboard and mouse combo in FPS games works so well.

However due to loss of job and no other jobs being available, I chose to strip down my PC and sell the parts on eBay to raise some cash.

Now my job situation has improved somewhat I looked into upgrading my existing PC (a low-spec barebones ASUS) so it could play recent titles in full HD. It costs a fortune, and you can probably guess where I'm going with this.

I compared it to an Xbox 360 and there was no competition: £209 for the *Elite* package with two games thrown in, compared to over £400 just to upgrade my PC and end up with a rig which was compromised at best.

I just can't justify the extra cost for one game, while everything, bar *X3*, is available on the Xbox. OK, the graphics on the Xbox aren't as good as those on a high-end PC, but the overall gaming experience is much better. And Xbox LIVE rocks.

I'm sure you've heard all of this before, but if the PC games industry is to survive, the hardware specifications need to be more realistic and must stop changing at the alarming rate they are now. That's the reality of it. Change or die, its that simple.

Shaun Pugh

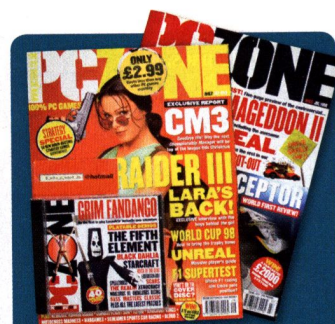
My prediction is that you will soon come back to PC gaming.

While the Xbox 360 does have all you outline, it doesn't offer the same immersive experience and community you get on the PC. However, it's very disappointing when a game is supposed to be a multiformat release, yet we get it months after the consoles do. That never fails to frustrate me.

But we all know patience is a virtue and we're often rewarded in spades for our loyalty: *Empire: Total War*, *Dawn of War*, *Football Manager*, *World of Warcraft* and *The Sims* - all these remain PC exclusives, and yet are still some of the bestselling games on any format around.

Are you sure you'll be happy, knowing you'll never be able to play them again? Or the new PC exclusives coming out like *The Old Republic*?

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LOST IN THE POST

LETTERS FROM OUR
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ANSWERED TODAY

WOW WIDOW

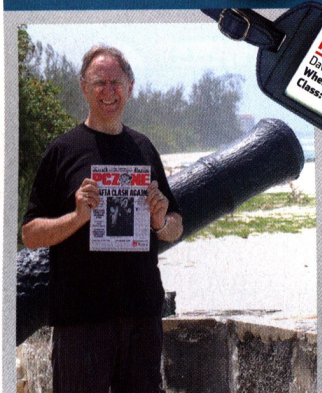
My husband has become welded to his mouse. All I can hear is him chatting to his mates about griffons. He keeps nagging at me to play, but I know that if I start, I'll have no left life - just like him. How long before we see *WOWA* - *World Of Warcraft Anonymous*? It can only be a matter of time before someone realises the damage this game can do to a person's life and so sets up the first self-help group.

Julia K

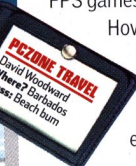
Since your letter in August 2005, wowanonymous.wordpress.com has been set up. However, rather than helping fans to give up it seems to be merely a celebration of the addiction! There is this though: wowdeto.com and wowaddictinstitute.com.

However, Julia there are far worse things to be addicted to: *Second Life* for instance...

PCZONE AROUND THE WORLD



We want photos of you with *PC ZONE* in the most exotic or inappropriate locations. Candid celeb shots count double. Every one printed wins a prize!



However due to loss of job and no other jobs being available, I chose to strip down my PC and sell the parts on eBay to raise some cash.

Now my job situation has improved somewhat I looked into upgrading my existing PC (a low-spec barebones ASUS) so it could play recent titles in full HD. It costs a fortune, and you can probably guess where I'm going with this.

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Too hirsute for some readers.

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HAIR TODAY

Just looking through the latest issue of *PCZ* and came across the subscription page. Is it just me, or does the lady in it have a slightly hairy back?

Keely Barnes

OK, she's slightly hairy. But then, if we're honest, isn't everyone's?

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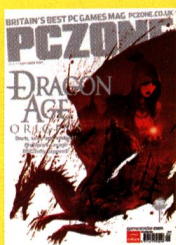
Cyberpower recommends CoolerMaster

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COVER STORY

DRAGON AGE: ORIGINS

BioWare turn their backs on high fantasy in their latest RPG



FANTASY'S GONE ALL dark, it seems. Sure, your *Baldur's Gates* and *Neverwinter Nights* were riddled with evil, but there was always a pervading sense of decency about the world. Now with *Dragon Age* wading into proceedings, the realms of elves and ogres are set to become every bit as morally ambiguous as our world. Happily though, BioWare are preserving the notion that those who live in fantasy worlds are sexy, scarily endowed, and yet to invent the bra. Swings and roundabouts, eh? Our intrepid word-vigilante Will Porter leaves behind the hubbub of E3 for a mega-secret glimpse of BioWare's next epic. The adventure begins on page 50...

PAGE

50



**PCZONE**

UPFRONT

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

ALI'S ABOUT

I NOTICED A chap reading *PC ZONE* on the Tube home the other day. While I was nervous about being recognised on public transport, I tried to sit next to him, but another commuter barged me out of the way and took the seat. I remained curious and began to spy on him to see what he was reading.

While I was discreet, this is a creepy thing to do, so I'd like to say sorry to the man on the Northbound Jubilee Line on 3 June reading the *Batman* issue. To be fair, he was so engrossed I don't think he would've noticed me if I'd stripped.

While I was busy playing spy, Hill, Porter and Log were in LA for E3, going above and beyond the call of duty to get in front of the best content at the show and supply us with a massive report. There was the new *Splash Damage* game, *Brink* which I've been itching to hear more about for months, and we also got our hands on *OpFlash: Dragon Rising* along with Valve's *Left 4 Dead 2*.

We've also got the first of Log's new columns this issue – this month about his baptism of fire into E3 – and also the return of Steve Hill's infamous E3 report. Next issue we'll have more E3 coverage as there's just too much to squash in one issue.

And if you do spot me on any form of public transport, feel free to say hello but also don't forget to give me your seat!

Ali Wood

Ali Wood

Editor

ali.wood@futurenet.com

WATCH OUT, PAYNE'S BACK

First details of Rockstar Vancouver's *Max Payne 3*

DEVELOPER Rockstar Vancouver PUBLISHER Rockstar WEBSITE maxpayne3.com

A BALDING, SLIGHTLY tubby Max Payne, grumpy as ever, hiding in Sao Paulo, Brazil, addicted to painkillers and sporting a scruffy beard. As far as the premise for the third Max Payne goes, we don't know whether to laugh or cry. Whatever way you want to look at Rockstar's new direction though, Max no longer appears to be the anguished film noir caricature from previous games.

Set 12 years after the close of *Max Payne 2*, our grumpy hero has tired of New York, and works as a private bodyguard for a wealthy Brazilian family. His attempts to retire are scuppered as his past doesn't seem to want to let go of the trench-coated, sideways-leaping superman.

Payne's new foe hasn't been revealed, neither have events from the decade leading to *Max Payne 3*, but we do know that the game will be set in "fully destructible" ghettos of Sao Paulo.

Max's addiction will feed into the game's structure, and "day and night" cycles will feature. Whether that means levels will be set in both daylight and the dark, or that there'll be an open-world element to Max's adventures is anybody's guess.

Bullet-time of course makes its return, that glorious and yet to be bettered slow motion, *Matrix*-style gunfighting system. Rockstar are promising more visceral and "ultra-violent" bullet-time in a souped-up RAGE engine (the tech which also powered *GT44*), and that the combat will now benefit from a cover system

and the ability to take human shields. Multiplayer will be in here too, a first for the series, though how Rockstar will manage bullet-time in an online deathmatch is beyond us –

perhaps they'll take the *F.E.A.R.* approach, allowing one person to remain sprightly while the others are mired in temporal sluggishness.

We'll have more info in next issue, and if you're well behaved, at least one screenshot of a man jumping sideways.

ETA
WINTER
2009

"Rockstar are promising a more visceral and 'ultra-violent' bullet-time"

STOP PRESS!

JOB RAIDER

Crystal Dynamics have booted out 25 staff from its San Francisco offices. The second time this has happened this year, incidentally.

FREE DRAGONS

As we predicted in *State of Play* (issue 207), *Dungeons & Dragons Online* is now made free to play. But not in Europe. Here you still need to subscribe.

BATTLEFIELD FRENZY

Add *Battlefield 3* to the list of games in that franchise, as DICE have confirmed they're working on it. More details as and when we get them.

36

BRINK

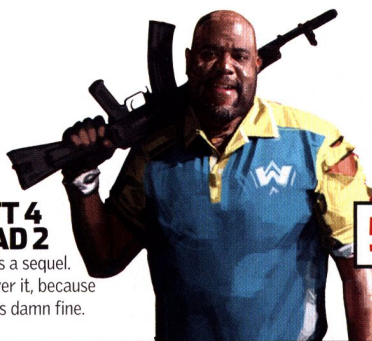
The new generation of multiplayer shooters is coming.



46

LEFT 4 DEAD 2

Yes it's a sequel. Get over it, because it looks damn fine.



50

DRAGON AGE: ORIGINS

Sex, blood and magic see BioWare return to fantasy.



SMUGGLERS REVEALED

The Old Republic goes Solo

DEVELOPER BioWare PUBLISHER LucasArts WEBSITE www.swtor.com

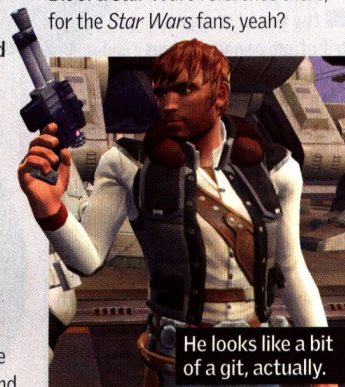
WE SAY "SMUGGLERS", but of course we mean the "Han Solo class". LucasArts have revealed that players of The Old Republic can choose to play as the Force-bereft funsters of the universe, forgoing the flashy magic of lightsabers and instead relying on the raw talent needed to dual-wield blasters effectively.

A brief showcase of the class showed off a few of the proposed talents. For a start, the game world will be peppered with dynamically created cover points, so your character can dive into cover behind objects for defence bonuses.

Smugglers will also be able to use grenades, head shoot droids, and blind

fire in wide arcs to attack more than one enemy at a time.

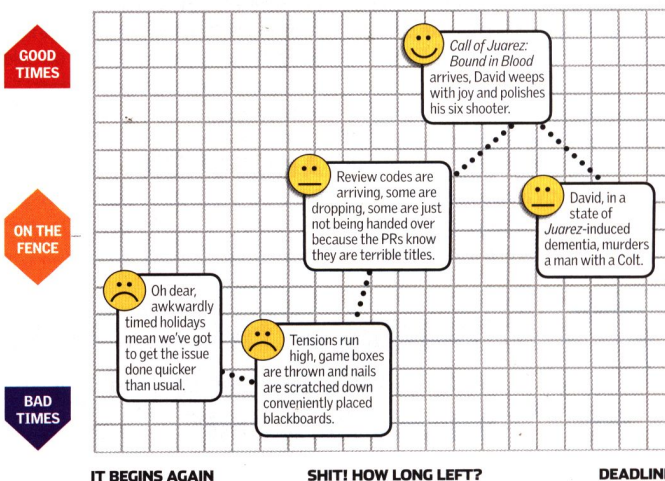
Though whether or not we'll be able to "shoot first" is still unknown. Bit of a *Star Wars* reference there, for the *Star Wars* fans, yeah?



He looks like a bit of a git, actually.

STUFF

The *Left 4 Dead 2* thing is rumbling on a bit more than we all expected. Tens of thousands of people threatening to boycott the game and Valve haven't covered themselves in glory with various videos of them promising material for *L4D*'s release that's never appeared. Gabe Newell is urging the community to stay faithful, saying that *L4D* isn't going to be abandoned. Newell tells us that team matchmaking, community matchmaking, mod tools, and other stuff will be arriving "during the coming months". Hang on, didn't Valve say that last year?

LIFE IS A ROLLER COASTER

Certainly not Max as we know him.

GAMES TO GO

It's second nature to us, but how is digital distribution changing the PC gaming retail industry?

Ali Wood investigates...

EARLIER THIS YEAR, Metaboli, a leader in the world of digital distribution, announced an incredible 120% year-on-year growth. They boast partnerships with Rockstar, Paradox and Epic Games and have recently inked a deal with Ubisoft, making their games available by its download-to-own for the first time. While many other industries are suffering in the recession, this ambitious firm also forecasts growth of over 100% for the rest of this year.

"Although we offer download-to-own – a single purchase of one game – we also offer games-on-demand – access to a catalogue of content for a single monthly fee," says Paul Howes, Metaboli's European business director. "And that's how we're very different to *Steam* and *Direct2Drive* because we offer games-on-demand through a subscription, and games-to-download."

Metaboli are working with publishers to make digital distribution even more attractive by including exclusive digital add-ons, and providing value in both content and delivery.

"One of the other things that we've been looking at is what we call pre-load where you download the game before it's released, and then we send a code to enable you to play it one minute past midnight on the day of release," said Howes. "So in that sense we can speed up distribution, although we are very reliant on publishers to build that into their strategy."

Valve recently announced that *Steam*, Metaboli's closest rival, has over 20 million accounts and almost 700

games to download, so it's certainly a healthy business. But Metaboli and *Steam* may not be able to keep up as innovative options for gamers crop up as mainstream companies begin to take downloads more seriously.

A NEW BREED

BitRaider's technology was originally unveiled at Austin GDC last September. It's unique as it allows players to start

playing a game when only 10% of it has been installed, leaving the rest streaming in the background.

Although BitRaider say they're working with a number of publishers and developers, founder and CEO Royal O'Brien admits many are sceptical until they see their product streaming.

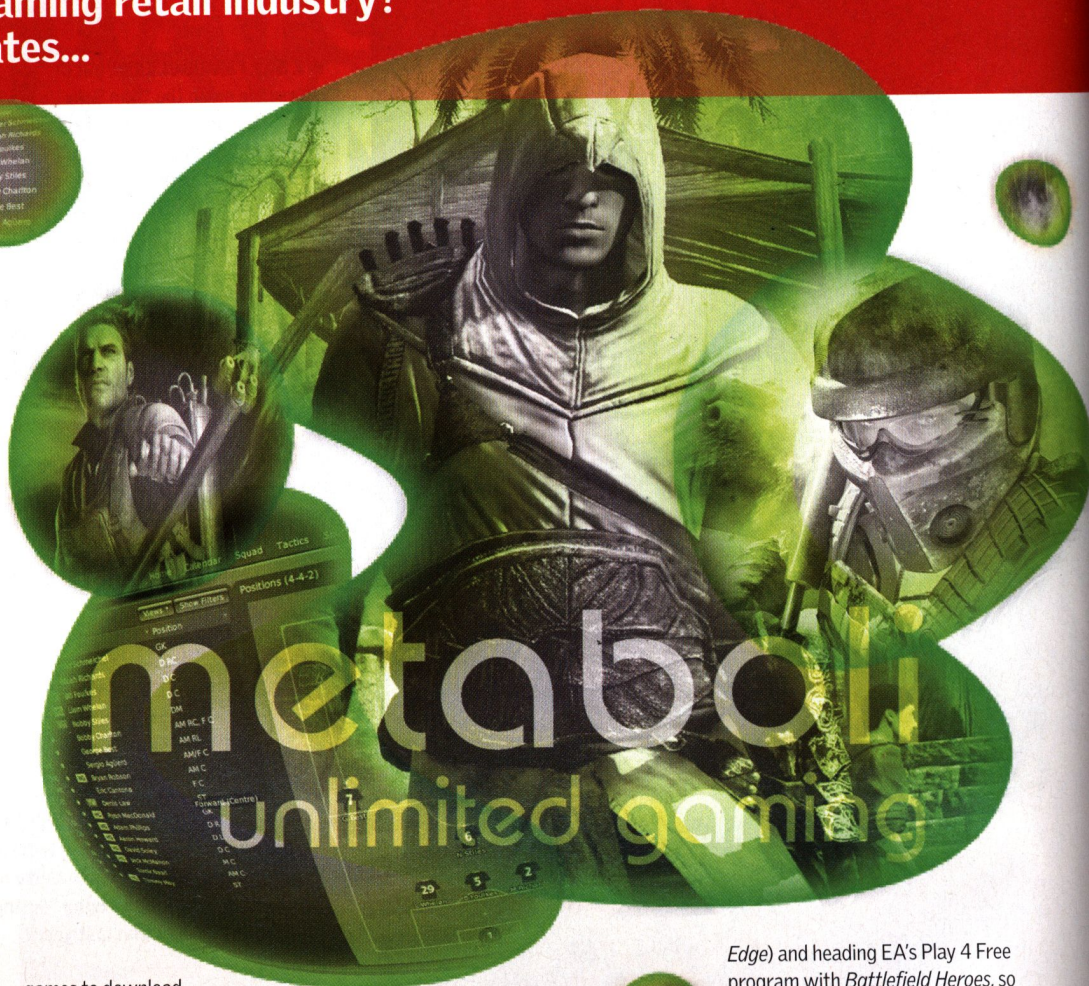
"Well, 99% of the time the feedback starts with 'It's not possible' and moves to 'How did you guys do that?'. From that point, we provide some feedback to them as a courtesy on how the game runs at the kernel level and we move forward from there. It is actually a simple process."

DICE has been in an experimental mood of late, with new games (*Mirror's*

Edge) and heading EA's Play 4 Free program with *Battlefield Heroes*, so with *Battlefield 1943*, it wanted to try something different too.

"I'd like to see this as another foray in the unknown," says producer Patrick Liu. "Why? Because we must learn to change and adapt to the market."

While other new release download-to-own-product has retained its retail value, *Battlefield 1943* will be available for just \$15 (£8), but DICE insist this is still a premium game. Do they think there's a danger models like this could erode prices across the board? "That thought has crossed my mind, but I don't think anyone can pull off such a product," defends Liu. "DICE has been in a great position with this game, and offering a download only for just \$15 is a unique opportunity for all gamers."

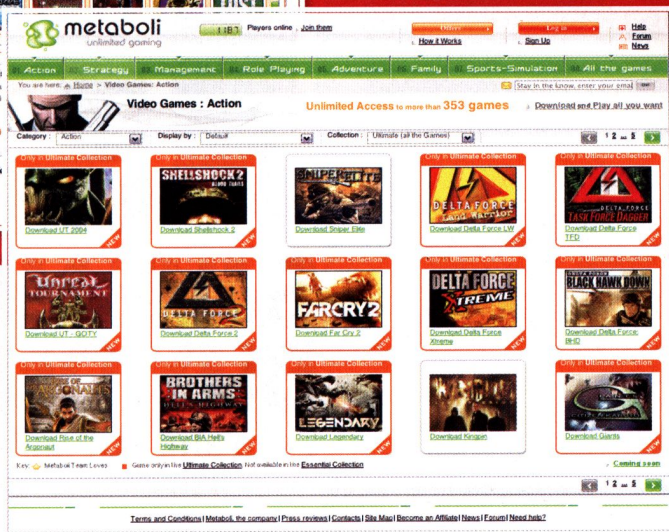


"Holding on to the old will not work as technology moves forward"

Patrick Liu, DICE



Metaboli are challenging *Steam* for control of the direct download gaming market.



"We have a lower barrier to entry with this title, but kept most of the depth of a classic *Battlefield* game," Liu continues. "I think we've set a new bar for what you can achieve in that segment, and I expect others to follow. There's no excuse to only release a certain type of game just because they're small and cheap. It's possible to deliver a full shooter experience as well."

NEXT STEPS

So the PC gaming market is still moving ahead like it always has, despite less shelf space being dedicated to PC games, and consequently more distribution being forced to go online. As mentioned there are multiple initiatives from all corners to push further toward digital distribution, including the traditional bricks and mortar stores (see 'High Street Online').

The appeal is not just the ability to save space in stores, but also to offer instant sales on the game's day of release, a proper back catalogue, 24-hour sales and instant price discounts – much in the way existing services do. It's just the logical next step in how games are bought.

"It's already been proven that if you make it difficult to get a product to the consumer, they will simply go find other means to get it," says BitRaider's O'Brien. "Digital distribution allows the gaming market to monetise their products faster and easier in many ways. It's already been proven that sure, people can go download MP3s anywhere, but last time I checked, the iTunes Store was doing well for something that people could download from anywhere."

"Bottom line, people will buy online if you give them ability to do it, which means digital distribution is not going anywhere, any time soon."



"The feedback starts with 'It's not possible' and moves to 'How did you guys do that?'"

Royal O'Brien, BitRaider founder and CEO

"It's a complex business to manage," adds Metaboli's Howes on why more traditional retailers haven't just introduced a download service themselves. "You've got to bring together all of the content from all of the publishers. We work with 56 different publishers from whom we licence content, that takes a lot of time and energy to manage."

"Also you need to aggregate technologies for the different types of technology: DRM technology and streaming technology to deliver this content over the internet and we tend to package it up so the users has a consistent experience."

"We're specialists in the area so I think they'd rather use us than bring in their own people to manage this type of service. The investment is considerable and why we've been successful, is that we do it for lots and lots of people. So we can spread our costs across lots of different channel partners, whereas a single partner just couldn't justify the investment at this point in time."

Metaboli are in discussions with two or three retailers which could well launch in the next three to six months: "There's more of them now that are going to be launching download

services," says Howes. "I wouldn't be surprised if all the top five had them within the next 12 months."

"I think that's the only way for them to survive," adds Liu. "Holding on to the old as the music industry did for a very long time, and still does, will not work as technology moves forward."

Eventually we expect most PC games to be distributed digitally. Soon enough physical product will be treated as some sort of luxury (limited editions with nice big manuals anyone?), but we're still a little way off that as DICE's Liu concludes: "It will take another generation of gamers to reach that point. So when our kids grow up they will know nothing better than digital download. Just as physical media has progressed from floppy discs to USB drives, and downloads are just the next natural step." **PCZ**

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

@ letters@pczone.co.uk
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HIGH STREET ONLINE

The Metaboli and GAME team-up

High-street retailers have been slow to embrace digital distribution. But if customers do go in a store and a game is sold out, they know they can retain that customer by giving them another option. GAME has been working with Metaboli on its games-on-demand service for the past five years, as Metaboli's Paul Howes reveals.

Q Are any retailers taking digital distribution seriously?

A We've been working with GAME for the best part of five years.

Initially it was a low-profile launch; they wanted to test the market as they needed to understand how the digital distribution market worked, so they partnered with us. We provided them a games-on-demand service and a download-to-own service.

How has it been received by the consumers?

The service has gone from strength to strength, and towards the end of last year we began to integrate download buttons into GAME's PC product pages, to give customers a choice to either buy the boxed version or download the game.

Because of this we saw a massive increase in sales: they went up by about 50%, purely because when people were searching for product, they were then given the choice of whether they wanted to buy the box or download the title, and it made all the difference.

Why haven't consumers heard much about your service being available on GAME.co.uk?

It would be good to get GAME talking about it publicly, as it's been fairly low profile. Although at the beginning of this year GAME suddenly increased the level of the resource they were committing to this partnership, and they're taking it much more seriously now, which suggests that they see it as being very valuable to them in the near term.

How long until other retailers get on board?

Other retailers have been a bit slow coming to the party, which has surprised me. I've been talking to all of them for the past couple of years. GAME were pretty quick to jump onto this, but others have been taking their time. They've adopted this wait-and-see approach.

PCZONE ChartsOfficial data compiled by
GfK ChartTrack

- 1 **NEW** **THE SIMS 3**
Issue 208 - 92%
- 2 **↓** **FOOTBALL MANAGER 2009**
Issue 202 - 90%
- 3 **↓** **EMPIRE: TOTAL WAR**
Issue 206 - 94%
- 4 **↓** **WORLD OF WARCRAFT: WRATH OF LICH KING**
Issue 202 - 86%
- 5 **NEW** **PROTOTYPE**
Issue 209 - 70%
- 6 **RE** **CALL OF DUTY 4: MODERN WARFARE**
Issue 188 - 89%
- 7 **—** **WORLD OF WARCRAFT: BATTLE CHEST**
N/A
- 8 **↓** **THE SIMS 2: DOUBLE DELUXE**
N/A
- 9 **RE** **GRAND THEFT AUTO IV**
Issue 203 - 91%
- 10 **↓** **FALLOUT 3**
Issue 201 - 91%
- 11 **↓** **SPORE**
Issue 199 - 95%
- 12 **↓** **COMMAND & CONQUER: RED ALERT 3**
Issue 201 - 86%
- 13 **↓** **WARHAMMER 40,000: DAWN OF WAR II**
Issue 205 - 78%
- 14 **RE** **LEFT 4 DEAD**
Issue 202 - 93%
- 15 **↓** **COMPANY OF HEROES: TALES OF VALOR**
Issue 208 - 76%
- 16 **↓** **THE SIMS 2: APARTMENT LIFE**
N/A
- 17 **↓** **CALL OF DUTY: WORLD AT WAR**
Issue 202 - 84%
- 18 **↓** **CRYSIS: MAXIMUM EDITION**
N/A
- 19 **NEW** **DEMIGOD**
Issue 208 - 68%
- 20 **RE** **SINS OF A SOLAR EMPIRE**
Issue 193 - 91%

**1. THE SIMS 3**

No surprise that this game hit the top spot. But that's OK with us, at least until the content packs start appearing.

**9. GRAND THEFT AUTO IV**

What? You're surprised Rockstar's finest outing has reappeared? Face it, everyone wants to be a gangster.

**6. CALL OF DUTY 4**

Again, it's no surprise that *Modern Warfare* is back, given all the hype surrounding *Modern Warfare 2*.

**14. LEFT 4 DEAD**

Oh come on, you should've expected *L4D* here, after Valve threw the Survival Mode at the infected mob.

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You see we're that good to you. But you'll have to be quick, as there's only a limited number available to buy and once they're gone, they're gone. It might even be better to subscribe... see the latest offers on page 44-45.

**VOTE FOR YOUR
GAME OF THE YEAR!**
Golden Joysticks shortlist live

WEBSITE goldenjoystick.com

FALLOUT 3, **LEFT 4 DEAD**, **Call of Duty: World at War**, **Empire: Total War** and **Football Manager 2009** are all set to go head to head in the battle to win the Ultimate Game of the Year award at this year's Golden Joysticks.

Over 270,000 voted in the long list and now it's time to log on and vote for

which games you want to win. Already over half a million have made their opinions count, so get on with it!

As for the winner of the PC Game of the Year our money's on *Left 4 Dead*, but it's up against stiff competition.

Head to goldenjoystick.com to find out more.

CRYSIS EVOLVED

A new engine means new game

WEBSITE games.ea.com/crysis

PREPARE FOR THE end of your current system as *Crysis 2* is looming over the horizon like a graphics card melting juggernaut. Well, that's what we'd have said a year or so ago, but now the situation seems rather different.

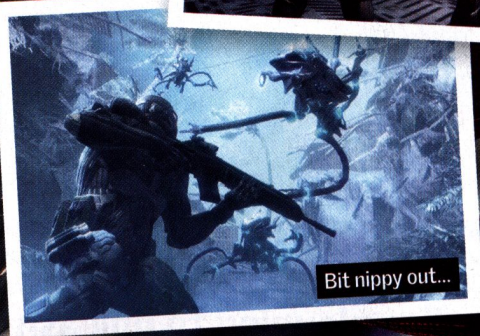
You see, *Crysis 2* is being developed on the CryENGINE 3, which is part of Crytek's attempt to break into the console market. This should mean that the game's system requirements, curiously, could be less than the original's.

"The development of *Crysis 2* marks a major stepping stone for our studio," said Cevat Yerli, head honcho at Crytek. "This is not only the next

game in the *Crysis* franchise, it's the first title being built on CryENGINE 3."

Lead animator Steven Bender has informed the world that the developer was still pushing graphical boundaries, stating that the goal was to push for near-photorealistic movie quality. Which is probably a bit ambitious as the game will have to run on the Xbox 360.

As for the game itself, we can guess it'll involve shooting aliens and Koreans again, but that would of course be pure conjecture on our parts. Let's hope there's more to look forward to than just a rehash of the first game and *Warhead*, good as they were.



DUAL ROLE FOR MOLYNEUX

Lionhead boss joins up with Microsoft Game Studios

WEBSITE microsoft.com/games

EVERYBODY'S FAVOURITE ONE-MAN hype machine, Peter Molyneux, has been promoted to the post of European creative director at Microsoft Game Studios, a move that apparently occurred as far back as March of this year.

Those with a penchant for Lionhead games need not be too concerned, because Molyneux's new role doesn't

mean he will be vacating his position in the comfy chair at the head of that company. Instead, he will split his time between the two.

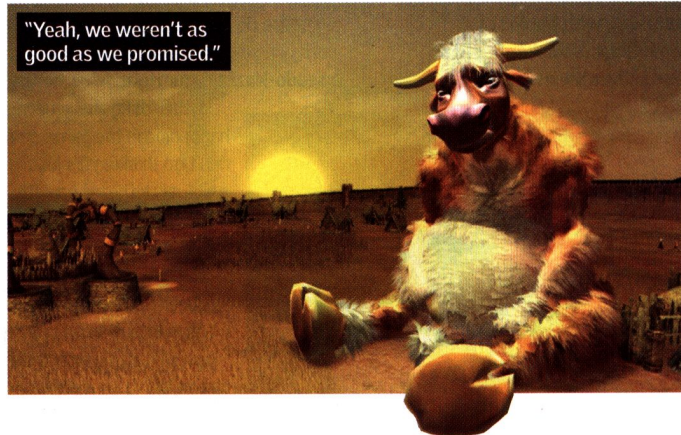
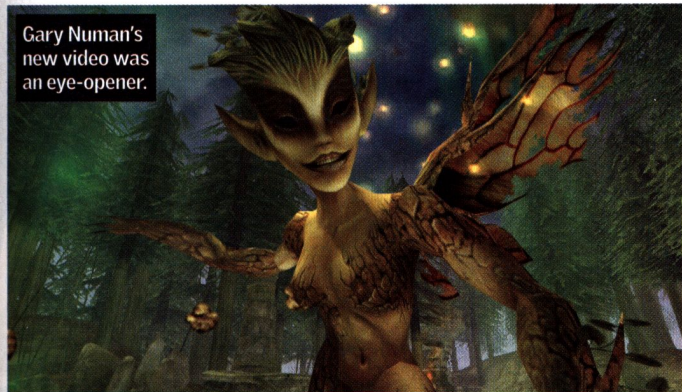
Phil Spencer, the general manager at MGS, was enthusiastic about hiring Molyneux, saying: "The best way for us to make sure our platforms evolve in a way that enables the best creative experiences is to make sure our creative


leaders are closely tied into the work that's going on with the platform team."

Molyneux himself said he wasn't going to be in a position to veto ideas he himself didn't like, although you can bet that, if he sees an idea that is the best thing ever in the history of computer games, we'll be sure to hear about it.

"I'm more about making sure they really are doing the experiences they're

passionate about, because passion is really central," he said, commenting on his new role. What this means for the PC games side of things is unclear, considering Molyneux himself has been outspoken about favouring console development nowadays. Does this signal a move back towards the PC side or is it a move to take MGS further away? Only time will tell.





Call that a castle? It's barely even a keep.

CASTLES IN THE SKY

Firefly Studios planning to unleash *Stronghold* MMO

WEBSITE fireflyworlds.com

IN AN UNUSUAL move, Firefly Studios have decided to take a different approach to the MMO game genre, using their own highly successful castle-building series – *Stronghold* – as the template.

At the moment, the game is in closed alpha phase, so don't expect it to

be out any time before early 2010. We'd like to chip in and say this estimate is very optimistic, so don't be overly surprised if the game's arrival slips until much later that year.

At the moment, it seems like the game will be very similar in approach to the offline versions, with tech trees,

resources and so on all playing their usual vital roles.

Players themselves will be able to get promoted up ranks based on their performances, and there is the potential for an emphasis on creating a more politically motivated community than in any other MMO. Elements such as

factions and elections could play a large role in achieving this.

We also believe there will be more emphasis on taking aggressive action against enemies, because a game in which everyone hid behind vast stone walls without the ability to attack each other wouldn't be very exciting.

NEW FIELDS OF BATTLE

Pants and boots not the only new things in *Battlefield Heroes*

WEBSITE battlefield-heroes.com

THIS MONTH MARKS the first part of our Battlefield Heroes clothing giveaway, with the first two items being Rippin's Rocket Boots and Pants. Over the next few months

you'll be getting codes that will allow you to redeem other bits of clothing from the BF Heroes website, so you can turn your avatar into the smart pseudo-Nazi to your right.

Other things have been happening in the game, so don't go thinking it's just a virtual clothes shop with a bit of shooting thrown in for good measure.

Recently, a new map has been added, Coastal Clash, which is an infantry-focused scenario with tight streets, a big windmill to

snipe off and foliage to hide in. In fact, the windmill itself is the key control point to capture if you want to win. Elsewhere there's a whole lot of new features, such as leaderboards, a friends list, groups (clans) and player searches.

There'll also be the facility to buy stuff from the shop instead of renting it, plus the timely addition of PunkBuster. Whether you think this anti-cheat system works, it's better to have it than not. Anything that prevents cheats from

succeeding can only be a good thing, right?

If you do find someone behaving in a suspicious manner, there's also a reporting system that allows you to inform the admins about these things.

To claim your very own Nazi Rocketeer gear, use the unique code on this month's DVD case.

"You can turn your avatar into a smart pseudo-Nazi"

One fully equipped PCZ reader.

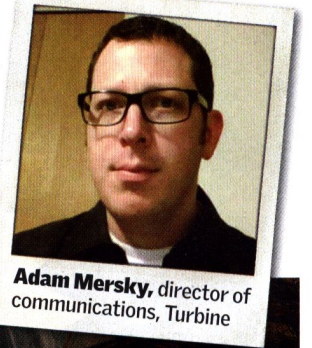


Coastal Clash's setting is rather idyllic.

LOTRO EXPANDS

Turbine's Adam Mersky takes us deeper into Middle-earth

PUBLISHER Codemasters **WEBSITE** www.lotro.com **PRICE** £19.99 then £12.99/month



Adam Mersky, director of communications, Turbine

D AVID BROWN LIKES to read books, so who better to talk to Turbine about the latest chapter in the *Lord of the Rings Online* saga? He spoke to Turbine's Adam Mersky, about what's coming in *Book 8* and what the company has planned for Middle-earth in the future.

Q So, what's *Book 8* going to bring to *LOTRO*?

A I think the highlights of *Book 8* are the new instance spaces – new places for players to explore. We'll also have two three-man spaces, a six-person space and 12-person raid space, which is the largest raid space we've introduced at level 60, which is the current level cap.

I actually really enjoy the three-person instances we've put together. These are meant for small Fellowships, for small groups, and they've got a great deal of flavour to them in the sense that you're manipulating these ancient works for the dwarves. In one case, there's this network of mirrors that bring light down from up above into the tunnels of Moria and the ancient civilisation there. The other has a series of water wheels and canals, so there's a lot of minor puzzles, clicking on this, opening that, extending gateways and doorways, using light to your advantage in the case



and to do it quickly, and so it's an investment, in the player base and the game. While it's challenging, I'd say it's very rewarding.

How come you only added quest markers in *Book 7*?

The game's been live now for two years and over that time we've learned a lot

players who've been playing MMOs since the early days of MUDs and are used to the challenges and struggles that come with this type of highly complex game world, but we also get a lot of people coming in who are experiencing an online game for the first time, who were attracted by the *Lord of the Rings* name. We have to constantly address both audiences and make sure we have the tools in there to help new players and aid for mature players.

The key to the quest guide is that it's an optional thing, you can turn it on or off, so it's really just another option for players to help them on their way.

Who's this Gorothûl guy?:

He's a sorcerer from Dol Guldur. In Tolkien's terms that means a servant of Sauron, someone serving dark forces and powers. He is bringing the Black Orcs and the powers of Sauron west. This is an influence we've felt in Moria since the beginning of that storyline, competing orcs within

Moria itself, the forces of the nameless that was connected to Balrog and, finally, the influence of Sauron from the east.

I think this is the first time we're seeing Sauron's hand directly. We've seen it through Angmar, through the false king of Angmar, to this point and now we've crossed the Misty Mountains, so the War of the Ring is finally beginning for the players.

What's up next for *LOTRO* players?

We're taking them to Mirkwood, the fortress of Dol Guldur – the ancient home of Sauron. Later this year, we're going to have a level cap increase in the game and we're going to introduce a new system called 'skirmishes', which we can't talk about. It's going to be a whole new system in the game, it's going to be really cool and add a lot of replayability. You'll be able to create custom soldiers to command and send into battle, which is awesome. **PCZ**

"This is the first time we're seeing Sauron's hand directly... the War of the Ring is finally beginning"

of the mirrors. They're fun spaces, they aren't long, but they are beautiful and challenging.

How difficult is it to consistently deliver free content for *LOTRO*?

It's definitely a challenge to offer free material on a regular basis.

If you look at *Asheron's Call*, which was our first game, we were essentially releasing free content on a monthly basis for 10 years, so we're very focused on responding to the players and on generating that new content. It takes a lot of effort and focus to create that kind of new content with speed, to do it with the quality level that we demand

about the preferences of our players and watched the player rates grow. At launch, *LOTRO* was one of the most accessible games on the market, one which changes and we want to make sure we stay on top of that as well.

There's two things: one is the vision we have for the game from the get-go and where we want to go and all that, then there's the feedback from the community, which thankfully has been growing consistently for a long time now. I think when we talk about the maturity of our player base, I should also bring in another element of that: the broadening of our player base.

Yes, we have a lot of hardcore



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1&1

JON 'LOG' BLYTH...

COSPLAYERS, NERDGASMS & BOOTH BABES



This was my first year at E3, and my head was filled with gullible imaginings. My problem is, I want the world to be more amazing than it probably is. So if people exaggerate, I choose to ignore the obvious overstatement, and imagine a world in which their wild and crazy lies are true.

So, when I was told to allow 30 minutes to walk from one appointment to the next, I looked up the average walking speed, and worked out that E3 was two miles long. When a salivating man told me there would be booth babes everywhere, some with their knockers right out, I built an arresting mental image not unlike the cover of *Being John Malkovich*. Only with more knockers and fewer Malkoviches.

So, on Tuesday morning, my brain was a patchwork quilt of delusion and hope. The Los Angeles Convention Center could only have been a disappointment. And so, it was. For starters, the doors weren't made out of caramel, and I wasn't immediately migrated into a higher plane to join the first game of 10-dimensional *Tetris*. Instead, I shuffled through my papers, pressed an imaginary pair of glasses back up my nose, and beetled off to my first appointment, with SEGA. The first thing they showed me, was Mario and Sonic's new *Olympics* game.

It's this kind of chasm between expectation and reality that causes some people to fall into a lingering melancholy. If it wasn't for the fact they showed me *Aliens vs Predator* immediately afterwards, I was thinking about going home.

So, I discovered there are two sides to E3. The first, and less entertaining side: the hot-foot shuffle from one end of the conference hall to the other, trying to keep an over-ambitious set of appointments, with people who – honestly – are far too busy to notice you've not turned up to have them sidestep your questions. This is the side of E3 that any games journalist will be keen to emphasise. It's not fun, they'll say. It's incredibly busy.

I'm no better. I'll gladly tell you how busy I was, simply to justify my own trivial existence. A tiny, busy fish in a bizarrely profitable industry. I may not be doing anything useful with my life, but at least I'm too busy to notice the depth of my futility.

But then there's the other side – those cosplay girls who manage to smile all day, and put up with clammy pawed gentlemen keeping their arms around them for too long after the camera's flash has gone off. The noise soup so dense that the best you can hope for is to fish out an identifiable crouton. The walls of plastic tat that one opportunistic company is trying to convince you will breathe new life into *Wii Sports*. This is the E3 that it's easy to miss, if you're working – the daft, flash carnival. And because it's a trade fair, everyone really should be working. But if these people are all



"I may not be doing anything useful with my life, but at least I'm too busy to notice the depth of my futility"

FINE DINING

If \$8 seems a little pricey for an E3 sandwich, then you've got two options: scavenge for the free, food that pops up now and then, and must be eaten right away without looking at it, or pay \$1.39 for a Cheese & Bean Burrito, from an LA corner store. Cheap, yes; but that's because the leathery, wrinkled bread resembles your grandmother's arm, and it has a tensile resistance to human teeth that perfectly matches that of brittle skin. But in the event I'm forced into cannibalism, at least I've had some practice at it.

professionals, why do they want so many crappy free T-shirts? Just walking around those exhibits gave me something I've never had before: an overview. I'm a newcomer to the games industry, really. After just three years here, I felt like I was staring at jigsaw pieces, scribbling a percentage score on the back, and putting it back in the box. Now, I feel like I've made real progress on the edges. It's like I've just realised you can roll the mousewheel down, to zoom out.

And then there were the nerdgasms. I got to speak to Tim Schafer. I got to sit on a bench with Tim Schafer, and ask him why the hell *Brütal Legend* wasn't coming out on PC. His answer? That he had no part in that decision, and if it was down to him it'd be available in every format. "Even a sweet drinkable liquid?", I thought about asking, but didn't say it out loud, in case he looked at me like I was a dick. "Even a sweet drinkable liquid," I imagined him replying.

So, that one's official, at least in an imaginary capacity – it's EA's fault. A pox on your corporate snout! **PCZ**

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PCZONE

E3 SPECIAL

PART 1
**PREVIEW
BLOWOUT!**

39
**MASSIVE
GAMES!**

The past two E3 expos were nothing short of disappointing. However, this year they promised the show would be a return to form, and the LA-based event didn't disappoint. Over the next 32 pages we bring you an explosive report from the world's most amazing showcase of new games. From our cover star, *Dragon Age: Origins* through to the controversial sequel *Left 4 Dead 2* - they're all here. Plus, we'll have more for you in Part 2 next month!

STEVE HILL

HILL RESURRECTS HIS INFAMOUS E3 REPORT **P26**

BORDERLANDS

INSIDE GEARBOX'S CEL-SHADED SHOOTER **P30**

ALAN WAKE

HE'S BACK AND WE HAVE THE INSIDE SCOOP **P32**

BRINK

SPLASH DAMAGE'S NEW GAME HAS US SALIVATING **P36**

APB

THE COPS AND ROBBERS GAME YOU HAVE TO SEE **P38**

**OPFLASH:
DRAGON RISING**

HANDS ON! FIND OUT HOW IT'S SHAPING UP **P40**

LEFT 4 DEAD 2

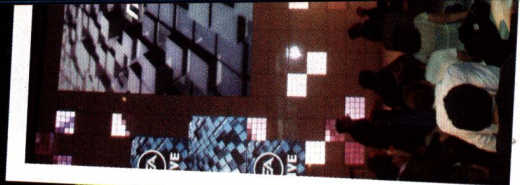
VALVE'S CONTROVERSIAL SEQUEL EXPOSED **P46**

**DRAGON AGE:
ORIGINS**

BEHIND THE SCENES WITH BIOWARE'S RPG **P50**

PLUS ALL THESE!

**MODERN WARFARE 2 • WOLFENSTEIN
BLUR • CRYSIS 2 • MASS EFFECT 2
SINGULARITY • SPLINTER CELL
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HILLY GOES TO

Steve Hill is down but not out in Beverley Hills

E3 is back. Following the dismal showing of the past two years, this is undeniably the real thing with publishers, developers, global superstars, booth babes and big boys, not to mention a hapless trio of PC hacks.

While erstwhile *PC ZONE* stalwarts Will and Log share a bunk bed in a downtown hostel, I am holed up in The Beverley Hilton, where you can buy a tuxedo for your dog, but you can't get a decent cup of tea of a morning. In what can be described as a strong week, this is my story.



Hill's Jedi training started well, but ended in disaster.

MONDAY

ROCKING UP AT Microsoft's morning conference under unseasonably grey skies, familiar faces are in evidence, and it's noticeable how old everyone has got. While I maintain my youthful good looks through a vampiric existence and flexible work ethic, others are visibly dying, clinging desperately to the games industry like a rising balloon.

That said, the show is stolen by a pair of sexagenarians, kicking off in astounding fashion with an appearance by the two best drummers in *The Beatles* for the unveiling of their *Rock Band* game. McCartney really should have spat out his gum before uttering, "I never thought we'd end up as androids," but Ringo Starr showed potential as a games journalist by drawling, "The graphics are very good."

Long-term Activision employee Tony Hawk wasn't going to be able to compete with that, despite having a wireless plastic skateboard. Of more interest is a breathtaking demo of *Modern Warfare 2*, staking a claim for best in show. Elsewhere, *Alan Wake* looks like a perfect combination of *Silent Hill* and *Alone In the Dark*; *Left 4 Dead 2* is more of the same, and *Splinter Cell: Conviction* seems a return to form.

And some bloke called Steven Spielberg is wheeled out to bang on about a glorified EyeToy.

With scarcely time to take it all in, it's off to the EA conference in a crumbling downtown theatre, where everyone is thrown by the appearance of pre-pubescent girls pretending to style hair. Normal testosterone levels are raised with *Brütal Legend* designer Tim Schafer claiming the game is based on his 14-year-old wank fantasy. EA Sports head honcho Peter Moore keeps up the keg-chugging frat-boy image with a slew of American sports games, but no *FIFA*, and proceeds to ham it up with hirsute tennis ace Pete Sampras.

Crysis 2 is announced, there's a teaser of Realtime Worlds' MMO, *APB*, and BioWare are wheeled out for *Dragon Age: Origins*, *Mass Effect 2*, and finally *Star Wars: The Old Republic*, replete with an army of lightsaber-wielding numpties.

Following a beer break, it's the Ubisoft conference, an interminable affair featuring a half-hour monologue from James Cameron about the game of his film, *Avatar*. Even the appearance of the world's second-greatest footballer fails to lift the spirits, with Pelé explaining in perfect English that he can't speak English, before employing an interpreter. A mind-numbing demonstration of hamster-based kids' games tests the patience, and the words *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* spark an instant walkout from the Brit contingent, catching a glimpse of *Assassin's Creed II* on the way to the exit.

It's been a hard day's graft, but respite comes with Activision's *DJ Hero* party, with sensational live performances from Jay-Z and Eminem. It's a celebrity-packed affair, with an Olsen twin, Kelly Osborne and the cast of *Entourage* milling about with the cream of the games industry. Will finds himself obliviously chatting to the cast of *Mad Men*, and even Leonardo DiCaprio is spotted on the balcony. Still seething from James Cameron's onslaught, I point out to him that, "*Titanic* was shit!" He doesn't hear me. I've never seen it.

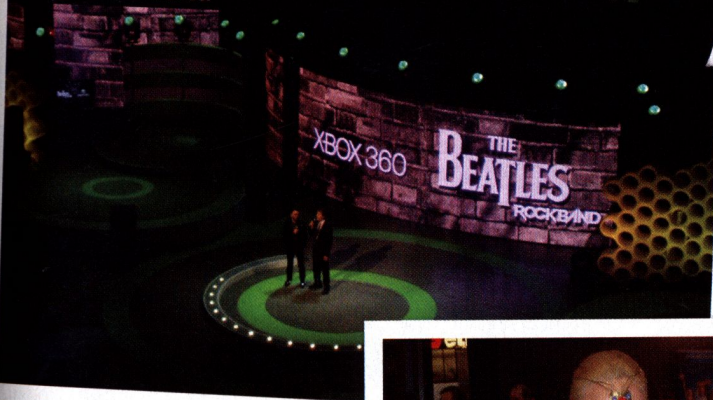
Retiring to an unofficial after-party with the *DJ Hero* team, security beat at the door while two PR women hide in a wardrobe. On the way out, a lad's mag writer falls from the first floor into a fountain.



Spitting distance from Jay-Z at the *DJ Hero* party.

HOLLYWOOD

Paul McCartney and Ringo Starr perform *Hollow Platitudes* at the Microsoft conference.



TUESDAY

THIS IS THE DAY of the show, and I awake with inexplicable blurred vision in one eye, and a tabloid hack wedged down the side of my bed.

A breakfast of mini-Snickers gets things moving, and I dive into a cab for a meeting with Finnish outfit Paradox Interactive. Paradoxically, the demo takes place not at the show but in the corridor of a whore-ridden hotel, on a laptop, on a chair. I manage to nod my way through *Hearts Of Iron III* and *East India Company*, but when we get to *Majesty 2* a cleaner is vacuuming at my feet, bringing proceedings to a merciful close.

Registering for the show, due to my missing eyesight I inadvertently print my badge as Hill Steve, something that is pointed out to me every half hour for the next three days. All the same, it's good to be back, with a manageable attendance and mainly tolerable noise levels. Porn stars dressed as games characters aren't as abundant as in previous years, and there also appears to have been a culling of the clinically obese, although I do see the man with tits that crops up every year.

For want of something to do, I sit through a solo *Wolfenstein* demo, which is an instant improvement in that it isn't held on a chair, and is recognisable as a game.

Elsewhere, I gawp in confusion as the man controlling *The Secret Of Monkey Island: Special Edition* switches from new graphics to old graphics, and finally end the day with a private showing of *Modern Warfare 2*, a rare treat for anyone who has ever wanted to hit a snowmobile driver with an ice pick and then re-enact Spectrum classic *Death Race*.

We're out of here, and following the obligatory posh restaurant, it's off to Sunset Strip's wretched Saddle Ranch for the last knockings of the Bethesda party, where the same pricks I see every week talk the same load of old bollocks.

Downtown LA, aka Bumtown.



Booth Babes were back, as this understated example demonstrates. Lovely stuff...

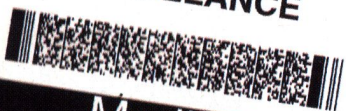


California rain. Who knew?



HILL
STEVE

FREELANCE



Media
ALL ACCESS



WEDNESDAY

MY VISION HAS miraculously returned, and due to the relatively quiet night, for once I don't feel suicidal, although this soon changes when I find myself press-ganged into a Square Enix conference where they unveil *Final Fantasy XIV Online*. They do this not by showing any of the game, but by having a row of blank-faced Japanese men talk in Japanese, with an interpreter filling in the gaps. It's slightly less painful than pulling teeth, although they do lay on a buffet. In a corridor.

By now I need a drink, and after feigning interest in *Astro Boy* on the Wii, I frogmarch the PR woman to an outside bar, where it promptly begins to rain.

A further schoolboy error occurs when I inadvertently find myself in a Square Enix round table discussion. As the door closes, my heart sinks, and they start talking in Japanese about some giant robot game called *Front Mission Evolved*. It's a test, but I take perverse pride in being the only person not to ask a question.

My mood is barely lifted by a man with a beard showing me a post-apocalyptic MMO called *Fallen Earth* in a booth the size of my garden shed. At least 2K Games have made an effort, with the all-new *BioShock 2* multiplayer being shown in a decent facsimile of Rapture, and the promising *Mafia II* being demoed to a row of park benches next to a car boot with a corpse in it. Following another tough day at the coal face, it's time for a scoop so I gatecrash the Nintendo party, where some pricks that I see every few months talk a lot of bollocks.

The *Mafia II* booth came replete with morbid props.



"I need a drink, so I frogmarch the PR woman to an outside bar"

"I only read it for Steve Hill's stuff."



THURSDAY

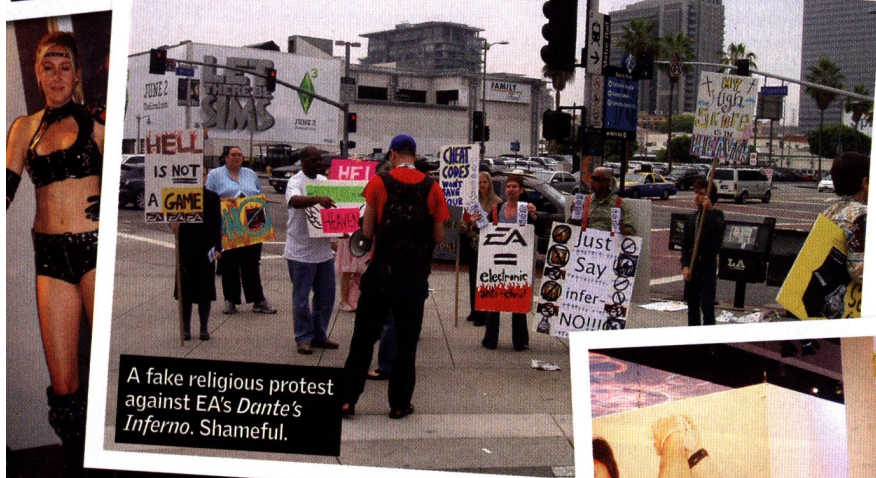
IT'S THE FINAL day of the show, so I treat myself to a well-deserved morning off, browsing the Hustler store before rocking up for an afternoon showing of *Star Wars: The Old Republic*, the first ever fully-voiced MMO. Enthusiasts will already be buffing their lightsabers in anticipation, although it's a bit cartoony. And the free T-shirt stinks of fish.

With time suddenly running out, I manage to squeeze into a showing of *Brink* from *Enemy Territory* developer Splash Damage. It's been talked up as one of the games of the show, although by this stage I am game-blind, and can make out little more than colours and shapes. It's a situation exacerbated by the next game being in 3D on a 108in hi-def TV. It's *James Cameron's Avatar*, and preposterously I have to hand over my belongings and be subjected to airport-style security before I'm allowed into the demo room and given a pair of 3D glasses.

After all the fuss, a bloke runs round a jungle shooting dinosaurs, while a bloke on a headset commentates hysterically on his every move. The tit.

A quick run through of *Assassin's Creed II*, and it's almost all over. I panic that I've barely scratched the surface of the show, so play *Batman: Arkham Asylum* for 10 seconds, and enjoy a couple of multiplayer races of *Blur*. For old times' sake, I take a quick snap of a big boy. He sees me. "Ladies and gentlemen, E3 2009 is closed..." **PCT**

A fake religious protest against EA's *Dante's Inferno*. Shameful.





Who you gonna call? Not me.

HILLY'S PCZONE E3 AWARDS

GAME OF THE SHOW

Modern Warfare 2. Forget the rest.

MOST HYPED GAME

James Cameron's Avatar. A lot of messianic babble over what is essentially a third-person shooter in headache-inducing 3D.

MOST NOSTALGIC GAME

The Secret of Monkey Island: Special Edition, replete with optional original graphics.

CHEAPEST PUBLISHER

Paradox Interactive. Get a room. Even a table.

SMALLEST VISITOR

Vern Troyer (aka Mini-Me) all over *Modern Warfare 2* backstage at the Activision stand.

SPICIEST VISITOR

Victoria Beckham, mooching round the Microsoft stand with her kids.

MOST EMBARRASSING DEMO

Hill falling off the *Tony Hawk: RIDE* wireless skateboard, a drop of less than an inch.

BEST PARTY

DJ Hero. Live sets by Jay-Z and Eminem, and half of Hollywood in attendance.

LONGEST LASTING FEUD

Paul McCartney and Yoko Ono being kept apart backstage at the Microsoft conference.

BEST ABUSE FROM HOOKER

A prostitute shouting "Nasty! Nasty!" at Will outside his downtown hostel.

TUNE OF THE SHOW

Crack A Bottle by Eminem: "So crack a bottle/Let your body waddle." Correct.

BIGGEST NO-SHOW

The LA weather: overcast with scattered rain. What the fuck?

DRINK OF THE SHOW

Beer and a shot. Like series two of *The Wire*, but without the egg.

BEST BREAKFAST COMPANION

Porn legend Ron Jeremy: "Love your work."

MOST DEBATABLE USE OF \$10,000

Three days of hot drinks and snacks at the 2K Games meeting room.

MOST INCOGNITOUS COMPTON VISITOR

Big ginger Log, casually changing buses in the 'hood while winking at gangsters.

MOST IMPROBABLE THREAT

A man in a wheelchair shouting "I'm gon' get you!" at Will outside his downtown hostel.

MOST EMBARRASSING ERROR

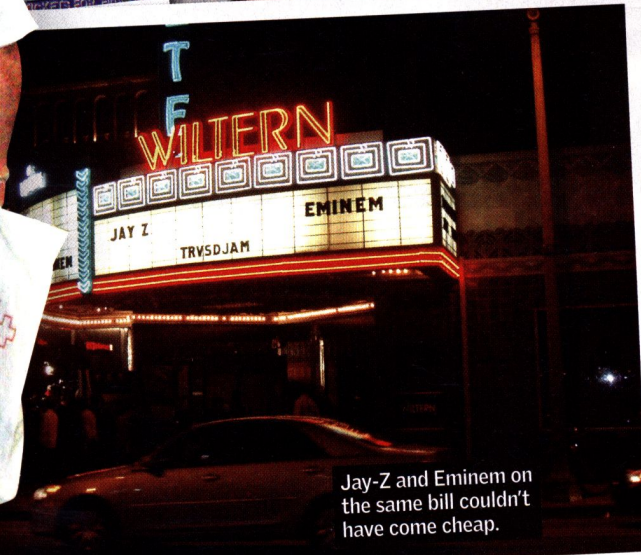
The heavily refreshed PR woman who locked herself out of her hotel room on the first night, butt naked.



This man has just won a BMW. Damn that recession.



A big boy.



Jay-Z and Eminem on the same bill couldn't have come cheap.

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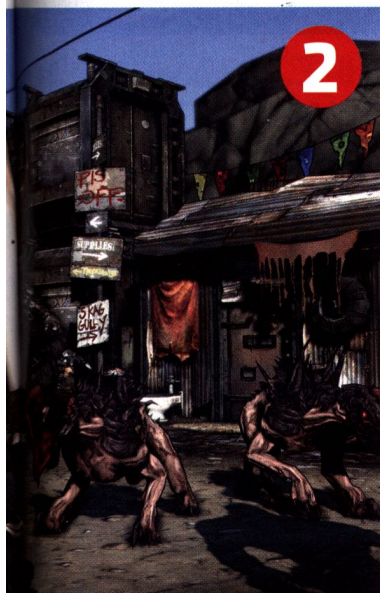
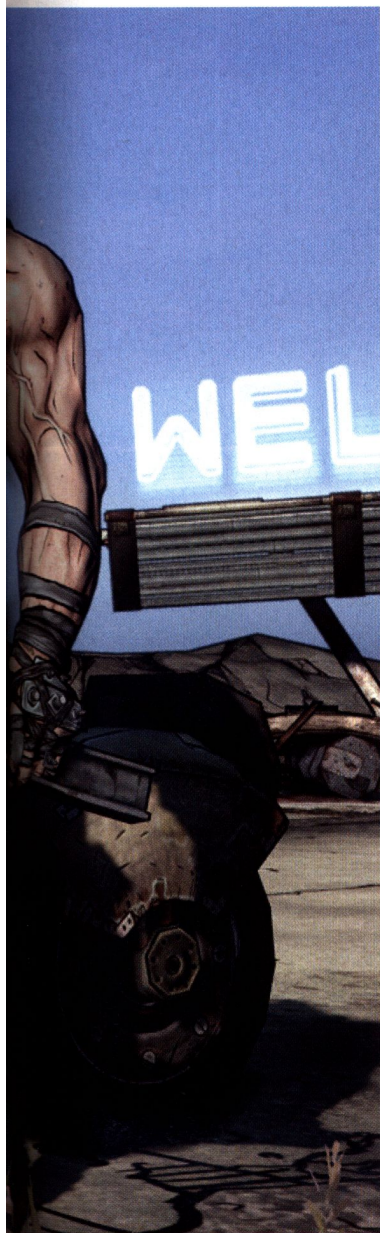
BORDERLANDS

DEVELOPER Gearbox PUBLISHER 2K Games WEBSITE www.borderlandsthegame.com ETA October 2009

IF YOU WERE trapped on an increasingly depressing planet, with increasingly hostile inhabitants and vast stretches of parched desert, with thousands of different kinds of guns and buggies and vigilantes and explosions, what would you do? Aha! Trick question, you'd do exactly what you're doing now – sit about and read magazines – because we've just described planet Earth.

Of course, things would be different if Earth was in space (far-away space, we mean), and you'd most likely team up with exactly three friends and take on missions, levelling up and collecting increasingly powerful weapons with which to take down local wildlife. Until then, here's a game pretty much about that. And it's a pretty game as well, having been morphed from a dull-brown shooter, into a cel-shaded one.





THE BIGGER PICTURE

1. FRIENDS LIKE THESE...

The game's a triumph of co-operative online play. You'll be able to hop into your friends' games and, as your character is persistent, bring back shed loads of loot to help you out in your own adventures.

2. SKAG HABIT

These little guys are skags, low-level pests on par with with fantasy rats. They come in different elemental flavours such as fire and ice, and can be crushed beneath the wheels of the game's various vehicles. Squish!

3. COMBAT ARMS

Scraps will be fast and frenetic, with a *Halo*-style recharging shield acting as your first line of defence, and a regular old cache of hit points sitting underneath that. Enemies drop lovely randomised loot.

4. PANDORA'S SOCKS

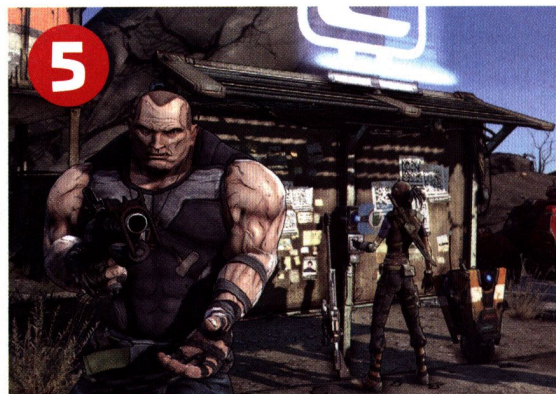
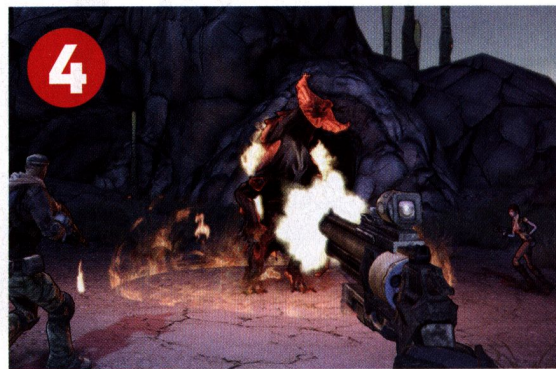
The setting is Pandora, a distant planet with a distinct, dusty, lawless Wild West feel to it. It'll be a huge place too, taking hours to cross. Think Joss Whedon's *Firefly*, with extra guns and weird aliens.

5. ARR PEE JEE

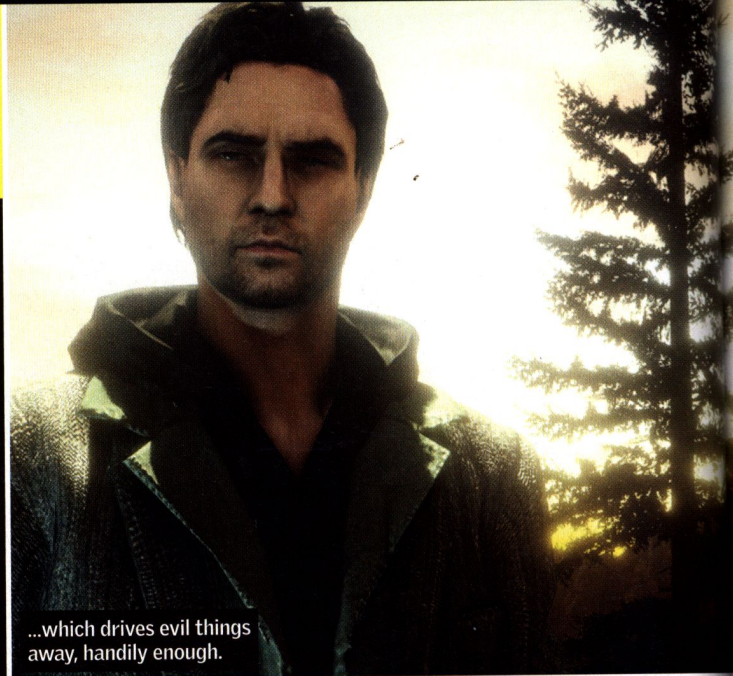
At its core, *Borderlands* is a shooty-shooter game with some weighty RPG bells on. You'll collect XP for milling through enemies, and level up your proficiency in weapons by upgrading your science-fiction looking hardware implants.

6. ONE MAN ARMY

The biggest feather in *Borderlands*' multi-feathered cap is the sheer number of weapons available. Over 500,000 is the official count, though they're procedurally generated, and often differ only in very slight ways.



Kickstart generators
to create more light...



...which drives evil things
away, handily enough.

OH, LOOK WHO'S HERE...

ALAN WAKE

Please, don't shake him. *Will Porter* is only fighting the forces of darkness

DEVELOPER Remedy PUBLISHER Microsoft WEBSITE alanwake.com

SO LONG HAS Alan Wake been absent that Remedy's former starlet, the now-distant Max Payne, has grown increasingly bald and pudgy since Alan was announced – as has this correspondent.

Alan Wake has been in hibernation for two years, and he hasn't even aged a day – all he's done is taken off his Rupert the Bear scarf and put on a hoodie. In all honesty though he has become emotionally distant from the PC, once touted as a *Vista* exclusive (imagine that!) Remedy are under strict instructions from their Microsoftian overlords not to even utter details of the PC release. Frankly though, when a game looks this good it may well be worth the wait.

Last time *Alan Wake* surfaced it was an engine without a game. A stunning recreation of the *Twin Peaks*-style town of Bright Falls and surrounding countryside with a beautiful day and

night cycle, but very little in terms of gunplay and pyrotechnics. Well, that's certainly changed.

AUTHOR TROUBLE

For those late to the slumber party Alan Wake is an author who specialises in horror, and his most recent work (one that he can't even remember writing) has a nasty habit of coming true. His wife has been kidnapped, the townspeople of Bright Falls become possessed by darkness after dusk, and even stationary construction equipment has a habit of being kick-started into life when infected by shadows.

In the words of Max Payne, *Alan Wake's* action is in essence a linear sequence of scares – albeit surrounded by a free-roamable world. The section I bore witness to involved tracking down a chap called Rusty, after the discovery of a page of Wake's novel suggested that after finding him the injured local would be promptly dragged screaming into the undergrowth by an unknown force.

Having found him lying, bleeding to death in a tourist information centre before fending off a couple of dark-polluted yokels (hardly a fitting advert for holidaying in Bright Falls) Rusty's fate came true. It's a neat storytelling system that should have us

all heroically trying, yet never succeeding, to conquer the inevitability of the printed word.

In *Alan Wake* your torch is as much a weapon as your pistol, since before you can damage anything shambling towards you it must be stripped of its darkness – a beautiful effect in which blackness is swirled off into the ether. Once the shield of darkness is on its way out then traditional bullets will finish off the job. What with light being a primary weapon this also means that flare guns can be used to evaporate flocks of

infected birds, while should you let off a hand-held flare in a crowd of angry locals then you'll be rewarded with a slow-motion maelstrom of darkness being whipped out of their bodies by the burning red flare.

Light can be a tool as well though. For instance, fix a generator and you'll be able to keep the hordes at bay with the flickering electric light it turns on.

Going back to the linear sequence of scares reference though, the action is perforated with sudden and jarring events that Wake clearly chose to skim

THESE WORDS OF MINE...

Excerpts of Alan Wake's nefarious novel come to light...

"The amount of pages keeps growing each night. There are also new edits on the old pages. They keep getting more aggressive. The story is rewriting itself. The protagonist is now my namesake, and his wife is called Alice. The most worrying aspect: the genre seems to be shifting. It's turning into a horror story. I can no longer be certain whether the hero can succeed or even survive. Apart for the jumbled fragments of bad dreams and an oppressive feeling, I can remember nothing of the process when I wake up. But this morning, a breakthrough! When I came to my senses, I could smell her perfume on my shirt. I am close. I know it. I must push on."

"Rusty's screams were still ringing in my ears. The tree stump the grove got its name from looked like a severed leg of a monstrous bird. I prayed that the gun would make a difference. Every time I moved the flashlight, I was afraid of the horrors it might reveal. Suddenly a ragged arrow glowed in the light. I followed it."

THE LOWDOWN

- ✓ Finally, Alan! Where have you been?
- ✓ A great game for a great engine
- ✓ Neat light-as-weapon mechanic
- ✓ Spooky diggers
- ✗ PC version still not dated

ETA
TBC
2010

"Remedy are likely to do us proud when it's time for Alan to rise and shine"

"I became increasingly afraid to go to sleep. I was convinced that I would wake up changed, darkness having seeped in through the cracks in the floor, crawled up to my bed, and made its way inside, through a nostril or an ear. I barricaded the door of the cabin. I kept the lights on at all times. I taped a note on the door (I had forgotten so many things already): 'Don't go out.'"

over when writing his self-propheying novel. Rummaging around in a building can be interrupted by a bulldozer coming to life and rampaging towards you, for example, ripping through the house as you madly dash from its evil yellow scoop.

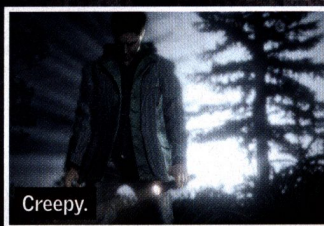
The animation of these possessed vehicles is genuinely unearthly (you'll come across a grumpy crane later as well), but any object could be possessed: from cardboard boxes to shopping trolleys. If it moves, it needs to be fiercely shone at with your torch to remove the taint, before you're assaulted by once-inanimate objects.

What happens during the day in *Alan Wake* is unknown, although it's likely that the beginning of the various TV-style episodes contained within the

game will have you discussing the whereabouts of your wife, and the cause of the evil shadows, with the eerie residents of Bright Falls.

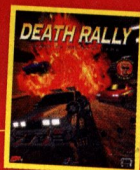
A strong supporting cast is promised by the delightful chaps at Remedy, and they've already shown off Barry Wheeler – Wake's paranoid and allergy-ridden literary agent. Whether he's the dearest of all Wake's friends is unclear, but you can get a few amusing lines out of him by shining your torch in his face and turning the lights on and off. Which is probably enough.

What with the Spring 2010 tag for the 360 release, *Alan Wake* is presumably a way off for us PC users. But we can now confirm, at least, that Remedy are likely to do us proud when it's time for Alan to rise and shine. **PCZ**



THE STORY SO FAR... REMEDY

HARD DRIVIN'
Remedy create *Death Rally*. A racing game that featured death.



1996



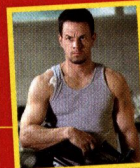
GET 'IM
The world's favourite grizzled cop strafe-jumps in slow motion.

2001

GOT 'IM
Remedy sells *Max Payne* kit and caboodle to 2K/Rockstar.



2002



MAXXY MAX
The *Max Payne* film comes out. It contains bullshit angels.

2008



RAW POWER

Core i7 Extreme

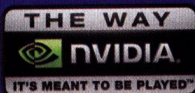
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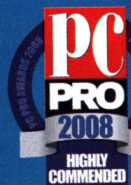
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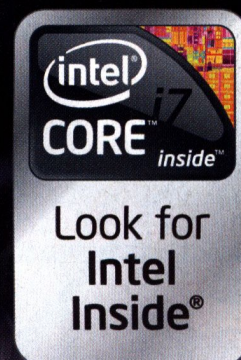
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MAKING A SPLASH...

BRINK

ETA
SPRING
2010

"The players go in eight by eight. Hurrah! Hurrah!" sings *Will Porter*

DEVELOPER Splash Damage PUBLISHER Bethesda WEBSITE brinkthegame.com

THE CITY OF The Ark is a strange place. For one thing it floats atop a flooded Earth, a last bastion of luxurious living for the ultra-rich that's simultaneously besieged on all sides by the homeless and destitute who want nothing but a dry piece of land to call their own. For another thing, most of the people that live there look like the stylised lovechild of Desperate Dan and Eric Cantona. Thankfully though, they're all rather intent on killing each other in magnificent ways that genuinely push the boundaries of online shooters.

In many ways the battle between The Ark's security forces and rebel contingent are a logical progression from Splash Damage's work on the *Wolfenstein: Enemy Territory* and *Quake Wars*. A further condensed class system is at work, for example, with potential jobs for each team member now conjured up dynamically by what's happening in the level. Brilliantly though, *Brink* is a game with narrative, with each rival side following a separate story throughout the game – complete with mid-level banter, scripted sequences and narrative twists and turns.

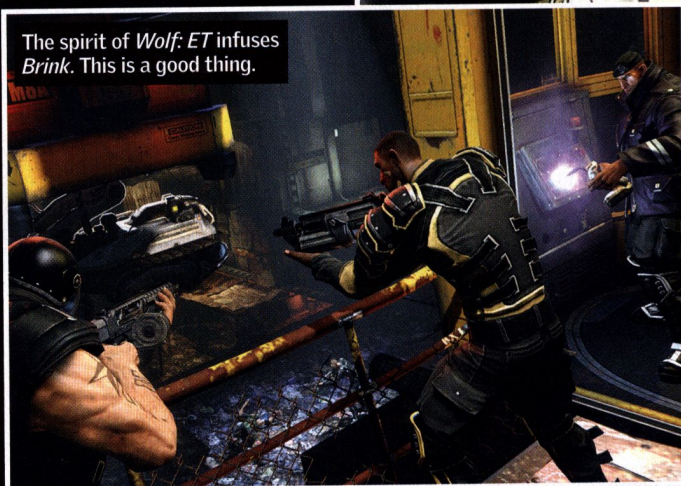
One level sees The Ark's police (eight co-operative players) warily entering Container City, escorting a robot that will defuse what has been reported as a dirty bomb. Container City once stored the belongings of The Ark's high and

mighty inhabitants, with clever automation ferrying items back and forth from their lodgings, but has become a rusting slum. Now, however, the chit-chat between the player characters suggests that violence is likely to erupt – a sudden spray of NPC bullets then confirms this, as does the presence of band of rival Rebel players out to thwart you. In essence *Brink* merges single-player and multiplayer experiences. And it does so beautifully.

As the bomb defusal robot crawls through the rusted red crates of the level (recalling the Gold Rush map in *Wolfenstein: Enemy Territory*) you can simply run around and shoot stuff in a fast-paced deathmatch style, or you can bring up a menu with the various mini-missions open to you at that time – each one with an experience points reward that reflects its difficulty.

In this case you could be asked to sprint behind enemy lines, for example, to find a hapless rebel who needs a spot of torture so that he reveals the location of the reported dirty bomb. Otherwise you could swap classes and become an

The spirit of *Wolf: ET* infuses *Brink*. This is a good thing.



"Brink is intent on merging the single and multiplayer experience"

Engineer at one of the command posts scattered through the level (Soldier, Medic and Covert Ops are the others that've been distilled down from earlier games) and be directed to blast a hole in some scenery to make a shortcut.

If you just want to help out though or find yourself between tasks, in Container City the basic escort mission will always be there to fall back on – culminating in the robot cutting its way into a suspect

metal box, while you and your team fend off waves of enemies trying to stop you. Once success is achieved, meanwhile, a cutscene will play showing your team discovering more than they bargained for within the container – although what that is hasn't been underlined just yet. Said narrative may not be of *Team Fortress 2* cinematic standards, very little is, but is hugely brave when merged into the context of multiplayer gaming.

THE LOWDOWN

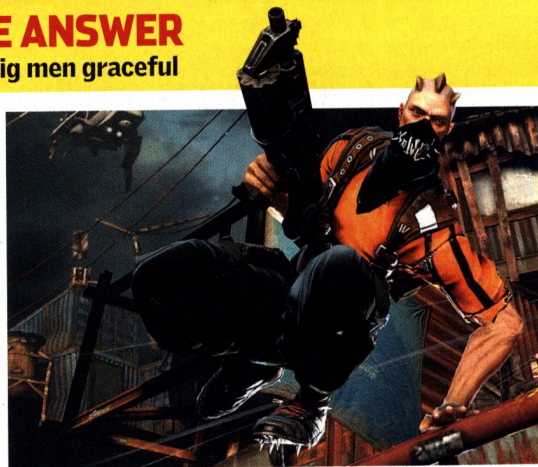
- ✓ The best of *Enemy Territory*
- ✓ Mixes narrative with multiplayer blasting
- ✓ Great sci-fi visuals and environment
- ✓ Clever movement system
- ✗ But does it blend story and shooting well?

ONLY S.M.A.R.T. HAS THE ANSWER

The clever movement tool that makes big men graceful

The S.M.A.R.T. system stands, rather conveniently, for "Smooth Movement Across Random Terrain". It essentially means that, should you be holding down the relevant key, the game will anticipate what your intention is – should you be running off a ledge, for example, it'll guess that you want to leap off it and onto the platform opposite. If you're charging headlong at a waist-high gap it'll realise that you want to skid *Mirror's Edge*-style through it rather than collide with a metal wall, and then duck beneath it looking rather ungainly. If there's a ledge above you and you're looking up while running it'll even have you jump up to it without your fingers coming anywhere near the space key.

This is a nifty system that will guarantee fast and fluid combat, but until we get our hands on it the PCZ jury will remain eating free sandwiches in their little room outside the court.



An airport monorail transfer system to rival even that of Terminal 5.

In terms of looks alone, *Brink* is striking. Take its airport map for an example: a sleek blue creation, left for the dust to settle once there weren't any more places for the planes to fly to. It's full of streamlined smooth curves and fancy architecture, yet the scattered baggage and general unkemptness tells a different story.

The actual players meanwhile are cartoony muscle-men, designed in an impressive (but not *APB* impressive) creation suite where hairstyles, bandages, tattoos, scars and different faces can all be swapped around at will. As long as you don't mind the Desperate Dan/Cantona issue you'll be good to go.

With vehicles seemingly abandoned, and perhaps *Quake Wars'* asymmetrical teams to boot, in many ways *Brink* appears to be a return to the ethos of *Wolfenstein: Enemy Territory* – itself

still, staggeringly, the third most played online shooter. It's a brave game and a fascinating one, but also a dangerous one should its constituent parts fail to gel together.

That won't stop us getting out our sandbags and Wellington boots in anticipation though. **PGZ**

The bandana shows he means business. As does the gun.

Despite being above the surface, The Ark is rather Rapture-esque.

THE STORY SO FAR... SPLASH DAMAGE

SPLISH...

The creators of *Quake 3* Fortress mod found *Splash Damage*.

2001



SPLASH...

Wolfenstein: ET appears. It's free. The world celebrates.

2003

I WAS TAKING... *Quake Wars* adds vehicles and Strogg to the *ET* mix.

2007

A BATH

Bethesda announce that they've teamed up with the *Splash* boys.

2008

ETA
EARLY
2010

CALLING ALL CARS...

APB

Will Porter gets caught by the fuzz, nabbed by the rozzers, etc etc

DEVELOPER Realtime Worlds PUBLISHER EA WEBSITE www.apb.com PREVIOUSLY IN 197

ALL THE BEST games were invented in the playground. Cowboys and Indians, Cops and Robbers, Doctors and Nurses – their names are legendary. Few, however, have ever made a pure transition into gaming. So while the world holds its breath for *Stuck in the Mud Online* we'll have to make do with *APB* – a near-perfect recreation of Cops and Robbers.

THE LOWDOWN

- ✓ Original gameplay ideas
- ✓ Remarkable customisation options
- ✓ Ingenious use of your music library
- ✓ Essentially *GTA* online done right
- ✓ Coming to PC first
- ✗ Huge balls-up potential

APB's city, San Paro, will contain thousands of civilians and up to 100 in each of its initial two districts – the Financial area (skyscrapers, alleys) and the Waterfront (water, boats, open roads). Players will be split between the criminals and lawmen (known in-game as Enforcers) and depending on what you get up to the game's clever match-making system in the sky will ensure that you get a fair fight.

Say you're a criminal en route to committing some mischief for an NPC, and are stealing a car to aid you – if your crime is witnessed by civilians, or the alarm goes off, the authorities will be alerted. If you're a proficient player with lots of big guns then the game might summon five or six player-controlled Enforcers to deal with you, or perhaps just one of a similar level and skill.

In terms of the missions handed out by NPC bigwigs (a chap called Zombie of

Just like *GTA4*.



the G-Kings for the bad guys, and LaRoche of the Praetorians for the Enforcers) they appear to be of a *GTA* flavour. A good example would perhaps be an Enforcer asked to escort a truck full of rich stuff to a bank, and thereby being extra careful not to attract the attention of nearby criminal minds who wouldn't mind half-inking it.

MOD YOURSELF

Successful completion of tasks like this will grant you unlock rights to the 30 cars in the game, money to buy boomsticks and even more extravagant ways to beautify your avatar. Which leads us onto another remarkable achievement of *APB*.

You see backing all this up is an astounding character creation system that goes far beyond the usual "I'll make

the nose... very big" slider bars. Body weight, vein protrusion, height of Mohican spikes: the works. You can even design your own tattoos, and choose patterns and fabrics for your own clothing. Cars you unlock can also be modded in similar ways.

Hell, if you want you can even record your own theme tune in an in-game MIDI suite to play as you squat upon



This guy takes his image very seriously.

CAN'T WAIT FOR APB?

Introducing *CrimeCraft*: the gangland MMO

Whether Blizzard's lawyers are getting warmed up at an MMO with the word "Craft" in its title is another matter, but if you want to play a rival MMO crime-shooter to *APB* that's free then *CrimeCraft* isn't all that far away.

It's a gang vs gang affair in which you leap in and out of cover in various PvP and PvE instances, and as such sadly not in the

open world proffered by our chums at Realtime Worlds, but is still fluid and rather engaging.

Powered by the Unreal Engine, and with a 'hippety hop' vibe, *CrimeCraft* will feature full-on guilds, auction houses, character customisation and everything else that's become such an integral part of online life in the last few years.



CrimeCraft: the same, but different.

a deceased foe's corpse. Should you become especially good at any of the above then there'll even be an auction house where you can sell your wares and become a local celebrity artist.

CLEVERNESS AFOOT

If this isn't mind-blowing enough (and to be honest, it should be) there's even more cleverness afoot.

Say you're driving along and playing some music in your car, running over civilians and giggling. When an Enforcer or two turns up to dish out some on-the-spot justice, if that song is in the library on their hard drive, they'll hear it booming out of your vehicle. If it's not in their library, then tech borrowed from Last.FM will analyse the closest match you have on file and play that instead.

As for hearing other players' chitchat, well if you have the option turned on there'll be VOIP that gets louder and softer however far away other players are standing.

Best of all? First and foremost this is a PC release. What with the absence of Blizzard from this year's E3 there was a marked lack of titles likely to hit our favoured haunted box before the consoles (PC-exclusive *The Old Republic* being a pleasant exception) so it's heartening to hear that Realtime Worlds have barely thought about the tech for the Xbox 360 version just yet.

There's little doubt that *APB* was one of the most original, daring and exciting projects at gaming's rejuvenated shindig

this year – right up there with Peter 'Geppetto' Molyneux and his puppetry of the primary school.

Whoever the victor though, with *Milo & Kate*, *APB* and *Brink* all developed on British soil I think we can allow ourselves to do a little flag-waving. So hooray and huzzah for UK developers! Long may they reign. **PCZ**

"One of the most daring and exciting projects at E3"

THE STORY SO FAR... REALTIME WORLDS

OH NO!

Dave Jones, of *Lemmings* and *GTA* fame, founds RTW.

2002



COULD BE HEROES

Crackdown, a super-powered city free-roamer, is announced.

2005

CRACK'D

Crackdown becomes an early hit on the fledgling Xbox 360.

2007



DUNDEE PD

APB is aimed for release. World holds breath.

2010

REALITY BYTES...

OPERATION FLASHPOINT: DRAGON RISING

Steve Hogarty chases another Purple Heart...

DEVELOPER Codemasters PUBLISHER Codemasters WEBSITE codemasters.com/flashpoint2 PREVIOUSLY IN 207

ETA
AUTUMN
2009

THE LOWDOWN

- ✓ Big
- ✓ Brutal
- ✓ Authentic
- ✓ Explosive
- ✗ Too many kinks?

What's that coming
over the hill etc.

IF MOHAMMED CAN'T go to the mountain, and I can't go to E3, then Codemasters will simply have to let me play *Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising* here at Zone Towers. It's all there in the bible, that irrefutable fact book of sensible things. And so, not one to question God's word, Codies dutifully plonked me in front of their punishingly authentic military shooter and allowed me to die from gunshot wounds to 1,000 different points on my being. A fate apparently only slightly less painful than having to hike about the cavernous halls of LA's sweaty gaming expo.

Dragon Rising is ultra-realistic, far from the medipacks of *Medal of Honor* and even further from the regenerating health magic of *Call of Duty*. Yes, it's one of "those" games, the ones where bullets make you absolutely dead, or where, if you're simply grazed by some shrapnel, the wound will pump blood realistically all over your uniform.

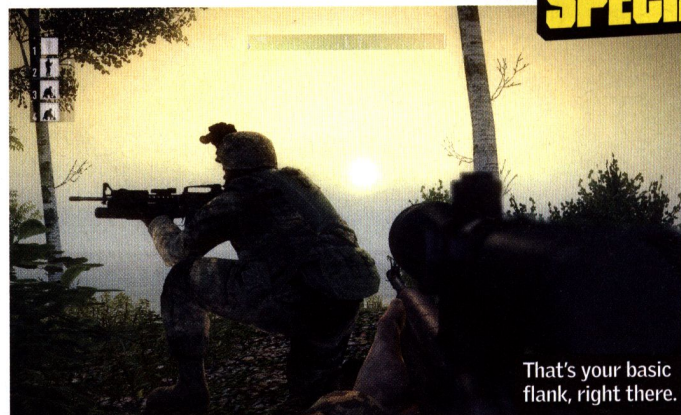
"OpFlash is one of 'those' games, where bullets make you dead"

Codies have had to change uniform designs repeatedly as real-life military forces insist on updating them. Their gun models are meticulously crafted replicas of their real-life counterparts. They've a research document an inch thick about tracer rounds. Anybody would think they've got something to prove.

GREAT RIVALS

And they do. Since developers Bohemia split to make *ArmA* and its sequel, Codies have been keen to prove just how much like the original *OpFlash* their own follow-up will be. It's a battle of realism, and as I stupidly traipsed up a hillside towards an enemy under cover, only to catch a bullet in the face, I realised who was on the winning team.

The AI in *Dragon Rising* has, according to the devs, had its systems built around an actual army handbook – a guide to, among other things, the correct way to move across a battlefield, the correct time to attack, and the



That's your basic flank, right there.

correct time to take cover. In this instance, walking in a straight line towards an enemy encampment was not something the handbook would suggest.

Over the next few attempts I approached the situation using different methods. Taking pot shots from a distance worked well enough, causing the two enemy troops to remain behind cover. Coupling this with a command to my fire team to flank led to a successful bit of soldiering. My men swept through a forest on the western side of the hill,

meeting the enemy side-on and fatally propelling small bits of metal into their bodies. On another occasion, I'd sniped the enemy before they could get behind cover, only to have them jump out at the last minute in an I-wasn't-dead-after-all sort of movement and shoot me dead.

For all our talk of headshots from four miles away, very few of your rounds will deliver an instant kill. On lower difficulty settings, the AI remains identical, what changes are the on-screen aids you're given.



THE STORY SO FAR... OPERATION FLASHPOINT

OPFLASH

The first realistic combat simulator, made by Bohemia.

2001



ARMA

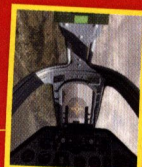
Bohemia split from Codies, and created *ArmA: Armed Assault*.

2007

ARMA II

Bohemia released their sequel, which we reviewed last issue.

2009



DRAGON RISING

Codies are nearly ready to release the second *OpFlash* game.

2009

MK16 MOD 0 (ASSAULT)

Enemies are flagged on your compass, on lower difficulty settings.



You can bet your arse that reloading ammo is authentic.



SKIRA: WELCOME TO THE FACT BOX

Everything worth knowing about *Dragon Rising's* island



● The real island is actually called Kiska, and is situated off the coast of Alaska, at the end of that really weird string of islands that comes away from the mainland. (Seriously what is it with that?)

● Skira has an area of 277,698km² – that's 1/75th that of Wales.

● If you were to stand Wales up on its end and fill it with the liquidated playing area of *FUEL* (Codies' other game with a big map), and then used Skira as a sort of scoop to scoop *FUEL's* playing area back

out of Wales, you'd have to scoop 53 times before Wales was empty.

● It'll take about five hours to cross the island on foot. That's the average amount of sleep an elephant gets per day!

● Kiska features a dormant volcano – imaginatively named "Kiska Volcano" – as does Skira. Codemasters have joked about placing a ninja-training base inside the volcano. Though you would joke about that wouldn't you, if you were making a game with a volcano in it.

"It'd be a shame to see another military sim fall foul of bugs"

➤ The more you bump up the difficulty, the more HUD furniture falls away. Crosshairs disappear and kill indicators vanish until eventually you're left with effectively the same information a soldier in the field would have. This makes sense, when the alternative is to make the enemy "a bit thick" and your skin like Kevlar.

A REAL BFG ATTACK

So, with my fleshy mortal form now on top of the hill I'd triumphantly flanked the crap out of, I turned to my next objective: dismantling a town by means of Howitzer artillery fire. The radial command menu is used to facilitate this, allowing you to snake through a series of technically minded options before landing on the "fire for effect" command.

For instance, what are you a fan of? Barrage fire? Or harassing fire? Or one of the other two kinds of fire that the game allows you to choose from? I chose harassing fire, which I'd later discover is a special kind of weapons fire designed to keep the enemy awake and worried. It didn't work exactly as intended, and instead levelled half the town and killed a great many people. In some sense, that's

probably as bad for enemy morale as disrupting their sleeping patterns.

Dragon Rising's command menu is something we've seen before – the closest comparison is *Battlefield 2's* radial menu, in which you're only ever given four options, each represented by a direction. Side-by-side, it's the antithesis of *Arma II's* near-incomprehensible menu system, and during the short time I spent playing *Dragon Rising* it appears to be just as capable. Context sensitivity means that the options you're presented with change depending on what you mouse over, and at no point do you feel out of control of your fire team.

There are still a few things to be worried about. Vehicles still feel weirdly top-heavy and just odd to drive, and the AI often likes to escape to remote areas of the map and just shuffle back and forth for a while, but these are likely the very reasons why *Dragon Rising's* been delayed until later this year. Having suffered the faults of *Arma II* last month, it'd be a massive shame to see another military sim fall foul of the bugs and quirks that seem attracted to this genre like wasps to an ultra-realistic jam sandwich. **PCZ**

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PC ZONE – the last one to subscribe is a child, trapped in the body of a man!

Well, this just looks like a hippy festival.

ETA
17 NOV
2009

The team are in the safehouse, so the extras head for the canteen.

LEFT 4 DEAD

Jon Blyth was hoping they'd call it *Five Alive*

DEVELOPER Valve PUBLISHER Valve WEBSITE l4d.com

REMEMBER WHEN WE all hated Valve last time? When they bundled *Steam* with *Half-Life 2*, and you had to download their game from a bottlenecked server? It was a ham-fisted, invasive, and unjustifiable coercion. Valve were literally turning the entire world into their sexual playthings, using our desire to play their new stupid game to make us install a lump of free software.

We came around, and there's not many of us who'd be without *Steam*; and until 2 June, if you wrote the words "Gabe Newell" on a sack of potatoes,

a legion of love-struck PC gamers would hurl themselves at it, trousers off.

The depth of Valve's fans' devotion can be measured by the stunned backlash, and dozens of disorganised petitions (some of which have gained thousands of signatures, others gaining around seven) demanding that *Left 4 Dead 2* be released as free DLC.

Personally, I'm torn between thinking "Well, they did say they'd work on *L4D* a bit more, I suppose," and "Where the hell did we get this wretched sense of entitlement from?"

But, the perception was that they'd broken a promise – a promise to deliver free DLC for the first game. Valve have built a pretty big rod for their own back,

in terms of previous generosity – but judging from their response since the announcement, it's not a rod they resent. *L4D* isn't being killed off – far from it, as with the release of the SDK, there's likely to be an explosive proliferation of maps, models and mods on the horizon. Sure, some of it might be crap – but if Valve wanted to migrate everyone like helpless automatons into their new game, that SDK release would be an odd gesture.

Well, we've got a long way into a preview without mentioning the game, but the backlash has been as interesting as the game itself. Because *L4D2*, as much new content as there is, is still *L4D*. If you've played the first game, you'll be instantly at home in the second.

Chet Faliszek's unapologetic about that: "I hate it when people make a sequel, and ruin what was so good about the first game". But to justify such a rapid sequel – especially from Valve, the kings of delay – we should probably address what you'll be getting for your money.

NEW IS OLD

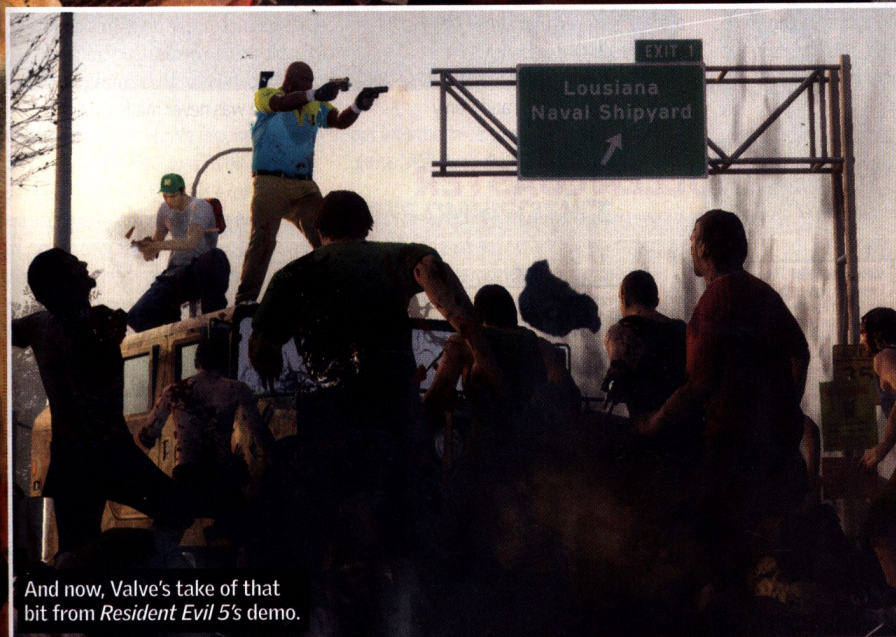
The characters are different: stranded reporter Rochelle, untrusting conman Nick, good ol' Southern boy Ellis, and football coach, erm, Coach. And the setting's changed to the Deep South, rather than a nameless city. But while the characters and locations are different, you're still fending off waves of infected-likes, and

"Left 4 Dead 2, as much new content as there is, is still *L4D*"

THE LOWDOWN

- ✓ New infected, characters, maps, and story
- ✓ The Director enters puberty
- ✓ The Witch gets an itchy arse
- ✓ Limbs fly off, as they should
- ✗ Bad PR move

Rochelle – an SMG-wielding reporter, and Coach – a chainsaw-wielding, er, coach.



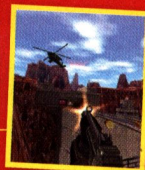
And now, Valve's take of that bit from *Resident Evil 5's* demo.

THE STORY SO FAR... VALVE

HALF-LIFE

Come on, we all know this story, don't we? We not all dense.

1998



HALF-LIFE 2

Remember that, anyone? Alyx? Dog? Big walking machines?

2004

PORTAL

What about Glados? Remember the cake? That song?

2007

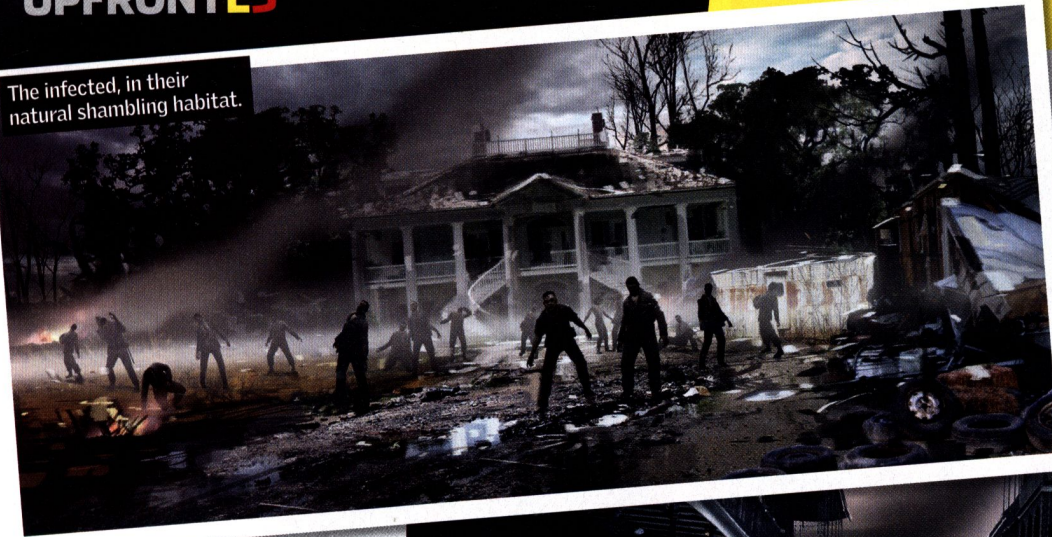


LEFT 4 DEAD

Come on, it's that game that came out last week, remember?

2008

The infected, in their natural shambling habitat.



Daylight doesn't mean blue skies – russet features heavily, too.

➤ despatching the special infected as they turn up.

So, what's new? Well, the level that was open for play at E3 was called The Parish, and knowing Valve, it was handpicked to give a little, but not much, away. We saw the newly-mobile Witch, and I'm ashamed to say that I did a tiny freak out, and shot her.

Then there are the "uncommon common" infected, as Chet calls them. These guys wear Hazmat suits, making them invulnerable to the gasoline fires.



It's familiar, because it's true.

The Hazmat character is the first revealed – a hooded, misshapen character who's visible in a crowd. He can soak up a couple more bullets than his common-common counterparts, but his main distinction is that he can't catch fire. Their bizarrely inflated hunchbacks may look weird, but you need that visual clue to know these guys aren't going to be bothered by a carefully shotgunned gas puddle or thrown Molotov cocktail.

Then there's the Charger – a lop-sided creature with one withered arm. This fellow is vulnerable to fire. But that's not always a good thing, as he likes to sprint and ram himself into you, stunning you and sharing the flame. This means in the sequel, fire won't be the unequivocal friend it used to be.

"In the sequel, fire won't be the unequivocal friend it used to be"

Melee weapons are another big addition. It might not feel like that much – every weapon had a right-click melee attack in the first game, right? – but this time, it'll be much more than a push back. You'll be able to crouch down and chop a infected's legs off them (dismemberment has been improved, too), and knocking the Hunter off a buddy with the axe will trigger a change of perspective. There's a frying pan, too – a bit of evidence that *Left 4 Dead* isn't taking itself that seriously.

Melee weapons aside – the chainsaw wasn't playable at E3, and I only

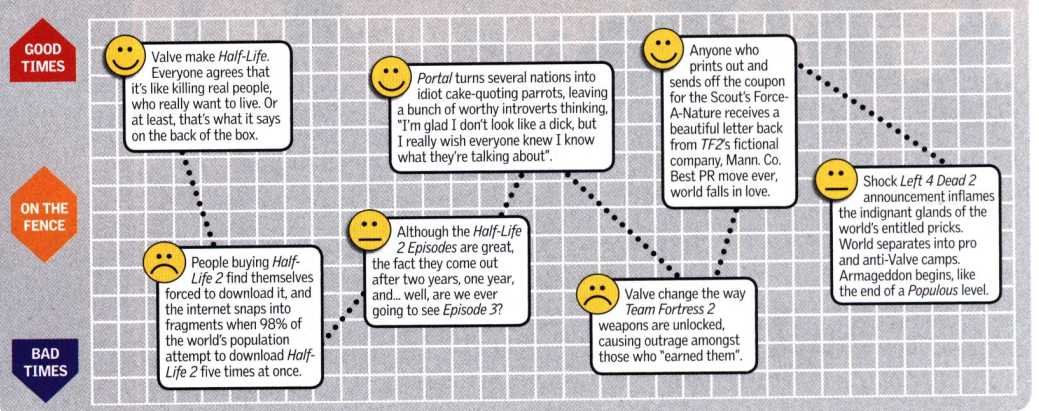
managed to get my hands on a frying pan – you'll be rewarded for exploration in the new game. Not with collectible stars, but with incendiary bullets. This is why fire had to be slightly nerfed – because when you find the incendiary ammo, you're briefly transformed into a flaming hosepipe of death, pan-frying the necrotized flesh of your assailants. These bullets aren't just lying around – they'll be tucked away by the Director in a level's less accessible areas, making them available only to dedicated foragers.

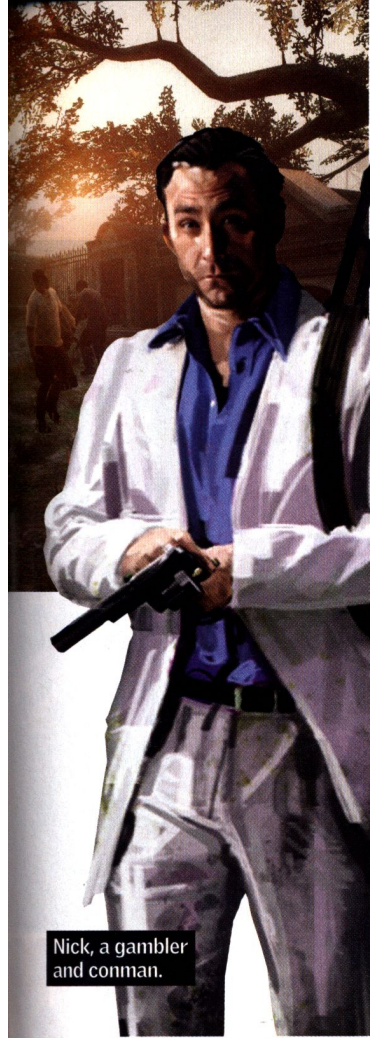
The locations of the campaigns in the first game was never made explicit,



Ellis was once a mechanic.

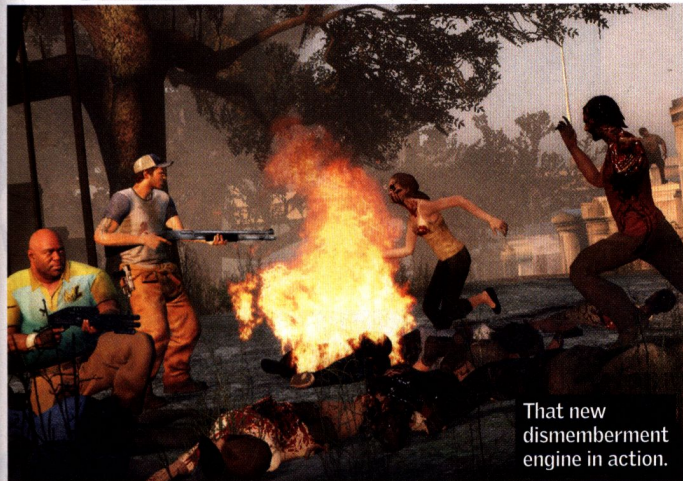
GOODWILL IS A ROLLER COASTER





You realise how difficult it is to resist the cheap fancy dress caption, right?

Nick, a gambler and conman.



That new dismemberment engine in action.

although it had a definite feel, in the same way *Half-Life 2* was "a bit East European". *Left 4 Dead 2* is explicit: you're travelling from Georgia to Louisiana, over five, much longer, campaigns. This time, it's not the stand-alone movie-spoof missions we know from *L4D* – this is an overarching story, spread over larger campaigns.

This'll give Valve a chance to explore the relationships between the characters. The tailored interplay between the characters was one of the high points of *L4D* – every person had something unique to say to every other character, in most situations. If those relationships change over the overarching campaign (and it's being hinted that they will) we can only doff our caps to the effort Valve

put into the "nice touch" aspect of a game. Will Rochelle fall in love with Nick?

MISS OMNISCIENCE

But the biggest new start is the unseen Director – the malevolent, manipulative AI that ran its fingers down your spine, then yanked the veins from your forearms. She (I like to think of her as somewhere between Glados and the *Team Fortress 2* announcer) has been completely renovated. Her remit is no longer confined to controlling the ebb and flow of the hordes, and making a slight difficulty adjustment when you're really good or really pants. Now, she also controls the weather.

The action can shift from idyllic sunshine infected slaughter, to low-

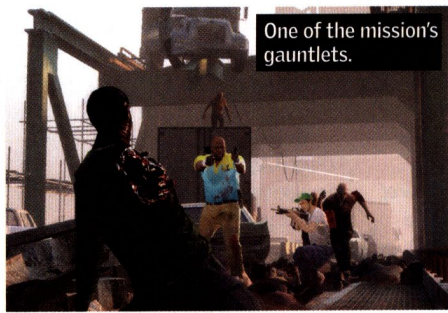
GROW A PAIR

Yes, Rochelle, even you. In fact, you grow two pairs

Valve know you've been cheating. They don't like it when you trigger an event, and then sit there, cowering, in a corner, until it passes. They think what you're doing demeans the bravery and spirit of the human race. So they've changed the nature of these events, slightly – now, the onslaught is ended by reaching another trigger. If you just sit in that corner, the pain ain't never gonna end.

There are also gauntlets – crossing a long bridge, leaping from one car roof to the next, with rescue at the end. It's dramatic, cinematic and bordering on cliché – but like the movie posters of the first game implied, this is all based on a love of the cinematic zombie experience.

Yeah, I said zombie. What are you going to do about it? Write a letter to Simon Pegg?



One of the mission's gauntlets.

was tense because you had more infected than you could reasonably fend off, coming for your face. And that's not going to change. And remember, the Director could bring in the clouds for a mighty thunderstorm any... time... now.

Left 4 Dead 2 seems to be all about improving

visibility thunderstorm infected slaughter in a matter of seconds. She can also change the layout of the level, making the route less straightforward, if it looks like you need slowing down.

Other differences feel a little more superficial, but do change the game: there are daylight campaigns, and the infected come apart in pleasing new ways. Chet seems keen on the idea of chopping an infected's legs off. These changes don't make the game any less tense – the first game wasn't tense because of the dusky purplish hues, it

the first game; and Valve feel they've improved it so fundamentally, that it makes no sense releasing it as DLC for the original. And while the sum of \$50 has seized the internet's imagination, Valve haven't set a price for it, yet.

Sometimes, the internet suffocates in its righteous idiocy, and sometimes, it has a point. But sometimes, it needs to acknowledge that it doesn't have enough information to fuel a justified rage. Like Chet's said – just give Valve a little bit of trust, at least until new information comes out. **PCZ**

ETA
23 OCT
2009

HERE BE.....

DRAGON AGETM ORIGINS

BioWare target sexy elf-enthusiast Will Porter with a barrage of lewdness, violence and rock 'n' roll

DEVELOPER BioWare PUBLISHER EA WEBSITE dragonage.bioware.com PREVIOUSLY IN... 209

WHEN MARILYN MANSON wrote the lyric "Are you motherfucking ready for the new shit?" it's doubtful that what he had in mind was a highly anticipated fantasy roleplaying game from the makers of *Baldur's Gate II: Shadow of Amn*. This, however, hasn't stopped trailers pouring out of BioWare HQ featuring the lank-haired metal starlet screaming over video collages of bloody dismemberment and player-on-NPC rutting. The message is loud and clear, albeit perhaps a little too loud and too clear for some tastes: the parental advisory warning on *Dragon Age: Origins* will read: "Dark, gory, a bit lusty, may well contain elf boobs".

"The game is massive. I think it's our biggest game to date. As a result it's really hard to distil it down to any one experience," explains lead designer Mike Laidlaw. "We thought, when a game is this long and you want to get people excited about it, why not take a bit of a rock 'n' roll approach?"

"It was either that or us putting patches on our sleeves and delivering a six-hour monologue: 'Hello! I'm here to talk to you about *Dragon Age*.'"

Hello! I'm here to talk to you about *Dragon Age: Origins*. The land of Ferelden is in substantial peril – not only is it a dark and edgy place, but it's become infected by The Blight. Said infection is an uprising of the darkspawn, a swarm of evil 'rotting flesh' types who usually trammel around ancient Dark Roads (mines and caves dug by long-dead dwarves).

REPTILE PROBLEMS

Every 400 years or so they come across an Old God, a big old dragon, who they corrupt and promptly helps them lead an assault on all living things. Sound a little *Lord of the Rings*? Reckon Dark Roads could be interchanged with the Mines of Moria, and the Balrog with an Old God? Well, yeah. But there's more shagging and racial hatred in this, so pipe down at the back.

Glistening armour, big sword, flames, what's not to love?



Blood and guts are copious, what with all the dark heroic fantasy.

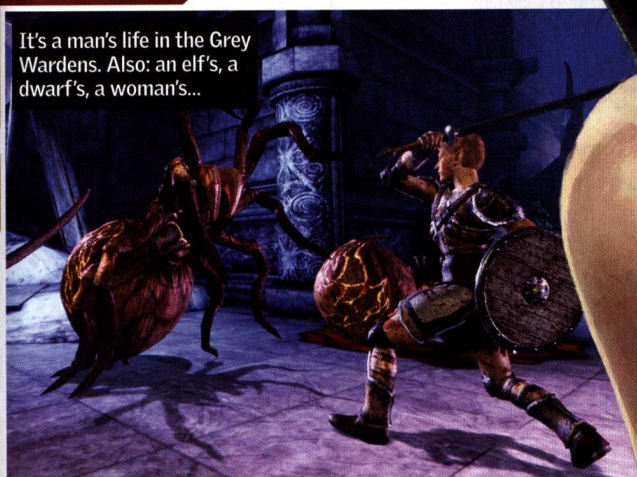
"The game has three distinct parts: first the origin stories, then the initial part in which you really become a Grey Warden and inherit the quest to gather the armies to fight the Blight," explains Laidlaw. "Then it's really thrown wide open to you, you have a number of different locations you could go to."

And off you'll trot across the land of Ferelden – visiting different hubs, in any order you wish, to recruit different various factions in the war against the darkspawn and the Blight infection that they've brought with them that's turning the local wolves and bears scabby and violent.





It's a man's life in the Grey Wardens. Also: an elf's, a dwarf's, a woman's...



The Blight: like David Suchet's *Blott on the Landscape* – only in the plural.

THE LOWDOWN

- ✓ Another BioWare classic
- ✓ It's got a dog in it
- ✓ Dark heroic fantasy
- ✓ Sex! Swearing! Violence!
- ✗ Too desperate to be adult?

ORIGINS OF THE SPECIES

That first day as a Grey Warden will be one full of questions. Where are you from? What magical art are you specialising in? Is this my cupboard? Where's the toilet? Thankfully you'll be able to know the answers, and make friends, having played through several hours of your origin tale.

DALISH ELF

The elves of Ferelden are second-class citizens, viewed with mistrust and hatred by humans. The Dalish hang onto the old ways – living on the outskirts of civilisation and struggling to hold onto their traditions. As a Dalish wanderer, you'll discover an artifact that reveals much about your people's past.

MAGE

Magic has brought great terrors to Ferelden in the past, and as such The Circle of Magi is as much a holding pen for magical types as it is a Hogwarts. Held with suspicion by the world and religious order the Chantry, the only way to become a mage is to resist being tempted by a demon from The Fade. Succumb and you'll be killed for your weakness. Charming.

CITY ELF

Every night, city elves must return to their alienage (basically, a ghetto) for fear of being arrested or beaten. The origin story here involves a bride-to-be that a local human lord wants to have his wicked way with, and a sacred tree that sits in the centre of your alienage and is tied to the fate of the elves. If the latter isn't set on fire at some point then we're a devouring corpse's uncle.

DWARF NOBLE

High up on the dwarven social strata things get a bit *Hamlet*. You play the son of an elderly king, hotly tipped for throne duties yourself, surrounded by conspirators and would-be usurpers looking to shake up the monarchy in their favour. As long as things are done with a noble veneer anything goes in dwarven politics, so it'll be just like the *Lion King* only with small men.

DWARF COMMONER

Being a dwarf isn't all about dipping beards into ale and singing gold-based songs, the dwarves of Dust Town have to make do with beards damp with water and playing tin-oriented ditties on a kazoo. They're also casteless, tattooed, spat upon and often forced into a life of crime by the rigid structure of dwarf society. As such, the tale of the dwarf commoner starts out mired in organised crime.

HUMAN NOBLE

Another tale of aristocratic betrayal, this one a bit more *Macbeth* than *Hamlet*, the human origin sees the humans preparing to lead an assault on the encroaching darkspawn. With everyone's attention stolen by the undead forces the king's enemies decide the time is right for a coup on the eve of battle, and as his son you're going to have to deal with the consequences.



This dragon is voiced by Kate Mulgrew – Janeway from *Star Trek: Voyager*.



You can add sex and guts, but the beard will never leave roleplay.



Grumpy monster: needs stabbing.

THE STORY SO FAR... BIOWARE

DOCTOR, DOCTOR
Doctors Greg Zeschuk and Ray Muzyka and found BioWare.



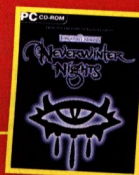
1995



GATE OPEN
Baldur's Gate chalks up BioWare as a true roleplay heavyweight.

1998

ALWAYS NIPPY
Neverwinter Nights struts onto the scene. We all coo at it.



2002



HERE BE...
Dragon Age sees BioWare return to swords and magic.

2009

One place that needs adhering to the anti-Blight cause are the Mages, and at the recent E3 I managed to sneak into a dark corner with Mark Laidlaw, attempt to hold his hand and then be the first to see both their spiritual and physical homes: the magical otherworld of The Fade, and the ancient Tower of the Circle of Magi.

"Interestingly enough this is where the character we're playing with started," explains Laidlaw, gripping his mouse defensively. "He's a human mage, so through his origin story he would have been raised here, met all the different characters and have been trained by them." Something, however, is rotten in the state of the Tower of the Circle of Magi. You can tell by the dead bodies, and strange pulsing pink guts on the walls. "One of the mages has staged a coup," continues Laidlaw. "His name was Uldred, and he essentially became an Abomination – a term we use for mages when they become possessed by a demon. Mages have a deeper connection to the Fade you see, which is where magic, and demons, come from."

As such, should you play as a mage you'll have a massive connection to the places you go and the people you're forced to slay in the Tower – an experience that will be lost on anyone that doesn't have a penchant for fireballs. BioWare

There are six different origin stories that you'll be able to play through (see 'Origins of the Species') and they're all fairly spicy and/or violent. Should you chose to play as a much hated city elf in a ghetto in the city, for example, you'll have to deal with a local lord wanting to bed your bride in true *Braveheart* style, so expect him to have a very English accent.

Whatever your origin though (and whether you've chosen to play as a warrior, rogue or mage) you'll end up at Ostagar – *Dragon Age: Origins*' equivalent of Helm's Deep. Here, fighting under the banner of

a cocksure king you just know is doomed due to his pretty boy blonde hair and shiny teeth, you'll become a Grey Warden. These chaps are a Blight-fighting force that the world has ignored for four centuries, becoming more and more relaxed as every undead plague-free year ticked past.

BioWare haven't revealed what happens after the encroaching horde march up to Ostagar's gates, but seeing as the rest of the game is spent traipsing around the country with a collection of

tents, rather than with several thousand heavily-armed and battle-hungry soldiers it's a fair bet it won't be pretty.

On then, to the more free-roaming part of *Dragon Age: Origins*. At any time you'll have three favoured companions with you personally, but the rest of your clan will always be hanging around to chat to and/or have sex with (if they like you enough and you've given them enough pretty objects) whenever your travelling circus settles down to camp.

The camp site acts very much like, the spaceships of *Knights of the Old Republic* or *Mass Effect* – just with far less metal corridors. Should you choose to move between different locations, meanwhile, BioWare promise that you'll see your merry band travelling across the map with every chance of coming across a few random encounters along the way.

"There are six origin stories and they're all fairly spicy or violent"

won't confirm it, but it's likely that similar returns to corrupted former pastures may well occur for dwarven and daleic elf characters.

Return visit or no, however, an encounter with a sloth demon will slip magical Horlicks into the atmosphere and your band of adventurers take a visit to the land of nod – or the Fade as it's known in this fantasy realm.

FADE IN

The place where magic, dreams and demon-types slosh around together – with the overspill generally splashing into the real world through its mages. It's a surreal place, one that doesn't really hold to the rules of normal architecture, and a place in which you'll spend around three hours of the game.

At first you'll be trapped in your own personal nightmare, and then you'll be trying to rouse your companions from theirs. It's a non-sequitur of a mission much like, I point out to Laidlaw, the painting quest in *Oblivion*.

"The Painting Quest is probably one of the best moments in that game," he agrees. "When you go inside it and

everything's all water coloured. I love that sense of breaking the rules. You think you know how a game plays, then in comes this new sequence..."

In the Fade BioWare really monkey around with the game, introducing a web of chambers to make your way through and throwing all manner of unexpected happenstance into the mix – fights with deceased friends, for example, and the ability for all characters to shape shift into stealthy mice or terrifyingly overpowered golems. It also cleverly exposes the paranoia and darkest feelings of your allies and, if one of your companions is the dog, shows that canines aren't the deepest of creatures.

As for the way that magic and combat will work throughout the game, well if you want you can play the game like it's *Baldur's Gate* – up from on high and controlling the whole party. Otherwise you can zoom in, switch between characters with the function keys and lead them around with WASD controls, placing your attacks with right clicks and selecting more specialised moves from the numeric keys.

You can happily pause the action at any point to line up a few more devastating hacks, swipes and electricity bolts; while those wanting deeper twiddling abilities can launch themselves into the tactics system where you can line up the trains of thought you'd like your characters to rattle whenever your attention has strayed away from them.

This all takes a while to get used to, when I played the game there were a fair few friendly fireball incidents, but it remains a system that will reward subtle tacticians and Leeroy Jenkins types alike. (Has enough time

You can't ride them, but you can climb on their heads and stab them.

MEET DOG

He doesn't say much, but he sure can tear shit up



Dog, who could have a more imaginative name should you give him one, is exceptional in combat – a real 'fire and forget' mechanic guaranteed to cause a ruckus with the darkspawn. His silent interjections, woofs and caustic ruffs are also heftily endearing.

"He's like the gravedigger in *Hamlet*, right?" explains *Dragon Age's* cultured lead designer Mike Laidlaw. "He's a break from the dark tone of the game."

Much as in the 360's *Fable 2*, meanwhile, Dog will be able to sniff out secrets and hidden items around the environment – proving that he'll be a useful party member as well as a coiled piece of bitey muscle when the need arises.

All hail the new Dogmeat.

Bit of a *Monty Python* Black Knight helmet there. Doesn't bode well.

"Your helmet doesn't match your outfit. Don't you know that fashion is all about co-ordination?"

THE GOOD DOCTOR(S)

BioWare bigwigs Dr Ray Muzkya and Dr Greg Zeschuk

Q

First things first, let's talk about the dog.

A Dr Greg Zeschuk: He's actually one of the really tough fighters. It's funny, because of the way the game works you find items that you give to party members to keep them happy, so you get dog bones and...

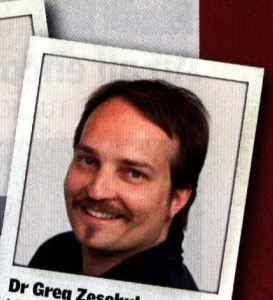
Dr Ray Muzkya: Actually the dog always likes you.

Dr Greg: You can't make him dislike you?

Dr Ray: Yeah, you can not give him dog bones and stuff, but he'll always like you.



Dr Ray Muzkya
CEO, BioWare



Dr Greg Zeschuk
Vice-president, BioWare

So he's not as fickle as women then?

Dr Ray: No. They like jewellery and stuff.

Dr Greg: It's not as simple as gifts though, it's your actions. The choices you make have consequences. One of them is how your relationship with your party unfolds. There are other consequences in terms of how the world changes: entire races can get destroyed as a result of your actions. You have to make some big choices. Grey choices as a Grey Warden.

Dr Ray: We're using the party, in a sense, as the morality system. What the party thinks of you reflects your actions.

Dr Greg: The companions are really the lens through which you see the world, and also the mirror that reflects your actions back. We've really invested a lot into them, they'll travel around the world commenting on each other, the lands they're in, and the actions you've taken.

So to the marketing: why are we all getting... erm... "motherfucking ready, for the new shit"?

Dr Ray: We sing that song in the office all the time! In the team meetings, all the time. I think it's about breaking, or defying, expectations of fantasy. One thing that the games industry has done is really tone down fantasy – made it a fairly limited and aseptic thing. What we've done is amp it up, in order to make it emotionally engaging.

Dr Greg: And provocative too. This is a new kind of fantasy, there's Tolkienist High Fantasy and there's dark fantasy like George R.R. Martin. This is somewhere in the middle, it's got the best features of both types. It's dark, it's mature, it's gritty and it's edgy – but it's also heroic.

"Hope is high that *Dragon Age* will be one of the greats"

current ladyfriend – sweetness and light redhead Leliana – then followed, and the dialogue tree opened up with options to either placate or kick to the kerb.

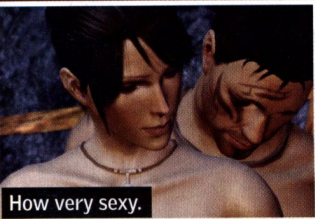
All of this sounds fantastic, yet (perhaps when viewed in isolation) the lines seemed stilted and the delivery faltering. Much as it's horrible to put down in black-and-white, but you start to wonder whether the olde worlde language of the roleplaying games of yore was better read than heard. While BioWare have our trust – they've more than earned it over the years – and when viewed in the context of an epic 80-hour game these concerns pale into insignificance. But it's an issue that needs earmarking all the same.

What cannot be left unsaid, and it's amazing that we've got this far without referencing it, that the RPG world has recently been blessed with the dark fantasy of *The Witcher*. CD Projekt's

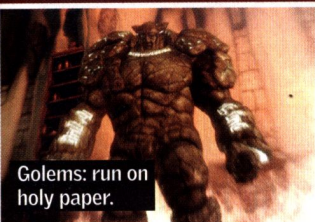
oeuvre may have been overly smutty with its pornographic conquest cards, but still nailed the feeling of a dark, sexualised and brutal world simmering with racial tension that *Dragon Age* is shooting for.

The bar of achievement is now genuinely higher than that which BioWare are accustomed to. The heritage and the quality on show in the game's mechanics and storyline, however, means that hope remains high that *Dragon Age: Origins* will be one of the greats. The marketing men may be desperate to sell the game through the medium of sex, death and rock 'n' roll – but they're denying the slow-burn heart and intricacy that have made BioWare what they are today.

If you defy the cynical attention-deficit and teen-friendly marketing then you see the game for what it truly is: an absolute blinder. With shagging in it. **PCZ**



How very sexy.



Golems: run on holy paper.



Where's the Dog Whisperer when you need him?

passed that we can mention him again? Maybe not.)

It should not go unmentioned either that the magic of *Dragon Age* is above and beyond that of other fantasy roleplayers, so much so that most tank and rogue characters may well raise an eyebrow. There are around 80 spells in the game in all, and four schools of magic: Primal, Spirit, Creation and Entropy. Clearly a lot of these are relatively dull party buffs and shields, but others err on the side of dirty, greasy and hugely physical powers that will ensure you'll have a Mandrake or two present in your party.

There is trouble in paradise though, and that lies in the tone.

SELLING SEX

We're all partial to a bit of sex and violence, I'm even partial to a bit of Marilyn Manson, but if these are used in a slapdash fashion you end up with something resembling *Torchwood*. And I don't know about you, but I thought *Torchwood* was rubbish.

The party interaction being shown off on the show floor at E3 was deliberately sexually skewed – showing off what happens when you give Morrigan, a gothic sorceress, a book of magic she's been after, and what she gives you in return. Fnar, fnar, toot, toot, etc. The reaction of the on-screen character's

BEST OF THE REST

An all encompassing listing of the games of E3



Shepard's back, and still enjoys blowing things up.



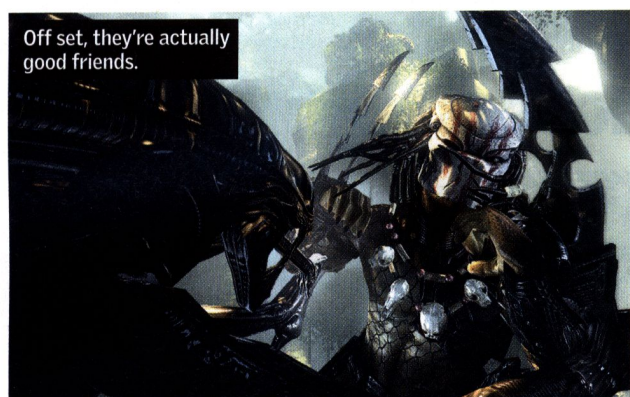
MASS EFFECT 2

No great departure from the original *Mass Effect* – and that's a huge compliment – *Mass Effect 2* is continuing the heroic space operatic adventures of Commander Shepard.

BioWare's previously released trailer showed us, in no uncertain terms, that Shepard had bitten the dust – although now they're claiming that his death plays a part in the trilogy's plot.

Intriguing, especially when they add that only one of the endings actually sees Shepard fail to return from the second game's overarching suicide mission.

We'll have more next month. For now, just look puzzled.



Off set, they're actually good friends.

ALIENS VS PREDATOR

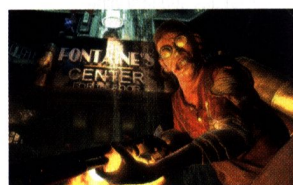
While the first in-game footage doesn't look like the first screens we've seen, it shows off a great deal of Predator-focused gameplay. Stalking enemies from treetops, leaping from branch to branch, flipping your visor to thermal imaging and watching as marines freak out – it's convinced us that Rebellion's history of hit-and-miss releases has deigned *AVP* a hit. Not shown is the Predator's trophy kill, one of the most gruesome animations we've witnessed, in which our boy twists the head off a marine and nicks his spine. LOL indeed.



Fisher's back. We can't wait to grab people and stuff.

SPLINTER CELL: CONVICTION

It's all change for Sam Fisher. In the previous iteration of *Conviction* he sported a floppy mop and a Bourne attitude, he's reverted to the much more contemporary Jack Bauer personality. A new "Mark and Execute" technique sees Fisher assessing situations and scoping out rooms before he makes his move. Oh, we should also point out that the bit in the trailer where the tri-goggled assassins smash through the window and their goggles go to "phweeee" made us tremendously excited.



BIOSHOCK 2

Multiplayer details have been revealed for 2K's shooter-RPG follow up. Set before the fall of Rapture, you're a plasmid test subject, and unlocks are doled out a la *Call of Duty 4*'s multiplayer mode.



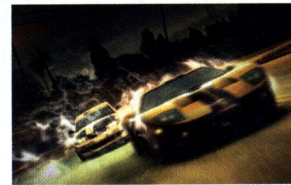
ASSASSIN'S CREED II

If Da Vinci had built you a personal flying machine the likes of which has yet to be invented even today, you wouldn't set it alight and smash it into some Italian guards would you? You would? Oh.



MAFIA II

More demonstrations of the slick and atmospheric mob-shooter had folk queuing for a glimpse. *Mafia II*'s slipped into 2010, though it promises to be well-worth waiting for.



BLUR

Bizarre Creations move away from their serious-face racer mentality with this *Mario Kart*-inspired and power-up driven motoring epic. Looks like great fun, but will fans appreciate the new direction?

PCZONE

ON THE DVD



MODERN WARFARE 2

Not a whole lot more was being shown at E3 than what we brought you in our last issue - *Modern Warfare 2* is still a polished, cinematic, action romp, with ice-picks and explosions.

PCZONE

ON THE DVD



SINGULARITY

Time-manipulation and magic gloves feature heavily in Raven's first completely original game. Grab objects and age them rapidly, or revert them to their previous state to solve puzzles. Interesting stuff!



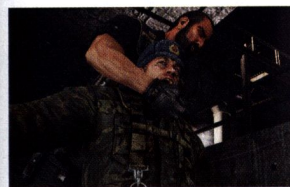
WOLFENSTEIN

New bits coming from E3 include a great scene where a mad scientist is pushed into a portal of madness and insanity only to re-emerge as something resembling *Doom's* Hell Knight (with a loin-cloth).



FALLOUT 3: POINT LOOKOUT

The next *Fallout* DLC emerged, which promises to open up a huge chunk of the wasteland to reveal a swamp area populated by mutated Southern hicks.



ROGUE WARRIOR

A new trailer for Rebellion's FPS based on the life of ex-SEAL Dick Marcinko show some Russians getting done over. Dick, we're told, has 25 different kill moves. So watch out.



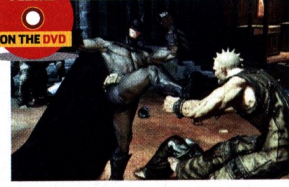
DEAD RISING 2

Capcom are cagey about their dabbings with PC releases, but we're told to expect the zombie defiling adventure sequel to arrive on our big black boxes in 2010. The first was brilliant fun.



LOST PLANET 2

The first was a gem if you could get it running, and the second promises full co-op support, as well as the usual contingent of giant boss characters and big guns.



BATMAN: ARKHAM ASYLUM

Bats has slipped off to the end of the summer, and it's unlikely a reflection on the state of the code. It's effectively complete, and we're already certain it'll be the best *Batman* game since *Batman: The Movie*.



JUST CAUSE 2

This wacky third-person action adventure was easily the most fun title on show, with Rico grabbing enemies with grappling hooks before kicking them right in their faces and jumping off cliffs.



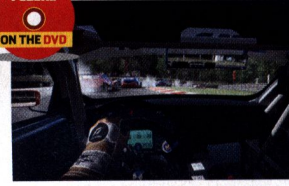
BATTLEFIELD 1943: PACIFIC

Rumours abound that *Battlefield 3* is in production, but we're focusing our love-beams on *Battlefield 1943: Pacific* - the remake of the excellent but ageing *Battlefield 1942*. Colourful and lovely.



CRYSIS 2

A teaser trailer for the sequel to *Crysis* revealed absolutely diddly-squat, apart from the fact that it will indeed be called *Crysis 2*. Who here wouldn't have preferred a *Far Cry 3* reveal though?

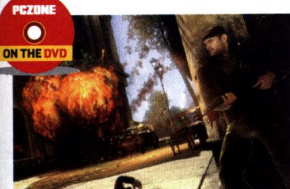


NEED FOR SPEED: SHIFT

Need for Speed: Shift is forming the simulation prong of the new *Need for Speed* trident of releases. Our ex-reviews editor Suzy Wallace is at the helm too, trivia fans, so there's bias aplenty.

PCZONE

ON THE DVD



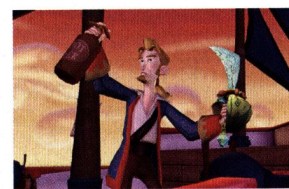
THE SABOTEUR

Pandemic are calling their Nazi murdering game "a blockbuster open-world gaming experience full of weapons, vehicles, missions and action". So *Mercenaries 2* in World War II, then.



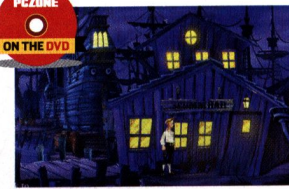
METAL GEAR SOLID: RISING

The first *Metal Gear Solid* game to be released on PC since *Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance*, not much else was mentioned about this Konami title. Could be an excuse to beg for a press trip to Japan.



TALES OF MONKEY ISLAND

Much as they did with *Sam & Max* and *Wallace & Gromit*, Telltale are set to release a five-episode series based on the classic *Monkey Island* games. Which we thought was the best news ever, until...

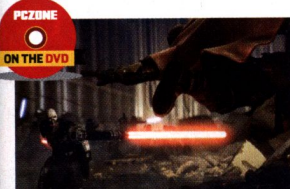


THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND

LucasArts have remastered the original *Secret of Monkey Island* game, with new voiceovers and art. And it can flip to the original, pixelly wonder-game.

PCZONE

ON THE DVD



STAR WARS: THE OLD REPUBLIC

No new gameplay footage, but E3 brought us what many are calling the best *Star Wars* film since *Episode VI*. An astounding cinematic scrap between Sith and Jedi.



ALPHA PROTOCOL

Obsidian's spy RPG is all about options, as shown by the latest trailer, titled 'Options'. All of them are ludicrous Bourne-ish escapades, with smoke grenades and even a stolen helicopter getting involved.

PCZONE

ON THE DVD



SUPREME COMMANDER 2

Square Enix have snapped up the *Total Annihilation*-infused RTS, with Chris Taylor and the Gas Powered Games lads still at the helm. Big stomping robots and giant zooming will undoubtedly feature.



RED FACTION: GUERRILLA

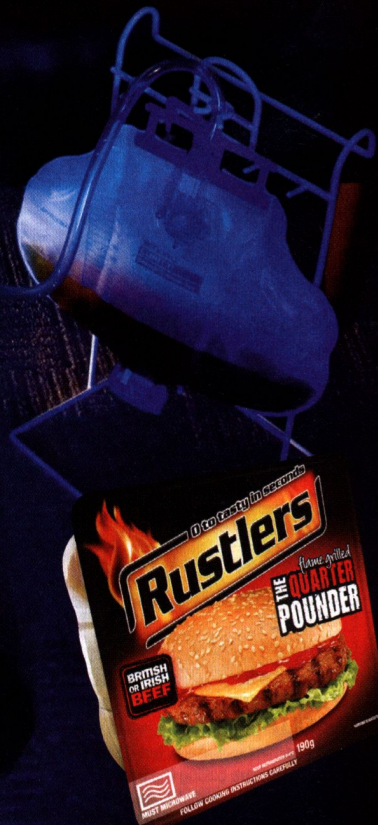
Though there's no more blowing holes in the floor, *Red Faction: Guerrilla* displays an impressive propensity for architectural deconstruction. As well as hammering the shit out of walls and bridges.

STARTING TO LAG?

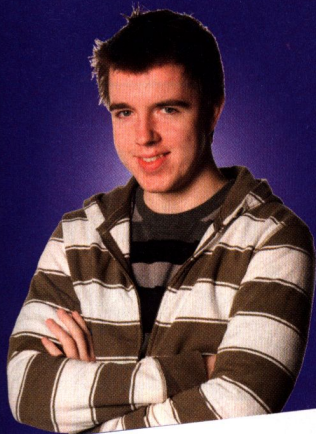
When 'just one more hour' turns into days and you're starting to lag, it's time to GameSafe and refuel with Rustlers - the hot n' tasty snack ready in seconds.



Rustlers
Gamesafe
KEEPING GAMERS ALIVE



FAST FUEL FOR REAL GAMERS
www.rustlersgamesafe.com



PCZONE Reviews

Our verdict on the latest PC

SPOILT BASTARDS

T HERE'S A *Left 4 Dead 2* Boycott group in the *Steam* Community, 30,000 members strong, sulking about Valve not giving their zombie-killing sequel away for free. Valve's asking for money in exchange for goods is apparently reprehensible, insulting, and possibly evil.

Search the *Steam* Community for "Left 4 Dead 2 Boycott" and you'll find, on the first page of results alone, nine groups dedicated to boycotting the *L4D2* boycott, two for boycotting the boycott boycott, and another that has boycott in the title so many times it ceases to make sense.

Wanting to gauge the mood in the official boycotter's *Steam* chatroom, I went in and asked whether anyone was planning on buying the game. Four said yes, while the rest continued to talk about their testicles.

Anyway, I'm not playing *L4D2* until they rename the big dude "Uncle Phil". Meanwhile, have some reviews.

Steve Hogarty

Steve Hogarty
Deputy editor

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 Empire: Total War



60 FUEL

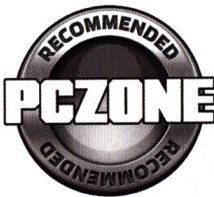
Well, it's set in a massive open world, but does *FUEL* have anything really going for it apart from size?

THE PC ZONE BADGES



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.



ONLINE ONLY

Don't have an internet connection? Then you're wasting your time with this game.



EXPANSION PACK

See this and you're going to have to get 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.



ALSO REVIEWED

- 64 OVERLORD II**
The son of the most evil one returns to inflict mayhem with his hordes of minions. And we love it.
- 66 STREET FIGHTER IV**
Petite Japanese schoolgirls get rudely manhandled by huge, hairy Russian blokes. Read our review while we call Social Services.
- 68 CALL OF JUAREZ: BOUND IN BLOOD**
Six-shooter shoot-outs at dawn as your horse watches on. Will this game fulfil your Clint Eastwood fantasies?
- 70 ANNO 1404**
- 71 MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL 29K YOSUMINI!**
- 72 HIRED GUNS: THE JAGGED EDGE TUNNEL RATS**
- 73 DANGEROUS HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS IN TROUBLE BRAIN EXERCISES WITH DR KAWASHIMA**
- 74 TERMINATOR: SALVATION LIGHTS OF ALTAIR**

PCZONE SWEARS...

- ✓ To only review code signed off by the publishers and the developers
- ✓ To give you our honest opinion. We're gamers. 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

Stats – from total airtime to miles driven – are continually recorded.



01 Jongo - 34
05 tzmnn - 4
06 Batsph 3688

01/13
TIME
00:00:24:07

FUEL

Steve Hogarty loves the smell of petrol in the morning

DEVELOPER Asobo
PUBLISHER Codemasters
WEBSITE www.codemasters.com/fuel
ETA Out now
PRICE £29.99

AT A GLANCE...

Lots of relatively tiny races in a massive 14,400km² world. Drive across it if you want, or if you can be bothered.

MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS:
3GHz Pentium D or equivalent Athlon 64 X2 processor, 1GB RAM and a GeForce 7800 or Radeon X1800 graphics card.

HOW IT STACKS

RACE DRIVER: GRID **88%**

COLIN MCRAE: DIRT **88%**

FUEL **66%**

IF YOU KNOW anything about *FUEL*, you'll know exactly what you want to do first: grab a buggy and strike out north until you can't head north any more. You'll be forgiven for forgetting how many thousands of square kilometres the racer is supposed to have crammed into it, as Asobo themselves kept changing the numbers while everybody else did their maths wrong and started thinking it had a playing area greater than the surface of the sun.

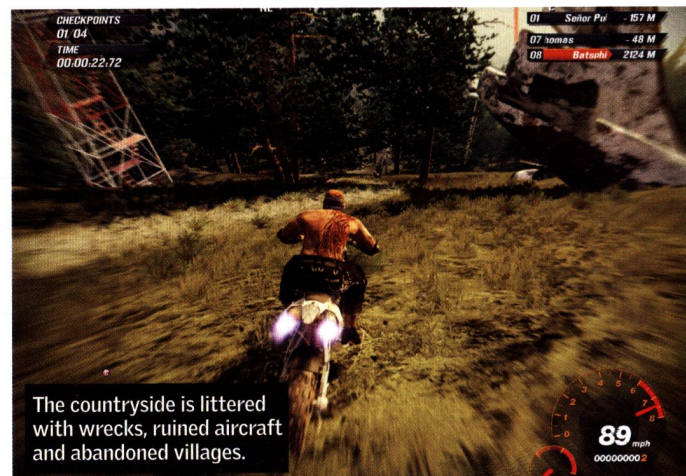
If you want to know how big *FUEL* is, the answer is "big enough". You'll get bored of trekking steadily towards the edge of the map before you get anywhere close to it. *FUEL* is so big that limits cease to matter. And if you're wondering how big that is, I've just looked it up. It's 14,400km², which is a square 120km wide, about 0.69 times the area of Wales. Very big.

Weather plays a part in that too, any given bit of that map can be subjected to torrential storms, blinding snowfall and

winding tornados which tear up scenery and bring it crashing down onto the track in front of you.

So that's *FUEL*'s strength: a large... make that a ridiculously large, procedurally generated wonder-map. In races, particularly the longer ones with widely spaced checkpoints, it allows

you to meaningfully choose your own path through the world. Either you'll want to stick to the decrepit remains of the asphalted primary roads, or when those roads inevitably stop leading you directly to your destination, pull away into one of the millions of back roads and dirt tracks that realistically criss-cross



The countryside is littered with wrecks, ruined aircraft and abandoned villages.

Buggies handle convincingly, and perform well off-road.

"When it works as intended **FUEL** is uniquely exciting"



the landscape and take a more direct route instead.

You race to win fuel (which is about as logical as working in a £10 note burning factory) completing challenges to unlock more challenges in new areas of the map. A wide roster of vehicles can be purchased, and canny vehicle selection based on the sort of terrain you'll be racing on is touted as the key to success. Superbikes, for example, bolt down highways, but scream in pain the second they touch mud and refuse to budge. Conversely, buggies and quads are typically slow, but have the traction to go cross-country when required.

YOUR OYSTER, SIR

In theory it's brilliant, and when it works as intended **FUEL** is a uniquely exciting racer. Blasting down a steep cliff face in a rickety buggy towards a 10 mile-wide lake, dodging rocky outcrops as the waterline creeps slowly towards you is easily one of the most exhilarating

moments of any racer. The scale on show is simply incredible: draw distances are unfathomably huge, and every point on the horizon can have a car pointed at it and subsequently be arrived at, even if it takes an hour.

So that's fantastic. Well done Asobo! You guys certainly deserve this big congratulatory party with cake and balloons and party poppers, and a midget version of Ann Widdecombe who goes around the room on a tiny locomotive letting people



"I'll crush your balls, you stinking paragraph."



Unlock new liveries for your vehicles by wandering around.

02:03
TIME
00:01:21.86

Quads like this can handle themselves off-road...

54
mph
00000000

Flip between vehicles at any time in Free Ride.

Helicopters ferry you across the map.

COMPARE AND CONTRAST

Visualising *FUEL*'s massive distances – a quick guide to just how huge this game's play area is. With the help of Wales...



IN TERMS OF SQUARES...

The square here represents *FUEL*'s playing area. Wales represents Wales. As you can probably make out, the game's map stretches from just below Cardiff right the way up to past Wrexham in North Wales. Though neither city is featured in *FUEL*, we should stress.



IN TERMS OF FLOODING...

Now if you were to take Wales, pull it off England, stand it up, hollow it out, and then tip the liquidated playing area of *FUEL* into it, the country would be flooded all the way up to Barmouth. We estimate that around 2,897,567 people would drown, and many more sheep. Wrexham would be spared.



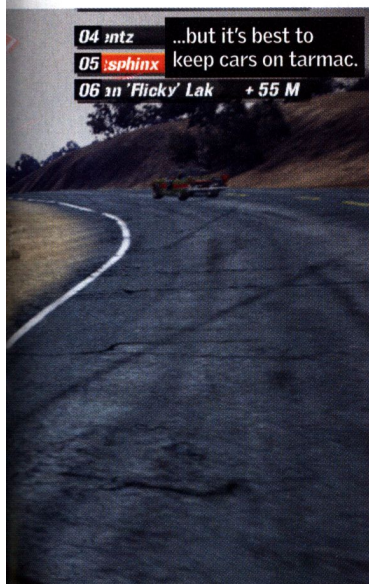
IN TERMS OF SCISSORS...

If you were to cut Wales down to a size equal to that of *FUEL*'s playing area, using a giant pair of scissors wielded from a large boat in the Irish Sea, you'd have to snip off Pembrokeshire. And then some! The resulting island would be lovely, claim scientists. Except for Milford Haven.

snort cocaine off her arse. But hold on! Stop the celebrations! Somebody's leaping out of the giant cake! Damn that shady catering company – it's Professor Rubbish AI and his evil sidekick Shite Physics. And they're shooting everybody in their faces! Oh dear, now everybody's either dead or writhing in agony as their life slides out of them, and it's all because Asobo didn't give due attention to Rubbish AI and Shite Physics. And there's cake everywhere.

You know when someone is driven to a tortuous jumping-out-during-a-party metaphor that something is deeply wrong. And sadly there is. Structurally *FUEL* doesn't play to its established strengths, and you'll spend little time actually exploring the expansive world Asobo have created and more time in the menu screen, ticking off rudimentary challenges in a way not terribly unlike a normal and unremarkable off-road racer.

In the races themselves, losing sight of the lead vehicles and allowing them to fall out of rendering distance lets the race AI unfairly propel them steadily



towards victory. I've had to restart many races upon noticing that the two race leaders were a good mile ahead of me, and that the gap was widening thanks to their magic "if you can't see them they're not mucking up" powers. On the highest difficulty setting you'll be thumped time and time again, and on the mid-setting you'll often find your opponents little challenge. Margins of victory are magnified hugely by the distances you race, and you'll rarely encounter anything close to a photo finish.

When you can see the other racers, they're generally good sport apart from the occasional hiccup – getting stuck on inclines (only to receive magical boosts), driving headlong into abandoned vehicles, that sort of outrageousness. Contact with them feels unsettlingly unpredictable, as does contact with anything other than the floor beneath your wheels.

"It's Professor Rubbish AI and his evil sidekick Shite Physics"

So we move on to the physics, which are floaty and unconvincing in all but the buggies. *FUEL* feels solid enough when you're not doing anything unusual, but collisions with roadside furniture and jutting-out bits of terrain highlight a real problem with the handling.

PHYSICS CHAOS

At times you'll be launched skywards, or fall foul of the cruddy damage meter that decides like some strict parent whether or not you've had enough damage for one day and rudely resets your car to the track. If you're lucky, it'll be pointing in roughly the right direction. The road cars are big offenders, feeling to be made of polystyrene and shiny paper – which is appropriate, as that's how they look: garish, chunky and exhaust-pipe laden in an otherwise fantastic looking game.

That *FUEL* is marred by these problems is a great big puddle of shame,

as when things come together the game really does shimmer. The payoff for daring to ride your bike through the dense, charred remains of a pine forest and succeeding, while your opponents stick to the prescribed route and fail, is immensely satisfying. The vistas and scripted weather changes you're treated to during races can be stunning at times, and when you decide to endure the free ride mode (before eventually being put off by the lack of anything to do or see in it) the previously mentioned sense of bigness about the mountains and valleys rarely ceases to impress.

You'll spend your time with *FUEL* trying to love it, endlessly probing it from all angles like an awkward virgin, certain there's at least one way in but repeatedly finding yourself rebuked, unsatisfied and frustrated. The head-spinningly massive world is a design feat on paper, but in practice it delivers nothing other than a varied, edgeless backdrop and the ability to plot out 100 mile long marathons, which unfortunately isn't as much fun as it sounds. *FUEL*'s not a bad game, but it's

fallen short of the incredible open-world racer epic we'd conjured up in our imaginations having had all of those big numbers and square miles thrown at us.

So really it's your own fault. I hope you're proud. **PCZ**

PCZONE

GRAPHICS Generally pretty
SOUND Yeah, cars and stuff
MULTIPLAYER Online challenges

- ✓ Lots of vehicles
- ✓ Lots to unlock
- ✓ Massive world
- ✗ World is uninteresting
- ✗ Physics are wonky
- ✗ AI is suspect

66

Outta gas

Mounts greatly increase your units' effectiveness in battle.



You'll even get your own evil boat.



OVERLORD II

Steve Hogarty sits on his arse all day while those around him do all the hard work...

DEVELOPER Triumph
PUBLISHER Codemasters
WEBSITE codemasters.com/overlordii
ETA Out now
PRICE £29.99

WHAT'S THE EVILLEST
thing you can think of?
Now wind it back a bit,
because we can't print what you just
thought of, and you should find yourself
somewhere in the region of heinous
war crimes.

Now think of another evil thing. Was it slavery? Good! Now imagine both of these acts being carried out by a pantomime villain in a pointy helmet in such a way that makes everybody laugh and feel good about themselves and the despicable world that we live in. Hey, that's *Overlord II*, a game whose morality slider goes from one sort of evil to another sort of evil. Destruction and domination are the two extremes, and being good doesn't really come into the equation. Which is fine, as the sprawling faux-fantasy world that is the game's setting is populated by wankers.

charge of an army of dozens of scurrying minions who'll pillage, loot and pile on to enemies. On the consoles it utilises both analogue sticks – one to move your character about the world, and another to sweep your underlings about the vicinity. Pleasingly, this translates well to PC: using the mouse to move your minions is at first clunky, but once you get to grips with just how subtle your gestures have to be it quickly becomes intuitive.

Fable is structurally this game's closest relative. The map is an interconnected web of levels which don't pull off the feeling of a proper open world, but at the same time are diverse

enough to allow you to backtrack in search of resources and treasure. From your throne in the Netherworld you'll receive quests to progress the plot, as well as various other quests to dominate or destroy the locations you control, or simply to pester the locals. At all times you can explore your dark sanctuary, which is home to the game's weapon and armour forging, minion resurrection (hurrah), and the nicked-from-Lionhead-but-not-as-good wife management stuff.

The minions remain the game's stars though. They'll destroy anything you

AT A GLANCE...

Action adventure RPG in which a giggling gaggle o' gremlins do all the hard work for you. Diverse and comical gameplay makes a winner.

MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS:
Pentium 2.4GHz or Athlon XP 2400+ processor, 512MB RAM, and a GeForce FX5900 or Radeon 9500 graphics card.

HOW IT STACKS

FABLE: THE LOST CHAPTERS 84%

OVERLORD II 78%

OVERLORD 72%

EVILTAINMENT

Overlord II doesn't fall far from the action-adventuring of the original game. In fact it feels more like Triumph's second attempt, and fans of the first will find themselves in instantly familiar territory. You're the titular Overlord, a villain in



Christ.



If *Gremlins* is your idea of great comedy, you'll love this.



Minions will pick up armour and weapons left lying about.

"Overlord II's brand of guiltless comic villainy is more entertaining than 'true' evil could ever be"

point a bony finger at, either throwing themselves at a selected target or streaming forward and interacting with the first thing they encounter. Clubbing seals, smashing crates, lobbing fireballs – they're largely autonomous creatures, who'll retrieve anything of value from the detritus and return it to you like an over-excited child.

MINION MAN ARMY

They retain their ability to wield and wear all of the fallen crap they find scattered about the floor – though tragically the game fails to demonstrate this as well as it did in the original, where a run through a vegetable patch would have your minion forces decked out in pumpkin helmets. Instead your first, batch of minions will sport some less-

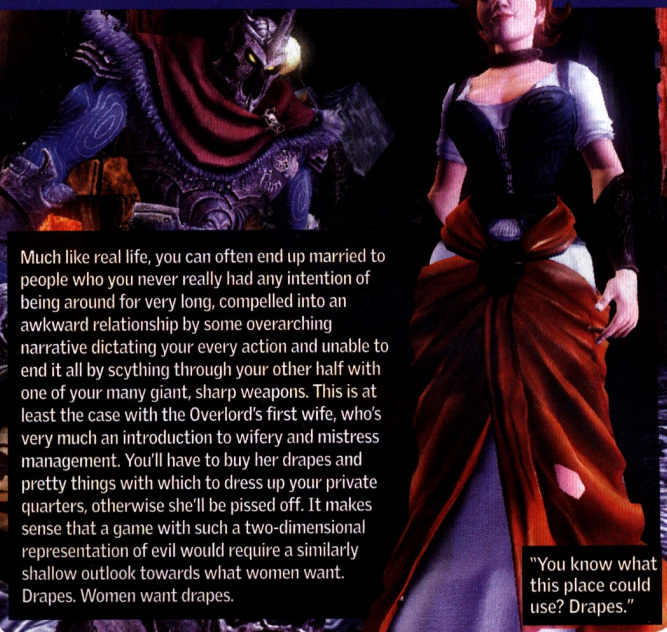
impressive seal-fur hoods nicked from the corpses of dead hunters.

Scavenging armour and weapons like this increases your mob's effectiveness, indicated by a rising percentage stat on the HUD. Not only that, but in certain cases you'll use disguises to allow your minions into previously inaccessible areas. Roman (or the Empire, as they're known in this fantasy world) garb will get you past town guards, and at times you'll have to combine the sartorial puzzling with your ability to leap into the body of a minion, which makes them far less conspicuous than when an eight foot tall bastard was standing in their midst.

Puzzles aren't taxing, rarely involving much more than using the correct minion type with the correct object. The browns are your cannon fodder brawlers, but

MISTRESS STRESS

Behind every evil man...



Much like real life, you can often end up married to people who you never really had any intention of being around for very long, compelled into an awkward relationship by some overarching narrative dictating your every action and unable to end it all by scything through your other half with one of your many giant, sharp weapons. This is at least the case with the Overlord's first wife, who's very much an introduction to wifery and mistress management. You'll have to buy her drapes and pretty things with which to dress up your private quarters, otherwise she'll be pissed off. It makes sense that a game with such a two-dimensional representation of evil would require a similarly shallow outlook towards what women want. Drapes. Women want drapes.

"You know what this place could use? Drapes."



Recover artifacts for upgrades.

your reds can chuck fireballs and (I think, it's hard to tell for sure) inhale away fire from burning barricades. Blues are medics and swimmers, while greens turn invisible when standing still and can saunter through toxic fumes. Every minion type has its own unique mount too, which furthers the variation in puzzles: browns riding wolves can leap short gaps to reach switches. Greens on their giant spiders can crawl up walls to unlock doors. That sort of thing.

You'll undoubtedly become attached to at least one of the little fellas, as soon as one of them finds a hat or something to mark him out as an individual. For this reason, minions can be brought back from the dead, at the cost of some of your newbies. Every minion's got a name this time around, and can level up independently of you. Brilliantly, they'll earn titles depending on their combat history – from lowly epitaphs like New Born, to the more noble Centurion Crusher. They'll have all of the weapons they died with too, so while visits to the graveyard aren't a necessity, they're an alluring option for a caring Overlord.

For a simple bringing-together of some basic ideas, *Overlord II*'s an

incredibly fun game. The depth is obscured behind some console-minded interfaces – running about your tower to access what are essentially different menu screens is a pain – but it's delivered with great pace and an engaging sense of progression.

So while this self-proclaimed "evil simulator" (that's actually the genre it gets listed under in *Vista*) doesn't feature that horrible thing we made you think of in the first paragraph, its brand of guiltless comic villainy is probably more entertaining than "true" evil could ever be. Just look at Kim Jong-il, that guy's never smiling. **PC7**

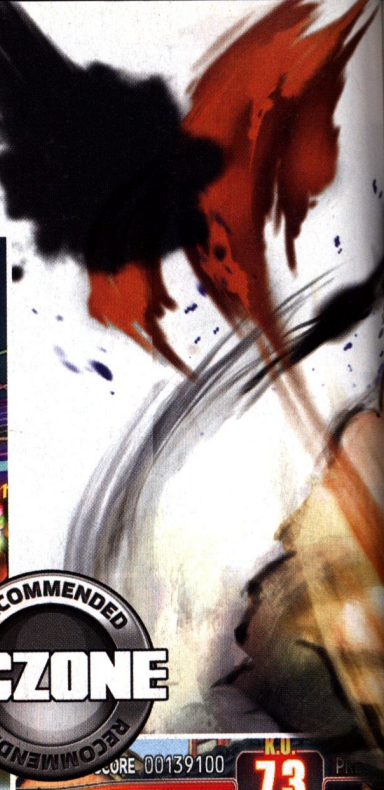
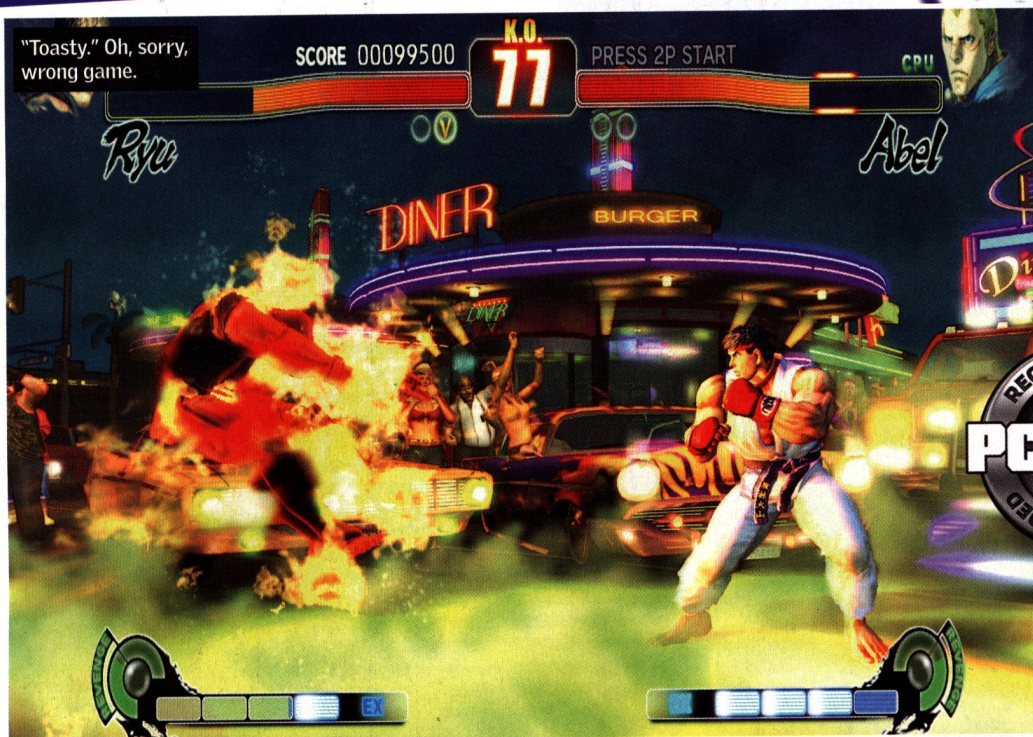
PCZONE

GRAPHICS Slightly prettier
SOUND Minion warblings are a matter of taste
MULTIPLAYER Some co-op and stuff

- ✓ Out and out fun
- ✓ Better, more open world
- ✓ Minion management
- ✓ Riding giant spiders
- ✗ Tower is a pain to navigate
- ✗ Occasionally console-focused

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Good lord



STREET FIGHTER IV

Who better to have his head crushed by a flying elbow than *David Brown*?

DEVELOPER Capcom
PUBLISHER Capcom
WEBSITE streetfighter.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £29.99

AT A GLANCE...

The definitive beat-'em-up returns with old and new characters, ready to beat the tar out of each other.

MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS:
 Pentium 4 2GHz, 1GB RAM, and a 256MB graphics card with Shader Model 3.

HOW IT STACKS

STREET FIGHTER IV 87%

STREET FIGHTER II 81%

NIGHT OUT IN SLOUGH 20%

THERE CAN'T SURELY be many people out there reading this who haven't heard of or played any of the *Street Fighter* games before. One of the most successful and iconic computer games to ever be committed to memory, versions of the second game even appeared on the Spectrum in its dying days. Best not to imagine that though, as the images are still scarring my mind to this day. What we have here is Capcom's return to producing a full new iteration of the game, getting rid of all this *Super Alpha X Edition* nonsense.

If you haven't heard of this massive franchise before, then the premise is simple: *Street Fighter* is a side-scrolling 2D beat-'em-up with larger-than-life caricatures who have to use kicks, punches and various special attacks to defeat their opponents over a set number of rounds. In single-player, you'll primarily be trying to unlock hidden characters, movies and artwork in the story mode,

which gives each character a flimsy and nonsensical reason for why they happen to be fighting against a load of burly super hulks from across the globe.

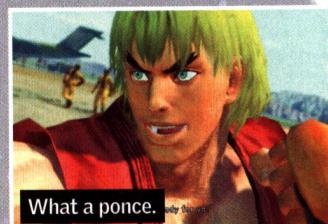
All the old favourites are back, accompanied by a handful of new ones, not all of which I believe are that good. Ken, Ryu, Chun Li, E. Honda and pals are all present and correct, with familiar moves supplemented by flashy new ones. The new additions include a vastly overweight American clown, a Mexican guy with a frying pan, and a French martial arts guy with amnesia. Some of the other characters won't be familiar unless you've kept up with all the various other games since *Super Street Fighter II* made its debut so many years ago.

Once you're into the game, and have somehow managed to sign into the execrable *Games for Windows - LIVE!* service, you're presented with a substantial array of options. Thankfully for a console port, the game hasn't been stripped down. There are loads of

graphics tweaking options to play about with and there are some intriguing new visual styles to stick on if you fancy a change. The game itself is as colourful and vibrantly exciting as you'd expect and the actual combat matches this perfectly.

SCRAPPER'S DELIGHT

While it doesn't feel as fast-paced and frantic as versions of yore, this might be something to do with this writer's inability to play the game with any level of skill. Suffice it to say that, for *Street Fighter* aficionados – or for people who've only dabbled – there's nothing that will make them feel uncomfortable.



What a ponce.



UNCOMFORTABLE IMAGERY

Is it just us that finds this a little weird?

We all know about the cliché regarding the Japanese and schoolgirls' underwear, regardless of whether it is grounded in reality or not. However, take a look at the screenshot accompanying these words and tell me, there's nothing slightly iffy about a big burly Russian manhandling

a tiny Oriental schoolgirl in such a manner. While we're not prudish about the sight of female flesh, even we have to admit to being slightly uncomfortable by this sort of thing. Zangief does look like he's having a whale of a time though, so who are we to spoil his fun?



The first problem for incompetents like me is that the game is still as impenetrably difficult at the higher settings. One could argue I just need to practice more, but I do think it is a valid issue to raise. In remaining so faithful to the original format, which is laudable – they could so easily have ruined the whole thing by attempting fundamental changes – this has meant that any issues you might have had with a previous version will still be present in this one.

This only really affects the single-player, of course, as the core of the game really should be fighting human opponents, either on the same machine or using the various online modes that are available (which we couldn't test at the time of writing, as no other bugger had a copy).

You should also probably be considering using a gamepad as well, even though I still firmly believe the keys could be an adequate substitute if they were implemented correctly. While the

D-Pad is useful, it's advisable to use a controller with an analogue stick, as some of the special moves require rolling movements to pull off.

While *Street Fighter IV* isn't without little niggling issues (mostly related to *Games for Windows – LIVE!*) there's no doubting this is the only fighting game you should consider getting. Ignoring the fact it's probably the only one currently out on the PC, it could definitely be described as genre-defining. While our console cousins have been falling over themselves to lavish praise

on and lick clean the boots of Capcom's developers, we'll be a little more reserved in our praise, because this sort of thing really is much more at home played on the couch on a big TV.

A brilliant combat game that can be dabbled with in short bursts or long bouts of human vs human combat, there's no denying that it is a must-play for PC fighting fans and those looking for a bit of short, sharp fun. If you've got a setup that allows you to play in your living room on the TV, add three extra points to the score. **PCZ**

PCZONE

GRAPHICS Wonderfully colourful
SOUND Decent, though voices repetitive
MULTIPLAYER Potentially good

- ✓ Just as you remember it
- ✓ Large roster
- ✓ Always good against humans
- ✓ Just plain fun
- ✗ Awkward menu system
- ✗ Feels better in the lounge

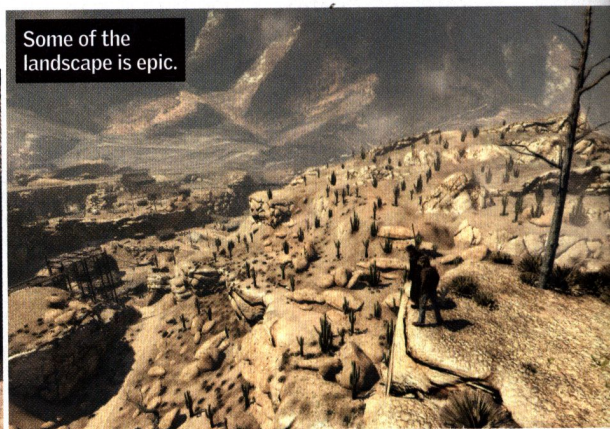
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Flying Fists of Fantastic Fury

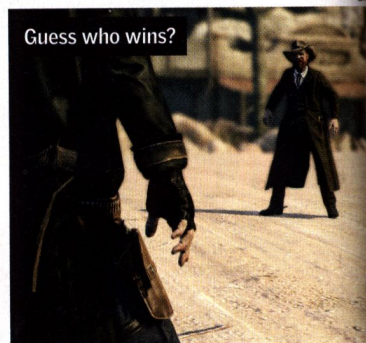
Suddenly the bandit was flattened by a giant floating crisp.



Some of the landscape is epic.

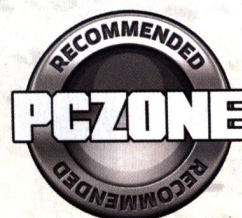


Guess who wins?



CALL OF JUAREZ: BOUND IN BLOOD

A rootin' tootin' cattle-rustlin' cigarillo-smokin' *David Brown* reaches slowly into his reviewing holster



DEVELOPER Techland
PUBLISHER Ubisoft
WEBSITE callofjuarez.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £34.99

AT A GLANCE...

Call of Juarez returns in a slicker, more commercial guise, with loads of features and a distinctly *COD* feel.

MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS:
3.2GHz Pentium 4, 1GB RAM (2GB *Vista*), and a GeForce 6800 or ATI Radeon X1650 graphics card.

HOW IT STACKS

**CALL OF DUTY:
WORLD AT WAR** 84%

**CALL OF JUAREZ:
BOUND IN BLOOD** 80%

CALL OF JUAREZ 70%

HOW CAN A game be better than its predecessor and yet feel strangely less intriguing to play? That's the conundrum I've been wrestling with since I got my hands on *Call of Juarez: Bound in Blood*. The original irked some with its unique approach, but its atmosphere and originality was first rate. Techland have looked hard at it and decided that certain things needed to be changed.

So, gone are the stealth sections and the curious mountain-climbing bits, replaced by a whole host of refinements and new additions to the core template. The first thing you think of when you start playing is how similar it feels to *Call of Duty*, and not just because of the regenerating health. Techland have injected that same epic feel into each level, be it with the scope of some of the levels or the intensity of the fire fights.

Of course, as a Western game, said atmosphere has to come from different sources than a WWII game – after all,

you can't just stick the main character in Stalingrad and tell them to get on with it. Techland really have worked hard to recreate so many classic moments that you wonder if there are any that have been left out, especially if you consider the multiplayer modes as well. You've got quick-draw shootouts in dusty, windswept areas; mounted combat; bows and arrows; and comedy varmints on rooftops tumbling like ragdolls to the street below. All of this is bound together by an interesting story about familial loyalty and a hot cowgirl.

The game revolves around two brothers, Thomas and Ray McCall, combatants on the side of the Confederacy in the US Civil War. The story is one of the best elements of the game, made better by the excellent voice acting of the two brothers. Ray is easily the pick, the same actor (Marc Alaimo, who played Gul Dukat in *Star Trek: Deep Space 9*) reprising his role superbly here as the troubled gunslinger.

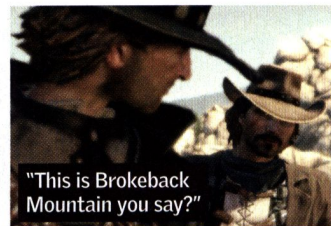
Bound in Blood's gameplay is relatively slowly paced, a necessity given the nature of the weapons

Ray can wield heavier weapons, like the shotgun.

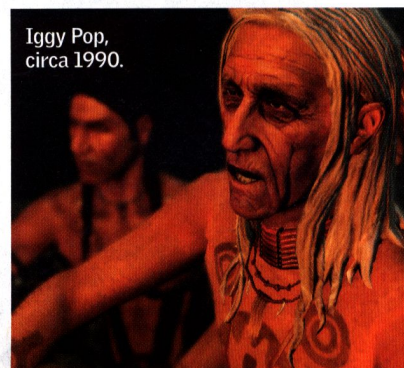




Iconic Western locations are abundant.



"This is Brokeback Mountain you say?"



Iggy Pop, circa 1990.

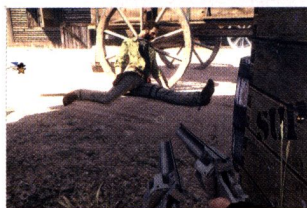
FOR A FEW DOLLARS MORE

Will the multiplayer be a quick draw or a slow coach?

Call of Juarez's multiplayer never took off, something Techland are desperate to put right in *Bound in Blood*.

Five modes are available, including Wanted, Shootout, Posse, Manhunt and Wild West Legends. This latter one is perhaps the most intriguing, an objective-based mode in which famous events are recreated by two teams, one defending and one attacking.

Posse is straightforward team deathmatch, Manhunt is similar to the VIP mode from *Counter-Strike*, and Shootout means each player gets a bounty on their head depending on how well they are



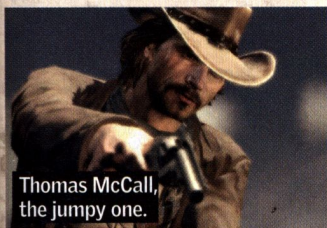
doing, with players killing them being rewarded with that figure.

Finally, in Wanted, one player can score (he's 'wanted') and when he dies, his killer becomes the wanted man.

"Techland really have worked hard to recreate many classic moments"

available to you. You can't charge through big groups of enemies with an automatic, because they don't exist. Instead, you have to make each shot count with your pistols, rifle or bow, occasionally tossing a stick of dynamite.

Kill a few desperadoes and you get the chance to enter a bullet-time mode, the nature of which depends on which character you are. Thomas McCall has a hammer-cocking quick-shooter sequence, while brother Ray paints



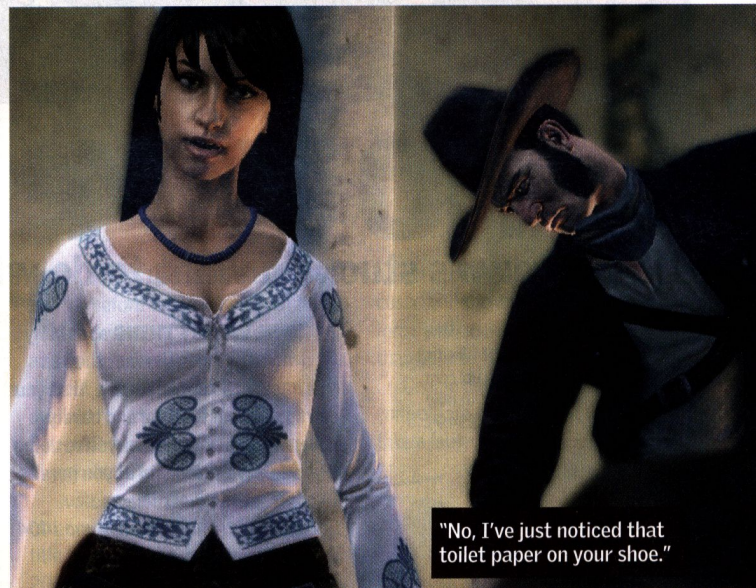
Thomas McCall, the jumpy one.

targets with crosshairs and takes them all out in lightning-quick fashion. They also work together on a third slo-mo sequence, where they burst through a door and clear a room. This uses the same dual crosshairs to represent two pistols dynamic from the first game.

WEST IS BACK

This all sounds good so far. And the game is very good – it has a great western atmosphere, good voice acting and a decent storyline – but it doesn't manage to attain classic status.

One of the reasons is that Techland have tried to include too many elements in the game, so many that you don't really get a chance to focus on one thing for long enough to enjoy it, other than the main shooting bits. There are a large number of killing methods open to you,



"No, I've just noticed that toilet paper on your shoe."

yet you rarely get to use them, which wasn't the case in the first game. Often when you do need to use the lasso or the throwing knives, for example, the situation is contrived.

Also, because of the understandable decision to go down the commercial *Call of Duty*-esque route, *Bound in Blood* has lost some of the uniqueness the original brought to the table. It no longer feels like its own game, more an albeit-good attempt to cash in on *COD*-mania.

While you'll always enjoy playing it, blowing away varmints and riding about on horses shooting people with a bow and arrow, there'll be something niggling you in the back of your mind that *Call of Juarez* has lost a little bit of its soul. Still a great game, though, and one that I'd recommend to any fan of Westerns and shooters. **PCZ**

PCZONE

GRAPHICS Slick
SOUND Excellent voice acting
MULTIPLAYER Has potential

- ✓ Great setting and atmosphere
- ✓ Excellent voice acting
- ✓ Loads of features
- ✓ Improves on the first game...
- ✗ ...but at a cost?
- ✗ Not as compelling as the original

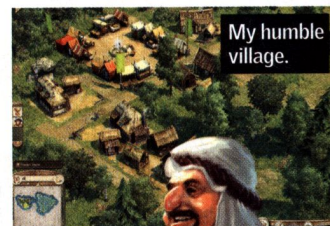
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More Leone than Wayne



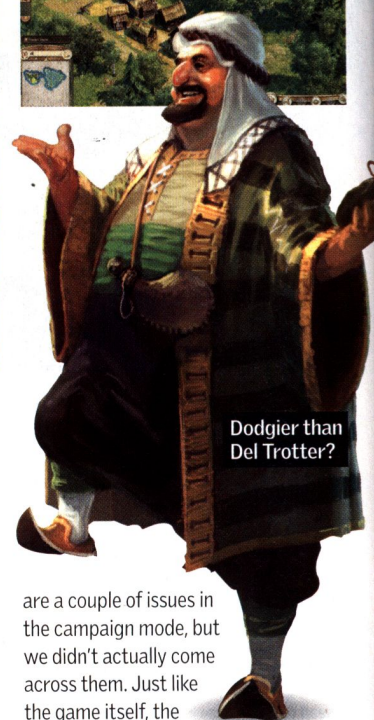
As you'd expect, the towns are detailed close-up.



Some soldiers.



My humble village.



Dodgier than Del Trotter?

ANNO 1404

David Brown's stuck on what to do with his wood

DEVELOPER Related Designs
PUBLISHER Ubisoft
WEBSITE anno.uk.ubi.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £34.99

AT A GLANCE...

Teutonic trading time again as we venture back into the mists of time to build cities and harvest goods and chattels.

MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS:
 3GHz processor (2GHz Vista), 1GB RAM, and a 128MB graphics card.

HOW IT STACKS

CIVILIZATION IV: COLONIZATION **88%**

ANNO 1701 **73%**

ANNO 1404 **72%**

THE WORST THING about any god game is the fact they all seem so impenetrable, that you can spend hours on one and barely have any idea about what you're doing (Paradox, we're looking at you here). In contrast to most mainland European god games then, *Anno 1404* does ease you into its gameplay relatively well. There aren't any massive blocks of small text to read through for two hours, only to discover that was only the first of seven tutorials. Everything is done through the power of the voice (and some helpful arrows). Yes, there are some little issues with it, but generally you get settled in (no pun intended) pretty sharpish, trading away and ferrying goods about the place.

Visually, the game is pleasant, and the scenery bright and colourful. Your citizens and peasants go about their business, though it isn't as easy to watch them doing so as we'd have liked. The zoom levels aren't subtle enough to allow for this, so you'll have to be content with an overview of your nascent kingdom. The object of the game is to build up your tiny settlement into a continent-spanning metropolis, through the means of good town

planning, sensible building choices and wise trading decisions. I'm not a massive god-'em-up fanatic, but *Anno* definitely does everything required of the genre. The thing is, does it do enough to attract people who aren't too excited about the prospect of assigning trade privileges to their citizens?

I think the answer is that it probably doesn't. What it does, it does very well, but there isn't any dramatic redefining of genre boundaries going on. You gather resources, you place buildings and you repeat. The campaign mode helps streamline this, with friendly (and occasionally patronising) talking heads asking you to deliver this or provide that for them.

If you don't fancy that, just pop over to the continuous game or try out the scenarios. There are achievements to aim for too, but you probably won't be too bothered by them.

One thing the game doesn't do well is run. By that, of course, I mean that there were significant drops in the frame rate (the game froze temporarily) when certain things happened, like when the talking heads appeared, for example. Other than that, there were no obvious bugs to prevent enjoyment of the sandbox mode. Apparently there

are a couple of issues in the campaign mode, but we didn't actually come across them. Just like the game itself, the campaign is solid. It might sound trite, but if you like god games there's nothing here you won't have seen before. But at least you know what you're getting. **PCZ**

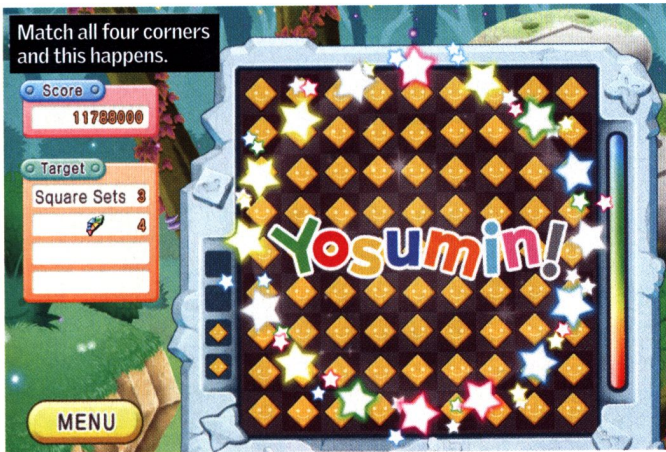
PCZONE

GRAPHICS Colourful and bright
SOUND Soothing music
MULTIPLAYER Online save and screenshot sharing

- ✓ Colourful graphics
- ✓ Very solid gameplay
- ✓ Eases you in well
- ✓ Genre fans will love it...
- ✗ ...but will anybody else?
- ✗ Some minor slowdown issues

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Alright on the knight



YOSUMIN! A (be)jewel in the crown

DEVELOPER Square Enix
PUBLISHER Square Enix
WEBSITE yosumin.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £7.49

MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS
800 MHz, 512MB RAM (1GB *Vista*), and
a video card.



IF THERE WAS one thing you could say about *Yosumin!*, one thing that was incontrovertible, it'd be that it's addictive. Regardless of the simplistic and repetitive gameplay, it's just one of those games that keeps you hooked with a "one more go" factor, hours after you've grown tired of its click, drag and repeat mechanic. The best puzzle games are daringly simplistic though, so does *Yosumin!* have the hidden depths of a *Peggle* or a *Plants vs Zombies*?

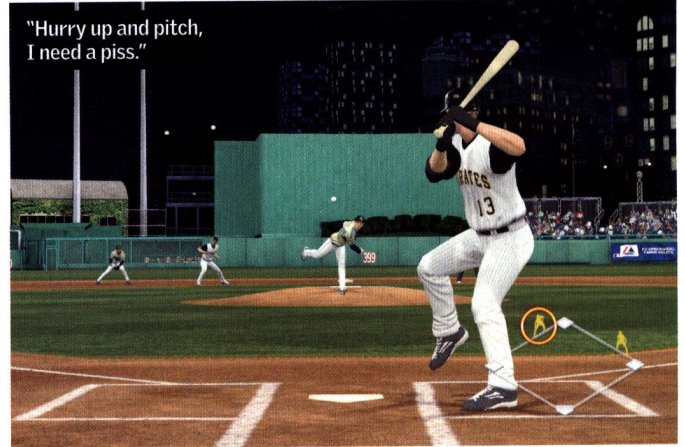
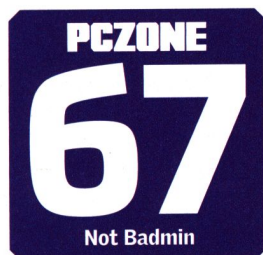
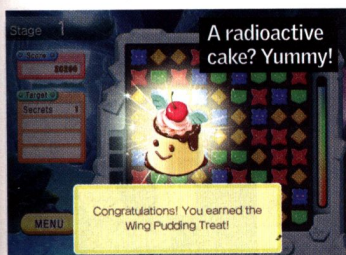
Well, no, not really (you'd probably already guessed that was coming). While I've played it now for this review, I seriously doubt I'll ever go back to it on my own time. Contrast that with a game like *Peggle*, where I've done all of the extra challenges (well, most) and it becomes clear that there's just not enough about *Yosumin!* to make it a stayer.

The premise of the game is irrelevant, so I won't bother talking about it. What you do is have a 9x9 grid

filled with different coloured icons. The object is to create squares and rectangles with the same colour icons (or certain special ones) at each corner. Each stage gives you a certain task to complete, like match X number of reds, greens and yellows. Special icons, if included in your shape, boost your time, shuffle the icons about and so on. If you create four shapes with the same colour icons, that colour is completely removed from the board temporarily.

Square Enix have tried to add various things to the game to keep it interesting, such as an endless mode or various treats that provide bonuses when selected. The problem is it just lacks a replayability factor. Granted, that first time might see you playing for hours, but once you've become too frustrated with it, you'll most likely never bother with it again. This casual game is cheap and cheerful, plus there's a free demo, but *Yosumin!* might not be worth it in the long run.

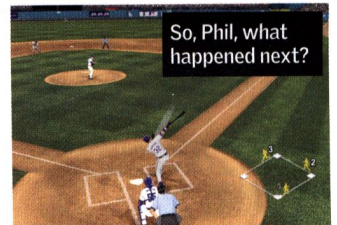
David Brown



MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL 2K9 Slapping balls is always fun

DEVELOPER 2K Games
PUBLISHER 2K Games
WEBSITE 2ksports.com/games/mlb2k9
ETA Out now
PRICE £14.95 on Direct2Drive.co.uk

MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS
2.4GHz single core (2.8GHz *Vista*), 512MB
RAM (1GB *Vista*), and a 128MB graphics
card with Shader Model 3.



ONE THING NEEDS to be said before we crack on with this review. At the time of writing, and as far as we know after some diligent research, *MLB 2K9* is only available on the PC in the UK from Direct2Drive, so don't be rushing off to any shops or anything.

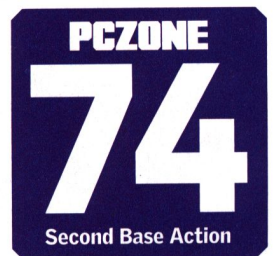
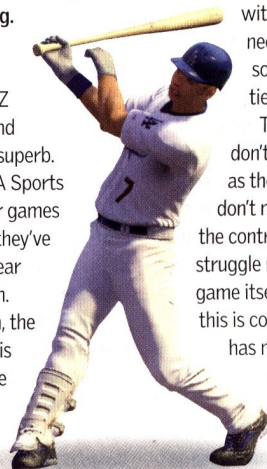
Just like with the other recent 2K Sports title *NBA 2K9* (87%, PCZ 203) the sheer quality and sheen on display here is superb. Despite all the efforts EA Sports have made to make their games feel like TV broadcasts, they've never come anywhere near 2K's level of presentation. The graphics are spot on, the sound and commentary is exemplary and the whole thing just feels like you are participating in a game of baseball.

The usual spread of options are available, with one-off fixtures, franchise modes and Home Run Derbies all playable. There's also a non-atrocious soundtrack to keep you interested (although, 50% of it is still complete toss). There's also a reasonable practice mode to get into the swing (pun intended) of things with. However, the interface problems that

were the only real problem with *MLB*'s basketball counterpart are back in full force, and are even more pronounced than before.

Couple this with the fact that the controls are so complicated that it'll take a fairly long time to get to grips with them. You really do need a pad as well, because so many of the controls are tied to the analogue stick. The training help screens don't actually help too much, as the button numbers often don't match what they are on the controller. But, if you can struggle past the interface, the game itself is baseball gold. And this is coming from someone who has no interest in baseball whatsoever. But if you do, snap this up as quick as you can.

David Brown





HIRED GUNS: THE JAGGED EDGE

Orgasmic turn-based strategy

DEVELOPER GFI: Russia
PUBLISHER Kalypso Media
WEBSITE snipurl.com/hiredguns
ETA Out now
PRICE £24.99

MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS
1.8GHz processor, 512MB RAM, and
a 128MB graphics card.

THERE'S SOMETHING BIZARRE about this game where mercenaries battle the forces of an evil dictator in central Africa. No, it's got nothing to do with the setting at all, it's the fact that all the female mercenaries I recruited emitted orgasmic noises whenever I clicked on them. Now, however great my effect on women, I fail to believe it stretches so far as to make small digital representations of them climax on demand. Anyway, the game.

Set in Africa, you control a fledgling mercenary force who is fighting some evil junta for another, potentially less evil, wannabe junta. Something like that, anyway, it isn't that easy to follow. You do this in a *UFO/Jagged Alliance*-style way, spending action points to fire, move, crawl and so on. The main problem is it this game is so very, very, very hard.

Really, it's just ridiculous. The internet provides you with mercenaries to hire and guns to buy, but initially

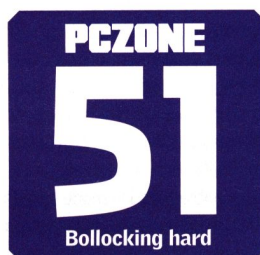


you'll only be able to buy a handful of guns and a smattering of ammo, so you'll be very limited in what you can do (like the start of *UFO: Enemy Unknown*). Then the game gently introduces you to things by forcing your tiny crew, armed only with popguns and a couple of Uzis, to fight an entire sodding army of ridiculously powerful soldiers. There's also a stupid weariness system that makes your guys fall over with tiredness towards the end of missions.

Hired Guns: Jagged Edge's difficulty is just ludicrous – it's tougher than the original *X-Com* games. It's just too hard to recommend and, coupled with some of the worst English translation I've ever seen, it has to be ignored.

While we don't down from a challenge, *Hired Guns* is so tough it's nearly impossible, and so it's almost unplayable. Which is sad, because I usually love this type of game.

David Brown



TUNNEL RATS

Better than the movie (just)

DEVELOPER Replay Studios
PUBLISHER Boll AG
WEBSITE boll-ag.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £15.99

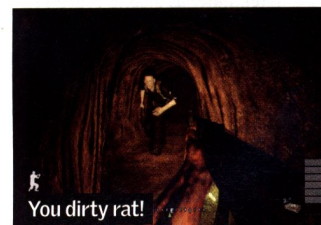
MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS
2GHz processor, 512MB RAM,
and a 256MB graphics card with Pixel
Shader 3.0 support.

IDIDN'T KNOW this was a game based on a Uwe Boll film until about 30 minutes into playing. A passing scribe asked whether it was "that Boll *Tunnel Rats* game" and, when answered in the affirmative, laughed and gave me his condolences. I seem to be getting that a lot these days, what with all the diabolical games I have to play.

Anyway, this is the official game of the movie *1968 Tunnel Rats*, directed by that most venerated of filmmakers, Uwe Boll. It's all about a young man who survives a helicopter crash deep in the jungles of Vietnam. To survive, he must fight his way past hordes of Vietcong fighter clones, avoiding deadly spike and bomb traps as he does so. There are also extensive tunnel sequences (hence the name) where you learn of his claustrophobia and growing madness brought on by the horrors of war.

First of all I'll tell you what is good about the game: nothing.

Now, let's move on to the bad: the jungle feels like an unkempt version of the maze at Hampton court palace, only with Vietcong emerging from the foliage like it was giving birth to them. When you stab an enemy, the knife prods thin air and the guy goes to ground. Using guns does bring some response, but only in terms of a sploody blood splatter and no other reaction whatsoever, barring an exclamation of



"Ow" in Vietnamese. Try to throw a grenade and your guy will pull the pin and then throw thin air, which is just too bizarre to explain here.

The maps are shit, the graphics are shit, you collect ears as trophies – just like Dolph in *Universal Soldier* – and the checkpointing is woeful. In short this whole thing is a nauseating mess from start to finish, and even the tunnel bits are atrocious.

Still, it's better than any of Ugh Boll's films.

David Brown





DANGEROUS HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS IN TROUBLE

Is it as good as the hype suggests?

DEVELOPER Mousechief
PUBLISHER Mousechief
WEBSITE mousechief.com/dhs
ETA Out now
PRICE £8.99

MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS
500MHz processor, 256MB RAM, and a DirectX 7 graphics card.



UNIQUE IS A word immediately associated with *Dangerous High School Girls in Trouble*, a name that just screams "Play me now!" You've just got to find out what it involves and why everyone seems to think it's so good. Is it good? Yes, it is, although it's charms and engaging nature only hold attention for so long. Being nominated in the Videogame Writing category in the Writers' Guild Awards 2009 indicates to what degree the game is appreciated and, to an extent, it deserves the applause.

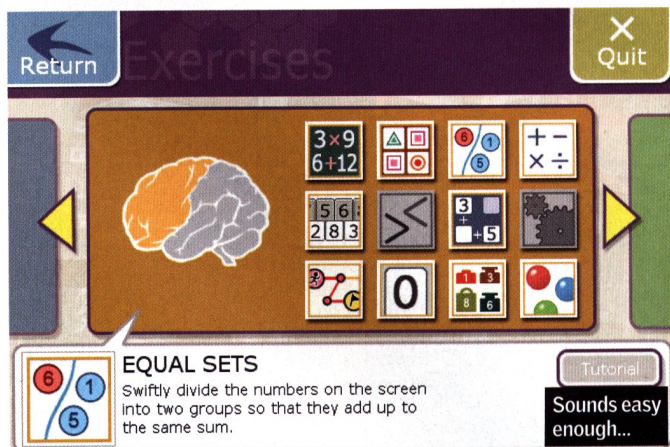
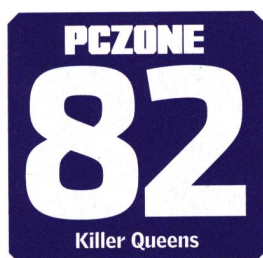
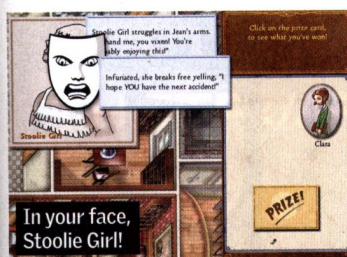
Set in the '20s, the game involves you building up a gang of dilettante females who, by misbehaving, uncover plots and foil dastardly deeds being perpetrated. It plays as *Cluedo* meets *Hoyle's Official Book of Games*. Picking a queen from a list of characters, you set about recruiting three more on the

board game-style map that confronts you. As you do, various plots unfold. There are also side quests to complete, giving bonuses and allowing you to upgrade your characters' skills.

When you confront another character, a mini-game appears. One is a poker-style game of bluffing, another a reveal-the-words game. There are a reasonable number to go through before you exhaust them all, and there is also a taunt game, which works exactly like *Monkey Island's* Insult Sword Fighting, which pleases this old timer. The jazz soundtrack fits perfectly too.

As a casual game for eating up a spare 30 minutes or so, *Dangerous High School Girls in Trouble* is perfect. Clever, original and genuinely pleasing to play, this is easily worth the £8.99 you'll pay for it on *Steam*.

David Brown

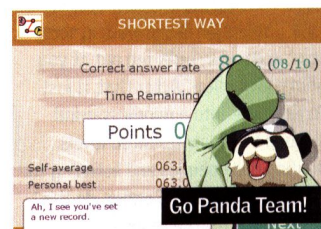


BRAIN EXERCISE WITH DR KAWASHIMA

Let a panda help your brain to grow

DEVELOPER Namco Tales Studio
PUBLISHER Bandai Namco
WEBSITE brainexercise.eu
ETA Out now
PRICE £14.99

MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS
1GHz processor, 512MB RAM
(2GB *Vista*), ATI Radeon 9000
or NVIDIA GeForce Ti 4200.



THERE WERE TWO questions asked by various members of the PC ZONE team when this plopped into our collective in-tray. First, will this *Brain Training* clone be suited to a static PC-sitting-in-front-of position? Surely it's perfect for trains or public transport instead of the home? Secondly, why does it say it needs 2GB of RAM to work in *Vista* when it runs directly off the disc?

The second question is still puzzling us, but the first is a little bit easier to answer. Primarily, this massaging of the frontal, parietal and temporal lobes should be played on a laptop, not on your super-charged gaming desktop. As it really isn't a game as such, you shouldn't break out your trusty poopsock, so treat it as a casual web game you'd play during the advert breaks in the *Neighbours* or *Hollyoaks* omnibuses. If there's any programme you need to keep your brain exercised for, it's those soaps.

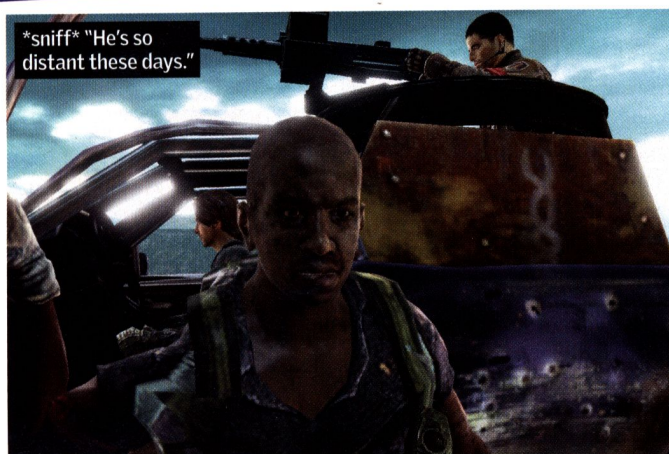
There are 12 games for each lobe of the brain that is being tested. I'm no science bod, but it seems to me that it doesn't really test how clever you are, just how good you are at playing certain games, as you can clearly get better and learn how to play them through sheer repetition. Nevertheless, each one is fun

in a "try to beat your score" kind of way, but as for the scientific and biological merit of the whole package, we can't really comment. It's also a little too expensive for something you'll play for a couple of minutes at a time.

Still, if the science does in fact work, it is a useful little package of mini-games. Just remember that it works best on a mobile platform. Playing it in front of a large LCD monitor doesn't seem right somehow. And we're still wondering how it could possibly need 2GB of RAM to work under *Vista*.

David Brown





sniff "He's so distant these days."

TERMINATOR: SALVATION

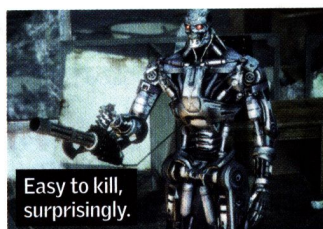
Dozing through the rise of the robots

DEVELOPER GRIN
PUBLISHER Evolved Games
WEBSITE terminatorsalvationgame.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £29.99

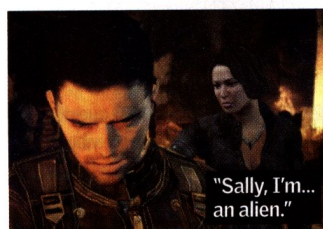
MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS
1GHz processor (2GHz *Vista*), 1GB RAM (2GB *Vista*), and a 256MB graphics card (512MB *Vista*).

THE MOST EVOCATIVE, stirring part of *Terminator: Salvation* is the loading screen, a burning red eye glaring out at you from the monitor. After that, it just degenerates into a mindless grind through tediously textured levels, fighting dull enemies and listening to dull characters say "Connor, do this" or "Wasps!" for the thousandth time. This is meant to scare you into taking cover, but these flying aerostats do virtually no damage and appear to be ever-present, their only purpose to throw you into a meaningless fire-fight every 10 steps.

The game is a prequel to the film, being set two years previously. You also don't get to play as Christian Bale playing John Connor, instead having a Shepard-from-*Mass Effect* lookalike's back to stare at instead. As for the game itself, you've seen it before: third-person action shooting with a cover system that you use to roll between bits of broken walls. The combat is broken too, sometimes. If you've run out of



Easy to kill, surprisingly.



"Sally, I'm... an alien."

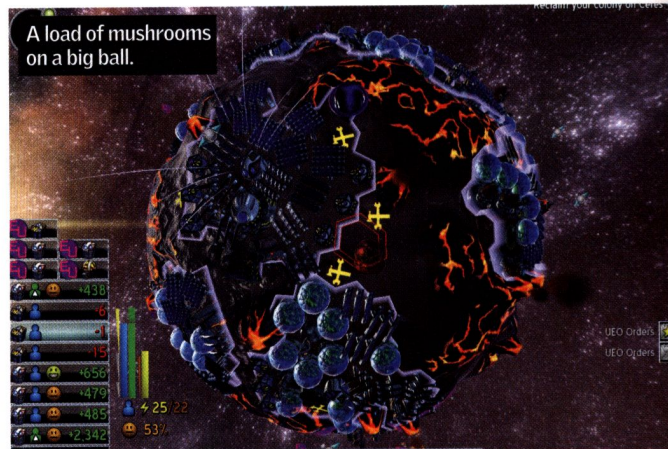
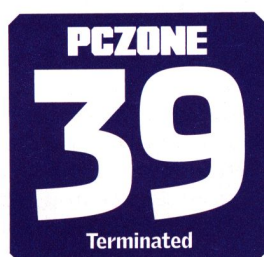
grenades and are facing the machines that can only be destroyed from the back, but they're focused on you, you're stuck until your useless allies decide to shoot them. Which can take a while.

The game is tedious from start to end. Action sequences hardly ever last more than a minute or two, with cut-scenes interrupting every couple of metres. The graphics are bland, the combat is boring and has far too many static gun sequences in it. Considering the licence they have, GRIN could have done so much more. But why do that when you can make lots of money off a mindless bit of tat like this?

David Brown



"What about just giving up?"



A load of mushrooms on a big ball.

LIGHT OF ALTAIR

The indie *Sins of a Solar Empire*

DEVELOPER SaintXi
PUBLISHER SaintXi
WEBSITE saintxi.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £11.99

MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS
1.5GHz processor, 256MB RAM, and a DirectX 9.0c-compatible graphics card.

IT WAS ALWAYS going to be a tall order for an unknown indie developer to steal the solid dilithium crown of *Sins of a Solar Empire* and SaintXi has failed to do so. It's easy to forget that this is an indie release, as there's a lot of depth to it and clearly thought has been put into trying to create a believable backdrop to the planet-twirling strategy.

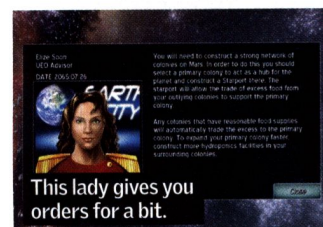
The gameplay revolves around the colonisation of planets, with the main single-player experience gradually easing you into how things work, planet by planet. You start off with Earth's moon and you're given a very limited number of constructions to plonk down on its surface.

As you progress through the levels, story elements intrude on the plonking, which leads to missions offering you different options later on, such as the ability to control of other factions.

The main problem is that your worlds can get cluttered extremely easily and while the interface is good at helping you locate troublesome areas



Space always looks nice.



This lady gives you orders for a bit.

quickly, it doesn't do a slick enough job. Zoom settings aren't sophisticated enough, meaning you'll often be zoomed too far out or too close in. The combat isn't exactly thrilling either.

There's certainly enough material here to justify the £12 outlay, but it retains an indie feel – everything is big and clunky. What it does well is guide you in slowly, never overwhelming you with information or tasks. However, a bit more transparency in terms of why you are or aren't making money and a polishing of all the clunky, rough edges would improve things. So while *Lights of Altaire* is good, it's far from great.

Adam Glick



Each colony has limited build space.



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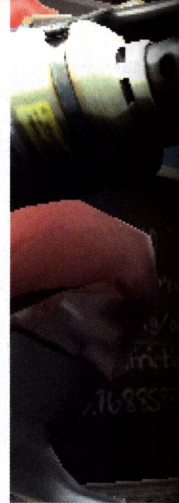
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gamigo.com – Your portal for free-to-play MMOGs

State of Play

Every month we cast fresh eyes over the changes made to long-running games...



If you see these gloves, you're probably already angry.

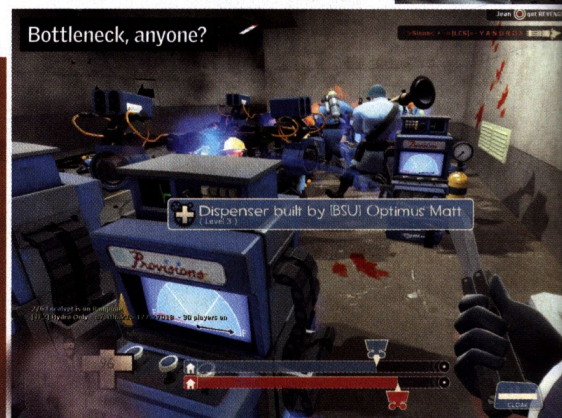


THIS MONTH...

TEAM FORTRESS 2

PUBLISHER Valve Developer Valve WEBSITE teamfortress.com PRICE £13.99

Bottleneck, anyone?



The bow is a comedic weapon to use.

WHILE IT MAY be a woefully overused cliché, if you wait ages for one bus to come along, two will then show up at the same time. In this case, the metaphorical bus should be replaced with "class-based update for *Team Fortress 2*" but the rest of it remains accurate enough. So, while the dust has barely settled on the Scout's revisions, we now have the Sniper and the Spy updates bundled together. After such a long period of inactivity on the *TF2* updates front, it's odd to have three classes revamped in such a short time.

Valve have included a whole wreath of other changes. First of all, a number of new maps have been added. Pipeline is the major new addition, a cart-pushing

map where the objective is to shove yours past the enemy's lines before they can do the same to you. Split into three stages, the new payload race mode (i.e. any map with two carts to shove) is exciting and doesn't bottleneck as much as you might expect it to.

Two new arena maps have been added, Sawmill and Nucleus, while a new community payload map, Hoodoo, has made its way onto the table. The meat of the update is, of course, the additions to the two classes, Spy and Sniper.

Valve have made an effort to make the Spy's changes intriguing and useful. His new revolver – the Ambassador – has a deadly accurate first shot, which causes a critical hit if it strikes an enemy's bonce. Make sure it does or you'll suffer for the next few seconds, as the gun has a short period of forced inaccuracy after this initial shot is fired.

Next up is the Dead Ringer, a new watch that shows you dying after taking damage, but which in fact cloaks you for eight seconds. After that, you uncloak as

usual, it's accompanied by a loud sound, making it obvious you have done so. Another watch replacement, the Cloak and Dagger, allows you to remain cloaked, provided you don't move.

The Sniper's changes are more interesting. Rather than just replacing the weapons with similar versions that have a slightly different feel, Valve have created unique weapons that make the Sniper feel more individual.

Replacing the regular rifle is The Huntsman – a bow and arrow. It allows you to move faster while firing and has a great reload rate. Better at medium range, it can also nail people to walls.

"TF2 has met our expectations and then done a bit more"

93% – Steve Hogarty, *PC ZONE* #187



Prevent the enemy team from moving the cart to your base!



[AAA] Thrown
ÜberCharge: 8% (The Kritzkrieg)

The rifle's still more effective though.

The SMG is replaced with the Jarate – the urine jar grenade everyone thought was an April Fools' Day gag. This foul liquid injures enemies if they get hit by it, but can douse flames on your allies (and yourself).

MINOR FAIL

Another SMG replacement is the Razorback, a shield that protects from the Spy's backstab, stunning him in the process. However, you move 15% slower while wearing it.

While this update is as good as any other – better, in fact, because it's two

instead of one – we do feel that the changing of the unlock system has been mishandled.

Before you earned each weapon and upgrade by completing achievements on a class-by-class basis. Now, you get weapons both randomly and by gaining achievements with any class. On my first go, as a Spy, I unlocked the Medic's Blutsauger gun. On the day of writing, I obtained three new weapons within 10 minutes of each other.

While the previous system was flawed as well, at least you felt like you'd earned the guns and so had a right to wield them. Now, it seems like anyone and everyone has them and people are confused as to why they're getting them for virtually nothing. It seems a bit strange to stick with a system, to make everyone get used to it, then piss it away after such a period of time. Maybe that's just us though. To be fair, we do like the fact we now have these weapons, but it

does feel like less of an achievement now that we've got them.

At the end of the day though, this is a great update, not just because it has come so soon after the last one. It has loads of content, exciting new weapons and concepts, a great new gameplay mode and lots of new achievements to aim for. It also had a superb introduction with the whole 'fiasco' surrounding the *Meet the Spy* video, with Valve's "everyone is fired" joke going down rather well.

The only real gripe we have is the way the weapons are now unlocked, which is good and bad in equal measure. Now, if you'll excuse me, I'm off to deliver my payload to some unsuspecting internet users.

VERDICT

A quality update that provides plenty of stuff to aim for, even if you don't have to do very much to achieve said aims, and another way to play the game. Just watch out for the servers where there aren't any class number restrictions.

David Brown

THE STORY SO FAR... SPY VS SNIPER



THE HUNTSMAN

A bow and arrow, this can pin enemies to the walls if used correctly.



JARATE

A vial of urine used to douse flames or to scald your enemies.



THE AMBASSADOR

An accurate first shot, which causes critical damage if it hits the head, is followed up by a period of painful inaccuracy.



RAZORBACK

This shield, fixed to the back, slows you down. But it stops a Spy's backstab.



DEAD RINGER

Cloaks you for eight seconds and makes the enemy think you're dead.



CLOAK AND DAGGER

Use this to remain invisible permanently in a given position, but if you move, your cloak metre starts depleting normally.

Budget

David Brown never rolls the dice when he lands on Free Parking

UNREAL TOURNAMENT III

PUBLISHER Mastertronic [WEBSITE mastertronic.com](http://www.mastertronic.com) PRICE £9.77

CONSIDERING HOW OFTEN *Unreal Tournament III* seems to be being given away for nowt on Steam, it might seem silly to actually consider buying this game any other way, but Mastertronic believe people will still want a boxed copy, and who are we to argue? Of course,



Suck my balls!

whether you actually want a copy of this is another question.

We don't think the age of the old-school deathmatch shooter is dead, but perhaps modern PC gamers are just tired of extraordinarily homoerotic virtual butt-slapping in a world where men wear ridiculous armour and wield obscenely phallic weaponry. While the women do and dress the same, they just look a bit less ridiculous.

The gaming equivalent of *Dynasty-*style shoulder pads, *UT3* has turned into a vaguely unpleasant version of the game we fell in love with nearly 10 years ago. Substance has been replaced by style and the only time we really ever go back

BUDGET
GAME
OF THE
MONTH



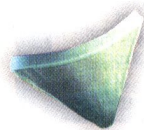
Looks better
than it plays.

to it is to play some of the imaginative mods that the community keep belching out.

Perhaps that's the reason you should actually buy it, as the main game isn't as fun as it used to be, sadly.

PCZONE
70
Its time has passed

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



James didn't buy a schoolgirl's underwear from vending machines in Japan.

SAVING ¥1,460.

David won a bet, after Man Utd were clubbed by Barcelona.

SAVING £10



Steve didn't get a Brazilian, despite the urgings from a PR who'll remain nameless.

SAVING £36

CELTIC KINGS: RAGE OF WAR

PUBLISHER Good Old Games [WEBSITE gog.com](http://www.gog.com) PRICE \$5.99 (£3.75)

TIME IS A harsher mistress than a Teutonic dominatrix driving a stiletto heel down onto your scrotum. This is the lesson *Celtic Kings* has learned.

When Steve O'Hagan first looked at it in issue 122, he thought it was "better than we expected". Now it is exactly as we expected: tired, old and not really

worthy of a purchase. I'd forgotten it even existed, in fact, so is there even a nostalgia factor to bring players back? We wonder.

Anyway, the game involves traversing either a regular campaign or a curious adventure-esque mode. The former is not worth any time at all, but the latter is reasonable, considering.

A *Diablo*-type adventure with strategic elements, and one with proper druids, might be worth a look if you have a spare fiver to spend and are bored.



I'm not sure Celts
looked like this.

PCZONE
51

OBSCURE

PUBLISHER Good Old Games WEBSITE gog.com PRICE \$999 (£6.25)

THIS THIRD-PERSON action-adventure/horror game about American teenagers is a port of a console game.

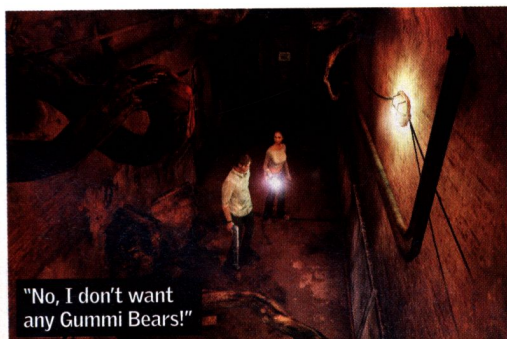
For the latter, we're always grateful for any games we get, even the toss like that recent *Leisure Suit Larry*. However we can also grit our teeth, churn our buttocks and slide into a maelstrom of

hate and eager revenge. *Obscure* is one such game and it hasn't been helped by the ravages of time.

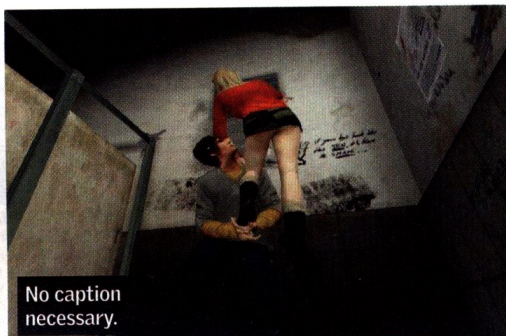
When it was released, it would have probably earned a score in the 60s, but now it can sod off. If I wanted to play an old third-person horror game, I'd stick *The Suffering* on.

So, while I enjoy watching a bunch of whiny American teenagers get slaughtered by foul creatures of the underworld, it isn't enough to drag me back into this old monstrosity.

PCZONE
48



"No, I don't want any Gummi Bears!"



No caption necessary.

ISHAR 1 AND 2

PUBLISHER Good Old Games WEBSITE gog.com PRICE \$499 (£3.13)

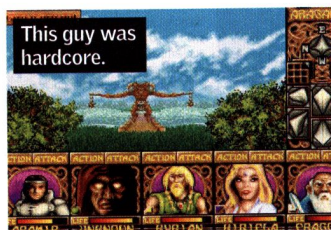
WHY THEY HAVEN'T gone the whole hog and included *Ishar III: The Seven Gates of Infinity* in this pack as well, I don't know. Surely nobody will be holding out for the third game after all this time?

Ah well, the vagaries of digital distribution aside, this twin-pack is interesting only for nostalgia value, as the games themselves are dogshit. I remember playing them way back when flick-screen RPGs were all the rage, and the *Elder Scrolls* series was but a glint in the eye of Bethesda's milkman. Even then

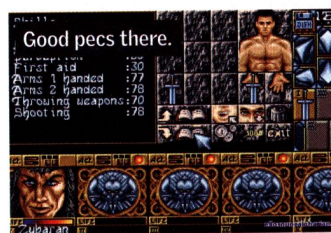
these titles were average at best. They were also, to me at least, very difficult. And you needed to use a pencil and paper to map your surroundings.

Still, there's a decent amount of material here for the low of standard and there's still a perverse interest to be had from exploring the environment and meeting characters. Not that much, though. I don't even think the third one was good to release separately anyway.

PCZONE
42



This guy was hardcore.



Good pees there.

AND THE REST...

The other cheap releases out now



HAEGEMONIA GOLD

PRICE \$999 (£6.27), Good Old Games
This space RTS comes with the *Solon Heritage* expansion. But *Homeworld's* better.

61



POSTAL 2 COMPLETE

PRICE \$999 (£6.27), Good Old Games
Tried too hard to be offensive, but as there's still no sign of the third game, this might suffice.

53



CHESSMASTER 9000

PRICE \$999 (£6.27), Good Old Games
Plays a tough game of rooks and pawns. Beat it and I'll doff my cap to you.

74

PCZONE TOP 5 BUDGET GAMES



MEDIEVAL II: TOTAL WAR

PRICE £10, White Label

The historical RTS game that set the standard for others to follow. Buy it, if only to try out the mods.



FAR CRY

PRICE £5, Sold Out

With *Far Cry 2* out it's time for the original to take the spotlight again. The second-best FPS ever made.



THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND

PRICE £5, Mastertronic

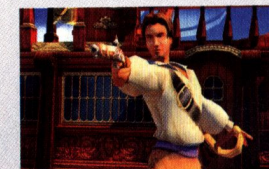
If RPG is your favourite genre, you could do a lot worse than this epic, sprawling classic.



PSYCHONAUTS

PRICE £10, Steam

You won't have more fun than this psychological shooter until *Brütal Legend* comes out. If it ever does.



SID MEIER'S PIRATES!

PRICE £5, Sold Out

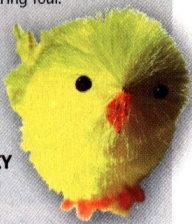
That's all the genres covered, isn't it? RTS, FPS, RPG, platformer and pirate. Yep, that's really everything.

Buyer's Guide

Don't stop buying them until they're bought

PCZ TOP 5 GAMING CHICKENS

- 1 FABLE**
Kickable chickens.
- 2 CRYSIS**
Pick-upable poultry.
- 3 ARMA II**
Firearm-fearing foul.
- 4 CALL OF JUAREZ: BOUND IN BLOOD**
Hole-filled hens.
- 5 SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND**
Rubber roosters.



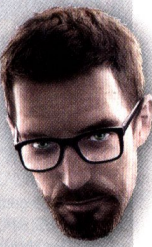
PCZ TOP 5 GAMES THAT WERE ONCE NOVELS

- 1 S.T.A.L.K.E.R.**
Roadside Picnic by Arkady and Boris Strugatsky.
- 2 FALLOUT 3**
The Road by Cormac McCarthy.
- 3 HALO**
Ringworld by Larry Niven.
- 4 RAMA**
Rendezvous with Rama by Arthur C. Clarke.
- 5 BIOSHOCK**
Atlas Shrugged by Ayn Rand.

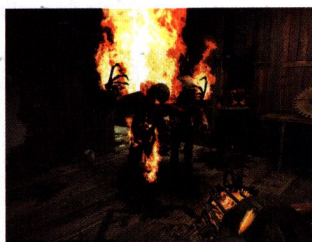


PCZ TOP 5 BEST-SELLING PC GAMES OF ALL TIME*

- 1 THE SIMS**
Issue 87, 86%
- 2 THE SIMS 2**
Issue 147, 82%
- 3 WORLD OF WARCRAFT**
Issue 152, 95%
- 4 STARCRAFT**
Issue 64, 88%
- 5 HALF-LIFE**
Issue 71, 95%



FPS



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 we like more than killing zombies is killing zombies as a team. And that's what *L4D* provides: a chance to scream with your buddies as you kill endless amounts of mindless and murderous plague victims.



TEAM FORTRESS 2

PCZ Issue: 187 - 93%

Beautifully balanced and engaging, Valve's update of the classic mod is a triumph, bringing together the best of online shooters and topping it all off with superb animation that rivals the best Pixar's films.



CRYSIS WARHEAD

PCZ Issue: 199 - 92%

This standalone expansion only takes a few hours to complete, but it re-ins in the harsh system demands of the original, and contains fantastic action storytelling, and a much 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.

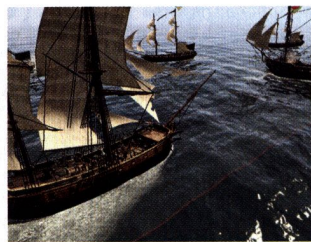


BIOSHOCK

PCZ Issue: 185 - 96%

This psion of *System Shock 2* will suck you right into its intricate, frightening, art deco world. A destroyed Utopia under the sea, terrifying characters and emergent combat make this an unmissable experience.

STRATEGY



EMPIRE: TOTAL WAR

PCZ Issue: 205 - 94%

Vast yet manageable, accessible yet hardcore. All four words and more describe the best *Total War* game money can currently buy. With the addition of dramatic sea battles and an extended global campaign map, there's simply nothing else with the same grand scope that remains as easy to get into. We feel that the only game that will topple this game from its perch as the best strategy game around will be the next game in the *Total War* series. It really is that good.



COMPANY OF HEROES

PCZ Issue: 173 - 93%

With this game Relic took the best bits from RTS games and left out the crap, creating a game that's accessible, taxing and exciting. And its expansions *Opposing Fronts* and *Tales of Valor* keep the action coming.



WORLD IN CONFLICT

PCZ Issue: 186 - 92%

A stunning RTS set during the Cold War, offering innovative online play, a solid single-player campaign that combines great gameplay and a good story, 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 in the expansion packs *Warlords* and *Beyond the Sword*.



SINS OF A SOLAR EMPIRE

PCZ Issue 193 - 91%

This startling beauty of an RTS seemed to come 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 maniacal plotting on the strategic map and cheering with delight as your warriors collide spectacularly with your opponents' armies. Middle Ages war fun.

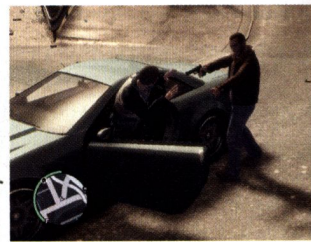


SUPREME COMMANDER

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



GRAND THEFT AUTO IV

PCZ Issue: 203 - 91%

We PC users have had to wait a while (OK - we had to wait a bloody age) before we could return to Liberty City with Niko Bellic, but the delay has been worth it. This version of *GTA4* adds graphics that are a cut above those seen on the consoles, expanded multiplayer modes, and an exclusive video editor, to Liberty City's free-roaming world and the sure-to-be-classic storyline of Bellic's American dream becoming an American nightmare.



MAX PAYNE 2: THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE

PCZ Issue: 136 - 93%

Payne is getting old, but it shows how to do bullet-time right. Noirish tone, a glowering voice-over and remarkable gun action mean that this 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. *Fahrenheit* boasts a twisting, turning, brilliantly told story, featuring multiple character control, split-screen tension, branching scenes and several endings.



PSYCHONAUTS

PCZ Issue: 156 - 90%

Clever, witty, impeccably detailed and 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.



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.



ASSAULT ON DARK ATHENA

PCZ Issue 207 - 87%

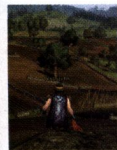
The new story in the *Chronicles of Riddick* is a mix of brutal knife fights and stealth, which means you need fast fingers and brains. And it comes with a revamped *Escape from Butcher Bay*.

MMOs



WORLD OF WARCRAFT

PCZ Issue: 152 – 95%
Blizzard's recreation of Azeroth as a living virtual world doesn't disappoint. While its graphics are dated, it's beautiful to watch, absorbing to play and with more content than you can shake a magic stick at.



THE LORD OF THE RINGS 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: AGE OF RECKONING

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, and drop into temporary group quests.



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 for old school gamers, 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.

SIMULATION



X3: REUNION

PCZ Issue: 162 – 92%
Finally, a space sim to better *X2: 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 with the X Universe?



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!



THE SIMS 3

PCZ Issue: 209 – 92%
The Sims 3 is like having your very own reality TV show in your PC, and just as addictive. Near complete freedom of gameplay lets you be a vicious deity, a benevolent dictator, or just a creepy voyeur.



MICROSOFT FLIGHT SIMULATOR X

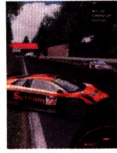
PCZ Issue: 175 – 89%
The latest (and maybe final) in the *Flight Simulator* series is the biggest since Microsoft started using actual polygons. What's more, the visuals may just sear your eyeballs.



SILENT HUNTER 4: WOLVES OF THE PACIFIC

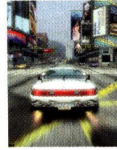
PCZ Issue: 181 – 82%
If you fancy a life beneath the waves, this submarine simulator fits the bill. Tactics, torpedoes, sonar and sailors combine to make the ultimate ship-sinker.

DRIVING/RACING



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. Guaranteed to make you feel like the Stig.



BURNOUT PARADISE: THE ULTIMATE BOX

PCZ Issue: 205 – 89%
This game has set the standard for online arcade racers. Packs more speed than a drug dealer and more fun than slapping a bag full of Jonathan Rosses and Russell Brands.



RACE DRIVER: GRID

PCZ Issue: 195 – 88%
Codemasters moves the series from its historical simulation roots, strips off the TOCA and creates a movie-realistic game with plenty of play modes and global challenges. Kind of like *Burnout*, but with proper tracks.



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. Time to get down and dirty with a 4x4.



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. (Well, fish-tailing '60s).

ODDBALL



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, this indie title 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.



BRAID

PCZ Issue: 209 – 90%
Braid is extremely pretentious, but extremely well made, with time-bending twists that'll provide a challenge to new and veteran platformers. It also has a secret editor for making your own levels.

SPORT



FOOTBALL MANAGER 2009

PCZ Issue: 202 – 90%
Another season passes and another *Football Manager* appears. New additions to this addictive football sim are a 3D match engine and options to deal with PRs and the media.



PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2009

PCZ Issue: 201 – 85%
PES lacks official support from the football business fraternity, but that doesn't detract from the game. This year's *PES* provides fun and realistic football, on and offline.



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.



FOOTBALL MANAGER LIVE

PCZ Issue: 205 – 85%
All the joy of *Football Manager* with added MMO fun. Build your own team from scratch and develop your manager's skills, to let you take on other managers around the world.



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.

ROLE-PLAYING



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 and live with your mum to enjoy RPGs.



FALLOUT 3

PCZ Issue: 201 – 91%
While it does play like *Oblivion* in a sci-fi skin, this is a great open-world that's just as entertaining if you just wander across Washington state than if you follow the plot. And DLCs are adding to its greatness.



MASS EFFECT

PCZ Issue: 195 – 92%
BioWare's best game since *Knights of the Old Republic*, with a real-time combat system that makes it feel a bit less RPG. Great story, fine action, brilliant dialogue and sex with aliens – 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 an epic story that pushes you into moral dilemmas, this RPG came out of nowhere to revive an ailing genre.



DEUS EX

PCZ Issue: 93 – 94%
This is the benchmark in RPGs – if not gaming. A twisting plot, exciting freeform levels and some moments of pure exhilaration and drama ensure *Deus Ex* remains the alpha male of the PC gaming world.



All approximate monthly dates are correct at the time of going to press

JULY

THE AGENCY
BIONIC COMMANDO
CALL OF JUAREZ: BOUND IN BLOOD
HARRY POTTER AND THE HALF BLOOD PRINCE
STREET FIGHTER IV

SOE
CAPCOM
UBISOFT
EA
CAPCOM

AUGUST

BATMAN: ARKHAM ASYLUM
RED FACTION: GUERRILLA
WOLFENSTEIN

EIDOS
THQ
ACTIVISION

AUTUMN

ALPHA PROTOCOL
BATTLEFIELD 1943
BATTLEFIELD HEROES
BIOSHOCK 2: SEA OF DREAMS
BORDERLANDS
CHAMPIONS ONLINE
COLIN MCRÆ: DIRT 2
FIFA 10
NEED FOR SPEED: SHIFT
OPERATION FLASHPOINT: DRAGON RIDING
SINGULARITY

SEGA
EA
EA
2K GAMES
2K GAMES
ATARI
CODEMASTERS
EA
EA
CODEMASTERS
ACTIVISION

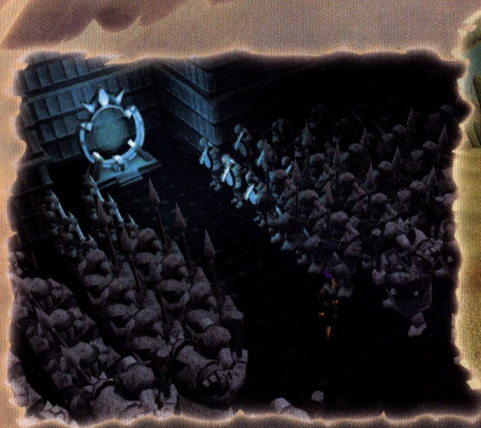
WINTER

ASSASSIN'S CREED 2
DRAGON AGE: ORIGINS
LEFT 4 DEAD 2
MAFIA II
MAX PAYNE 3
MODERN WARFARE 2

UBISOFT
EA
VALVE
2K GAMES
ROCKSTAR
ACTIVISION

JOIN THE BATTLE IN **RUNE**SCAPE

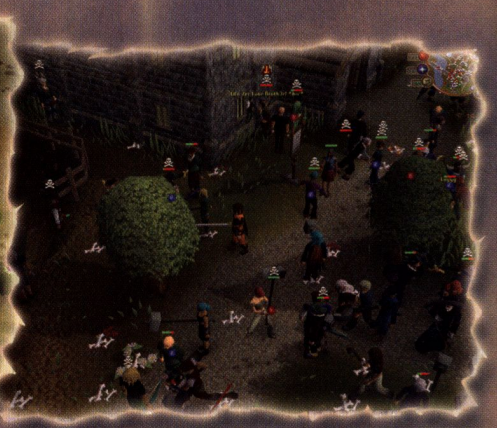
Next month's issue comes with a **FREE** Wallie card worth 7 days of full membership!



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REALMS



BE THE MASTER OF
THE MEANEST BEASTS



BATTLE WITH
YOUR FRIENDS



WWW.RUNESCAPE.COM



PCZONE

Hardware

Better gaming through technology



The CRV43 is a unique curved display with a 32:10 aspect ratio.

NEW ARRIVAL

WHEN PEOPLE SAY their life is repetitive, it's a prelude to them quitting their job, divorcing their partner, or taking an extended holiday to Asia to find themselves getting stoned on a beach.

In my case, repetition is a joyful affair. It started a few weeks back when my wife went into labour. The machine the hospital used to monitor the baby's heart had a mesmerising effect, its endless thumpety-thump played over a speaker while the display flashed messages like FETAL EVENT and DAD NAUSEOUS.

As I drove home at 3am my brain morphed the sounds of the road into a heart beat, and any sequence of numbers on the dashboard into a heart rate. It reminded me of when I first played *Doom*, when my mind would garble everyday noises like doorbells and telephones into startled Imps and Cacodemons.

Today, stuck in an endless loop of sterilised bottles and dirty nappies, I still feel the pull of *Plants vs Zombies* – itself an endless loop of repetitive tasks. As well as designing the game to go on forever, PopCap have also been careful to keep system requirements down, meaning the DirectX 8 title will play quickly on the slowest Atom.

If you're a casual gamer who's been wondering what makes Intel's small processor great, the answer bears repeating: botany and the living dead.

Handy

Phil Wand

Hardware editor

AHEAD OF THE CURVE

Ultra expensive... but just look at it!

THE NEW NEC CRV43 is an LED curved panel measuring an astonishing 43in across the diagonal and boasting a response time under 0.02 milliseconds.

Size-wise, it's the equivalent of placing two 24in widescreen panels side-by-side, though because the CRV43's screen is seamless it provides a resolution of 2880x900 pixels, gently curved to match your peripheral vision.

Although an easy sell to video editors and designers, NEC is also targeting gamers for whom price is no object. The company knows many PC owners have deep pockets and that a 32:10 aspect screen will revolutionise their experience.

The screen is also relatively easy to light up. The CRV43's resolution represents a total of 2,592,000 pixels, just 12% more than a 1920x1200

screen making it unlikely to trouble today's flagship hardware. It's also easy on software, with no fiddling about in the Control Panel getting multi-monitor settings right as *Windows* treats the screen as a single device. And it uses a single HDMI or DVI-D cable.

At £5,000, the CRV43 won't be a bestseller, but its technology will filter down to mainstream over a few years. necdisplay.com

DIRECTX HEAVEN?

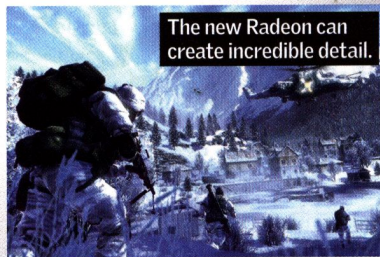
Here we go again

AMD WAS PIMPING its new DirectX 11 capable Radeon family at the COMPUTEX expo in Taiwan this year.

Known as Evergreen, the latest GPU line-up to emerge from the red corner will be launched soon and will replace the company's existing high-end DX10 products based around the R700 chip.

AMD will beat NVIDIA to market with the R800 devices, and the Radeon team have been upbeat when talking about DX11's improved performance under *Windows 7*, but we've heard this all before.

When *Vista* and DX10 were new, gamers expected frame rates to radically improve. If anything, they got worse. ati.amd.com



NEWS ROUND-UP

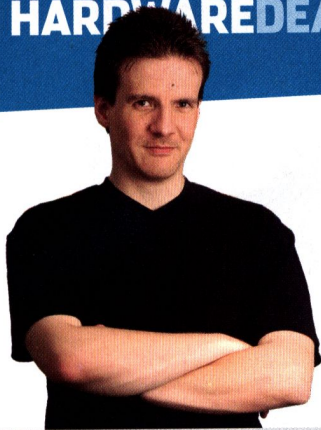
AS PREDICTED SEVERAL years back, hi-def formats such as Blu-ray have done nothing to halt the DVD sales slide. Like games, it's really not important how a movie looks but what it contains. Developers and publishers need to stop relying on graphical detail to hoodwink customers and get back to creating what their customers actually want. blu-raydisc.com

COMPARISON SITE USWITCH asked more than 12,000 UK internet users what they thought of their broadband service. Only 3% of users suckered by 'up to 8Mbps' contracts received that speed, and more than half think they're getting a bad deal. The best provider, in terms of satisfaction and value, was 02. uswitch.com

WARNING:
THIS MONTH'S
HARD WORDS

BY RICHARD COSGROVE

BABY: A biological organism noted for simultaneously emitting a piercing wail, while discharging multi-coloured and foul-smelling excretions from both ends of its body. **PARENT:** A mature biological organism that finds the behaviour of its "baby" endearing, while its peers find the noise levels irritating and the emissions repellent. **STARFORCE:** DRM that destroys your PC by firing a high-energy particle beam from a satellite at it, if you fail to keep the game's DVD in a drive while playing. Marginally less irritating than SecuROM. **POPCAP:** Gaming company noted for creating easy-to-play titles that require intensive aversion therapy, in order to stop playing.



PROBLEMS?

Mistook your wardrobe for the toilet again? Local shop stopped stocking your favourite blue-flavoured Pringles? Been playing *World of Warcraft* 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 your hardware hassles. Wandy knows everything, and he's willing to help if you email him at: wandy@dearwandy.com, including as much information about your problem as you can and system specs where applicable.

Dear Wandy

If it ain't working, don't panic – Wandy's here...

Q SEVENTH DEADLY WIN

Should I make the move to Windows 7?
John de la Poer

A Short question, long answer, made longer by the fact you don't say what version of Windows you're using now.

The best thing you can do is imagine that your PC is a dishwasher and that your operating system is the tray which holds all the crockery. Now, if you were to replace this tray with an expensive chrome plated one, would all the crusty bowls you're too lazy to wash in the sink come out any less dirty?

No, of course not, and it's the same story with your PC. Installing Windows 7 will change your desktop but it won't change your gaming. Steam will download stuff at the same speed.

Zombies will still be after your plants, and you'll remain depressingly average at Counter-Strike.

It's more than that. Although Windows 7 has Vista's contemporary looks, the mechanics have been adjusted to make it feel more like XP. So although XP users will settle in very quickly, they also have the least to gain – and when you add a price tag expected to be higher than Vista, there'll not be queues forming outside PC World any time soon.

So if you're a contented Windows XP user, my advice is to not meddle. If you're having problems, I'd spend time troubleshooting your PC and put the money you would have spent on 7 towards a new solid state hard drive. I promise you, this will transform your machine more radically than any new OS.

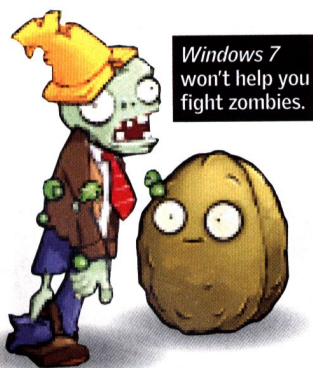
If you're using Vista things aren't so clear cut. Many PC owners will have

found that, having upgraded from XP, certain games, applications and drivers simply didn't work any more. In my case, Sony Acid Pro crashed regularly, as did older games like Railroad Tycoon, not to mention early StarForce-infested titles such as TrackMania. My Philips ToUcam webcam turned into a paperweight thanks to the lack of driver support, and even now, popular tools like VNC continue to act strangely.

Of course, many of these problems can be avoided with upgrades and workarounds. The workarounds are free, if you can find them, but in the case of Sony Acid Pro it's a £120 patch and even more money to fix the likes of Acrobat and Photoshop. In this situation, you could make an upgrade to Windows 7 part of an expensive grand plan to put everything back in full working order. It'll sure cost you a tidy sum, but at least you'll have the latest of everything, including the OS.

Lastly, if you're wiping the slate clean and buying a new PC, there's a strong

"If you're a contented Windows XP user, my advice is to not meddle"



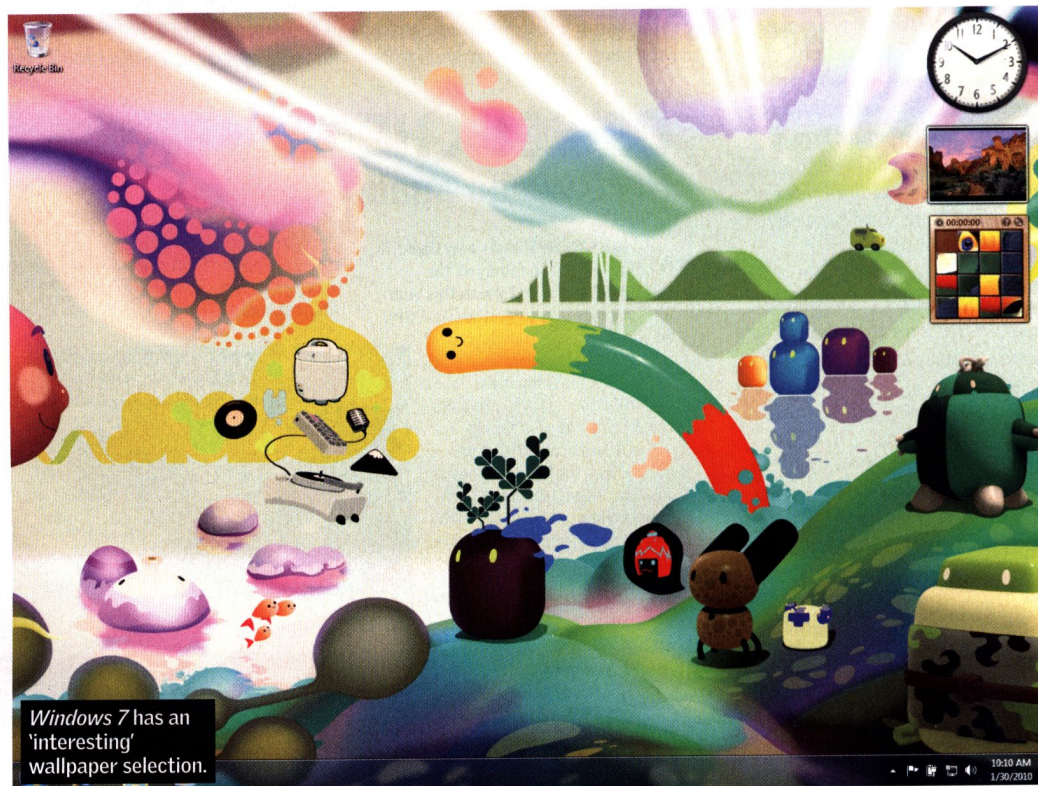
DRIVER WATCH

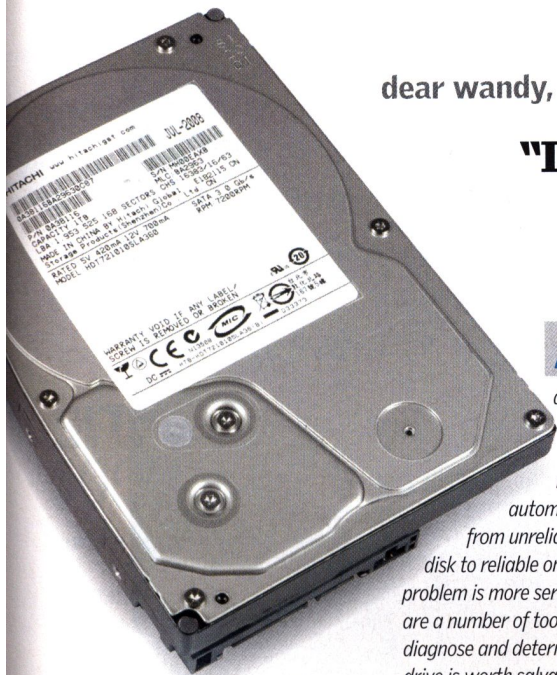
GRAPHICS

MANU	DESC	RELEASED
ATI	CATALYST 9.5	15 May 09
NVIDIA	Force Ware 185.85	06 May 09

SOUND

MANU	DESC	RELEASED
Creative	X-Fi Beta 2.18.0004	30 Jul 08
Creative	Creative Alchemy 1.20.04	01 Aug 08
Creative	Audigy Beta 2.18.0001	17 Jul 08





A drive's date of manufacture is printed clearly on its label.

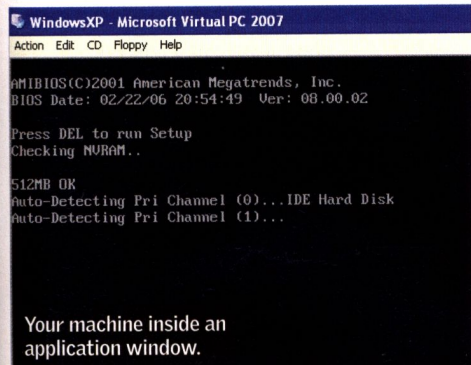
likelihood you'll be getting 7 bundled with it. In this situation, it'd be pretty reckless to wipe the drive and resurrect your dog-eared copy of XP.

Q BAD TO THE ZONE

My XP PC recently crashed to the dreaded Blue Screen of Death. Scandisk reported a dirty volume with 4KB of data in bad sectors. Windows is now backed up, but it's really not at all happy. I've had more BSOD crashes and lots of Windows error messages.

Can I repair the current hard disk or do I need to get a new one? If I do get a new disk, can I copy across the current Windows installation or will it be corrupted and so useless?

Mike Heroys



wandy@dearwandy.com @
dear wandy, pc zone, future publishing, 2 balcombe st, london, nw1 6nw ✉

"Installing Windows 7 will change your desktop but it won't change your gaming"

A Bad sectors are physical defects, but they can also be false alarms. And while modern drives will automatically move data from unreliable areas of your disk to reliable ones, sometimes the problem is more serious. Although there are a number of tools you can use to diagnose and determine whether the drive is worth salvaging, my advice is simple: don't muck about.

Backup your system in its entirety using a drive image tool such as Norton Ghost or Acronis True Image, swap out the HDD for a new one, then restore the image you made. The sticker on the existing drive's casing will indicate the date of manufacture, and you first should visit the support section of the maker's web site to see whether it's still under warranty – if so, follow their instructions to get it replaced. Even if it's out of warranty, you can now buy 320GB drive online for not much more than £30. Or you could take this opportunity to get a solid state hard drive and really give your PC a boost.

Of course, once your machine is restored your Windows will continue to report problems as any key system files lost to bad sectors won't have magically repaired themselves during the backup process. What you'll then need to do is boot from your XP CD-ROM and choose Repair. Do not choose to launch the Recovery Console but select your installation from the next screen and choose Repair.

Be warned that this will require you to reinstall all Microsoft patches and Service Packs, so at this point you might wish to

consider going ahead and reinstalling your entire PC system instead.

Unfortunately, you've found out too late that backing up regularly is the single most important thing you can do to safeguard your sanity!

Q GAMING À LA MODE

I'm thinking of upgrading to Windows 7 when it comes out. One of the reasons I'm interested in the new version is the XP Mode, as it will allow me to run all my current software without having to have two systems or two PCs side by side. However, nobody's explained whether XP Mode can be used to play games like *Half-Life* or *F.E.A.R.* and I was wondering if you could fill us in.

Mike Williams

A Let's be absolutely clear here. While XP Mode is a genuine, fully functional copy of XP that runs like an application inside Professional, Enterprise, and Ultimate editions of Windows 7, it's also what's known as

a virtual machine. This means it's actually a guest operating system that looks, feels, and smells like a real machine, it isn't actually real. While it'll run applications, your games won't work because virtual machines do not support 3D hardware acceleration. At least, not right now.

XP Mode is made possible by Windows 7 creating a fenced-off environment in which it can run. To the end user, this is all convincing – if you were to restart the XP Mode environment you could press 'Del' to enter the BIOS, all within a window on your desktop – but unfortunately it's all too slow and non-3D-ified for gaming.

What XP Mode will do is make reluctant corporate users make the switch to the new operating system safe in the knowledge that if they can't get a mission critical application to work properly under 7, they can always revert to XP. The fact it's next to useless for most home users is something you should think about before using it to justify any upgrade. **PEZ**

ALL ABOUT...

16 WINDOWS 7 EDITIONS

As with every version of Windows since XP, Microsoft will be releasing Windows 7 on 22 October in several different editions, each one tuned to a different target audience.

You'll find Starter edition bundled with netbooks. Originally a low-power, low-feature version without a 64-bit variant or Aero, Microsoft said Starter would not support more than three applications at once. The company later removed the limit.

Home Basic isn't available in the UK, but Home Premium is. This flavour will be the entry level consumer product, though with the eye candy of Aero and with Windows Media Center. As with all the other editions you'll be able to watch DVDs and decode MPEG4 streams.

Professional adds more advanced networking capabilities, such as remote desktop and the ability to join a domain, plus encryption at a file system level together with group policy editing and XP Mode. This version makes most sense for businesses.

Both the Ultimate and Enterprise editions are the same, except that the latter is only available through volume licensing. Ultimate builds on Professional with features such as AppLocker, but unlike Vista it's an irrelevance to almost all home users.

Most gamers will be happy with Home Premium, and most users will be happy with Windows 7.

FORUMS:
DIRECT FROM
DEARWANDY.COM

(Jeremy DEagle) I have a home movie that's over an hour long. I want to save a small chunk of it and post it to Facebook. How can I copy out this small chunk? Preferably without spending anything! I'm on Windows Vista Home Premium. (paulod) Movie Maker and choose the split option? I'm on XP, and I'm not sure if you have Movie Maker in Vista (wiz) If you don't have Movie Maker onboard, it should be a free download from the Microsoft site. Split and then cut out the bits you don't want. When you save/export, you can choose the quality you want. Best to do a couple and then check before you upload.

HOW WE TESTED

SPEED: All desktop systems and laptops are put through their paces using benchmarking software, to see how fast they really go. **COST:** Bargain PCs that perform as well as models twice the price are going to score highly. **INSIDES:** When buying a custom-built desktop, we check that wires and cables have been tucked away neatly.

AT-FX X58 GAMER

PRICE £1,350 **MANUFACTURER** AdvanceTec **WEBSITE** advancetec.co.uk

WITH THE RELEASE of Intel's Nehalem CPUs, many PC builders are rushing to release competitively priced systems. AdvanceTec's take on a low-priced Core i7 system involves cutbacks in the motherboard and graphics card.

The X58 uses a Gigabyte X58-UD5 motherboard, which is rich in features but not overly expensive, so it's hardly

a compromise. Unlike the single GTX260. While this NVIDIA card is very good, its performance falls short when compared to that of AdvanceTec's Core 2 Quad AT-FX Wahdita, which uses an ATI 4870x2 and costs over £300 less.

More performance could be eked out of the X58 by upgrading the Intel CPU cooler and overcooking the i7. But this is tricky compared to doing it with a Core 2.

So, despite this machine being fitted with the latest processor technology, what it really needs is a second GTX260, or just a single, higher end graphics card. And for £1,350, that's what you should really expect.

If you just want a Core i7 platform upgrade then the X58 Gamer is a good starting point. But you can get last-gen Intel machines that outperform it for the same price. **DJ**



PCZONE
85
Good, but lacks oomph

SPECIFICATION

CPU	Intel Core i7 920
CLOCK SPEED	3.34GHz
RAM	6GB 1,333MHz DDR3
GRAPHICS CARD	NVIDIA GTX260 BFG
STORAGE	640GB

XTREME 780 Q9000

PRICE £1,699 **MANUFACTURER** Rock Web **WEBSITE** www.rockdirect.com



SPECIFICATION

CPU	Intel Q9000
CLOCK SPEED	2GHz
RAM	4GB 1,066MHz DDR3
GRAPHICS CARD	NVIDIA 9800M GTX
STORAGE	250GB

THE IDEA OF being able to drag a capable gaming machine around to a mate's in a single carry-case for some LAN gaming remains a draw. Likewise, for those who don't want a huge desktop machine cluttering up their house, powerhouse laptops are still an attractive prospect.

This Rock Xtreme is the first Centrino 2 gaming laptop we've seen, and is reputedly the fastest around. The Centrino 2 platform is designed to help out with the problems associated with gaming laptops – especially their notoriously low battery life.

In the business sector Centrino 2 wins out due to its increased wireless range and improved battery life. On the gaming front however, the CPU is not the workhorse of the machine – that's the

graphics card, and that's still going to be draining as much power as if you were running it with a standard Core 2. The Q9000's support for DDR3 memory does little to boost game performance either.

Centrino 2 is not a necessity for gaming, which requires a powerful GPU. As such, you're still better off sticking to the older generation of chipset, for the added value an established platform offers. **DJ**

PCZONE
73
Desktop challenged



SITECOM WIRELESS 300N XR

PRICE £90 MANUFACTURER Sitecom WEBSITE sitecom.com

SITECOM CLAIMS THIS router brings wireless gaming to the same level as cabled, by using 802.11n WiFi.

The Stream Engine, a feature of 802.11n the 300N uses, prioritises time-sensitive data packets, and so reduces lag in games.

In practice, this router provides an excellent connection, with little to no data loss or choking. It's not as good

as a cable, but close as any WiFi router has gotten yet.

The 300N XR also has a built-in firewall that automatically opens ports used by games it knows.

The only serious flaw against this router is it lacks a built-in modem. **AO**

PCZONE
85



DELL XPS ONE 24-INCH

PRICE £1,479 MANUFACTURER Dell WEBSITE dell.co.uk

THAT SHINY 24IN monitor contains all the PC you'll ever need. So long as you're not a gamer.

Dell does get a few things right: the IPS screen is clear and accurate; the built-in speakers make others sound flat; the build reeks of quality; and the Bluetooth keyboard with integrated trackpad is great.

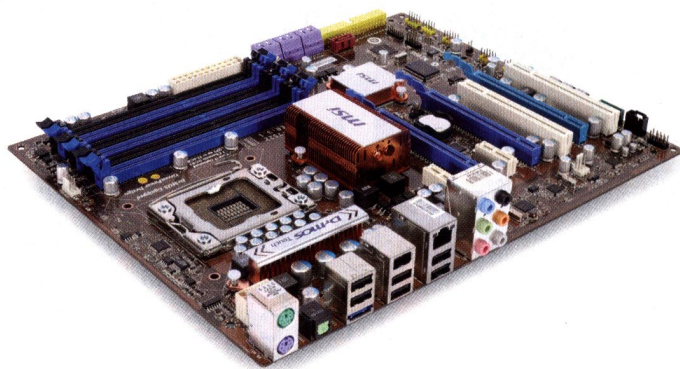
But the price is eye-watering; the quad-core CPU is let down by a middling graphics card; and the fans are, at best, noisy.

The XPS One needs a superior cooling solution and GPU to be a proper all-rounder. And for this price, that's what Dell should be providing. **AO**

SPECIFICATION

CPU	Intel Core 2 E7200
CLOCK SPEED	2.66GHz
GPU	GeForce 9600M GT
RAM	2GB DDR2
STORAGE	500GB

PCZONE
73



MSI X58 PRO

PRICE £160 MANUFACTURER MSI WEBSITE eu.msi.com

MSI'S CHEAP X58 Pro is virtually identical to Gigabyte's excellent EX58-UD5, but comes in at £40 less.

The X58 has a bank of retro switches that let you alter the CPU's clock. It keeps the temperature down by separating the cooling module for the chipset and MOSFETs, and automatically reducing power based on the system loading.

MSI has also included *GreenPower*, which lets you over- and underclock every element of the board from within *Windows*.

The built-in audio doesn't compare to the EX58-UD5's Dolby Home Theatre, but MSI's board matches the Gigabyte's performance, except for beating it in memory throughput. Overall, the X58 is excellent value. **HW**

SPECIFICATION

SOCKET	LGA1366 Core i7
CHIPSET	X58
RAM	6 slots, max 24GB DDR3
SLOTS	3x PCI 2.0 x16, 2x PCI x1, 2x PCI
MULTI GPU	CrossFireX, SLI
PORTS	12x USB 2.0, 7x SATA, 2x FireWire, Gigabit LAN

PCZONE
89



MICROSOFT SIDEWINDER X8

PRICE £88 MANUFACTURER Microsoft WEBSITE microsoft.com

MICROSOFT'S LAST SIDEWINDER gaming mouse was an aesthetically divisive rodent, but very comfortable to use. The X8 is styled similarly, but some its predecessor's sharp edges have been smoothed out.

Weights have also been removed, but the battery needed for the wireless connection (which is handily chargeable while the mouse is in use) make up for this loss in mass.

The X8 uses Microsoft's BlueTrack tech instead of a standard red laser. This helps to reduce lag – important for any gamer – and allows the mouse to work on more surfaces.

While this is a lovely mouse, the price is far too high to justify buying it. **DJ**

PCZONE
80

Reviews by Dave James, Adam Oxford, and Henry Winchester

REMEMBER:
TO TURN OFF YOUR
PC YOU NEED TO
CLICK A SWITCH

There are times when you're told to "Turn off" your PC. Clicking on the Start button then Shutdown will do this. Waving photographs of Vanessa Feltz dressed in a spandex cat suit and Chris Moyles wearing a corset, stockings and suspenders in front of your PC won't.

Hardware Buyer

This is our favourite PC gear – both expensive and cheap

LOADED?

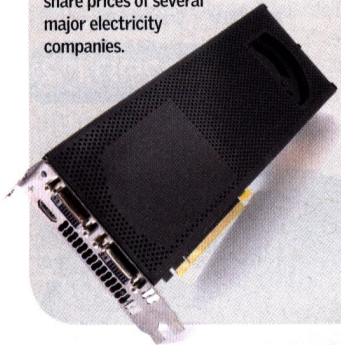
GRAPHICS

ZOTAC GEFORCE GTX 295

PRICE £436

zotac.com

The current king of the hill is this giant dual-GPU board from NVIDIA. That ridiculously large heatsink covers two 280 chips running side-by-side. And it's not just faster than AMD's 4870X2 (its nearest rival), but it's also a lot more energy efficient. Good news, as the 4870X2 is currently propping up the share prices of several major electricity companies.



PROCESSOR

INTEL CORE I7 965

PRICE £839

intel.com

Intel's latest processing powerhouse doesn't just have four cores with which to throw your games around, it also support hyperthreading for running even more simultaneous processes without affecting framerates. The upshot: there's not a game in the world that this will struggle with.

SOUND CARD

AUZENTECH X-FI PRELUDE 7.1

PRICE £144

auzentech.com

Take a top-of-the-range Creative X-Fi audio chip and surround it with components of such a high grade they're spoken of only in hushed tones by those in the know, and then add Dolby Digital Live – you'd have a pretty cool sound card, right? Actually, you'd end up with this one.

SCREEN

NEC 24WMGX3

PRICE £529

onec.com

If we had the money we'd fritter it on this incredible 27in screen from NEC. Picture quality is simply unrivalled, and it's got so many input options it's the subject of at least three web fetish sites. Size queens will always go for something larger, and that would be lavishly decadent too.

HDD

SEAGATE BARRACUDA 7200.11

PRICE £99

seagate.com

If we're talking money no object, then we'd couple this with a solid-state drive from Samsung for maximum performance and storage, but if our loaded rig was limited to one hard disk, it would be this one. A huge 1.3TB of storage and a performance unmatched by any other vanilla HDD.

MOTHERBOARD

ASUS RAMPAGE II EXTREME

PRICE £321

asus.com

This Core i7-friendly board sports the X58 Intel chipset and everything else you can imagine. It's the deluxe department store of motherboard design, hawking bespoke capacitor design and expertly tuned performance pathways, to the sleazy suburban joys of three-way SLI.

SPEAKERS

LOGITECH Z-5500

PRICE £195

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?

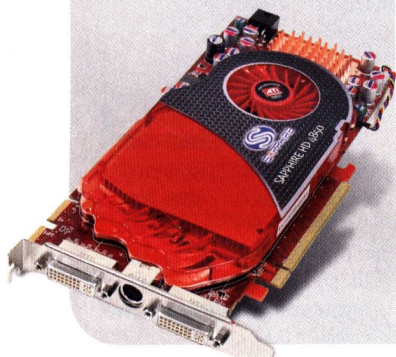
GRAPHICS

SAPPHIRE HD4850

PRICE £120

sapphiretech.com

This is the card that had arch-rival NVIDIA slashing prices in an effort to be competitive. Just £120 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

INTEL CORE 2 DUO E2180

PRICE £44

intel.com

At the budget end of things, it's a tough choice between the E2180, E4500 and E8200 processors from Intel. It's not surprising that 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

VIEWSONIC VA903M

PRICE £118

viewsoniceurope.com

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, although it can't handle native widescreen resolutions.

MOTHERBOARD

ASROCK CONROEXFIRE-ESATA2

PRICE £60

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.

SOUND CARD

CREATIVE LABS SOUND BLASTER AUDIGY 2 VALUE

PRICE £20

uk.europe.creative.com

The cheap Audigy card 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, unless you're an audiophile, or you want your PC to act as a top-class music system.

HDD

WESTERN DIGITAL CAVIAR 1600AAJS

PRICE £30

wdc.com

A 160GB hard drive, like this SATA 2 model, 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

LOGITECH X-530

PRICE £55

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 their value can't be beat, giving sound quality above their price bracket.

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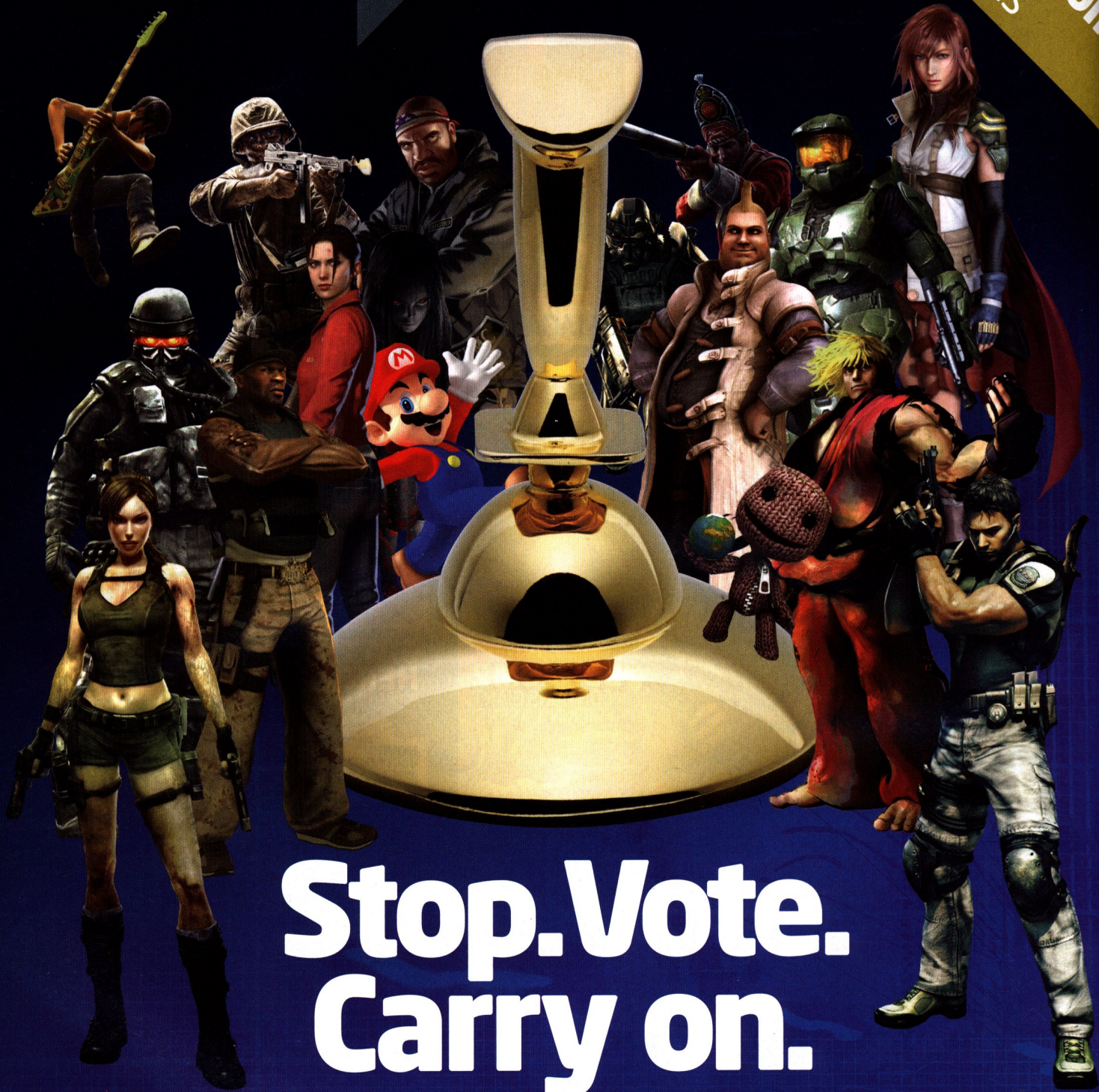


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PCZONE

Freeplay

For the man who has nothing

IT'S ABOUT TIME

FINALLY I'VE FINISHED *STALKER: Shadow of Chernobyl*, a mere two years after I first started it. Granted, I restarted about four times at least and once had a critical blue screen of death error that made me wary of loading it up for months. What made me go back to it after so long? A rather shallow reason – graphics.

If you turn to page 100 you'll see a little mod called *STALKER Complete 2009*. This mod basically brings the original game up to *Clear Sky*'s visual standard, and it just becomes a more interesting experience for it. This is shallow, because there's no reason I couldn't have just played it all again using the original version, but, creatures of vanity as we are, prettier visuals do make a difference.

Unfortunately, I've only been able to achieve "bad" endings. It does raise the question of having non-Hollywood endings in games, though, something I'm for in a big way.

It also just presses home how much potential the eastern European development scene has. With this, that *Metro 2033* game, the bods behind *Cryostasis* and *Men of War*, the future is rosy. Even if the traditional image of future success is always coloured red, white and blue and glossed with a distinctly American sheen. Not that I've got anything against the blockbuster hits from our pan-Atlantic cousins, of course, but for the moment, I'll be looking forward in the opposite direction for originality.

Well, apart from all those remakes of ancient games that turn out to be rubbish, of course.

David Brown
Staff writer



"Alright Keith. Fancy seeing you here!"

ENHANCING THE ENHANCED

New tales coming for *The Witcher: Enhanced Edition*

WEBSITE thewitcher.com

PEOPLE AROUND THESE parts will be aware of my ongoing love affair with all things *Witcher*, which includes playing the game a lot and also reading both of the Andrzej Sapkowski's Geralt of Rivia books that have been released in English. So how could I not use my column page's news item to talk about the latest addition to the epic saga?

What's coming is officially known as the 1.5 patch, but we like to think of it as "the patch with stuff made by readers". It rolls off the tongue more easily, we believe. What does it contain, this fabled new collection of wonderment? Well, to be honest, we only know a little bit about that, what with CD Projekt, at the time of writing, being a bit too secretive.

We know that all forms of copy protection have been removed from the

game, including the disc check itself. This means there'll no longer be a need to have that potentially unstable no-CD crack in place and you can also keep your lovely *Enhanced Edition* disc in its box, safe from the dangers of scratching and other plastic-tarnishing activities. The bulk of the content comes in the form of five new user-created adventures, cobbled together using the bundled *Djinn* suite.

This is where CD Projekt's reticence starts. We don't know what these adventures will involve, barring the exploration of neutrality and morality that pervades all of Geralt's capers. We also don't know if these adventures will be new, as in ones not already available on the internet. We hope that they are indeed completely fresh, otherwise it'll be a bit of a letdown.



The *Enhanced Edition* also provided new material.

Those of you who've been keeping an eye on the goings-on at E3 that we've been looking at earlier in the issue will have noticed that there was no news on the proper sequel to the game. That saddens us greatly, because we can't wait for a completely fresh new romp through the wilds of Temeria. Especially after seeing the action-packed teaser.

Perhaps it'll be set in a different area of Sapkowski's universe, but we'd better stop speculating now. It'll only cause us to want the game more.

"All forms of copy protection have been removed from the game"

PCZONE
FREE-O-METER



Not Free!

0
HOURS

*Approximate amount of completely free stuff this month



Free!

542
HOURS*

SNIPPETS



FOOTBALL CRAZY

Patently infringing on all number of copyright laws, *Open World Soccer* looks good but doesn't really have any gameplay yet. One for the future, if Jon Hare's lawyers don't get at it first. openworldsoccer.sourceforge.net



MMM, FREE GOO

Those of you who got a legitimate version of *World of Goo* might be interested in this open source level editor, with which you can create your own gooey maps! snipurl.com/gootool



NEW NUKEM (KINDA)

Shiny new graphics are great, especially when they make old games look shiny and new. This is what the *Duke Nukem 3D* high-res pack does, adding textures and 3D models to replace the sprites. hrp.duke4.net

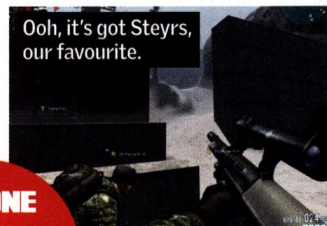


Like *Counter-Strike*, but not quite.

ALPHA 079 091 BRAVO



"Need backup!"



Ooh, it's got Steyrs, our favourite.

FAMILIAR SHOOTINGS

Counter-Strike clone is out free

WEBSITE combatarms.nexoneu.com

WE'VE HAD OUR eye on *Combat Arms* for a while now, but it hasn't really been in a fit state to talk about seriously. Taking another glance for this issue, we thought it was about time we had a right good go at it.

This writer, in particular, hasn't touched *Counter-Strike* for years, barring *Fight Club*, so it was with a great deal of trepidation that I approached this free clone. First of all, you get the tiny download manager, then the 700MB or so that makes up the game. Speeds are decent, so it won't take anyone too long to get it all. From there, proceed to the website above to register, which allows you to play. This process is a little fiddly, and once you're through it, you realise it's largely irrelevant, unless you want to post on the *Combat Arms* forums.

The game itself blends *Battlefield's* weapon and armour buying and customisation, with the team-based multiplayer shoot-outs of *Counter-Strike* (with a little *Insurgency* thrown in for good measure). Locations bring

memories of scurrying around *de_dust* and *as_tundra*, though there are no bombs to plant or VIPs to assassinate. Add to this a far more sophisticated and complex weapon purchase

system and you have a decent amount of replay value, even if the number of maps is few at the moment.

The weapon purchase system is based on renting them. You use credits to hire new guns, armour and so on, either for a whole day, a week or whatever. Once that time expires, you go back to the vanilla kit. This is a good idea, as everyone is given a decent amount of funds to make their first purchases. It avoids the "Oh great, everyone's got a better gun than me" scenario that plagues so many online shooters with unlocks, and there's a surprising variety of stuff you can get.

The gameplay itself is fairly workmanlike, providing a decent level of satisfaction while never really feeling as fluid or entertaining as *Counter-Strike* did before the master players took over and it became a tiresome chore. *Combat*

Arms also has respawning, so you also don't get the "Sod it, I died and have to wait 4.5 minutes until the end of the round" problem.

For a free shooter, *Combat Arms* is pretty good, so give it a go.



In the army, everyone is clever and sexy.

EA EMANCIPATES BATTLEFORGE

Average RTS card game is now free!

WEBSITE battleforge.com

WHILE WE RECEIVED a little bit of flak from some fans for our rather critical review of *BattleForge*, it seems most players agreed with us. How else do you explain the game being made available for free so soon after release? You can bet it wasn't because EA suddenly felt a desperate pang of guilt over fleecing the public with glorified patches of their sports games every year. No, most likely it was because no bugger was playing the thing.

What we have now is a *BattleForge* Play4Free client, providing unlimited access to all elements of the game, including any new material that has been and will be added. You get two decks of 32 cards when you sign up with the free client, meaning you can play any scenario and the Renegade campaign. However, there are a couple of restrictions, the first being that cards



This guy's pretty awesome though.

can only be offered in the Auction House once you reach certain experience levels (four in PvE and 10 in PvP).

Direct trading and in-game emails are also restricted until these conditions are met. Other than that, it is as if you had the full version, which has loads of

imaginative ideas and concepts, it just binds them all together with a lack lustre and generic RTS game where everyone uses the same units and every game seems to be a rush to see who gets the monuments first. Still, at least it's free now.

SNIPPETS



NUMBER ONE: THE LARCH

If you want to make your *Fallout 3* experience more like *Oblivion*, try out this 'foliage' pack from a group of talented mod people who thought that nuclear wastelands needed more greenery. snipurl.com/thelarch



COGS OF WAR

It's patch time in the land of *Cogs*, the tricky puzzler we thought was pretty decent back in issue 208. The new patch implements anti-aliasing and improved language support. snipurl.com/cogsgame

Bug Fix of the Month



THIS MONTH
MEN OF WAR
1.11.3 PATCH

"Fixed 'zombie' tank men that survived vehicle fires."

AN EXCITING YET SENSIBLE RIDE

SimBin release sponsor-powered Volvo racer

WEBSITE www.simbin.se/games/volvogame.htm



"Why did I have to come on A. Olofsson day?"

EVER WONDERED WHILE driving your Volvo late at night, what it would be like to just put your foot down and plough the car into the nearest brick wall, killing yourself and innocent pedestrians too? Would there be an explosion? Would anybody be engulfed by it? Being engulfed sounds cosy, so would it be?

Sadly, by the time you've run through the scenario a few times you're pulling into the driveway and nothing will ever come of it. Thanks to SimBin though, and their free Volvo racer, you can boot recklessly about two race courses in some of

the manufacturer's greatest models. The Volvo S60 Concept is the star, though the old 240 Turbo Group A rally car is our personal favourite.

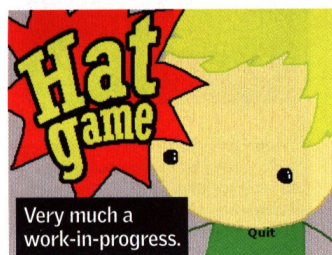
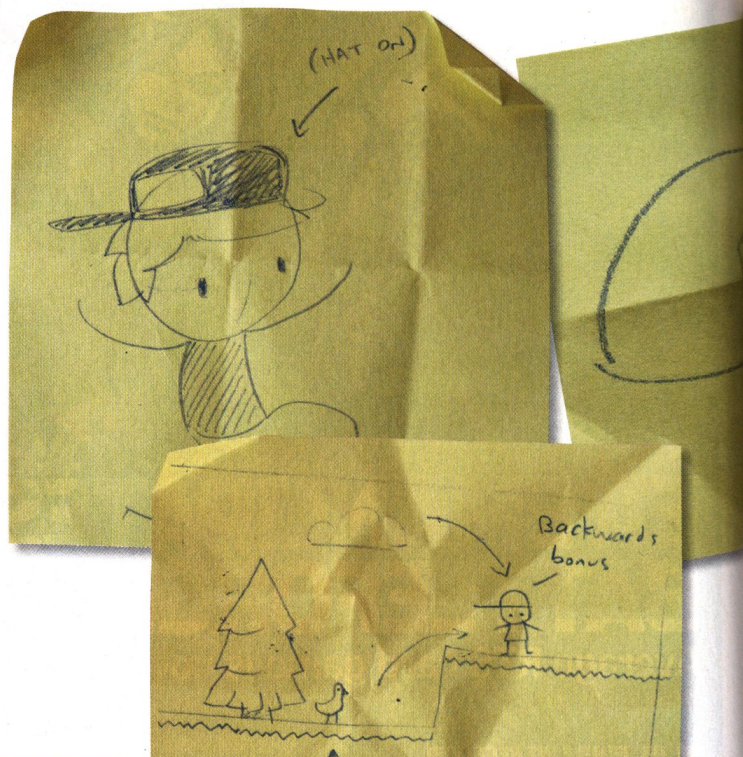
Of course, as manufacturers don't like people seeing their cars in flames and killing passengers, the crashes are mundane. But otherwise *Volvo - The Game* is a fun, if minimalist, racer.

The two tracks featured are the Gothenburg Eco Drive Arena and a course never before featured in a game: Chayaka, in Ukraine. The four other cars besides the two already mentioned are the C30, S60, S40 and 850. Lists - we love 'em.

HOW TO

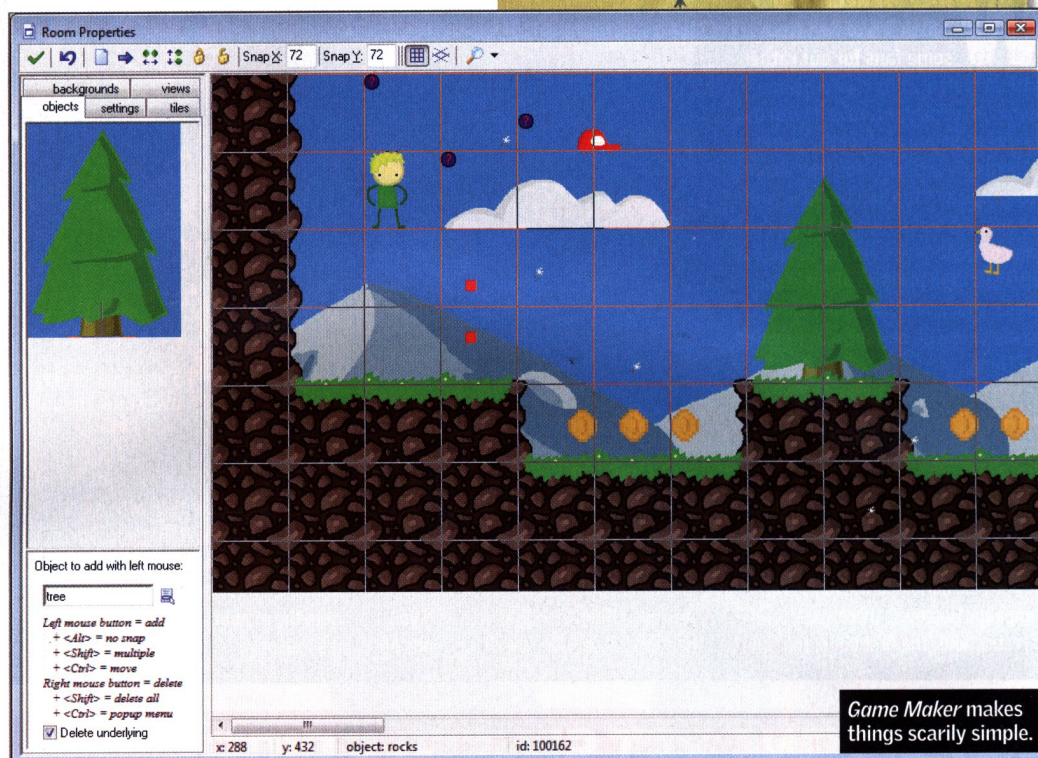
Make a game

PART 1 Steve Hogarty starts on his quest to become the next Ken Levine



I'VE HAD AN idea for a game. You know how when Mario jumps, his hat sticks fairly rigidly to his head? Well, bear with me here, what if every time you jumped your hat would fly off your head and float about the screen, blown about by dynamic wind systems? What if, after every jump, you had to run back and get your hat? Well that's my game idea. A platformer in which your hat comes off.

While it'd be irritating at first, knowing that a sudden gust might catch your chapeau and whisk it off to places unknown, eventually it'd become fun. Maybe. Well let's see, shall we? So, over the course of the next few months I'll be showing you how to bring your game idea to life. A bit like what *PC ZONE*'s Dan Marshall (zombie-cow.com) did a couple of years back, creating *Gibbage* and making tens of pounds out of it. Except, instead of getting my hands dirty with C++ guides as Marshall did all that time ago, I'm going to create my hat game in the simply titled but deceptively powerful (and free) *Game*



Maker 7 (yoyogames.com/gamemaker). That way there's some chance of me finishing the thing.

Let's not beat around the bush, my hat game is a fairly awful idea. Nobody wants hats going everywhere. But for your game you could try having a premise that isn't about infuriating the player, maybe they could even be rewarded in some way. The important

thing is that it's workable and practical, even if it's not very original. Don't aim too high – aspirations are dangerous, and ambition will come back to bite you in the balls if you're not careful. So keep it plain, and if you're really stuck just rip off somebody else's idea and change one thing.

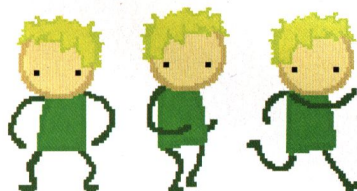
In an attempt to make some sense out of the direction-less knot of work

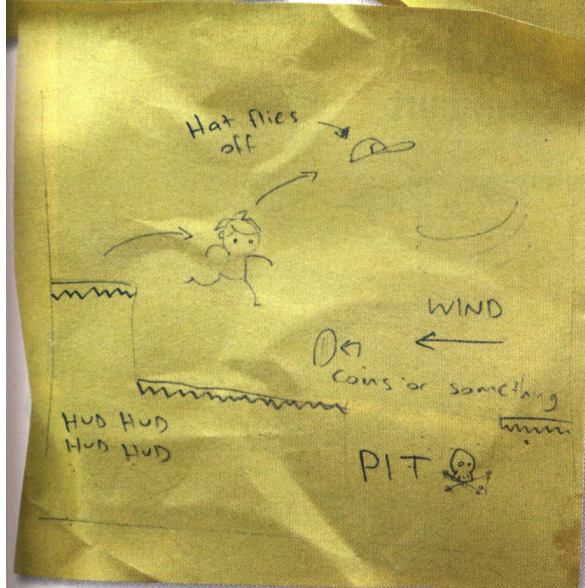
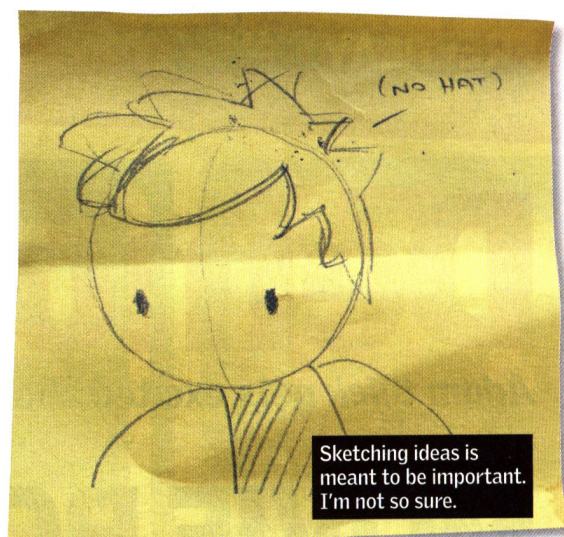
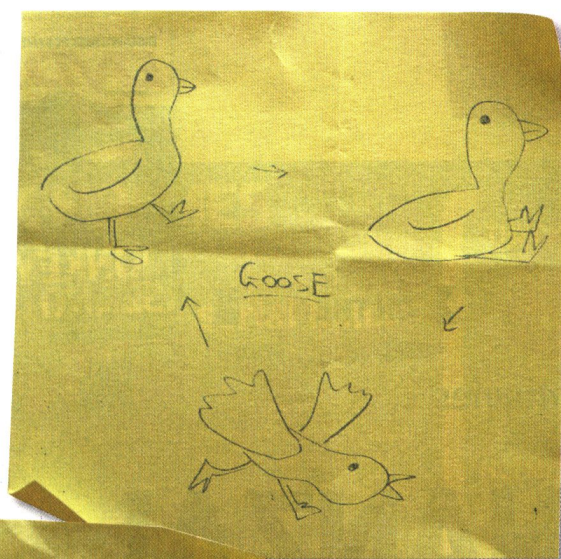
that went into the first few hours of making my hat game (which, as it happens, might very well end up just being called *Hat Game*), I'll take a single aspect of my half-arsed efforts and talk about that. Calling what I did in *Photoshop* "art design" would be overstating matters, but I did approach the canvas with some idea of what I wanted *Hat Game* to look like.

ON ME'ED SON

My main character's head would have to be large, bright and round so that the player is aware of where he is at all times – essential for those mid-air hat

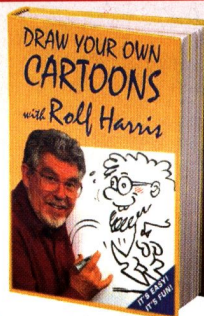
"If I follow every one of Miyamoto's decisions, I'll end up with something on par with *Super Mario Bros*"





DRAW YOUR OWN CARTOONS WITH ROLF HARRIS

A short review...

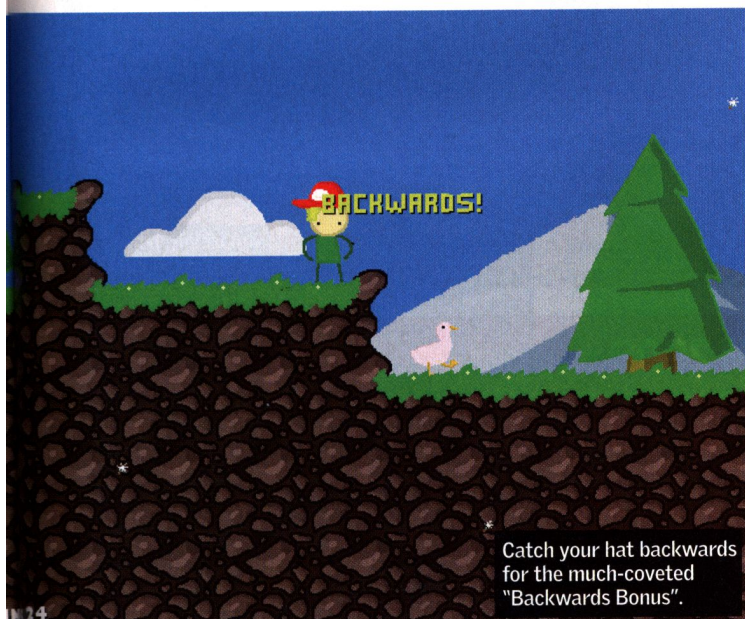


Rolf Harris hasn't just phoned this one in, he's sent a multimedia message to his editor containing a short video loop of him flipping the bird while riding around in a helicopter funded by his *Animal Hospital* millions.

Though the advice contained within this tome did help in the creation of *Hat Game's* running animation, the book is otherwise filled with lazy sketches supposedly drawn by our antipodean polymath, interspersed with limp copy and obvious pointers.

For example, Harris advises children not to draw hats too small, before we're submitted to page after page of crude portraits of men with too-small hats.

Draw Your Own Cartoons With Rolf Harris is nonetheless essential reading if you plan on following our *How to Make a Game* guide, and is available (used) on Amazon.co.uk for 1p.



catching feats. And so, Guy was brought to life, a bobble-headed stickman.

Shigeru Miyamoto gave Mario his distinctive red dungarees and hat so that he'd stand out – and also because he only had 16 colours to work with. So reasoning that if I follow every one of Miyamoto's design decisions, or at least

have vaguely similar reasons for them, I'll end up with something on par with *Super Mario Bros*.

Rolf Harris, meanwhile, taught me to draw a running man when I was 11 years old, in his book, *Draw Your Own Cartoons*. That book had a chapter about foreshortening, in which Rolf

described how he got a friend to lie on a couch and stretch out towards him to demonstrate the geometric principles involved. Rolf drew a terrifying sketch of a man coming out of the page with grasping hands and a look of dread in his eyes, which to this day haunts me.

Thankfully *Hat Game* doesn't feature foreshortening, but there is running – another chapter Rolf covers extensively. If you've any experience in animation you'll know what a pain it is to create anything better than something that moves like a bunch of cats taped

together, but after hours of pained tweaking and adjusting I think I managed to get Guy's limbs flailing in a way that resembles a running gait.

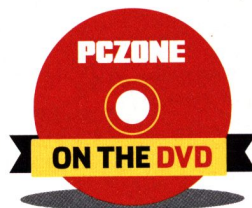
Bored with animations and wanting to move on to something else, I turned my attention to what I intended to be *Hat Game's* prime antagonists: the troublesome geese... **PGZ**

NEXT MONTH

Steve programs highly realistic, near-sentient hunter/killer goose AI.

Demos

Adam Glick gets excited about movies



MOVIE BONANZA!

E3 takes over the disc and renders me virtually redundant

WEBSITE dawnofwar2.com

THERE'S BEEN THE slight matter of the E3 Expo in the USA getting in the way of all things demo-related. But fret ye not, we've collated a bumper crop of movies, clips and strange teasers that tell us virtually nothing about the game other than that it exists. We've also gone and stuck them on the disc.

The list is long – *Alan Wake*, *APB*, *Crysis 2*, *Left 4 Dead 2*, *Mass Effect 2*, *Natural Selection 2*, *Singularity* and *The Secret of Monkey Island* are just some of them. There's also the brilliant *Meet the Spy* video of recent fame if you haven't managed to catch it elsewhere.

Don't forget that we do have two full games for you to play for free – *BASE* and *Combat Arms* – so we haven't completely forgotten about playable content for you lot to get stuck into. This bit is all about the movies though, so sit back, enjoy and begin soiling yourself with excitement at what's coming to your PC soon!



Amazingly, he just kept going upwards.

PROBLEM ZONE

Trouble with your DVD? Help is at hand!

1. If the menu doesn't appear when the disc spins up, open the Run command from the Start menu and enter D:\pcz.exe (D is the DVD drive's letter).
2. If you have a problem with a specific demo or application, check the DVD's Help section. Also ensure your PC's drivers and DirectX version are up-to-date.
3. If that doesn't work check our forums at pczone.co.uk for fixes, or send an email to us at letters@pczone.com. Please describe the problem, what you were doing when it occurred, any error messages that came up, and your system's details.
4. If the DVD itself is faulty, send it and an SAE to Disc Department, Reader Support, Future Publishing Ltd, Bath, BA1 2BW, to get a new one.

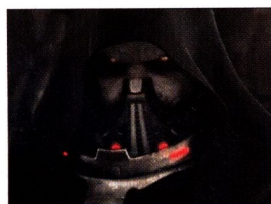
We can only provide assistance with technical problems directly related to our cover DVD. The PC ZONE discs have been tested and certified virus free by an independent organisation. We recommend that you always run an up-to-date virus checker on any software before running it. Future Publishing Ltd cannot accept any responsibility for disruption, damage and/or loss to your data or your computer system that may occur while using these discs, the programs or the data on them. Ensure that you have backups of data contained on your hard drives before running any new software.

ADAM GLICK'S FILM 2009 The pick of our E3 trailers



MASS EFFECT 2

This'll be a massive seller, and rightly so. The first game might have had a couple of issues, but it was still an epic sci-fi extravaganza. Don't expect anything less from the sequel.



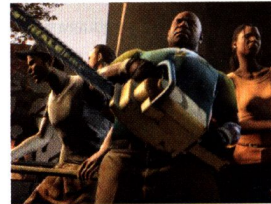
THE OLD REPUBLIC

BioWare's *KOTOR* trailer looks great, with loads of Jedis, lightsabers, and Star Wars shenanigans. Cinematic, definitely. If only the game could look this good.



ALAN WAKE

He who has hidden from us for so long, has returned from the wilderness to give us another gorgeous look at the awe-inspiring scenery he'll be traversing. We can't wait.



LEFT 4 DEAD 2

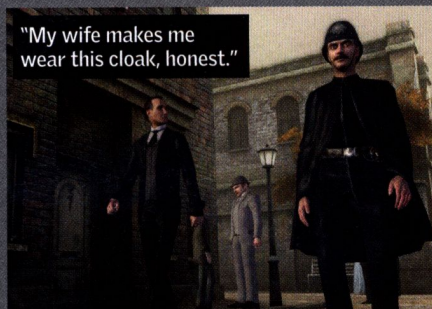
Woah! Valve sure opened up a can of worms with this one. Nevertheless, we're absolutely certain the game itself will be just as good, if not better than the first one. Because it has chainsaws!

SHERLOCK HOLMES VS THE RIPPER

The super sleuth vs the serial killer

WEBSITE www.sherlockholmes-thegame.com/en

NBODY EVER FIGURED out who Jack the Ripper was in real life, but our violin-playing, crime-solving friend, Sherlock Holmes, will surely be able to prevail where Scotland Yard's finest failed so miserably.



Frogwares' previous game – *Sherlock Holmes versus Arsène Lupin* – which, funnily enough, featured French gentleman-thief Arsene Lupin in the title role – was good, but lacked the thing that could push it to

greatness. Does this demo indicate the developers have got it spot on this time? We'll let you make up your own mind on this one.

Certainly it promises to be a far grittier experience, what with women having their throats cut left, right and centre.

THE DYNAMIC DUO



HOLMES

The detective is on his most dangerous case yet, unless you count that Cthulhu one.



WATSON

Poor dunderheaded Watson, always failing to spot clues. We still love him, though.

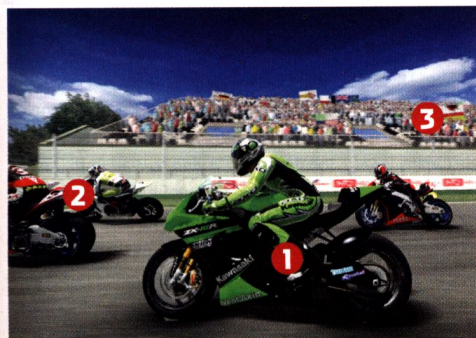
SBK 09

More gravel-biting torture

WEBSITE sbkthegame.com

THE 2008 ENTRY into the *SBK* franchise earned an average mark of 67 in issue 198, being seen as a "decent, if unforgiving motorcycle sim" from reviewer, Anthony Hare. So, will this next iteration set a superb lap time or keep a steady pace and finish in the middle of the pack?

At first glance it seems like it's the usual case of sequelitis so far, with tweaks favoured over fundamental changes. Realism is again at the forefront and non-veterans will no doubt spend most of their time spinning out on every corner and grinding their rider through the gravel.



1. YOU

This is you, before repeated trips to the tarmac tear your leathers to shreds.

2. THEM

Your opponents will spend less time on the floor than you, even if you ram them.

3. SOME PEOPLE

These blurry fellows will try to cheer you on, but might just laugh at your ineptitude instead.

RUMBLE STRIPS



THE HARDCORE

Experienced players will probably head straight for the heady thrills of the "through-the-eyes" camera view.



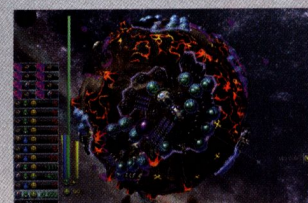
THE NOOBS

For other players, it might be best to use the third-person view. But you'll still end up on the gravel.

BEST OF THE REST



Here are the some of the other demos and movies that you can enjoy on this month's cover DVD. Or not, if that's your will...



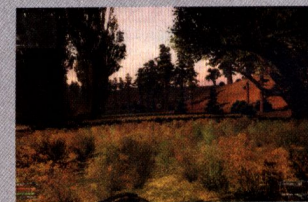
LIGHT OF ALTAIR

Our production editor said this strategy title looked like a game where you "grow fungi on a globe in space". Find out if he was right on page 74. saintxi.com



THE BALL

For more about this mod, check out Extend on page 100, but this is a must-have for *Unreal Tournament III*. moddb.com/mods/the-ball



STALKER COMPLETE 2009

This mod got David to play *STALKER* from start-to-finish for the first time. Makes your game look brand new and packs in a glut of bug fixes. snipurl.com/complete09



SPORE CREATURE CREATOR

With the first full expansion coming soon, what better time to look at the best bit of *Spore*. Remember, penis monsters aren't funny anymore. spore.com

HOT DOWNLOADS
PCZONE

SUPERMARKET MANAGEMENT DEMO

snipurl.com/supermarket
Not so much a hot download as a frozen-at-absolute-zero download, this cutesy *Tycoon*-esque game is absolute arse biscuits of the highest possible order.



PIMP GAME DEMO

snipurl.com/pimpgame
Those of you who've never dabbled in the sex trade, here's your chance to get involved. Get your workers earning money and start investing in charitable organisations and school fund raising. Perhaps.



Freeware

Adam Glick's obsession with freedom rages on...



PCZONE

ON THE DVD

This month, jump off the top of really tall things and fall to the ground, teach a penguin to fly (well, bounce), explore a really low-resolution but technically brilliant dungeon, play an unfinished game about little people, and balance a load of cats and watermelons on top of one another...

GLICK'S PICK



TOMB OF THE AZTECS

DEVELOPER Iain C
WEBSITE snipurl.com/iv16d

THIS WILL APPEAL to all but 95% of you, specifically those of you who've heard of raytracing and appreciate why a game that resembles a low-res *Wolfenstein 3D* runs at 15 frames per second.

I don't know a whole bunch about rays, and why they're being traced, but as far as I can tell it's a rendering method that more realistically depicts 3D environments by drawing lines of virtual light from sources, reflecting them off objects and noting where they hit the player's 'eye' – much how like real life works. It means that traditional lighting and shadowing effects can be achieved at no extra cost – but the base cost of raytrace rendering is such that the whole thing will run like glacial movement anyway.

Past all this techno-sorcery, *Tomb of the Aztecs* is an ultra-basic real-time Roguelike which sees you exploring the depths of a well lit Aztec tomb, shooting fireballs at guards and priests while plundering and pillaging chests.

Truth be told, the game itself isn't terribly interesting, but as a tech demo it'll provide at least 10 minutes of appreciative chin-stroking.

"Hope you don't mind me... dropping in. Ahurrhurr."



BASE

All your BASE are belong to us

DEVELOPER D3 WEBSITE snipurl.com/d3base

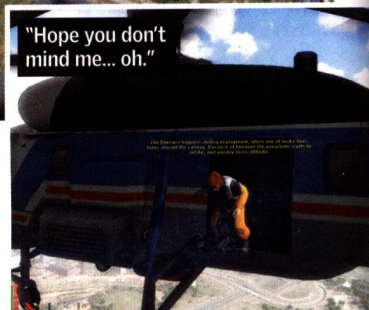
SOME OF YOU might have been thinking "Is this all about *Night of the Living Baseheads* by Public Enemy?" No, this is nothing to do with drugs or groundbreaking rap acts. This game is about hurling yourselves off tall buildings with complete disdain for your safety. Actually, I tell a lie – there's plenty of regard for safety, as you'll find out when learning the ropes of freefalling and *BASE* jumping.

The game was available for purchase a while back, but it wasn't exactly

pushed by the people who decide what will be hyped and what won't be. This was stuck firmly in the "what won't be" camp and so was ignored by virtually everyone. Sadly, this debacle means D3, the plucky Russian developers behind the game, are no more. However, one of their parting acts has been to put the entirety of *BASE* up for grabs to anyone who wants it. And, if you haven't grasped the concept of this section of the magazine yet, it means you can download it at the above link for free.

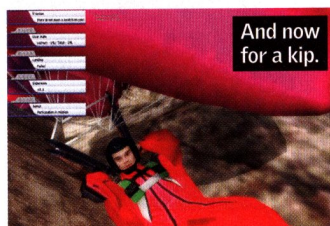
BASE is what you might have come to expect from Russian developers with limited budgets – rough around the edges, but with some kernels of killer gameplay. However, a caveat – you do need to be a little bit interested in skydiving to get anything out of it. If you are, then waste no further time and get playing it. If you aren't, read on.

"Hope you don't mind me... oh."



The only way a non-enthusiast is going to have any fun with *BASE* is by trying to get an adrenaline rush from freefalling into and/or off of different locations and trying to wait until the last possible moment before you open the parachute. The simulation aspects are dry (and terribly translated) and the monstrosity that's the campaign screen won't help matters at all. Thankfully, you can download a modified file from snipurl.com/3dbasemod and avoid some of the game's annoying early sections. Just select the pre-created campaign and you'll have a load of cash and the ability to visit any of the locations.

The other way you can enjoy the game is by not opening the parachute at all, laughing as your curiously clothed avatar plummets to his death. Which is what we did for the majority of our playing time.



IVORY SPRINGS

Unfinished, but not unloved

DEVELOPER Konjak WEBSITE konjak.org

FOR ME, CUTE and colourful platformers are what big lines of cocaine are to Premier League footballers (allegedly). I can't get enough of them, and Konjak's got a track record of developing some fantastic 2D platformers – *Noitu Love* being a personal favourite, with its big smiling vans and clever read-it-backwards name. Like some Da Vinci-

esque perfectionist, his portfolio of titles includes some never-to-be-finished projects, one of which he's just popped up on his blog.

Ivory Springs is similar to *Cave Story* (something Konjak admits) in its look and feel, a pixelly side-scroller with a chiptune soundtrack and some chatty NPCs. By definition it's unfinished, so of course it's short, the enemies are a bit duff and the one-puzzle mechanic is repeated heavily throughout – but the ideas, the story and the atmosphere will leave you wanting more.

Which could be the point really, if enough people pester him to finish it there's every chance the developer will stick another seven chapters on and be done with it.



LEARN TO FLY

Flightless? Sounds like a challenge

DEVELOPER Light Bringer WEBSITE armorgames.com/play/3789/learn-to-fly

ALL AQUATIC, FLIGHTLESS birds dream that, one day, they'll break the shackles of their evolutionary milieu and disappear into the wide blue yonder. One plucky little penguin will achieve just that, with your help, in this charming little time waster from Light Bringer. The object of the game is as simple as its title: teach your penguin hero how to soar into the clouds.

You achieve this in a way that is strikingly similar to those Yeti games

where you hit a penguin with a bat – your heroic Antarctic ally flings himself down a curved ramp, flying up into the air at the end. The goal is to make him glide until his momentum disappears and he plummets into the icy waters.

At first you'll barely make it over the ramp, perhaps scraping a few feet into the ocean. Each attempt brings money which you can use to purchase a glider, a rocket pack or alter various stats like air resistance and ramp height. There

are also achievements to be gained that bring you cash rewards and allow you to progress to a new level; which just means getting a bigger ramp and harder achievements.

As a time waster, this is perfect. Browser-based and fairly addictive, you'll refuse to be beaten by the final and most tricky secret achievement. Once you've finished it, you'll never go back, but you'll be recommending it to your friends for a while afterwards.



WEBGAME OF THE MONTH



CAT CAT WATERMELON

DEVELOPER Lexaloffle
WEBSITE snipurl.com/catcatwatermelon

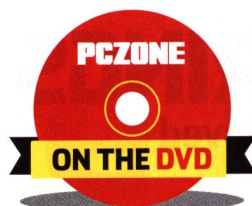
BALANCING GAMES AREN'T my cup of tea, as I find them charmless and boring. Anyway, I've made an exception this month and have named *Cat Cat Watermelon* the best webgame of this month.

The object of the game is simple: balance cats, watermelons, red-and-white-striped balls and large bowls on top of one another to complete the level.

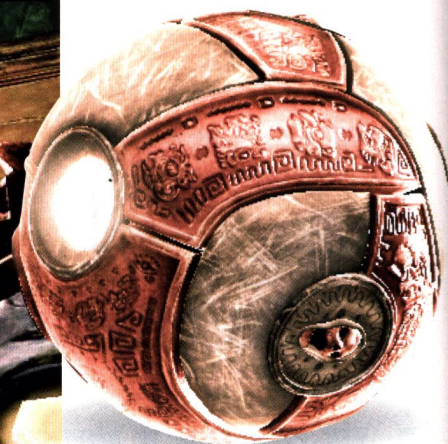
There are currently 20 levels, but once you get the hang of the way each object interlinks with another, it won't take too long to speed through each one. *Cat Cat Watermelon* is a refreshing twist on balancing games, not just because it has a load of cats that blink at you in it.

Extend

David Brown checks on the latest mods, maps and add-ons



A huge zombie gorilla? Yes please!



THE BALL

History repeating itself (sort of)

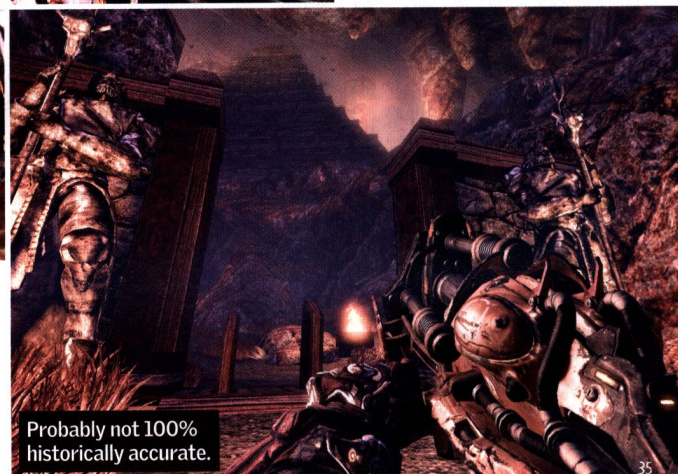
MOD FOR Unreal Tournament 3 [WEBSITE moddb.com/mods/the-ball](http://www.moddb.com/mods/the-ball)

IF, INSTEAD OF using the version supplied on our cover disc, you decide to download *The Ball*, beware of one thing (well, it doesn't matter too much, this is just to save you time). There are three versions of *The Ball* that can be had from the link above, and it's not completely obvious that the third and most recent one actually contains both of the others. So, if you want to save some time, just get the third one. It'll also be easier to install, as it comes with an executable.

Anyway, what is *The Ball*, I hear you cry? It is the brainchild of a group of people called Toltec Studios, named after a Mesoamerican culture of the

pre-Hispanic period of Central American history. The team have taken more than just the name from this period, however. The whole game is inspired by and designed around Mesoamerican art and architecture, so you've got ziggurat-style pyramids and that sort of thing.

As the hero, a geologist who becomes trapped in an ancient underground complex, you discover a large gold-encrusted ball that you can control using a strange mystical device that's exactly the same as an Impact Hammer, pushing it forward or dragging it towards you à la *Half-Life 2*'s gravity gun. To progress, you manipulate your



Probably not 100% historically accurate.

ball (don't snigger at the back there) into various different holes or orifices (I told you, stop it!) activating the buttons contained therein. There are also buttons that can only be activated by your character.

As you move deeper into the complex, you discover that you aren't alone, until enemies appear that have to be battered with your ball (that's enough tittering for now).

The Ball really is an excellent mod, providing at least four or so hours of sphere-coaxing entertainment. It can be a little frustrating when your ball refuses to stay still or keeps getting stuck (ditto for the cubes you need to

push about) and we'd definitely advise you to scale down *Unreal Tournament*'s double-jump option. If you don't, there will be numerous times where precise movement leads to untoward leaps into fire or onto spikes, which is more than frustrating. Thankfully, the game doesn't punish death too much, merely pushing you back to a checkpoint, but with the level just as you left it before you died.

If you like puzzle games and happen to own *UT3*, you'd be mad not to get this installed and start exploring. It looks good and is fun to play. And there's more to come, as more content is in the works.

DIADOCHI: TOTAL WAR

The sons of Alexander follow in his footsteps

MOD FOR Rome: Total War WEBSITE moddb.com/mods/diadochi-total-war



Phalanx for the memories...

AS ALL OF you will doubtless be aware, the Diadochi (also known as the Epigonoi) were the group of people who were left as successors to the vast lands conquered and subjugated by Alexander the Great.

These few weren't content with what had passed down to them and set about each other trying to nab all the rest of it for themselves as well. This mod, if you hadn't guessed, attempts to bring that period to life using the ageing medium of *Rome: Total War*.

The scenario is therefore stretched between the years 305 BC and 147 BC, with two main campaigns to

play through. One of the primary aims of the mod was to introduce "impeccable unit and AI balance", which, to an extent, they've succeeded in doing.

As is usual with *Rome: Total War*, having the right version makes a lot of difference. The mod was specifically designed with the *Alexander* expansion in mind and it isn't nearly as stable on games which only have *Barbarian Invasion* installed.

The *Alexander* expansion is really very good, so if you haven't already got it, this will hopefully provoke you into doing buying it.

STALKER COMPLETE 2009

A nuclear wasteland prettified

MOD FOR Shadow of Chernobyl WEBSITE snipurl.com/complete09

AMONGST THE EVENTS of 2007 was the release of *STALKER: Shadow of Chernobyl*, a rough diamond appearing out of the radioactive mists of Pripyat.

One thing the original *STALKER* could never be described as was beautiful. Workmanlike, certainly. Effective and atmospheric? Correct. But beautiful? Not really. *Clear Sky* appeared looking much better, combining the glory of new visual effects with the same gritty feel of the original. Now, artist Pavel Dolgov has brought the original *STALKER* up to date, visually.

Resembling *Clear Sky* in most places, Dolgov's new textures, and the bounty of mods included in this pack, gives the whole *STALKER* experience a lift.

While the game world is still a depressing and lethal place, the improvements do make the game a more interesting proposition. There are some little tweaks in the way the game works (a sleeping bag to advance time, various minor interface changes) but the mod is basically visuals based. Use it and breath new life into your stalking.



A nuclear wasteland never looked so good.

THE CHAOS WAR

Extra mounts and blades

MOD FOR Mount&Blade WEBSITE snipurl.com/chaoswar

WHILE IT MIGHT not have been the most well-received game in the eyes of the critics, *Mount&Blade* continues to enthral players around the world with its open-ended gameplay set in a pseudo-medieval world.

With the first official expansion promising multiplayer and visual improvements, do we really need mods for the game? Of course we do, damn it! This one isn't a must, but it

does make the whole thing harder and has numerous other mods glued onto it, including a wound system, battle morale, permanent death, "extremely powerful Lords" and other such *Blade-y* things.

If you are a fan of the game, it be worth checking this out.



"Eh up, our kid," and so on.

Northern Pikeman



Nice dress.

MOD CONS!

The add-ons to avoid



LABYRINTH

MOD FOR Neverwinter Nights WEBSITE moddb.com/mods/labyrinth1

A mod made by a schoolboy isn't necessarily a recipe for disaster, but the odds are definitely against it being anywhere near good. This is definitely not good. It claims to be based on the movie starring David Bowie and a bunch of Muppets, but ends up being a generic *Neverwinter Nights* module that will only annoy fans of the film.

Online Zone

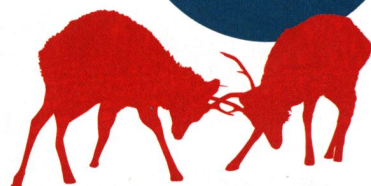
What's new in *PC ZONE*'s forum, Fight Club and Zone Chat

COME AND
TAKE ON THE
ZONE STAFF IN
OUR MONTHLY
ONLINE GAMING
FREE-FOR-ALL!

We managed to embarrass ourselves again this month by nearly forgetting both Zone Chat and Fight Club, but like true soldiers we rose to the task and lead our teams to both victory and humiliating defeat. Elsewhere, our Twittering continues, while the forumites get themselves into a lather over the *Left 4 Dead 2* fiasco/storm in a teacup, the seriousness of which depends on your viewpoint.

FIGHT CLUB

When writers forget to turn up



OH DEAR, WE so nearly made a complete bodge up of this. See, we were so engrossed in other activities that we actually forgot Fight Club was on for a little while. Luckily, you were patient enough to wait around for us and, eventually, much fun was had by all, except when we were trying to take the group photo (more on that later).

The capering began on one of the newest maps, Pipeline, which involves three separate stages of pushing a cart through the enemy base area to the end of the track. At the moment, this map set, flagship of the new Payload mode of play, is very popular, and when it doesn't get bottlenecked by Engineer turrets in the second level's main corridor, it's great fun.

Thankfully, this didn't happen to us, although perhaps only because the Blue team was rubbish for the majority of the game. Even the valiant PeachFUZZ, trying to turn it around as a Heavy, was unable to stem the Red tide, being ruthlessly cut down by sniper fire.

The situation was so bad that the Blues were unable to even leave the safety of their spawn room, any attempt to do so usually being met with a hail of rockets, bullets and backstabs. In fact, Blue defeats also remained a pattern on the next map, Badwater.

Even though the teams got jumbled up with the map change, the Reds continued to totally dominate, preventing any advance by the Blues, although this changed when the teams

Best we could do, under the circumstances.



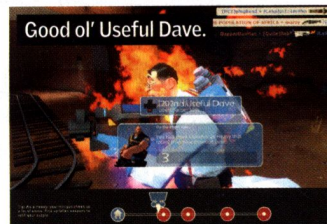
swapped roles. Bulletproof Smurf earned his spurs by dominating five people at once, although it was subsequently revealed that he had played the game for more than 80 hours in just the two weeks prior to Fight Club, so he should really be doing well in a game with noobs like us.

Gavpowell also distinguished himself as a Heavy, even though his work was only made possible by Marzy's sterling Medic work.

Elsewhere, [Quite] Rob was humiliated by David, who dominated him with a stealthy Heavy punch to the back.

Much tittering occurred when The Entire Population of Africa logged in for a quick game, but their baseball-lobbing turned any remaining laughter to screams of bitter rage.

Good ol' Useful Dave.



And so, the group photo. This was an utter disaster from start to finish, with a handful of Snipers ruining things for everyone by refusing to stop killing people while the photo was being taken. A hasty snapshot of a small group of players huddled around the cart was all we could manage, thanks to the activities of these selfish individuals.

Oh, how we do loath then, with [Quite]Rob uttering many an expletive as his impotent rage grew. We know exactly how he felt. Still, other than that, it was a good game.

See you all next month for some more rage-quitting action. We'll try to remember to actually turn up promptly next time.

PCZONE 2009 ON THE BLOG



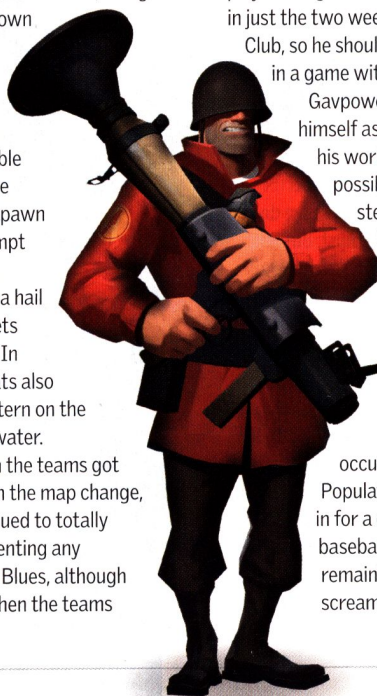
WE LOOK AWAY from the Twitter feed for a few days and blam, a hundred more people are knocking on our proverbial doors, demanding to know what we are doing, saying, thinking and, potentially, sleeping with.

Plastic love companions aside, we've been doing a lot of thinking, specifically about the comical fleecing of our console cousins by the guys behind *F.E.A.R. 2*. You see, they've been forced to pay for some DLC which then appeared on the PC as a completely free update. Thanks Monolith, we really are the best of pals now!

Elsewhere, it's been a mixed bag of links to frustrating web games, telling one of our ex-freelancers about a *Sims/Star Trek* parody and an embarrassing linkage mistake which we rectified with a nice video of a strange creature being scratched by an affectionate owner.

Finally, we spoke a little about characters from *Team Fortress 2* taking some time out from their busy schedules to enthusiastically endorse and advertise various household cleaning products. The Heavy's one is particularly inspiring, we have to say.

Don't forget to keep tabs on us at twitter.com/pczone.



NOTES FROM THE FORUM

So, will you be boycotting *Left 4 Dead 2* too?

SUNSCRAMBLE: I presume that's going to be a free update to the box we bought late last year, yes? Valve?

PEACHFUZZ: Many people (more gifted than I) have seen all *L4D* has to offer so a new instalment to chew up the winter evenings is fully justified. Maybe I'll be done with it by November so won't feel too bad about coughing up for the sequel. Probably not though.

LIQUID_METAL: All the features they've listed sound like patch content, a mini expansion at best. Unless they've started using the Crytek engine it's pointless to release it as a sequel.

JOWOO: To be quite frank, that's utter bull. The original has got loads of life in it, it just needs some NEW f**king LEVELS VALVE!

ANDY_MONAHAN: It has always been an ambition of mine to play a zombie-fightin' Uncle Phil.

MUSICALGIBBON: Well, this does provide an example of how promises for post-release content should be ignored when reviewing a title, and when considering what to buy. I saw numerous reviews mention how the lack of content would obviously be rectified given time. "This is Valve we're talking about here, folks."

APOPHIS_DD: You can't expect Valve to just work tirelessly for no reward. It may just seem like an update rather than an entire game's worth of content, but they have to get paid. They'll also use it as a way to see how popular the game is with selling figures. Just as long as it doesn't cost an arm and a leg, paying for it shouldn't be an issue.

DISC10: I watched the trailer that was posted up earlier. Whilst it looks awesome, it should really be DLC. Personally I would really like melee weapons, but I don't want to have to pay for a whole new game to get them.



Uncle Phil is just one of the new characters.

ZONE CHAT

A prelude to combat



Some of the readers want to bodypop in *Prototype* too.

BECAUSE WE FORGOT Fight Club for a bit, Zone Chat was curtailed somewhat by our tardiness. Nevertheless, there was some meaningful banter to be had for a little while, so let's see what the highlights were.

Useful Dave was upset by Apophis_DD's uncompromising assessment of his hygiene, which kicked things off into a discussion about hairy backed ladies advertising subscriptions to this very magazine.

PeachFUZZ declared that he liked the look of *Prototype*, with Halrick piping up to tell people he was also considering it, because he "liked rooftop jumping".

Marzy then congratulated Steve on his having played *Left 4 Dead* with Graham 'Glinner' Linehan, he of *Father Ted* fame. That happened ages ago. Do keep up, readers!

Utter Nutter questioned the way in which we compiled our *Buyer's Guide* and was pleasantly surprised to hear that it isn't ordered by score, but by whoever wins in a

wrestling match, with *The Witcher* beating *Deus Ex* via pinfall after a succession of Hulk Hogan's Atomic Leg Drops.

Finally, the closing comments were all about *Mass Effect 2*, with DapperDanMan saying he was looking forward to the darker edge it is going to have. Useful Dave said that "killing Wrex was lulz," which brought the conversation to a close.



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 that there Steam group for the date of the next chat event...

CAN'T MAKE FIGHT CLUB?

If you find yourself unable to make it to Fight Club - perhaps you've gone back in time and been eaten by some dinosaurs - then play with other PCZ readers on the following servers. We might even join in from time to time.

WHO'S WHO

Jon Blyth [PCZ]log
David Brown [PCZ]plughead
Steve Hogarty [PCZ]misterbrilliant
Will Porter [PCZ]batsphinx
Phil Wand [PCZ]peoplesfrontofjudea

BATTLEFIELD 2

85.236.100.48:16567

CALL OF DUTY 4:
MODERN WARFARE
85.236.100.48:28960

COUNTER-STRIKE: SOURCE
85.236.100.48:27015

DAY OF DEFEAT: SOURCE
85.236.100.48:27315

HALF-LIFE 2:
DEATHMATCH
85.236.100.48:27215

TEAM FORTRESS 2
85.236.100.48:27115

SERVERS PROVIDED BY...



MULTIPLAY

Retrozone

Facing the wrong way since 1995...



Flashback

NOCTURNE

THERE AREN'T MANY games that instil a genuine sense of fear or trepidation into the player, but I believe *Nocturne* is one of those select few. You take control of a mysterious fighter of evil, The Stranger, who works for a secret government agency called Spookhouse. His job, along with the other bizarre residents of the Spookhouse facility, is to investigate tales of supernatural goings on and to discover if they are hoaxes or not. None of them are, because that would make this game the most boring in history.

The game is split into four distinct, self-contained acts with a final epilogue. While chronological in nature, each one can be picked at any time at the start.



Zombies... again.

We do advise playing them in the proper order though, as the story makes more sense that way. On his adventures The Stranger comes across numerous ghosts and ghouls, including werewolves, vampires and Frankenstein's Monster-esque Chicago mobsters, created by a demonic Al Capone.

One of the most interesting and amusing elements of the game are the agents employed by Spookhouse. For example, there's voodoo expert Scat Dazzle, who accompanies you in act two. One of his powers is an ability to summon a Loa (a Voodoo spirit) who is called Baron Samedi. Elsewhere we have Elspeth 'Doc' Holliday, who eagle-eyed readers will remember from *Blair Witch, Volume I: Rustin Parr*, in which she is the main character.

One thing that was curious about the game was its control mechanism. It has separate controls for movement and aiming, making it difficult to do both at once. Certainly, when first attempted, the whole thing feels ridiculous. Auto-aim is available for those unwilling to persevere, but once you get used to it, the mechanism is passable. Another

The Stranger, dealing out justice for 10 years.



thing I seem to recall is that it was so damn hard I never managed to finish it. In fact, writing this has inspired me to hunt it down and give it another go. Will my skills have been honed with time, or will I just be even worse than before? Probably the latter.

As mentioned before, there aren't many horror games that are genuinely unnerving, but *Nocturne* is one of them. A brooding, dark atmosphere is supplemented by sometimes difficult gameplay mechanics to create a tense experience. One for all horror buffs.

But how? Playing the game, legally

Finding *Nocturne* nowadays should be easy, certainly compared to most of the games we feature in *Retro Zone*. eBay probably has old copies available. Barring that, there might be ones for sale on Amazon. In fact, I just had a look and there were numerous copies available.

Other than that, the only methods we can think of are dastardly and illegal, so

we have to warn you off doing that sort of thing.

amazon.co.uk

There should be some used copies there.

ebay.co.uk

If Amazon fail you go here. There might be a friendly merchant ready to help you out.

Nocturnal Blasphemy Characters and people in and influenced by Nocturne



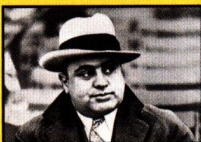
1 THE STRANGER

The lead protagonist, he despises monsters, though he has to work with many of them to survive.



2 BARON SAMEDI

A Voodoo spirit that reluctantly helps The Stranger wipe out a load of zombies in chapter 2.



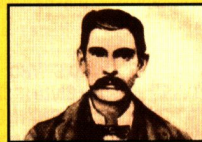
3 AL CAPONE

While dodging taxes, Al bred a ruthless gang of Tommy Gun-wielding Frankenstein's Monsters.



4 HAYSTACK

A Spookhouse employee, this guy is a renowned boxer. So not really like Giant Haystacks.



5 ELSPETH HOLLIDAY

This is actually a picture of Doc Holliday of OK Corral shootout fame.

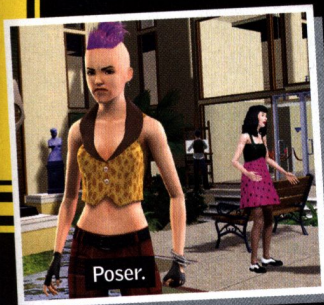


6 BLOODRAYNE:

Nocturne 2 was the working title, apparently, for Dhampir simulator, *BloodRayne*.

Now & Then

THE SIMS 3 vs LITTLE COMPUTER PEOPLE

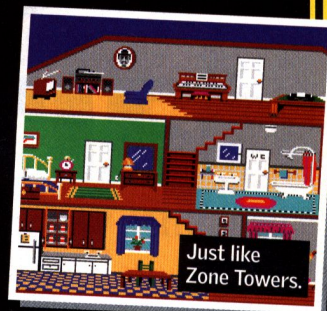


Poser.

BEFORE TIME BEGAN, before Will Wright was embarking on his lifelong career to plague chart compilers with his cash-generating series, there was *Little Computer People*. It was also known as *House-on-a-Disk*, which we think is a better name.

Compared to *The Sims* it's simplistic, but compared to other things released in 1985, it was very impressive for a wide-eyed youngster seeing it for the first time (a few years later, I might add). Every copy would spew out a unique character, who would go about his or her business while you watched. Interaction was possible, commands could be issued and poker could be played, but generally you just left them to their own devices.

Thankfully, unlike *The Sims*, there were no brand name-related expansion packs churned to rot our minds and corrupt our souls.



Just like Zone Towers.

Play it! How to get tiny virtual people inside your PC

- 1 World of Spectrum (worldofspectrum.org) once more, is the first place to go if you want to play the Speccy version of *Little Computer People*, though it is the inferior one.
- 2 If you want one of the better versions, we'd go with either an Amiga (such as WinUAE) or Atari ST (eg. *Gemulator 9*) emulator, for improved graphic niceness.
- 3 If you do want to go down the Rick Moranis route, you can shrink one of your relatives and place him in a multi-level hamster cage that's stuck inside a small CRT monitor.
- 4 However, you could just give up on the whole idea, succumb to the darkness and just buy *The Sims 3* instead. After all the entire world will likely do the same.

MAMEframe

PITFALL 2: THE LOST CAVERNS

A CHARMING, LO-FI, basic platformer, *Pitfall 2: The Lost Caverns* had good intentions and a heart of pure gold. But when SEGA took the name and turned it into an arcade game in 1984, it was awful.

So excited were they with the powerful chips and plentiful memory of their space-age arcade machine that they needlessly turned Harry into some

camp, cartoon version of Indiana Jones, replete with a pink fedora and matching leather jacket.

He didn't even have a proper jumping animation, instead he stood rigid, arms and legs pointing downwards as he sailed through the air. This is sort of like how you'd imagine robots would jump, not caring about the stance they were in moments ago, or

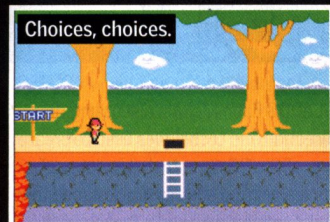
What is MAME?

The Multiple Arcade Machine Emulator runs over 3,500 games. You can get it from mamedev.org or from this issue's DVD (we've also got 32 and 64-bit versions of MameUI, which has a nice interface). But downloading games for it is illegal.

So don't.



the stance they'll be in moments later, but simply living in the present and assuming their default pose. Never play this game, instead stick to the original *Pitfall*.



Choices, choices.



Weeeeeee!



Uh-oh, spaghetti-ohs.

Back in the day



STRYKER'S RUN

By Richard Cosgrove

THE ACORN ELECTRON had crap graphics, but great games. Mainly because they were harder than bouncers from the Chelsea Headhunters' favourite pub.

Take *Stryker's Run*: you simply run from left to right, avoiding bombs from planes, laser fire and mines. You can take nine hits before being turned into a skeleton. As there's no scrolling you don't know what the next screen holds.

So as you reach the edge of a screen you can find yourself being bombed by planes (taking four hits), then shot by a volley from the soldier in the next area, before you jump back into the previous screen to get re-bombed (eight), so you go back to the soldier, who's turned his back, but run over a mine (skeleton).

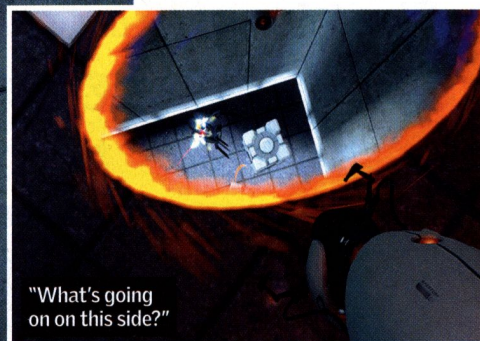
Think *L4D*'s Survivor mode is tough? Load up *Stryker's Run* in an Electron emulator and feel real pain.

On the PCZ Hard Drive

The games we're playing, and why we're playing them



"Oh, are you going into the blue portal? Yeah me too."



"What's going on on this side?"

PORTAL

Lost in space: **Steve Hogarty**

IF ANYBODY WOULD like to send me a new PC, that's something we can do. We'll work out the details later, I could tattoo your logo on my arse, write long anecdotes that end with your company being really awesome – I'm as flexible as I am corruptible. I just need to move on from Source engine games, the limit of what my home PC is capable of.

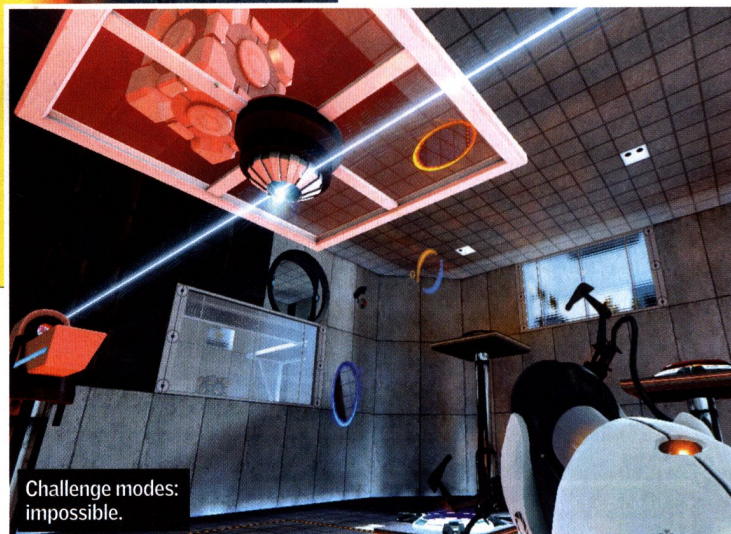
That's probably why I replayed *Portal* at the weekend, albeit with the settings turned slightly down. Another reason would be the interminable guilt I feel for not giving the game the oft-coveted *PC ZONE* Classic award, instead landing it with 89, which is as close to

a kick-in-the-teeth as you get in our scoring system. I stand by it, but only because I'm not above running out of the room to avoid arguing with people who say I'm wrong.

Coming back to *Portal* knowing the solutions to the puzzles (and the twist) naturally takes much of the wind out of



Remember this bit?



Challenge modes: impossible.

the game's sails. *Portal* is one of the few games that makes me wish I'd never played them, just so I can play them for the first time again. The worth of that first play and the brief novelty of the tech outweighs anything the time trials and challenges offer. Still, slipping through folded space is huge amounts of fun, and the later levels offer some flexibility, allowing you to try techniques you might not have considered the first time around.

The developer's commentary is interesting too, with the voice of

GLaDOS Ellen McLain discussing the direction and techniques used to create one of the PCs greatest characters. In such a concise and tightly designed title this commentary works fantastically, and is perhaps the best use of the feature in any Valve title to date. In fact, it's easily worth playing through again just to listen. That, and the song at the end, the one that the internet ruined with its incessant LOLing.

VERDICT: Improves with amnesia

(This article was sponsored by Cyberpowered Ltd PCs.)

PLANTS VS ZOMBIES

Braindead and loving it: **David Brown**

THIS IS PROBABLY the first tower defence game I've played, but there's just something infectious about PopCap's presentation of *PvZ* that makes you want to keep coming back for more. However, in terms of pure longevity, *Peggle* was a better game.

Once I've finished all the mini-games in *PvZ*, I'm far less likely to return than I am to PopCap's other

great game, which could be an indictment on me, but more likely that *PvZ* just doesn't have the same draw.

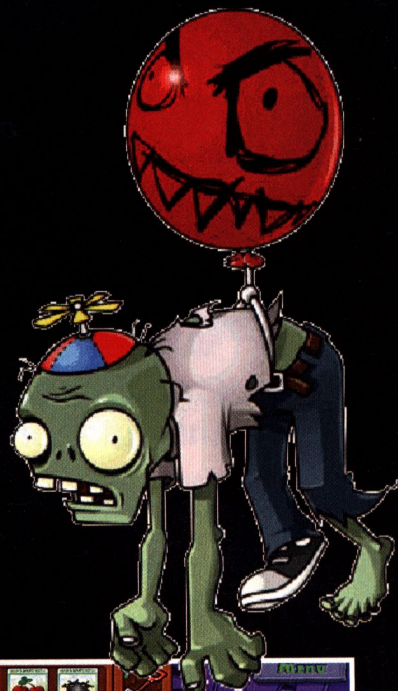
While I'm in there, though, the game is providing a great deal of fun and I applaud the passion and ingenuity that has gone into the huge array of mini-games available once the main adventure has been completed.

The whole thing is almost polished

casual game perfection, but it still doesn't quite reach the addiction levels of its stable-mate, *Peggle*, although there'll always be a soft spot in my gaming heart for Wall (and Tall) Nuts and their fellow eco-warriors.

Here's to a *Left 4 Dead* mod replacing the Infected with Zombies from this game.

VERDICT: Good, but not crack



DEFCON (DEMO)

Finger on the button: **Adam Glick**

I'M NOT BAD with money, in the sense that money exists to be spent and that to be "good" with it would imply that you play your part in keeping it sloshing about inside the increasingly hollow tummy of the British economy. So in that sense, I'm brilliant with money. Probably the best there is.

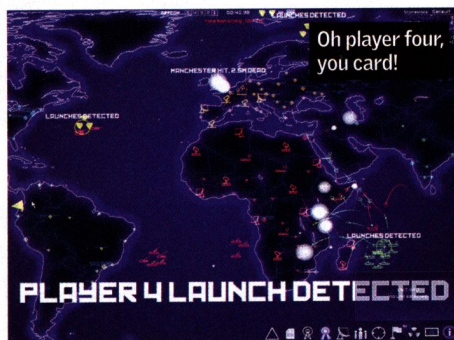
So why am I playing the demo of *DEFCON* when I own the full game? Because the Steam authentication is bugged, and not just for me either, but for several others too – the game's forum is a grumblebox of complaints. Still, the demo's fun, and I recollect the full game being really great.

Place your silos, radar, airbases and naval forces and watch the doomsday clock tick inevitably towards nuclear annihilation. As cities are razed by the power of the atom, ominous death counts hover about white-hot blotches on your map. Something about the words "London hit, 5.9 million dead"

sends a chill down your spine – though I can't quite figure out why.

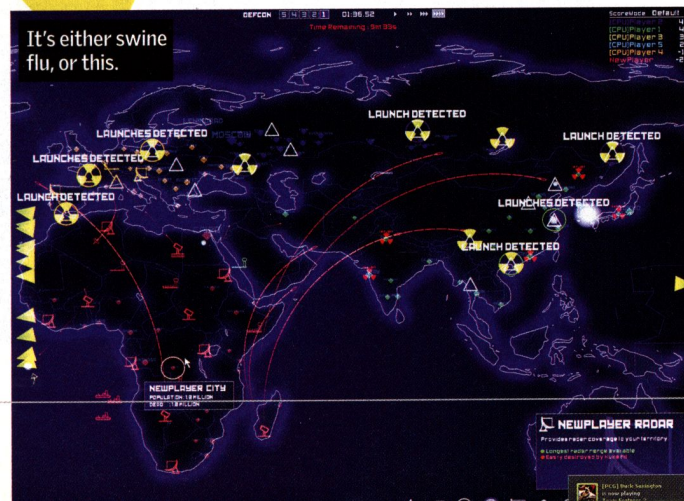
DEFCON's admittedly lacking in depth, and some hard and fast strategies floated to the top soon after the game's release.

Enough time's passed now to be able to return to it for at least a few decent wars. And with North Korea waving



a metaphorical arse at the rest of the world, it's an apt way to spend our remaining days.

VERDICT: A real WOPR



WHAT'S ON YOUR HARD DRIVE?

Readers on their chosen poison

EVE ONLINE

I thoroughly enjoyed my two-week trial of *EVE* before I saw my life in four months time where I was five stone heavier with no girlfriend. I knew I'd get hopelessly addicted and bailed as soon as I could. Part of me still wants to get into it.

g_hughes

STONEKEEP

Very old skool RPG, with a grab-happy Yoda puppet thing to keep you spending those precious gems. There's a lot of traipsing around, but it's all interesting.

G_Man_007

BRAID

This is surely the best platformer since *Yoshi's Island*. (I swear I only borrowed a SNES to play it.)

JohnnyWarmonger



FALLOUT 3

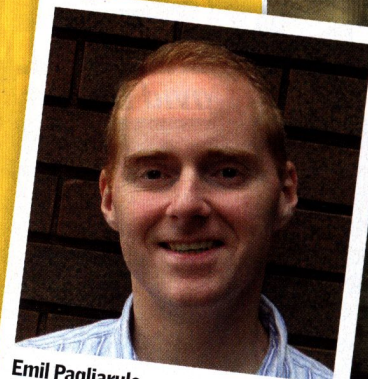
Steve Hogarty wanders the radioactive wastelands in search of answers

WHAT CAN BE said about *Fallout 3* that has not already been said earnestly and with stabbing finger motions in a pub by Will Porter already? Not a whole lot, it must be said.

The sprawling post-apocalyptic adventure captured the imaginations of millions, and the

downloadable content, at the very least, scrubs memories of *Oblivion*'s horse armour right out of our memories.

In exchange for a booster shot of *Rad Away*, lead designer Emil Pagliarulo offered up some inside info on the game's development. What a nice guy.



Emil Pagliarulo
Lead designer, Bethesda



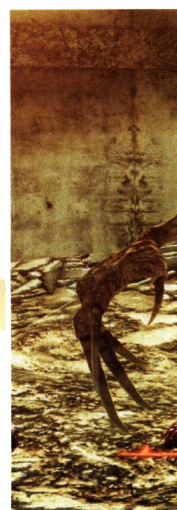
Aim for the head! Or the arm, that works too.

02 FAN REACTION

"When we started working on a new *Fallout* game, we never dismissed any fans, and never would. At the same time, you have to be confident in your own creative abilities, and confident in your team. You have to trust your own creative judgment. If you can't do that, then what's the point? The whole reason we acquired the *Fallout* license was so that we could make a *Fallout* game we wanted, one we thought would be great.

"So, at the end of the day, we listened to all the fans, but we had to make a game that feels right. That's what we did, and it was definitely the right way to go."

"We listened to the fans, but we had to make a game that feels right"



01 V.A.T.S. ATTACK

"VATS was a top priority for us from day one, really. We knew we needed to somehow replicate the body-targeting system used in *Fallout* and *Fallout 2*, but in a real-time, primarily first-person, environment. And we also knew we needed to make it really visceral. Todd Howard had this image in his head of the crashes in the *Burnout* series – in those games your vehicles' smash-ups get repeated in slow-motion – somehow applying that to whatever cinematic mode we came up with.

"I have to say that the end result is remarkably close to what Todd and I originally envisioned. It's both tactical and visually exciting, but it's also very fast and easy to use. Really VATS is everything we had hoped it would be."



Ruined billboards and destroyed towns.



Fallout 3's colour palette defined its atmosphere.

03 ART CHOICES

"We did very few in-game iterations of the art style. For us, it was more a matter of doing tons and tons of concept work before finally deciding on the appropriate art styles. Especially for the really key visual elements, things like the Pip-Boy 3000, the Vault 101 suit, all the robots – we really wanted to make sure we nailed them at the concept stage.

"The one thing we did change a bit in-game was the overall colour palette. It was a challenge trying to find one that was both appropriate and wasn't too oppressive. It's a wasteland, so everything's dead, so the atmosphere is pretty darned bleak. So the trick was making the world seem dismal, but not so much that it's depressing to actually play through."

04 LADY EFFECTS

"There aren't many differences when deciding to play as a female character. We made a conscious effort to make the gameplay identical for both male and female characters.

"There is one significant way in which the game can be easier if you play as a female character. If

your character is female, and you take the Black Widow perk, you'll do extra damage against male characters. The majority of enemies are male. So if you go that route, you'll have an easier time. It was unintentional – a by-product of the way the systems worked."

Fighting robots is a tactical affair, with VATS highlighting weak points.

Deathclaws evolved from three-horned chameleons. *Fallout* fact!

05 LEAVING THE VAULT

"The experience of leaving Vault 101 for the first time is something we definitely wanted to bring home for the player. So in that sense, it was a very specifically crafted moment.

"It was interesting because, if you'll remember, the player had a very similar experience at the beginning of *Oblivion*. You leave the Imperial Prison, and emerge out into this beautiful forest scene.

"For us, it was this big question: In *Fallout 3*, how can we give the player an equally memorable experience, while showing a post-apocalyptic wasteland? How can we make a wasteland beautiful? And there were other things to consider, too. Like, what if the player decides to wait while in the Vault, and they end up leaving at night? How will the wasteland look then?

"So yeah, there were a bunch of things we took into consideration. We knew that initial introduction to the Wasteland would be critical to the way people responded to the game."

As picturesque as the end of the world gets.

06 NEESON OR STEWART?

"Unfortunately, I didn't get to meet Patrick Stewart, or work with him directly for his voice session.

"I did get to meet Liam Neeson, however, and help a bit in his recording session, and I can tell you straight up that he's the real deal. A great guy, and a consummate professional.

"I remember when he was recording the Dad holotapes, many of which I had written, and he was just sort of sitting there in this dark recording studio, talking into the microphone. It was as if the Dad character was sitting there in his lab, making his holotapes. Todd and I sort of looked at each other; you could feel this sort of creative electricity in the air.

"So yeah, getting to see Liam Neeson act out material I had written is, really, not an experience I'm ever likely to forget. It was amazing."



The war on size zero models rages on.



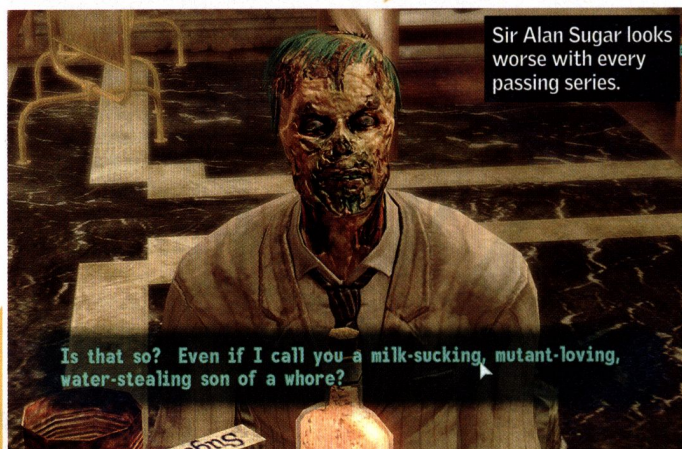
Could do with a trilby, really.

07 SARTORIAL STYLINGS

"The thinking was that the fashionable '50s clothes would have some benefit and not just look pretty. Every piece of clothing modifies a skill or attribute. So what they lack in damage resistance, they tend to make up for in skill or attribute modification.

"We did this to give those clothing items some kind of real gameplay value, so not every player would be compelled to wear power armour. And it makes sense. If I'm a doctor, I'm going to perform my medical duties better wearing scrubs (with medical equipment stuffed in the pockets) than I am wearing raider armour.

"And it doesn't hurt that the '50s outfits look so cool. They definitely give your character much more personality."



Sir Alan Sugar looks worse with every passing series.

Is that so? Even if I call you a milk-sucking, mutant-loving, water-stealing son of a whore?

08 MORBID FASCINATION

"No quest was left out because it was too dark. But Tranquillity Lane is morbid enough. I wish I could give you an answer as to where that quest came from. I sometimes dredge these things up from my sub-conscious.

"For me, really unique gameplay sequences like Tranquillity Lane tend to come from my experience as a gamer. What have I seen before? What haven't I seen? What have I always wanted to do in a game? What would give me a new experience? And for me, being the Pint-Sized Slasher and getting to kill people wearing that clown mask, well... that's the cherry on top.

"It helps, obviously, if you have a really sick sense of humour."

"I really wanted the player to be able to experience *Fallout's* world before the bombs fell"



He aint so vicious now.

09 STEALING INDEPENDENCE

"Quests like Stealing Independence are all about our designers taking ownership over ideas and really running with them. In the case of that particular quest (which was conceived long before the original *National Treasure* movie ever came out, by the way), it was one of our designers, Al Nanes, taking a

concept I came up with and really just knocking it out of the park.

"He researched the signing of the Declaration of Independence and found one of the signers, Button Gwinnet, and decided to base the robot on this guy, and it sort of took on a life of its own."

Achievement bloody well unlocked.

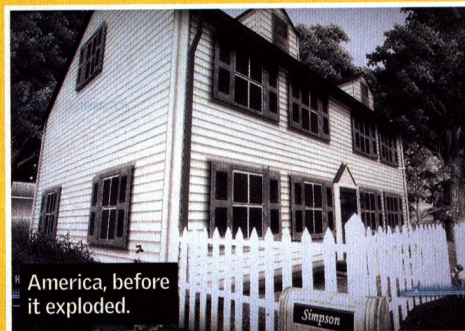
Now that's just grim.



10 TRANQUILLITY LANE

"I didn't know if the idea for Tranquillity Lane would stick, or what the gameplay would end up being, but I knew I'd wanted the player to be able to experience *Fallout's* world before the bombs fell. And I wanted it to come as a complete surprise.

"I think, when the player gets there, the mission really helps with the pacing of the game. It breaks things up, and it gives the player an entirely new, unexpected experience."



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Singularity! AVP! Blur!
The Old Republic! Splinter Cell!

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Quit Esc	Select Unit 1 F1	Bollock Unit 1 F2	Berate Unit 1 F3	Kick Unit 1 F4	Seduce Unit 1 F5	Protect Unit 1 F6	Nurture Unit 1 F7	Inspire Unit 1 F8	Cry for Unit 1 F9	Marry Unit 1 F10	Mourn Unit 1 F11	Recall Unit 1 F12
Not sure ~	Small gun 1	Big gun 2	Shotgun 3	Small mach. gun 4	Big mach. gun 5	Rockets? 6	Grenades 7	Sci-fi 8	Mines 9	Karate 0	Retract statements Backspace	Look puzzled \\
Order drinks Tab	Lean L/ Salute Q	Fwd/ Smile W	Lean R/ Sigh E	Reload/ Tell joke R	Time travel T	Raise arms Y	Do five squats U	Inventory/ Imagine I	Open door/ Ovulate O	Pause/ Presume P	Wiggle left ear [Wiggle right ear ,
Shout Caps Lock	Strafe L/ Pray A	Back/ Fire gun S	Strafe R/ Aim D	Command (angrily) X	Command (nicely) C	Fly V	Change colours B	Cry/ Complain N	Launch missiles M	Clench L buttcock [Clench R buttcock ,	Sprint harder Shift
Sprint Left Shift	Tap feet Z	"Halt!" Alt	Crash everything *	Stare into middle distance Space Bar				"Halt! Grrr!" Alt Gr	Crash everything *	Hide shame #	Hyper- beam Ctrl	
Crouch Ctrl												

New chopper Prt Scr	Get in chopper Scroll	Get out chopper Break
Touch chopper Insert	Chopper up Home	Chopper left/right Pg Up
Stop touching Delete	Chopper down End	Chopper on/off Pg Dn
Left ←	Back ↓	Right →

Maths minigame Lock	Divide /	Multiply *	Decrease karate -
POV 7	POV 8	POV 9	Increase karate +
POV 4	Explode 5	POV 6	
POV 1	POV 2	POV 3	Default karate
Engage digestion 0		Disen- gage .	Enter

LEGEND

☐ UNIT 1 COMMANDS

☐ WEAPON COMMANDS

☐ MOVEMENT COMMANDS

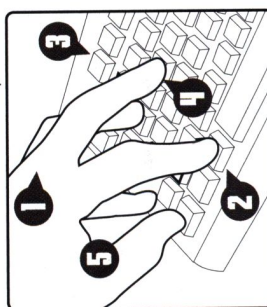
☐ MAGIC

☐ HELICOPTER COMMANDS

☐ HEAD CONTROLS

DANCE FINGERS, DANCE DANCE

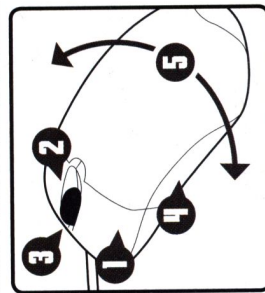
YOU'RE IN THE ARMY, SO GET THOSE DIGITS DANCING LIKE A DRUNKEN DONKEY



1. Knuckles are a pain, but with practice and hammers you'll soon be rid of them.
2. The Windows key can and should be prised off with a butter knife.
3. The F in the F keys stands for 'fun'. The Fun 5 key usually takes screenshots.
4. Your overworked fingertips will eventually form a handy pus-filled callous.
5. If your keyboard emits a beep, that means you're not pressing enough keys.

MOUSE M.D.

DON'T THINK THE MOUSE IS FREE FROM THIS OVERCOMPLICATED BUTTON NONSENSE



1. Left-clicking fires your selected weapon. Double-clicking offers the enemy flowers.
2. Right-clicking looks down the sights. Double-clicking jabs the gun into your eye.
3. The mouse wheel scrolls through weapons. Press it in to self-immolate.
4. The side button quits the game and restarts the PC in Safe Mode.
5. Pushing the mouse about aims the gun. Push in circles to call in reinforcements.



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