OVER 45 PC GAMES REVIEWED AND PREVIEWED!

WORLD CUP '98
Play only the best this summer – we round-up the hottest footie games

STAR WARS
MONSTER PREVIEW!
LucasArts strike back with
FORCE COMMANDER

Plus!
HEART OF DARKNESS
GRIM FANDANGO
EARTHWORM JIM 3D
COMMANDO

Massive player's guides to
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SCOOP!
Prince Of Persia 3D, Heretic II, Driver, Lands Of Lore III, Blood II

£4.99 JUNE 1998 **ISSUE 64**

REVIEWED: STARCRAFT • MICRO MACHINES 3 • DIE BY THE SWORD •
STAR WARS: SUPREMACY • JANE'S F-15 • USM 98 • TRIPLE PLAY 99

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06

Your ship has crash landed on an unknown planet. Look around.
Crystal clear water shimmers. Shadows shift. Alien architecture fades into the
horizon. Darkness falls. Walkways glow. Godless temples beckon.

You are afraid. You are in the real world...but it is like no world you
have ever known. You are an uninvited guest in the fastest,
sleekest, most beautiful 3D world ever created.
Live it. Breathe it. Survive it.

Unreal. Alter your reality...forever.

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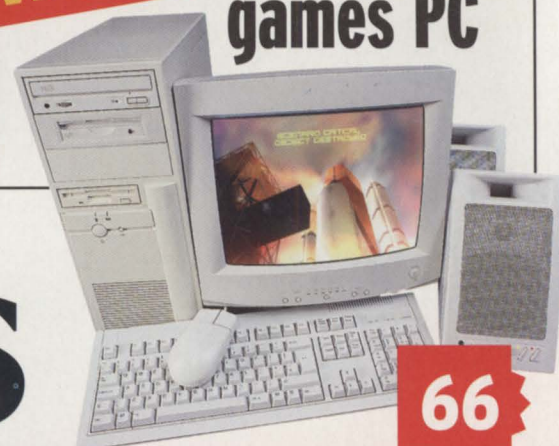
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This is...

Unreal™

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It's nearly here!

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We preview LucasArts' all-new 3D adventure.

WIN! The ultimate games PC

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As the world goes football crazy, we cast a critical eye over this year's new football games and predict who'll come out on top this summer.

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He's back, and this time accompanied by Disco Zombies.

STAR WARS Force Commander

We take an early look at the awesome new *Star Wars* strategy game and talk EXCLUSIVELY to LucasArts about their plans to dominate the real-time strategy scene.

WORDPROCESSOR

HOW NOT TO GET AHEAD IN PUBLISHING

I think I have worked out what the essential ingredients are for a letter to appear in a PC magazine.
1) A mild swear word.
2) A ridiculous question that has been asked thousands of times before.
3) A serious question that can benefit the readers of *PC Zone*.
4) A ridiculous request of you which will not be fulfilled.
5) Another mild swear word.
6) And, finally, a compliment to the magazine.

So in a witty attempt to be clever, and maybe almost humorous, here goes… Bollocks. Is *Jedi Knight* better than *Quake II*? Do you have any information as to when the official id *Quake II* mission pack will arrive on our shelves? Can I please have a 3DfX card out of the kindness of your heart? Arse. I think you are all really great and you should keep up the good work!

David Shirman, Edgware
PS: As this letter is truly superb, please could you maybe think about offering me a game or something. Much obliged.

SEPARATED AT BIRTH?

Commander Data, from *Star Trek: TNG* (left): a striking resemlance to *Zone's* man in black, Chris Anderson (right), reclining on his glow-in-the-dark pillow.

Size doesn't matter – unless it's ***massive***, of course.

The Reckoning *mission pack is due for release around the end of May. We don't send out 3D cards to smartarses. Try harder next time and come up with something original and we might send you a game. Then again…*

A COOL LETTER

Just a couple of words on the use of adjectives in your 'mag'. In the April issue, the demo version of *Mysteries Of The Sith* is described as a "massive one-level demo". This makes me wonder what a normal demo (as opposed to massive) would be like. They don't get very much smaller than one level, do they? A one-level demo is, therefore, by definition, not massive, at least in my mind. (And neither is a two-level demo 'huge'). Now that that's out of the way, please accept my *humoungous* and also *massive* congratulations on your otherwise *superb* and *great* magazine. It gives me *megatons* of *super* reading pleasure every month.

Labero, e-mail

The Mysteries Of The Sith *demo is, in our opinion, pretty huge, massive and humongous (note spelling) in that you had to cover a lot of ground in order to complete it. It was* therefore 'massive' in every sense of the word.

FINALLY, QUAKE II

Over the last couple of issues, people have written in to complain about all the patches that *Quake II* needs in order to be able to run over the Net.

Well this is another one. You palmed them off, by saying the Point Release is here and it's the last one. Well it isn't – or wasn't. Within a month of the Point Release's release there have been a further two patches for *Quake II*!! Ridiculous! So what I did was say sod it, and deleted all the patches and reinstalled *Quake II* out of the box, completed single-player for once (impossible if you want to play on-line and single-player at the same time), and then installed the patches to play on-line. Which is good because it seems to have quietened down a bit now, with no patches appearing for over a month. So now's the time to install that patch and play *QII CTF* online (in my opinion, *QII DM* is crap, but *QII CTF* is better than *Q1 CTF*).

Nick Venovski, e-mail

Now hang on a minute. We *didn't palm anyone off with a Point Release, we just stuck it on our cover disc so you didn't have to download it from the Net. id have since released more patches in an effort to try to please everybody, and you can't really knock 'em for that, can you?*

THE SECRET LIFE OF CHRIS ANDERSON

The secret is out. You can't hoodwink your reading public any longer. It finally struck me, after having a niggling feeling for the past few months, that I recognised the bloke in the photo in TechZone – Chris Anderson *is* Lt

WORD PROCESSOR

Commander Data from *Star Trek:TNG*! The resemblance is just too similar for there to be any other explanation. Deny it all you like, but I know the truth. It's no coincidence that such a technologically advanced artificial lifeform was picked to do the hardware reviews. And since *ST:TNG* went out of production, he obviously found himself in need of alternative employment.

Come on – own up! Keep up the good work. Top mag.

Mark Turner, e-mail

U p until recently, Chris would often disappear for days at a time, often under quite mysterious circumstances. We now know that instead of suffering from a bad back or a life-threatening hangover, he was actually in LA filming *ST: TNG*. However, he's now given up his acting career to concentrate on PC Zone. Incidentally, has anyone noticed how you never see Steve Hill and Jabba the Hut in the same room at the same time?

WHERE'S HEDZ?

A fter reading your magazine, I awaited with baited breath a review of *HEDZ*, from Hasbro. I looked in issue 60, and it said on the Hotline that it was out in February. I flicked through the reviews, only to find that it wasn't there. Fair enough, I thought, they haven't got the code yet. But then I looked in the next issue to see nothing, then the next issue, then this month's, and I found jack about it. Not even on the Hotline. Is it out and you haven't been bothered to review it, or has it disappeared off the face of the planet. Keep up the good work, blah blah. Cheers etc.

Phil, Seaford

W e've spoken to developers Viz, and they maintain that they're making lots of changes for the better and that we can expect to see something new very shortly. We'll keep you posted.

F1GP 3D?

I liked almost everything about *F1GP2*, but now its too old and 3dfX has come

along and supported excellent-looking games like *F1 Racing Simulation* and *F1 97*. When *F1GP2* first came out I couldn't get away from it. So I heard on the Net that *F1GP3* was coming out in March, then you guys said in November. Could you tell me the proper date, if it will have 3DfX support, and if there are any screenshots of the game (please send to me if possible). By the way, I'm Australian so please go easy with the insults.

Mathew, United Arab Emirates (probably the only bloody reader of PC Zone here!)

'day! MicroProse are remaining very tight-lipped about F1GP3, although we have heard a rumour that a 3D-accelerated update is currently in development and that F1GP3 is on the cards.

THE BEST SHOOT 'EM UP

O ver the past few issues of most of the PC magazines I've looked at, there has been at least one complaint about *Quake II*. In Word Processor in your last issue (62) there were two – "*Quake II* Sucks" and "Everybody Loves *Quake II*" After buying the game, and subsequently selling it, I must agree with both of these. It has made improvements on *Quake* in several areas, such as graphics and level design, but in my opinion the original *Quake* plays better. In your review, you mentioned the multi-player capabilities of the game, which I think are overrated. The multi-player levels included on the disc are not very good, and the weapons suffer from the same problem as in *Quake* – all you have to do is grab a rocket launcher and it is too easy to just camp there and gib anyone who comes close. In both single-player and multi-player games, *Jedi Knight* is a far superior game, even though the game engine is not so advanced. In single-player mode, as you said yourself (issue 62, page 74), *Jedi Knight* has excellent level design, but in *Quake II* the levels are uniformly boring, if colourful. The weapons are also better designed and thought out, and it is possible to beat someone with a concussion rifle/railgun using a lightsaber, so you don't have to spend hours getting a concussion rifle before you can win. The Force powers and inventory items also add depth to

the game that *Quake II* lacks. So if *Jedi Knight* is so much better (as so many people think), and you aren't being bribed by id, why is *Quake II* hailed as Best Shoot 'Em Up?

John, e-mail

I n our review, we stated that Jedi *was a better one-player game than* Quake II. *However, we've got a LAN in the office, and every machine has both* Quake II *and* Jedi *installed on the hard drive. We flirted with* Jedi, Forsaken *and even* Age Of Empires, *but* Quake II *is still the game of choice in the PC Zone office, therefore it's the Best Shoot 'Em Up.*

ON THE BLAG

W here do all the PC games go after your God-like mandibles have torn open the box, peered at the CD, played the game and printed the review? Do they go to Silicon Heaven, high above the digitized, transparent clouds? Or do they plummet through gorgeously rendered terrain into PC Game Hell, where the Devil pokes at them with a big stick and taunts them with good games? Perhaps they are slammed into the basement at Dennis Publishing, never to see the light of day again. My theory, however, is that the good games see the bottom of a briefcase/rucksack, and the 0-60 per centers visit the bin. Now, what I am proposing may seem radical to some (others may call it ludicrous), but I think it's a glorious and revolutionary new scheme. I think you should send them to me. Don't scoff, I think this plan would work magnificently well. I shall leave it in your capable hands. Cheers.

David Pollitt, Durham

D ue to the lead times we work to, we normally end up reviewing 'gold' disc versions, which we can't give away because of the risk of piracy. Consequently, most average or above games are kept by the reviewer (even if we ask for them back). All boxed copies get put in a box which is sent to Great Ormond Street Hospital, where the contents are auctioned for charity.

LETTER FROM AMERICA

I just read the sixtieth issue and found it pretty kick-ass. I have just a few questions to ask. On the cover of the mag, you

title the *Star Wars* real-time strategy game as *Star Wars Supremacy*. Is this the specific title for the UK? I live in the US, and every mag here has been calling the game *Rebellion*. Is this a concerted effort on LucasArts' part, or just a lingo thing?

Secondly, although this will sound a tad anal and ethnocentric, what's the conversion rate, roughly, for pounds to US dollars? We generally pay 50 dollars for a game like *Jedi Knight* or *Quake 2*. I'm wondering if the prices are similar.

Finally, what's the deal with these soccer games such as *Actua Soccer*? Are they only released in the UK? Although I'm not a big fan of soccer, I would like to check out some of these titles. I have no delusions of ever seeing a piece of software like *Championship Manager*, but it would seem to me that there has to be more than *FIFA 98*.

Leigh Berry, e-mail

F or various copyright and legal reasons, LucasArts weren't allowed to call their game Rebellion in the UK so they opted for Supremacy. To all intents and purposes, it's the same game. The Recommended Retail Price (which includes tax) for full-price games is around £39.95 here in the UK, although most releases tend to be discounted to £34.95 or £29.95 almost immediately by retailers. This works out at about $55.

Yes, there is more to football than FIFA Soccer. Championship Manager is available in the US on import through Eidos, and Actua Soccer is distributed by Interplay under the VR Sports banner. Both are worth a look, and infinitely more interesting than baseball will ever be.

GOLDENEYE DENIED

I am wondering if there is any likelihood of the *GoldenEye* game currently available for the N64 being released for the PC. I would much appreciate your comments.

Tom Lawrence, e-mail

W e haven't heard anything, and Nintendo, as you might expect, are desperate to keep successful N64 titles to themselves to protect their console. We have heard of a few games that borrow some ideas from GoldenEye, however, so don't be surprised if you see a few clones appearing by the end of the year.

ZONE WORLD FIRST

Keep your fancy European penis extensions – this is what you call a proper car.

Eat tarmac, coppers – you're never gonna stop us.

It could almost be *The Sweeney*, but with palm trees.

This could only be Los Angeles, or Torquay.

Time for a quick

Reflections announce a spanking new 3D car chase game. Here's the gen on what could turn out to be a potential mega-hit.

Everyone loves a good car chase. That's the law. Never mind heart-rending explorations of the frailties of the human condition, what we really want is screeching tyres, hissing radiators and spinning hubcaps, as numerous films and TV series have proved. All the thrill of the chase is now heading towards your PC, courtesy of Gateshead-based developers Reflections. In business since 1984, they are best known for their Psygnosis titles, including a trio of *Shadow Of The Beast*s and a pair of *Destruction Derby*s.

Driver is still a working title, and the game puts you

REPORT BY STEVE HILL

in the role of the titular motorist. It's not a Highway Code simulator though, or indeed a racing game, as the driver in question is of the criminal persuasion, specialising in quick getaways. Cruising the mean streets of Miami, New York, San Francisco and Los Angeles, you pick up jobs and earn money from illegal capers. All of which immediately has you thinking *Grand Theft Auto* – in 3D.

Car chase movie

Martin Edmonson, who owns the company, came up with the concept for *Driver*, and is all too aware of the *Grand Theft Auto* comparisons: "Yes, that's one of our concerns, but *Driver* is not that similar to *GTA*. We're making more out of the car chases in the game. This is like a living city where you live a day-to-day life; instead of clicking on icons to achieve certain things, you actually have to drive to the location. In any case, a lot of people will be screaming out for a *GTA* in 3D, and I'm sure there are a lot of companies who are doing

The French Connection, anyone?

Driver features some emphatic attention to detail, including hubcaps that fly off during a high-speed chase.
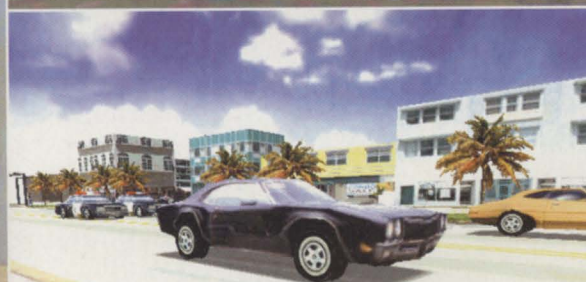
Other traffic is an occupational hazard for a getaway driver.

The cops stop to buy some doughnuts, probably.

Sorry, occifer...

Kool & The Gang, The SuperFly Guy, TNT...
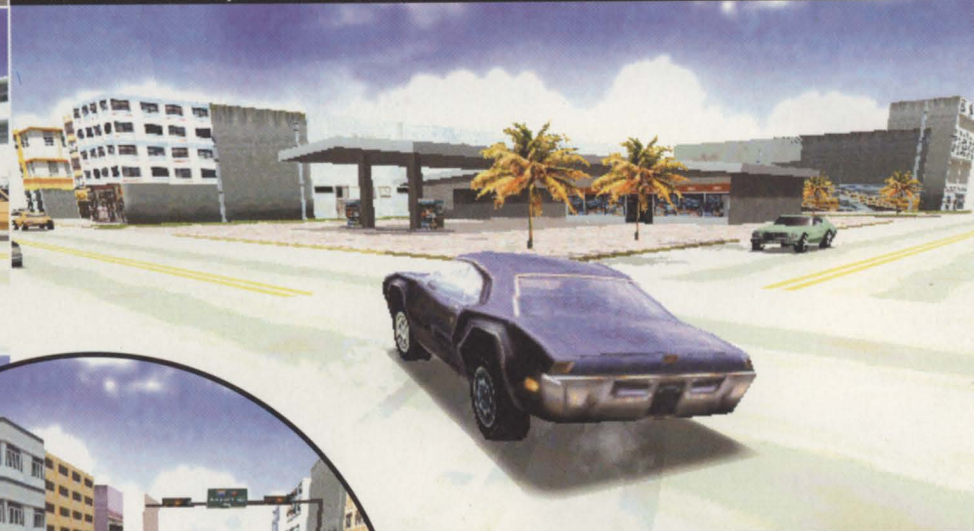
Just check out the rear end on this beauty.

You think you're clever – just try and get out of this sticky situation then.

getaway

just that. At least we've had a head start – we started working on *Driver* in January last year, well before anybody knew about *GTA*. It's unfortunate, but it happens."

In many ways, *Driver* seems more like a film than a game, as Martin concurs: "That's exactly what we're aiming for – it's almost like an interactive car chase movie. It all stems from when I was a kid. I used to stay up late and be allowed to watch *Starsky & Hutch* in case there was a car chase in it. I've got *Bullitt* at home, and *Smokey And The Bandit*, which I used to love when I was young. And I watched *Dukes Of Hazard* every single week."

As did we all, if only to beast on the lovely redneck temptress Daisy Duke…

Klunk-click every trip

Perhaps unusually – and in common with *The 'A' Team* – nobody dies in *Driver*, which was a conscious decision by Martin: "Well, games are starting to get very realistic now. *GTA* has a very cartoony look, and the fuss over it was ridiculous. But *Carmageddon* was a bit gratuitous – I don't like the idea of mowing down old ladies in zimmer frames and things like that. It wasn't really very amusing. You've got to be quite responsible, because it is photo-realistic."

The game also has a definite '70s feel about it, although this is more for automotive reasons than any quasi-trendy posturing: "I think the cars look brilliant. Most car chases that come to mind use those kind of big cars where the rear slides out. Plus so many racing

games use Ferraris and Porsches and Lamborghinis. We just really wanted to stay away from that and get a little bit of a classic car chase film feel to it. Also, these things look so good when they're smashed up; they get more and more crumpled, the hubcaps fall off, and they rattle but keep on going."

All the cars are authentic, including Starsky and Hutch's Ford Torino – minus the white stripe. It's not really about camshafts though, as Martin says: "I don't think anybody is particularly interested in whether they're driving a Buick Skylark or not."

We've played *Driver*, and will be following its progress closely. Cops 'n' Robbers has never seemed such fun. ⓩ

Driver is currently slated for an end-of-year release.
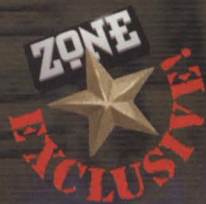
Lead character Corvus tries out the Ring of Repulsion – one of the new defensive magical items.

Raven unveil

It's official: Raven Software are about to leap the generation gap with their forthcoming 3D fighting fantasy game *Heretic II* – now to be powered by the *Quake II* engine.

Activision's formidable relationship with both iD and Raven Software has been further cemented with the announcement of *Heretic II*. This sequel to the critically-acclaimed fighting fantasy original will debut before Christmas, with a *Quake II*-modelled environment. It will also be viewed from a third-person perspective, which is something that has yet to be tried out using iD's technology. In search of the facts, *PC Zone* had a chat with project administrator Daniel Freed.

PC Zone: Why did you opt for the third person-view in *Heretic II*? Is this view set in stone, or still being considered?

Daniel Freed: It's set in stone. Most of the team, right

**REPORT BY
PAUL MALLINSON**

from the very beginning, wanted to do a third-person perspective game. Brian Pelletier and Steve Raffel had the idea to do a third-person perspective *Heretic* several years ago – even before *Tomb Raider* came out – but the technology wasn't at a state where it could be done properly. Now that the technology is here, we feel that we've got the means to make a really cool game.

PCZ: Are you going to go for multi-character

action, or is it all to be played out from the point of view of one person?

DF: The game is played entirely from the perspective of one person. This allows us to build a much better and more detailed character than if we had to split our time between several. In the long run, one character works out better.

PCZ: Will the game feature 'hub' levels (one central level with branching locations), or progressive single-player maps?

DF: We're doing something in the middle of all that. We have a couple of hub-like areas, where there's a level that you need to return to several times or cross

Expect some awesome lighting effects courtesy of the *Quake II* engine.

Heretic II will feature a third-person viewpoint with a 'roving' camera effect similar to *Tomb Raider*.

Quick game of arrows, anyone?

Raven's designers have already sketched out hundreds of early monster designs. Only the best will appear in the finished game.

As well as spell-casting action, *Heretic II* will also feature melee combat and ranged attacks.

Heretic II

through, and we have more linear levels as well. When designing the layout of the game, we wanted to give the player a sense of being in a real place, so we laid things out in a manner that we felt helped convey that feeling. The city levels are more hub-like, while the outdoor or dungeon-like ones are more linear.

PCZ: Could you give us an idea of the weapons and spells we can expect to see in the finished game?
DF: We're bringing back a few of the favourite spells from the original *Heretic*, like the Morph Ovum. Generally though, we're striving to make the game fast-paced, like the original. We want the player to be able to rapid fire as he darts across a room looking for cover from incoming fire. We want that kind of excitement. For the most part, our weapons are ranged attacks. We've broken down the weapons into two categories: offensive and defensive. Offensive weapons are as you would expect – traditional fire and kill; defensive weapons are more along the lines of protective

measures, like the Ring of Repulsion *(See the screenshots with the blue ring – Ed)* that pushes everything around you away from you. We also have melee combat planned.

PCZ: Are you planning to make *Heretic II* an out-and-out shoot 'em up, or are you working towards something with a more scripted, adventure-y feel (like, for example, the excellent scripted immersive qualities of LucasArts' *Mysteries Of The Sith*)?
DF: We are telling a very involved and immersive story throughout the game. We will be using pre-scripted cinematic sequences in various locations that will allow us to advance the plot further, provide clues, and give goals to the player. So I guess we're making it a fast-paced shooter/adventure like *Mysteries Of The Sith*.

PCZ: What about atmospherics and environment? Bustling towns filled with non-playing characters (NPCs) would be great. Do you have any plans for anything like that? Thunder? Lightning? Rain?

Fog? Smells?
DF: Well, bustling towns filled with NPCs really isn't an option. We only have so much of a machine to work with, and every extra character that we add slows down the game's frame rate. There are NPCs that players will encounter throughout the game and be able to interact with, and there are towns, but they're not full of just random pedestrians.

PCZ: How advanced is the game at the moment, and what are you currently spending the most time on?
DF: We're still at a pretty early stage in terms of the game's development. We have several levels put together architecturally, lighting, and textures, as well as a few monsters. Getting the character model mostly functional and actually into the game is the next major goal for us. Ⓩ

Heretic II is due out in December.

BULLETIN
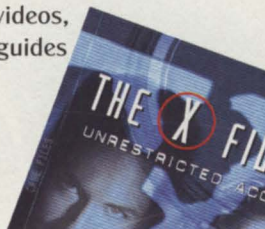
Red Orb show Prince Of Persia 3D

Brøderbund and Red Orb Entertainment have announced Jordan Mechner's latest title in the turban-tastic *Prince Of Persia* series.

If you're old enough to remember the first time The Wombles were in the charts, then you're possibly old enough to recall the original version of Jordan Mechner's *Prince Of Persia*. It was one of those games which, along with *Lemmings*, was converted to practically every format of the day, including the Game Boy. It's been so long since any sort of game appeared with the *Prince Of Persia* logo on the box that everyone assumed Jordan Mechner had either shrivelled up or become a reluctant tax exile getting fat on tequila and cakes.

Not so. Along with his special friends at Red Orb Entertainment, the faintly robotically named game designer has quietly been hatching plans for *Prince Of Persia 3D* – Mechner's answer to *Tomb Raider* (which, as anyone will tell you, mercilessly 'borrowed' the gameplay mechanics of *POP*). The project has been so shrouded in secrecy that not even the people working on it knew what it was. As Ken Goldstein, general manager of Red Orb, confirms in a sort of breathy rasp: "Very few people, even within the company, knew that the project was in the pipeline."

Prince Of Persia 3D is a third-person perspective action/adventure which will contain all the features of the classic games. You'll be faced with collapsing floors and platforms, as well as sabre-wielding sheikhs and, possibly, camels. The control interface is said to be "elegantly simple", enabling you to run, jump, swim and climb without losing track of your fingers. Red Orb promise exotic and fantastic locales, fully in keeping with the *Arabian Nights*-esque theme. If you've ever felt the urge to slice your way through a Middle Eastern marketplace, this will probably be the best chance you get. *Prince Of Persia 3D* is out later this year. **Z**

Prince of Persia 3D will be for mature players only, judging by this particularly vicious scene. Note the *Tekken*-type styling of the visuals.

How difficult the game will be has yet to be seen.
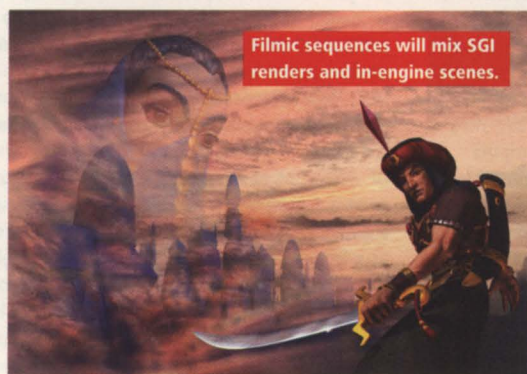
Filmic sequences will mix SGI renders and in-engine scenes.

this month. A quick call to Epic UK's offices and a chat with their MD Nigel Kent revealed the truth: "It's not finished yet. We're aiming to get the game completely finished for the E³ show in June." So what about this 'World Exclusive'

review that appeared in a recent issue of a certain PC games magazine?

"Well, we're not too happy about that. The game has undergone 12 revisions since then." Apparently some of the levels have changed

significantly, and Epic's technical guys have been working hard improving certain parts of the network code in order to optimise the multi-player side of things. We recently had the chance to play a preview version and were

(again) very impressed by what we saw – massive levels, moody lighting and ground-breaking AI.

Fingers and legs crossed for a *finished* version, plus the *definitive* review, next issue.

Activision get Quake III

No big surprises this month as promiscuous publishers Activision repeated their marriage vows to *Quake* developers iD Software. This time the pre-nuptial agreement contains the worldwide rights to *Quake III*.

The relationship has been going steady since Activision nursed the two official *Quake* mission packs, including *Scourge Of Armagon* by Activision stablemates Ritual Entertainment. The successful partnership has been further cemented by the fact that over 850,000 copies of *Quake II* have been sold since the two companies started frotting together.

As we evangelistically announced last issue, *Quake III* is set to pop some time later this year, and will use a new graphics engine that head programmer John Carmack probably knocked up in an afternoon. If the game manages to appear before Christmas, it could well steal the thunder from impending *Quake II* engine-powered 3D shoot 'em ups *Daikatana*, *SiN* and *Half-Life*. **Z**

Interstate goes Eighties

Activision versus Jason Nevins? It's an 'Eighdees' thing, man.

With Run DMC spearheading the Eighties revival, it comes as no surprise to hear that last year's *Interstate '76* is making an Eighties-style return – this time ditching the flares in favour of drainpipes in a new storyline that involves preventing the overthrow of the US Government.

Set for a winter release this year, *Interstate '82* promises more of the same driving-based combat, but with the added elements of a first-person shoot 'em up. As well as shifting around in cars, you will also be able to take to the road on motorbikes, fly helicopters or even run around on foot.

Twenty-five environments will feature as you burn rubber all over the States. Whether Taurus will make a reappearance sporting a well-groomed mullet remains to be seen. But with a new graphics engine and a host of new weapons, it only remains to be seen whether the 'laceless rapsters' will be doing the soundtrack. Check out the Activision website at www.activision.com for more details. **Z**

Chekov's lost add-on pack

Star Trek fans will be elated to hear that Interplay have announced a special add-on disk for Star Trek: Starfleet Academy.

Due for release this June, *Chekov's Lost Missions* is an all-new collection of nine simulator scenarios and two multi-player blasts, giving budding Wesley Crushers the chance to show just how much of a stranglehold a certain TV series has on their lives. The new sets of missions also include supplementary camera views, previously unseen shield indicators, an ability to monitor the pace of the game, and some saucy Polaroids of Captain Kirk in a taut girdle. Well, okay, scrub that last one.

The update disk has been designed to challenge your skills, your leadership and your tactical ability against familiar enemies such as the Klingon Bird of Prey and the Romulan heavy cruiser. William Shatner, Walter Konig and George Takei all make special appearances to instruct and encourage you. **Z**

Scratch one Klingon Bird of Prey. Pastie-wearing scum.
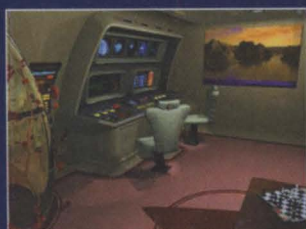
Looking very similar to the Captain's room of the first game.
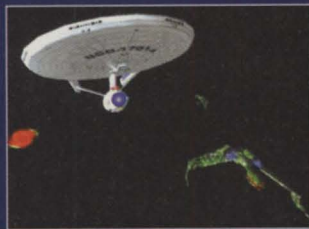
Old-skool *Trek* fans will no doubt lap up *Chekov's Lost Missions*.

Most people will want this add-on for the 3D card support.
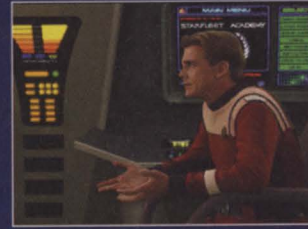
"Has anyone got a hanky?" asks new recruit Terry Overmars.

TA landslide from Cavedog

With the arrival of Cavedog's first expansion pack for *Total Annihilation* imminent, the Seattle-based developers have announced details of a second add-on, as well as a truckoad of other titles.

Total Annihilation: Battle Tactics, due for release in July, boasts 100 missions that are being developed both for experienced players and total beginners. *Total Annihilation: Kingdoms* is a totally new addition to the series, and is set 10,000 years prior to the current struggle. Four unique sides are promised in the battle between good and evil, and you can take the path of magic or technology. Expect to see Kbots on horseback around December.

Limited edition Motorhead Scalextric set up for grabs

Win! Ten hip flasks and breathalysers also to be won!

"Win some, lose some, it's all the same to me," sang Lemmy in the seminal Motörhead metal anthem *Ace Of Spades*. A bold, brash and flippant statement of over-confidence in anyone's book, but we reckon he'd cry his eyes out if he failed to land the top prize in our exclusive *Motorhead* Scalextric competition. A limited edition *Motorhead* Eurochampions Scalextric is not to be sniffed at. And neither are the ten *Motorhead* hip flasks (minus beverage), the ten *Motorhead* breathalysers, or the ten copies of Gremlin's excellent game of the same name, either.

Just answer this question:
Name one of the two men currently driving for the McLaren F1 team.
First out of the bag gets the Scalextric and a copy of *Motorhead*. Ten runners-up prize winners get a hip flask, a breathalyser and a copy of the game. Send your answers on a postcard or stuck-down envelope, along with your name and address, to: **The Ace Of Games, PC Zone, CPZ86B, Customer Interface, Bradley Pavilions, Bradley Stoke North, Bristol BS12 0BQ**

Rules: All entries to be received by Wednesday 10th June 1998. No correspondence will be entered into. The Editor's decision is final.

(Above) THE prize!
(Right) Fighting off the rest of the *PC Zone* team, Mallo dashes in for the patented 'back-skuckle' manoeuvre on the lovely Jayne Dobson (a model who, we're told, has the longest legs in the world).

Up a Gear

There can't be many people out there who haven't, at least once in their tiny lives, dreamed of strapping 70 tons of reinforced steel and munitions to their body and causing all sorts of mischief. More than once, Activision have been kind enough to give us such an opportunity, first with the *MechWarrior* series, and more recently with the lovely *Heavy Gear*.

Not a bunch of gentlemen to rest on their laurels, Activision have kindly decided to once again return to the universe of great big robot tank things for the inevitable *Heavy Gear 2*. Rather than simply roll out the same game engine as before, the 3D accelerator-only game will take full advantage of emerging graphic technologies to ensure the most convincing simulation of future war imaginable. The battlefields will be full of both allied and opposing robot blokes, while the landscape should encompass jungle, swamp, volcanic and urban areas.

"*Heavy Gear 2* takes advantage of hardware-accelerated technology by enabling players to pilot fluid, animé-like Gears through realistic, immersive battlefields while maintaining fast frame rates," reckons Alan Gershenfeld, Senior Vice President at Activision Studios. And having yet to get our hands on a playable version, who are we to argue? **Z**

Will *Heavy Gear 2* prove as successful as it's fore-runner? We reckon it's a safe bet.

Watch your back, Dungeon Keeper

Spinny Rotatey 3D Graphics™, with coloured lighting and lava and that.

Virgin are set to take us on a magical mystery tour this October with the release of *Nox*, a suspense-filled, wizard-assassinating strategy/adventure with enough spell-flinging action to make *Dungeon Keeper* look like a monster's coffee morning. With over 100 spells, 30 enemies and three different forms of magic (healing, attacking and illusion), *Nox* should be wizard warfare on a global scale, especially with network and Internet options accommodating up to eight players.

Beginning as a lowly apprentice, notoriety (and the chance to challenge the evil White Wizard) only comes after venturing through four worlds, containing three realms each, and gleaning whatever knowledge you can from the secret forces within. A slightly tilted overhead view has been chosen, with line-of-sight visibility, complemented with moody lighting effects. 3Dfx or not, *Nox* could well blow your sox off. **Z**

Apart from the *Total Annihilation* stuff, Cavedog currently have three other titles in development for 1999: *Amen: The Awakening* is a first-person action adventure featuring a British (hurrah!) commando; *Elysium* is a 3D RPG set "in a world beyond dreams"; and *Good & Evil* is a real-time strategy RPG that curiously boasts elements of Spinal Tap. Presumably all the sound settings can go 'one louder'. We'll have screenshots and more information next issue.

Mmm… where have we seen this sort of thing before? If you've never played Atari's classic *Gauntlet*, you're in for a real treat with this.

Monolith don the Gauntlet

Borrowing a well-known line from a well-nown Tarantino film, Monolith's *Get Medieval* is a *Gauntlet*-style romp with more action, power-ups, witty quips and multi-player options than you can shake a crossbow at. Fancy two up on the same keyboard, a row of daisy-chained sidewinders, and both Internet and LAN support? Sure you do.

Wildly over-the-top pyrotechnics play a part.

The game's numerous levels, enemies, backdrops and explosions are all 3D-rendered with dynamic colour filters and active lighting. Various mouth-watering utilities such as the Random Dungeon Generator and Dungeon Editor compliment the game.

Release is expected in the not too distant future, so keep an eye on **www.getmedieval.com**. ⓩ

Up to four players can play together in the same game. Which is nice.
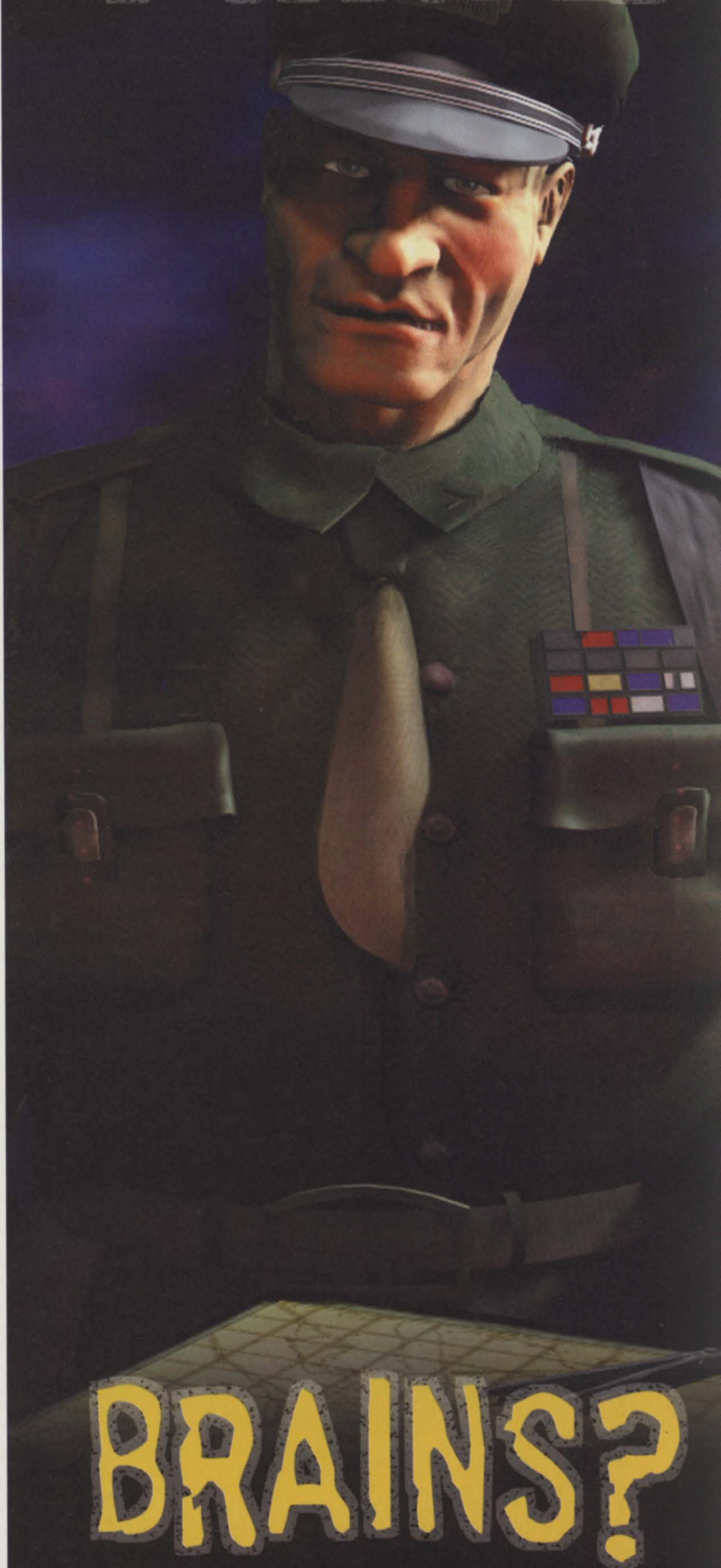
Smoother ride for ActivLink

Activision's free on-line gaming service, ActivLink, is now running off dedicated hardware here in the UK. The new upgraded service means you shouldn't have to contend with the frustrations of low bandwidth, latency and impertinent colonials that are so often associated with Stateside servers.

ActivLink code is built into many of Activision's current multi-player titles, so you won't need any upgrades or third-party software to go play on-line. The interface is also integral to each game, making it not just seamless but also easy to use. In addition, as well as hosting multi-player games of *Dark Reign*, *Heavy Gear* and *Zork Grand Inquisitor*, Activision have pledged to provide support for all

"If I had 150 quid..."

Got 150 smackers burning a hole in your pocket? Bored of all your games? Want to try something new and different? How about this for a suggestion...

Petrol-heads should head down to their nearest computer shop without further ado and make sure they grab Digital Edge's brand new F1 Sim Combat

steering wheel for £99.99

On our travels we found that HMV and Electronics Boutique currently stock them at this very reasonable price (which includes the full version of Psygnosis' *F1 '97* into the bargain. For your dosh, you can also get a copy of Gremlin's

Motorhead available for £34.99

from all good software retailers. And bloody excellent it is, too. If you want the ultimate thrill, you can then spend your left-over cash on a reasonably cheap

ventilation fan from Argos, £14.99

Set the fan and steering wheel up in front of your PC, crank up *Motorhead* and feel the wind in your hair as you tear through the tracks! As recommended by the (very dry-eyed) Stephen Hill.

Pandemonium too

New add-on pack for the classic *Quake*.

Fans of the original *Quake* who'd thought the gaming world had left them behind might be interested to know there's a new add-on pack available that should keep them going while they save up for a machine that'll run the sequel.

Developed by Impel Productions, *Abyss Of Pandemonium* proudly boasts that it "stretches the *Quake* 3D engine to incomparable heights". Hmmm. Corpulent marketing hype aside though, we managed to try out a demo which featured a napalm cannon, one of the four new weapons available in the final version. Other weapons include a rocket-powered Impaler, and the Prototype LG-2. With six new enemies and 16 new levels, *Abyss* will also give all you PC *Quake*-sters the chance to take on all those Mac users who boasted about how great their machines were five years ago. Revenge, as they say, is sweet. *Abyss Of Pandemonium* is available now at £14.99. **Z**

The all-new flame launcher from *Abyss of Pandemonium*. Neat, but hardly 'next generation' stuff. Still, it's not a bad little add-on at all.

Mikala casts Freeze
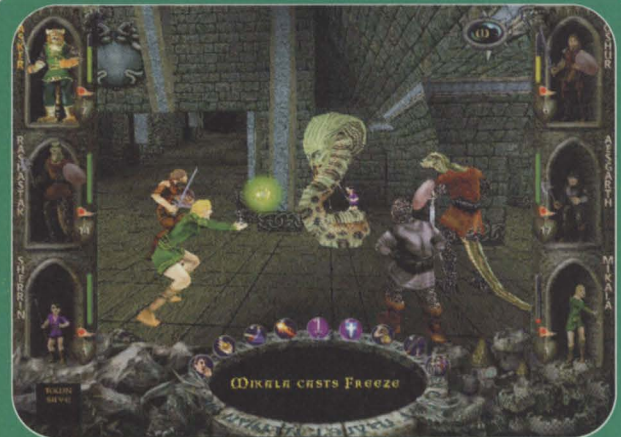
What the devil?

Virgin to publish long-titled role-playing game.

If you went to school with a boy called Cet Ude D'ua Khan, you'd probably have 'extracted the Michael' out of his name, calling him things like 'Mr Stupid-Name', and 'Ude-woode Stupid Name' or something. Unfortunately for you, had you done that you'd probably have regretted it. You see, Cet Ude D'ua Khan is The Lord Of Death, and in the tongue-twistingly named RPG *Swords And Sorcery: Come Devils Come Darkness*, due later this year, old Cet has risen. And he doesn't want your babies.

Come Devils... is a very traditional role-playing game featuring nine unique races, including the Ratlings, and 13 fully customisable character classes, such as the mystical ZenMaster. Rather nicely, the game enables you to choose between real-time or turn-based combat, making it accessible for both types of RPG freak. Probably most important of all is the six-player mode, which'll enable you to team up with five of your bestest buddies, or strike out on your own and make life difficult for them. You bastard. **Z**

Psygnosis enter real-time strategy arena with Global Domination.

Set in the not too distant future, *Global Domination* is a real-time strategy blast-fest set in the mould from which *Command & Conquer*, *Warcraft* and *Total Annihilation* all popped. As ever, the game puts you in charge of a group of heavily armed nutcases, with the objective of slaughtering anyone and anything who wanders into view.

The game aims to break away from the pack by appealing to both arcade fans and strategists alike, but we've yet to see exactly how this 'genre-busting' approach is going to work. What is fairly sure is that the game will be completely customisable, and will come with its own editor. You can also safely assume that the design team will have played rival titles like *Red Alert* and will learn from their mistakes – for example, they do promise a beefed-up brand of artificial intelligence. But then who doesn't? **Z**
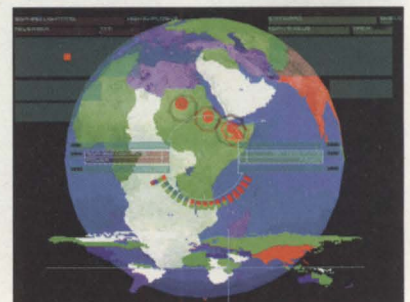
Dominate the world in *Global Domination*.

their forthcoming in-house titles. "ActivLink gives gamers a free, simple and efficient way of playing their games. We're pioneers with this type of service, and other publishers will no doubt follow suit," said a company spokesman.

Pleased to meteor

Activision release more official info about their forthcoming remake of *Asteroids*.

The retro revolution continues apace with news that Activision, fresh from their successful *Battlezone* remake, are preparing to release a brand spanking new version of legendary space-bound rock dodging shoot 'em up *Asteroids*. First released in 1979, *Asteroids* won itself a legion of fans by virtue of its spartan vector graphics, eerie sound effects, and intrinsically satisfying boulder-shattering action, which saw players repeatedly reducing hulking great rocks into minuscule pebbles, and taking the occasional pot shot at hostile flying saucers. The 1998 reconstruction won't be as austere as the original – Activision swear blind it'll be rammed full to squealing point with "vivid 3D graphics, expansive playing areas, and CD quality sound" – but the simple, arcade-style gameplay should survive intact. (Hopefully it'll reach us long before that genuine asteroid – which some scientists reckon could smash everything on the planet to bits in May 2028.) London-based coders Quickdraw Developments are responsible for churning out the game with a digital crank handle. For further granite-splintering information, pull your digital car onto the 'Information Superhighway' and turn right at the junction labelled www.activision.com.

The old *Asteroids* game gets a facelift.

Shop Around

Which is exactly what we did – saving you the legwork!

WHAT WERE WE BUYING?	HMV	Virgin Megastore	Electronics Boutique	Computer Exchange
Sidewinder Force Feedback Joystick (MS)	129.99	119.99	129.99	99.99*1
F1 Sim Compact Steering Wheel with F1 97 (Digital Edge)	99.99	79.99*2	99.99	99.99
AWE64 soundcard (Creative)	79.99*3	99.99*4	—	115.00*5
Rage 3D gamepad (Thrustmaster)	—	39.99	34.99	—
Mysteries of the Sith (LucasArts)	19.99	19.99	19.99	8.00*1
Starship Titanic (Zablac)	34.99	39.99	34.99	—
USM '98 (Cendant)	34.99	34.99	29.99	—
NHL '98 (EA Sports)	39.99	34.99	29.99	20.00*1
Actua Soccer 2 (Gremlin)	39.99	34.99	34.99	29.99*1
Warhammer: Dark Omen (EA)	34.99	34.99	34.99	20.00*1

Call: **HMV Direct** (Mail Order enquiries)   0990 468000
Virgin Megastore (Oxford Street)   0171 631 1234
Electronics Boutique (Oxford Street)   0171 637 7911
Tottenham Court Road Computer Exchange   0171-419 2588

*1Second hand. *2Without *F1 97*. *3Value edition. *4Value edition speakers. *5Un-boxed Gold edition.

All prices correct as of May 1st 1998.

Bob Dewar's excellent adventure

Set just after the turn of this century, *Beneath* puts you in the role of Jack Wells, fearless adventurer. The plot opens with you receiving a letter from your father, inviting you to join him at the site of an archaeological excavation he's working at in the Arctic. When you arrive, it's no surprise to find that the camp is deserted and looking slightly worse for wear.

Having stuffed an improbable amount of caving gear into your rucksack, you descend into the earth to rescue your old man: you'll have to find your way through three worlds that include volcanic mines and an underground city; climb,

We've been rumbled

Let's loose off a couple of rockets...

...and throw a match into this gasoline.

Wonderfully coloured lighting and graphics in *Robo Rumble*.

Strange name, fabulous-looking game. *Robo Rumble* gives the real-time strategy crowd a kick up the jacksie.

Robo Rumble, from Metropolis, has no UK publisher as yet, but we hear from inside sources that GT, Interplay and Eidos are all keen to snatch it up. And so they should be. From what we've seen, this incredible-looking game could possibly become a benchmark among angst-ridden strategy fanatics.

Inspired by *Total Annihilation* and *Command & Conquer*, it comes as no surprise to find that the gameplay is similar. However, originality does shine through in that it is up to the player to design and create these fighting machines himself. *Robo Rumble* contains literally thousands of different units with which to construct these mechanoid beings of destruction. Will it all be too much for our tiny brains to cope with? Find out soon. **Z**

Third World Woah!

Role-playing and real-time tactical combat go together like... well, like fists and faces, really. Activision would certainly agree – they're releasing a new role-playing and tactical combat game developed by Redline Games.

Third World is set in one of those grim and gritty futures where packs of mutants roam the apocalyptic, post-urbanised landscape looking for brains to feast upon. You assemble your own gang of mutants, cyborgs and aliens, and set out to dominate the world. Epic battles and dangerous missions are just for starters – the main course comes in the shape of fully 3D environments and characters. Randomly generated scenarios and an eight-person multi-player mode are your choice of dessert.

"RPG fans will get off on customising and building up their gang, and tactical fans will thrive on conquering and defending the city's buildings and resources," says Ron Millar, Lead Designer and Vice President of Redline Games. "Action fans will love the real-time combat and 3-D engine. This game is going to rock." **Z**
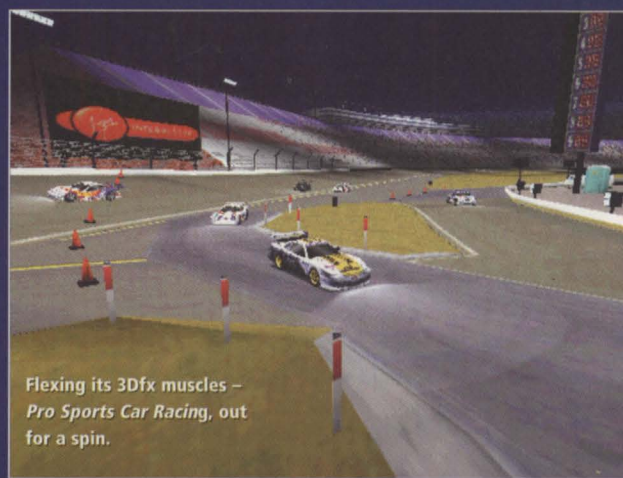
Flipping fast cars

Scheduled for release in late autumn, ISI/ Virgin's *Pro Sports Car Racing* aims to recreate the experience of driving the world's nuttiest production cars.
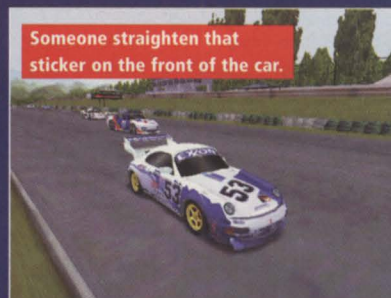

Flexing its 3Dfx muscles – *Pro Sports Car Racing*, out for a spin.

According to the developers, a huge amount of effort has gone into reproducing accurate physics and realistic track conditions for the game, complete with variable weather and lighting. They've also programmed the individual computer opponents to drive in the style of 'real' racing drivers.

Machines due to make an appearance include the ubiquitous Porsche 911, the startlingly quick McLaren F1, and that most famous of Ferrari facsimiles, the Honda NSX. Lesser-known cars in the line-up include the Panoz Ford Esperante and the Oldsmobile Aurora. Although these last two sound as though they've fallen off a loop of Scalextric track, they'll doubtless make punters across the pond wet their checked golfing trousers in anticipation.

Race locations include the glorious Sebring International, Laguna Seca, Las Vegas Motor Speedway, and Mosport Park Canada, among others. **Z**

Someone straighten that sticker on the front of the car.

swing and fight across the 12 levels, solving puzzles, dodging obstacles and avoiding underfed predators.

Activision promise that *Beneath* will deliver the next generation of 3D gaming. Says Bob Dewar, their Senior Vice President: "The developers, Presto, gave us innovative gameplay, rich storytelling and photo-realistic detail in *The Journeyman Project*. We expect nothing less."

Win a bundle of X-Files goodies

WIN!

Get closer to Mulder and Scully by winning all this groovy X-Files gear.

It's not exactly a game, but the new *X Files: Unrestricted Access* CD-ROM should be enough to keep diehard Mulder and Scully fans happy until the new movie and game proper make an appearance later this year.

We've got 10 copies to give away, as well as 10 copies of the 'never seen in the UK before' new video release *Patient X*, and 10 copies of the new X Files Video Trivia Game to 10 lucky winners.

All you have to do is send your answer to the question below on a postcard, with your name, address and telephone number, to the address below. The first 10 correct entries to be plucked from the *PC Zone* sock drawer will receive a copy of the CD-ROM, the video and the trivia game.
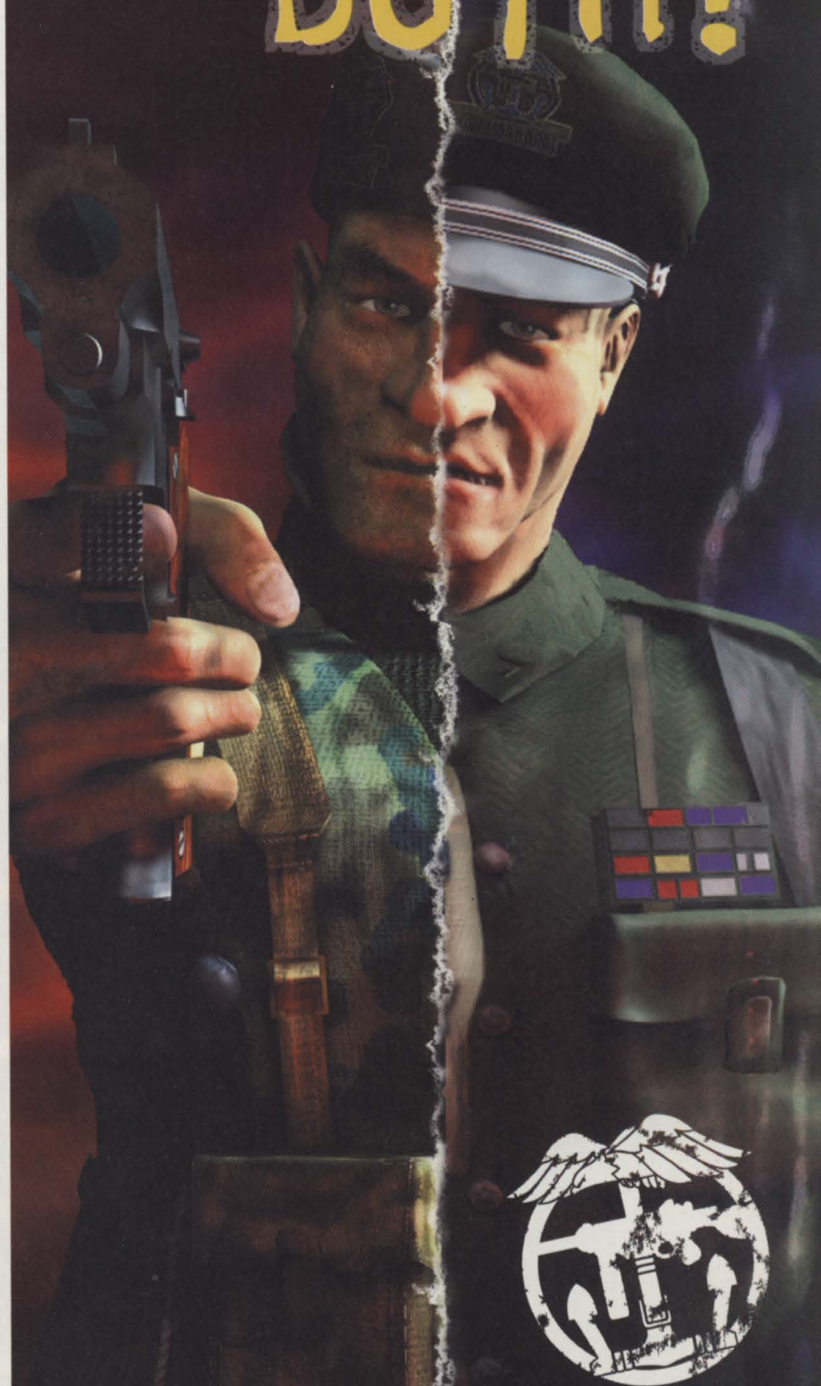
QUESTION:
David Duchovny starred with Brad Pitt in which serial killer road movie?

Send your answer on a postcard to:
X-Files/PC Zone Competition, *PC Zone*, CPZ86C, Bradley Pavilions, Bradley Stoke North, Bristol BS12 0BQ.

Rules: All entries are to reach us no later than Monday 1st June. All the usual restrictions apply. The Editor's decision is final. **Z**

You buy White Label Doubles. Two great games for only £14.99.

You play them until your fingers drop off.

Your Mum thinks you have leprosy and collapses.

As you're giving her mouth to mouth resuscitation, your Dad walks in.

Your Dad walks out.

As you chase after him down the street he collapses.

You rush to a phone box to call an ambulance.

Trouble is, without fingers, you can't dial.

But hey! You've two great games for only £14.99.

White Label Doubles. Sorry.

FULL THROTTLE
DIG

STAR WARS
REBEL ASSAULT

STAR WARS
REBEL ASSAULT II
THE HIDDEN EMPIRE

X WING
Collector's CD

TIE FIGHTER
Collector's CD

STAR TREK
25TH ANNIVERSARY

STAR TREK:
JUDGMENT RITES

PC
CD

Trading games on-line

Games Terminal is the name of a new on-line second-hand games software swap site just launched in the UK. For an annual membership fee of £5, **www.gamesterminal.com** you can purchase new and used games, take advantage of money-back offers, and can also get in touch with other gamers who are looking to swap stuff. Terminal, the company behind the new site, say that **www.gamesterminal.com** is "very much a membership site in the truest sense of the word – the site is designed with the user very much in mind, and we will constantly monitor feedback from our members and evolve the site to meet their requirements." So get in there and save some money.

Or Die Trying

Psygnosis' upcoming *ODT* is a slightly curious action adventure set in a striking 3D polygonal world.

With *ODT* you will be able to pick one of four main characters (bonus characters are 'unlocked' as you progress) with an array of distinct abilities and skill. The object of the game, expected around Christmas, is to make your way through the sectors of eight separate levels. Each area has its own environment, and incorporates a different set of weather effects, sonic backdrops, sounds and enemies.

Gameplay looks set to follow in the footsteps of Lara Croft, with a combination of action, exploration and puzzle-solving. Indeed, the Paris-based developers list *ODT*'s influences as *Tomb Raider*, *Chaos Engine*, *Loaded* and *Diablo* – so expect a heady Gallic blend of all four (plus garlic).

Combat takes the form of hand-to-hand punch-ups, magic or weaponry, and every bad guy displays Pysgnosis' special brand of 'Artificial Stupidity'. **Z**

Outcast, Heretic II, and now *ODT* – all from a third-person perspective.

A proposition in an alleyway?

WarBirds goes 3D

3D terrain, but no real cockpits – *WarBirds* grows up.

A new 3D accelerated version of Interactive Magic's classic *WarBirds* has just become available in shops and on the World Wide Web. This update release features 11 additional World War II fighters, new improved cockpit artwork, plus support for enhanced graphics using Direct 3D. Now players with or without accelerator cards can compete together in the same universe, making everyone happy in the process.

Using I-Magic's proprietary Internet technology MEGAplayer, *WarBirds 2.01* currently enables up to 200 fight combat fanatics to battle for domination of the skies within the same scenario. Tests indicate that the game still suffers little from lag. Isn't technology marvellous? **Z**

Railroad Tycoon returns

"Late 1998" will see the release of *Railroad Tycoon II* from PopTop software. Mike Wilson's company GOD (Gathering Of Developers) has been linked with the game in the US, although a publisher for the game over here in the UK has yet to be announced.

The sequel to the legendary *Railroad Tycoon*, *Railroad Tycoon II* will put you in control of 34 cargo types and 51 train engines from around the world. You can span the ages from 1804 to beyond 2000 while establishing transportation empires and out-manoeuvring fellow 'robber' barons on the way. Scenarios allow for worldwide exploration and expansion. A sophisticated economy and stock market for Wall Street plunderers enables you to test your entrepreneurial prowess.

Railroad Tycoon II is to be based around PopTop's proprietary S3D engine, which will enable highly detailed 3D graphics and renderings. The game is the first developed exclusively for a 1024x768 resolution, in either 16-bit or 8-bit colour. Check **www.poptop.com** for more info. **Z**

Lavish high-res graphics in *Railroad Tycoon II* – now out of MicroProse's hands and into the lap of PopTop.

HOT Line

Tracking the hottest games and their current release dates

TIMELINE

JUNE
Half-Life (Sierra)
SiN (Activision)

JULY
Falcon 4.0 (MicroProse)
FIFA: World Cup 98 (EA Sports)

AUGUST
Blood II (Monolith)
Evova (Psygnosis)
Prey (GT Interactive)

SEPTEMBER
Championship Manager 3 (Eidos)
Civilisation III (MicroProse)
Daikatana (Eidos)
Duke Nukem 4 Ever (GT Interactive)
EBT Tank (DID)
Grand Prix Legends (Sierra)
Populous III (EA)
SimCity 3000 (EA)
ST: First Contact (MicroProse)
Thief, The Dark Project (Eidos)

OCTOBER
Age Of Empires II (MicroProse)
Alpha Centauri (EA)
Blade (Gremlin)
Lands Of Lore III (Westwood)
Settlers III (Blue Byte)

NOVEMBER
Carmageddon II (SCi)
Constructor II (Acclaim)
F1GP3 (MicroProse)
Grim Fandango (LucasArts)
Messiah (Interplay)
RPG (Gremlin)
Turok 2 (Acclaim)

DECEMBER
Anarchronox (Ion Storm)
Diablo II (Blizzard)
Dungeon Keeper 2 (EA)
Expendable (Rage)
Total Anihilation II (GT Interactive)

JAN '99
Tenth Planet (Bethesda)

FEB '99
Hunter II (Activision)

Global warning

Global Sorties is the latest *Microsoft Flight Simulator* add-on which, instead of just offering new aircraft to pilot or new landscapes to fly over, actually promises something different. Budding pilots will have their nerve tested by a number of 'adventures', the most interesting of which is the threat of decompression and armed hijackers. Twenty-one adventures are promised, along with variable weather conditions and three new ATC voices. Available now for £29.99, *Global Sorties* – Published by Instant Access Software – is compatible with *MS Flight Sim 5.1*, *'95* and *'98*.

For further information on *Global Sorties*, you can check out **www. instantaccess.com**.

The UK's largest multi-player games tournament
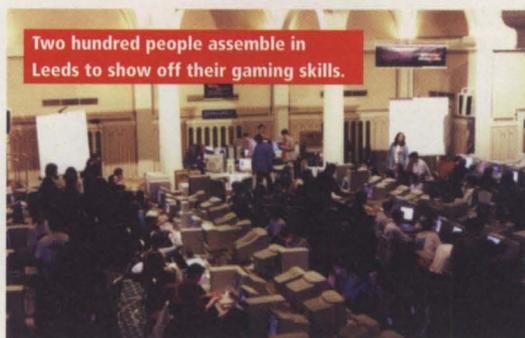
ZONE PC ZONE SPECIAL REPORT

Fusion '98 was the UK's biggest multi-player network party. We sent along our reporter Declan Lynch to check out the final score.

What to do on a wet Easter weekend? Have a party, of course! And that's exactly what over 200 people did in The Queen's Hotel in Leeds this year at Fusion '98 – a party unlike any other you've ever been to. Well, 'party' is not quite the right word. It doesn't accurately convey the seriousness of much of what was going on.

The game of the moment is still *Quake* (*Quake II* has a lot of catching up to do on-line). And here were a collection of the UK's top *Quake* players, most of them organised into teams (known as Clans), fighting for supremacy on – for the first time ever – a completely level playing field. No connections dropping off, servers overloading or sisters picking up the phone for yet another gossip with their friends next door (actually, come to think of it there were almost no women at the event, so well done to Knightrider for being the only female player in attendance).

Fueled only by coke, fags and burgers, few combatants had any chance of survival with high-brow players such as Cenobite, Nightwing, Sujoy, Timber and Strider cutting a swathe through the assembled 'cannon fodder'. And they did indeed need a lot of fuel to get through every arranged tournament and competition (with a few other games like *Red Alert* and *Total Annihilation* thrown in for good measure). Kick-off was at 9am on Saturday morning, and the gaming literally did not stop until late on Sunday evening. As you might expect, by that time there were a few tired eyes.

Like all good parties though, a host is required. This duty was admirably performed by the Edinburgh and Durham-based organisers of the event, Reality-X. This was their third and most ambitious LAN (Local Area Network) party to date, made possible by an impressive range of sponsors, some of whom even came along in person and took part in the frag-fest.

"Why hadn't this sort of thing happened sooner," was the only fair criticism raised on the day. Eleanor Davis, the Director of Reality-X summed it up: "I think there's still a serious misunderstanding of the gaming community in this country, both from a public and a commercial perspective. I've been to computer shows before, and a lot of people there don't have a clue about gaming. The people here at Fusion '98 are out there every night playing on-line and getting organized on IRC [Internet Relay Chat]. They have a growing voice which has been largely ignored so far. No one else has ever got off their arse to do something on this scale, so we thought why not us?"

And, at the end of the event, who won all the prizes (including a bundle of free subscriptions to *PC Zone*)? Well it may be something of a cliché, but everyone who attended did really well (especially the lucky sod who won the fantastic 17-inch monitor in the free raffle). You can find a full list of the winners on the Fusion '98 Web page, located at **http:// fusion98.reality-x.co.uk**.

The next event is already under construction, and the above site will have all the relevant news as it breaks. If you're interested, you can expect another event called The Gathering in Edinburgh during July, and Fusion '98: Part II (working title) sometime in November. Keep on fragging… **Z**

Two hundred people assemble in Leeds to show off their gaming skills.

It's 2am and things are still *Quake*-ing along at a fairly rapid pace.

We have to wonder what the room smelt like after two days of non-stop gaming. There must have been an awful lot of methane expelled over the 48-hour period.

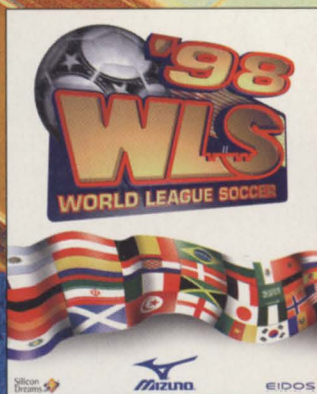Paul Younger, Fusion '98 co-organiser, explains the *Quake* tourny schedule.

Nihilistic tendencies

Activision have signed an agreement which will see them publish the first three titles from Nihilistic Software, a newly formed development company headed by gaming veterans Ray Gresko, Robert Huebner and Steve Tietze, whose combined credits include work on *Dark Forces*, *Dark Forces II: Jedi Knight*, *Descent*, *Descent II* and the *Quake* mission pack *Dissolution Of Eternity*.

The first game from Nihilistic will be a 3D role-playing adventure, which Activision tell us they plan to release in the autumn of 1999 – far too long a time to be waiting for a game, in our books (so we'll come back to it at a later date). Hopefully Nihilistic will be showing early code at the forthcoming Electronic Entertainment Expo (E³) in Atlanta, and we'll have first screenshots for you next issue.

THE MAN WHO KNOWS
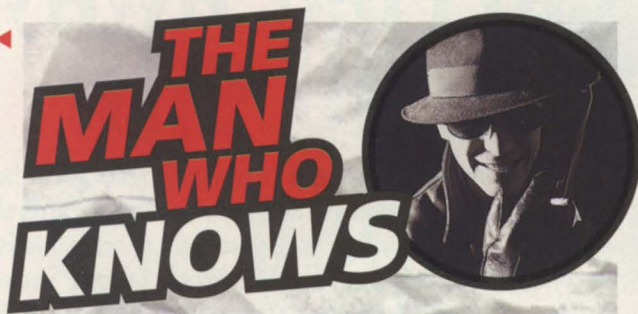
Odds and sods from the wonderful world of games.

Software piracy is a contentious issue that costs the games industry millions of pounds a year. Taping a copy of *Jet Set Willy* (and subsequently having to shoplift the colour-coded inlay card) may be a little bit cheeky, but a pirate in **Turkey** recently took things to extremes, not only of greed, but of rank stupidity. Wishing to duplicate a batch of moody CDs, he bypassed the traditional illicit pressing plant and simply placed an order with a major duplication firm for 40,000 copies of a dozen top titles. Suspicion was aroused when the company noticed that the games were all from different publishers, who were subsequently contacted and expressed no knowledge whatsoever of the order. Inevitable consternation ensued, and some top detectives were brought in to investigate the matter. Very little sleuthing was actually needed though, as the felon somewhat foolishly left his home address on the ordering documentation. The authorities simply drove to the hapless criminal's house, where he was sat drumming his fingers waiting for 40,000 knock-off games to drop onto his doorstep. The tit.

Further news of dishonesty comes by way of America's **Professional Gamers League**, who have had to disqualify eight players for using so-called *Quake* 'steroids'. Not the muscle-inflating, genital-shrinking drugs favoured by Wolf out of *Gladiators*, but performance-enhancing patches that do some of the thinking and/or aiming for the player. The PGL has kicked off its second full season, and keeping it clean of cheats has proved to be quite a task, with some particularly anal individuals also attempting to improve their rankings by fixing matches.

In a move that further compounds the current widespread game/movie symbiosis, **Interplay** have announced plans for a specific film division called, logically enough, **Interplay Films**. **Tom Reed**, formerly of Ron Howard/Richie Cunningham's Imagine Entertainment, who has been appointed president, gargled: "Computer games have been evolving at an incredible pace. The days of *Pac-Man* and *Space Invaders* are ancient history. Games are incredibly sophisticated now, particularly RPGs and strategy games that are like extended virtual movies. As these games have matured, the market has demanded increasingly complex story content, and this is where the lines between computer games and movies are blurring. Once you start creating games concerned with issues like constructing memorable characters, compelling dilemmas, hidden agendas and multiple reversals all leading to a definitive climax, then you're basically talking story development. This is exactly what we do when developing films. Everything boils down to the fundamentals of premise, character and story. The result is that software content is gaining acceptance every day as a viable source for film adaptation."

Initially the company will focus on its current licenses, such as **ClayFighter**, **Fallout**, **Stonekeep**, **Descent**, **Carmageddon** and **Redneck Rampage**, the latter of which should certainly be worth a look.

More movie madness comes from the Luxembourg-based set of **Wing Commander**, with the final week of shooting seeing the appointment of a new cast member, namely **David Warner**, who recently appeared in low-budget arthouse flick *Titanic* playing the role of **Spicer Lovejoy**. Warner's credits also include *The Omen*, *Tron* and TV appearances in *Twin Peaks* and *Star Trek: TNG*. No stranger to games, Warner starred in Origin's *Privateer 2: The Darkening*, a third instalment of which is currently being 'revamped' following rumours of its cancellation.

One game that has definitely been dropped is Microsoft's **Riot: Mobile Armour**, from developers **Monolith**, who are now seeking a new publisher. A Microsoft spokesdroid barked: "Each of the companies shared different visions for the game. We still think they have a great development team. We are open to working with them again on a case by case basis, but the *Riot* project is now terminated."

That's enough, I'm off for a lie down.

The all-new PC ZONE

There are changes on the horizon for your favourite PC games magazine...

From next issue, *PC Zone* will look a bit different to how it looked before. We'll be introducing a number of new elements and a whole new visual style that we're sure will have you jerking in paroxysms of ecstasy, while at the same time punching the air in delight.

NEW LOOK!

PC ZONE
MORE THAN JUST PC GAMES
#65 JUL 1998
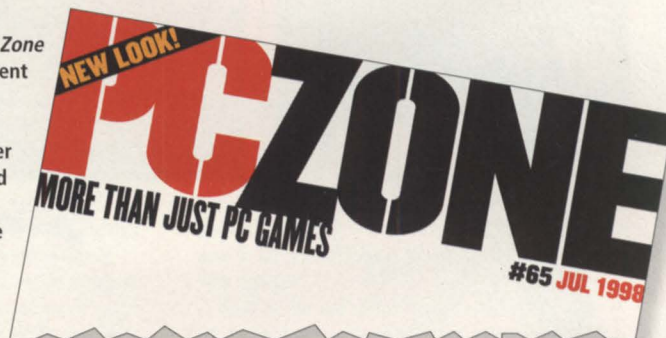
Watch the newsstand for the new-look *PC Zone* logo on the cover of the July issue, out on Thursday June 11th.

From here on in, though, we want to hear more from *you* – we want to give you a bigger say in what we are doing. We'd like to hear from you if you've got a peculiar gaming obsession (say, for example, you've got a full-size 747 cockpit set up in your bedroom, with a PC and copy of *Flight Sim '98* set up inside it, or a collection of underwear stolen from some of the world's most famous game developers). We want to know what you think of our reviews (whether you agree, disagree or just don't care). If you're having problems with a shop, a mail order company or a customer service helpline, we'd also like to hear about it (there may be something we can do to help you out). If you need any technical help with your games, or have any useful technical or gaming advice to share with us (including hints, tips or cheats), then let us know. Write to: The Editor, *PC Zone*, 19 Bolsover Street, London W1P 7HJ, or e-mail us at: editorial.pczone@dennis.co.uk.

YOU READ IT HERE FIRST

Last-minute gaming info as the magazine goes to press...

Looking Glass have changed the name of their forthcoming first-person adventure/action game *The Dark Project*. It is now to be called – wait for it – *Thief, The Dark Project*. Which we think is… erm, not much of an improvement.

Jane's simulations have confirmed that they are working on an old-style fighter simulation called *Jane's Fighter Legends* – an aviation equivalent of *Grand Prix Legends*, by the sounds of it.

MicroProse have announced the development of a sequel to their hugely successful *Top Gun* flight sim, again based on the Paramount Pictures film of the same name. *Top Gun: Hornet's Nest* will combine 3Dfx visuals and realistic-looking combat sequences spread over 30 missions to generate the thrills.

GT Interactive – not Psygnosis, as at first thought – have acquired Perfect Entertainment's forthcoming *Discworld Noir*. Why this has happened, no one is saying, but we're hoping to get some answers (and screenshots) from Perfect Entertainment themselves next issue.

Finally, our news spies have discovered something about *Star Trek: Starfleet Command* – a real-time strategy game based around the original Star Trek universe – due from Interplay in time for Christmas. Those very spies should have more for you soon.
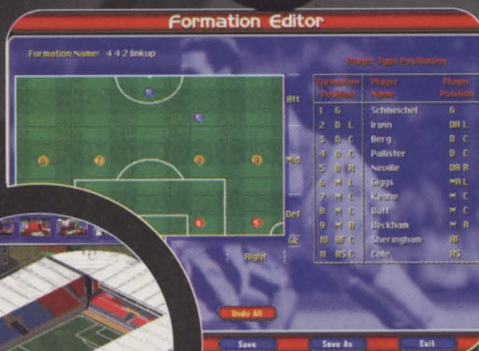
PC ZONE | our price

CHART Predictions

WITH THE WORLD CUP JUST AROUND THE CORNER, FOOTBALL FEVER SEEMS to have gripped the country. The games chart this month seems to reflect this, with *Ultimate Soccer Manager* scoring the Number One spot. Despite it being the third *Ultimate Soccer Manager* game in the past three years, the new version is reported to be the most revolutionary and comprehensive management simulation to date, with club flotations, sponsorship, training, merchandising and even pitch punch-ups. So if you can stand a bit more football on your screens, it's definitely worth a try.

To take part in this month's Our Price Top 10 prize giveaway, just put pen to paper, answer the question below and send it in to: Our Price Competition (64), PC Zone, Dennis Publishing Ltd, 19 Bolsover St, London W1P 7HJ.

Our Price Question:

WHICH GROUND HAS THE NARROWEST PITCH IN THE PREMIER LEAGUE?

Rules and restrictions: All entries must be received by Friday 5th June 1998. No correspondence will be entered into. Multiple entries will not be accepted. The Editor's decision is final and the winners will be notified by post. All other usual competition rules and restrictions apply.

#	Title	Publisher	Price
1	**USM '98**	(Cendant)	£34.99
2	**STARCRAFT**	(Cendant)	£34.99
3	**STAR WARS SUPREMACY**	(LucasArts/Virgin)	£34.99
4	**GRAND THEFT AUTO**	(BMG)	£34.99
5	**CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 2 97/98**	(Eidos Interactive)	£19.99
6	**QUAKE II**	(Activision)	£29.99
7	**C&C/CIV II BOX SET**	(Virgin)	26.99
8	**BATTLEZONE**	(Activision)	£34.99
9	**TOMB RAIDER II**	(Eidos Interactive)	£29.99
10	**KICK OFF 98**	(Anco)	£7.99

How does it help make the creatures of 3-D games come roaring to life?
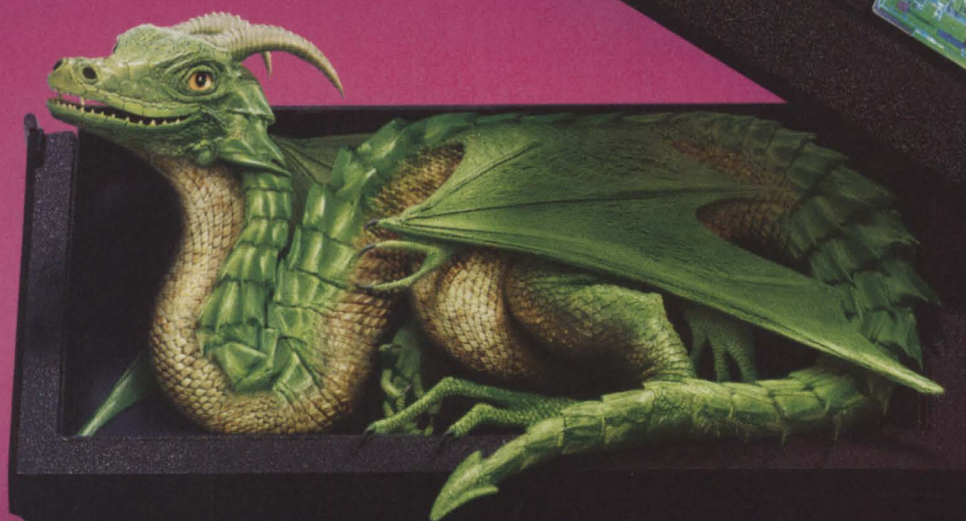
Engineering.

The Pentium®II processor is engineered to help bring you the colourful animation, 3-D objects, and lifelike video and sound that make today's software so great. In fact, the ability to run today's most amazing software, whether it's educational, games, communications, or business, is built right in. So programs with three-dimensional creatures are even more fun and challenging. The Intel Pentium II processor. Because it's what's inside that counts. ▶www.intel.co.uk

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First Encounter

Blood II: The Chosen

T HE ORIGINAL BLOOD WAS one of the few real alternatives to Quake. Richie Shoemaker sees how the sequel will stand up to Quake II.

WHILE WE PATIENTLY AWAIT THE RETURN of cigar-chewing '80s throwback *Duke Nukem*, another sequel is waiting in the wings, promising just as much schlock-horror action.

In many ways Monolith started a trend by developing a game around someone else's 3D engine. The original *Blood* was based on Epic's *Duke Nukem 3D* engine, just as every developer now clambers to use *Unreal* or id's *Quake* engine. For *Blood II* Monolith have completely changed strategy and, in an effort to stand out from the crowd, created their own 3D engine.

The LithTech engine, as it is now known, is not only capable of generating pretty coloured lighting effects, but also promises to give you much more interaction with the in-game environment. Until now we've only been able to smash windows and small bits of furniture, and spray walls with bullet holes. With the LithTech engine, however, each element within the environment will be able to take on different properties. Walls can be assigned specific properties and constructed from tone or wood, and consequently they will 'react' differently: spray machine-gun fire across a room and every round will sound distinct as it ricochets into corners or embeds itself into wooden doors.

As well as working on the technicalities, Monolith have also updated the story behind *Blood II*, bringing in new characters to join Caleb in the fight against The Cabal.

It is now 2028. The Cabal has developed into a worldwide organisation whose sole aim is to bring about the next incarnation of Tchernobog. You choose one of the four characters and enter into a quest to stop The Cabal. Of course, being an undead rotting corpse you are purely self-driven by revenge and hatred.

Many of the original weapons are destined to make a welcome return, including the infamous voodoo doll and flare gun. As for new weapons, Monolith are being very cagey about the details, but they have revealed that there'll be new enemies to blow limbs off, and 'dynamic death scenes'. All the usual deathmatch options will be catered for, along with some quirky new ideas, but again Monolith are yet to reveal exactly what thay have planned.

What characterised *Blood* was its unashamed references to the great schlock-horror films of the '70s and '80s – zombies, rats, mad monks and dismembered hands. In many ways *Blood* was the game equivalent of *Evil Dead* – darkly funny, cheap and with a whole lotta blood. The sequel promises to take everything a stage further, and with a brand new engine at their fingertips, maybe this time Monolith will finally get the credit they deserve. ⓩ
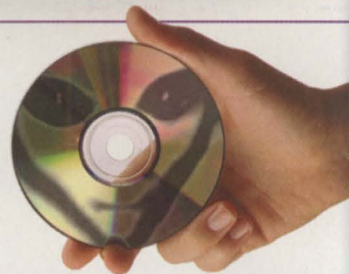
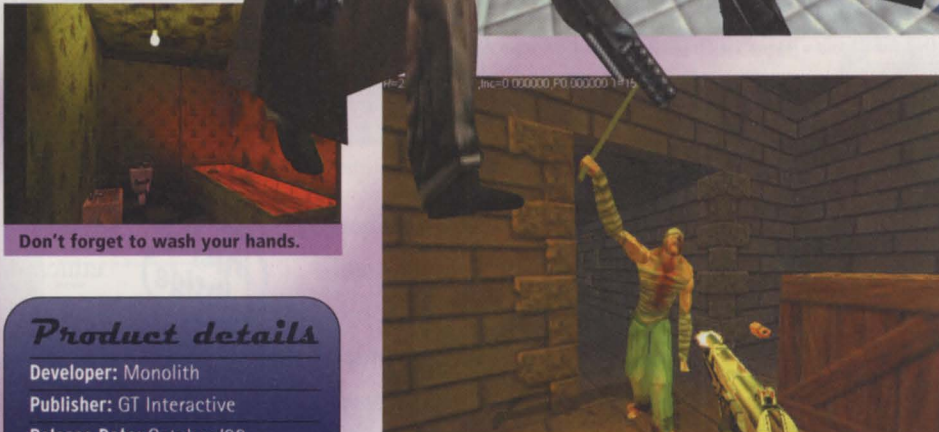The Build engine is dead. Long live the LithTech engine in all its polygonal loveliness.
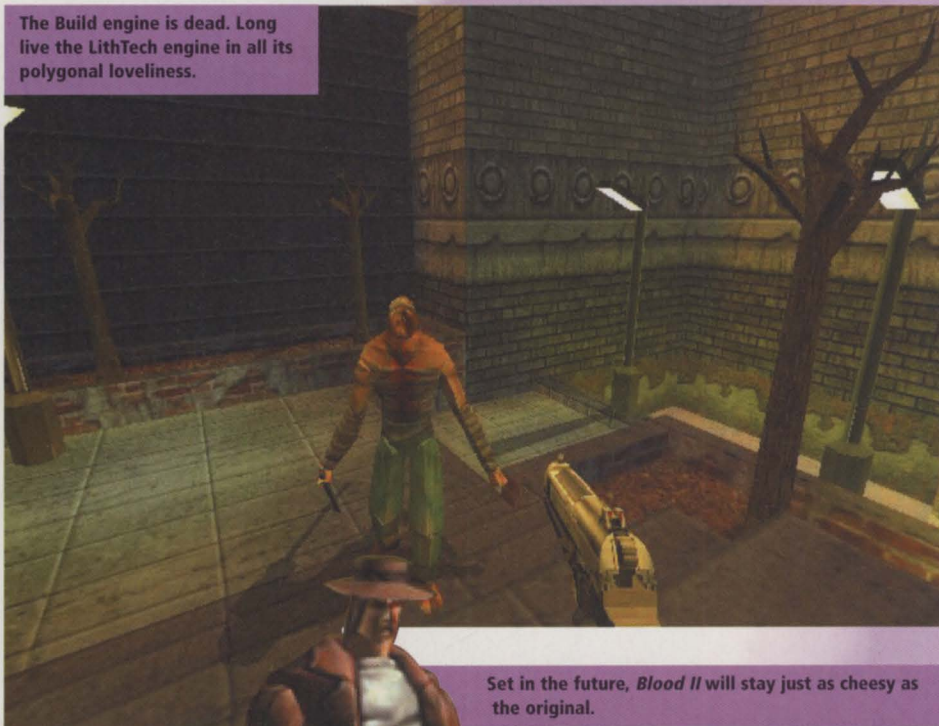
Set in the future, *Blood II* will stay just as cheesy as the original.

Translucent effects fitted as standard.
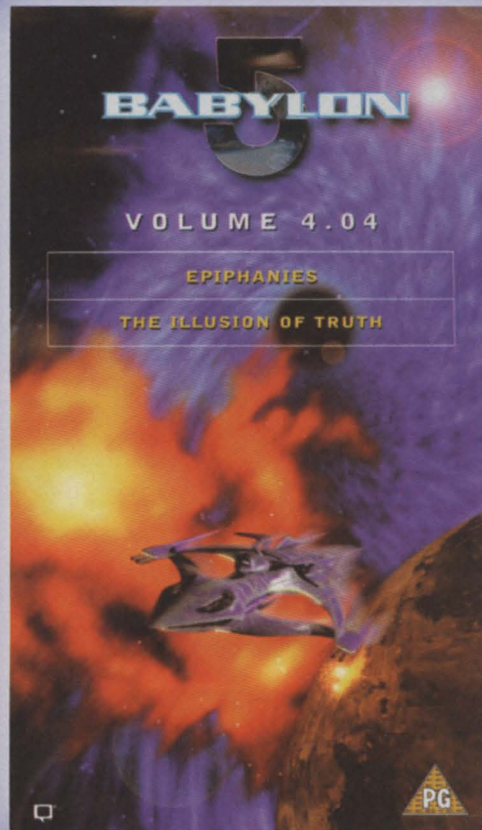
Don't forget to wash your hands.

Product details

Developer: Monolith
Publisher: GT Interactive
Release Date: October '98
Website: www.the-chosen.com

Some old weapons will make a reappearance, along with a load of new ones, most of them deadlier than a pea-shooter.

Another *X-COM* game will soon be with us, but it's very different from what we've seen before. Are fans of the series ready to take the fight to the aliens themselves? Jeremy Wells investigates.

X-COM Interceptor

WHEN *ZONE* FIRST CAUGHT A GLIMPSE OF *X-COM Interceptor* at the beginning of the year, no one could believe what they saw. What would diehard *X-COM* fans think? It looked more like *X-Wing* than the *X-COM* that so many know and love.

So why the big change of direction? "We wanted to broaden the appeal of the *X-COM* brand and take it to a much broader audience," explains game designer Dave Ellis, "and at the same time give existing *X-COM* fans a chance to try something new."

It certainly is very different, though at the same time spookily familiar. The emphasis is still very much on strategy and research, it's just that this time around you get to kick some alien arse in real-time, 3D combat. While some of the ships, units and aliens will be familiar to those of you who've played any of the existing three *X-COM* games, the designers are desperate to point out that there will be loads of new additions to get to grips with, as well as a new 3D game engine. "*Interceptor* takes place in 2067, about 17 years after the events in *Terror From The Deep,* five years after the events in the upcoming *X-COM 5,* and a full 17 years prior to the events in *Apocalypse,*" explains Dave. "Even though the game style is very different, we want to make fans of the genre feel at home with the interface, the units, the way the game works. Essentially you'll have to follow the same processes – send out probes, develop technology and defend your base – but this time around you actually get to fly about in space and engage in combat. You control one ship and instruct your wingmen what to do. That way you get to co-ordinate the attack as well as lead it."

Three ships will be available in all and each will be fully customisable with numerous different weapons (some of which will be only too familiar to *X-COM* fans), tractor beams, cloaking devices and all other manner of futuristic weaponry and paraphernalia. It won't be a case of just steaming on in, guns blazing, however. You'll have the facility to attack certain modules and disable different parts of an enemy's base, and you'll have to adopt different techniques and strategies to succeed. This means you'll have to think long and hard about how you're going to take an alien base out, and in particular whether it's worth risking some of your resources in order to further your research. You'll also be able to practise your combat manouevres and hone your skills playing against human pilots over a LAN and there's also talk of internet play.

Even if you've previously shied away from the *X-COM* games you'll be forced to admit that this new strategy/space combat hybrid has great potential. Whether MicroProse will be able to please existing fans and newcomers alike, however, is still open to question. From what we've seen so far, it looks like they might just pull it off. **Z**

MicroProse have developed their own 3D engine for the game. And unlike the *Wing Commander* series of games, it doesn't look two-dimensional and flat.

The ships available to you are based on those featured in the first two games in the series.

Many of the weapons and equipment will be familiar to fans of the series.

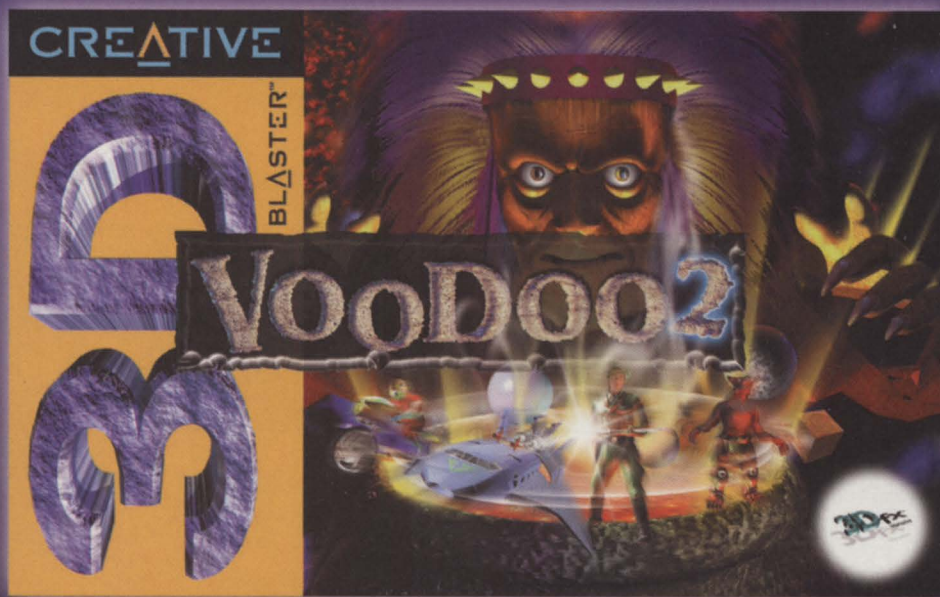You'll also get the opportunity to take out your mates on a LAN.

You'll be up against five alien races, three of which will be familiar to fans of the strategy games, plus two new ones.

Product details

Developer: Microprose US
Publisher: Microprose
Release date: July '98
Website: www.microprose.com

Having the Fastest 3D Accelerator isn't Everything...

Earthworm Jim 3D

T HE INCREDIBLE WORM animal, cow public enemy number one, is back once again. Except that this time he's in three glorious dimensions. **Steve Hill** challenges annelid.

A S GAME CHARACTERS GO, EARTHWORM Jim is certainly up there among the strangest. In the real world, it takes a sizeable leap of faith to accept that a common or garden worm can do anything of interest, let alone become a superhero. The humble hermaphrodites generally have a fairly moribund existence, sentenced to a spineless life of blindly eating shit and indulging in solitary sex – much like some of the *PC Zone* editorial team, in fact. But in the crazy world of games, such limitations are scarce hindrance, and Jim has long since shed his earthy roots to become a bona fide star, with his own animated television series and everything.

The cult of Jim is set to quite literally gain a further dimension in September, when Interplay release *Earthworm Jim 3D*. The original, highly successful platform game was coded by Shiny Entertainment in Laguna Beach, California. However, the latest incarnation sees a slight change of scene, being developed in a former maternity hospital in Dunfermline. Relative newcomers VIS Interactive are the team responsible, who you may recall are still beavering away on the oft-delayed weird-'em-up *HEDZ*.

Clearly, 3D conversions can be a treacherous business. Witness *Jaws 3D*, an absolute travesty that sullied the name of the original classic. But that was a film, and this is a game. Even so, how do you go about translating a 2D platform game into a 3D extravaganza? VIS Interactive's Vice President of Creativity is the hirsute Kirk Ewing, and *PC Zone* spoke to him live and exclusively from his remote Scottish hideaway. This noise came out of his mouth: "You've got to take a bit of licence with it. It would be impossible to copy the original and put it into 3D. So we've taken the best of 3D understanding with what we've learnt from *HEDZ* and the other 3D games around, like *Mario*, *Crash Bandicoot* and *Jersey Devil*, kicked it around the office, covered all that in treacle, feathered it, called it rude names and labelled it *Earthworm Jim 3D*." Evidently, the drugs *do* work.

The original game was renowned for its odd humour and bizarrely incongruous characters. As Kirk says: "We thought it was fucking alright, and we liked the way they really didn't belong in that game – or any game, for that matter. We've tried to create as many new characters as we could to live inside Jim's brain."

Among the new characters being introduced are the curious Disco Zombies, some gun-toting cows known only as The Bovine Special Elite, and a manic, scooter-riding rabbit called Rabid. Clearly, *Earthworm Jim 3D* is shaping up to be a barrel of laughs, and Kirk isn't lying when he says., "This is a funny game. It's surreal."
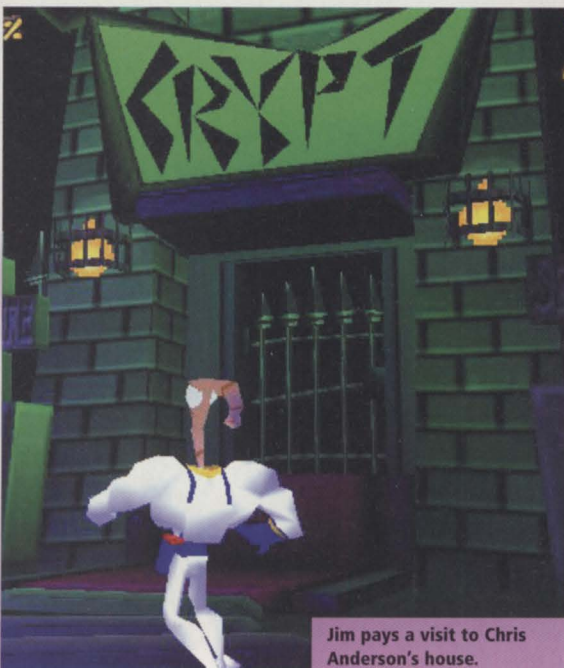Worm up! Z

The game involves visiting various areas of Jim's fragile psyche, of which this is one.

Absolutely no idea what that mincing thing is, but it's bound to be weird.
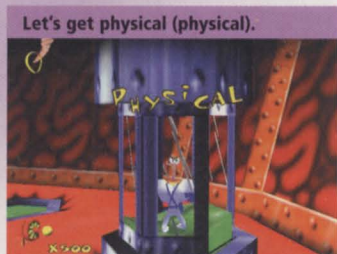

God only knows what this is.

Are you starting, or what?

Let's get physical (physical).

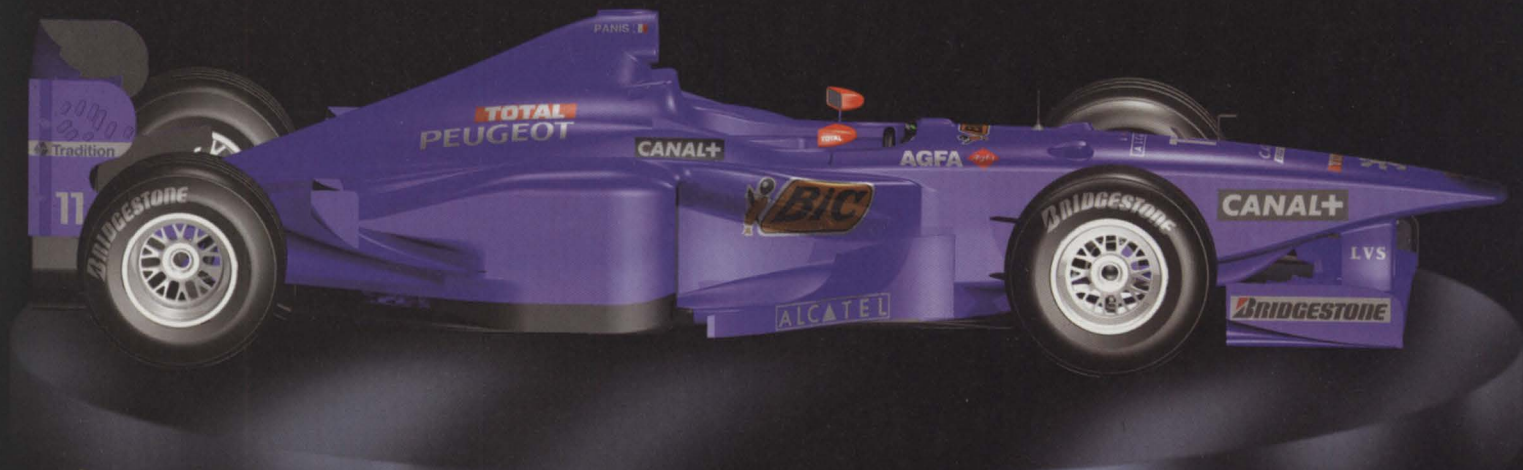Jim pays a visit to Chris Anderson's house.

Product details

Developer: VIS Interactive
Publisher: Interplay
Release date: September '98
Website: www.interplay.com

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simulation meets stimulation

CANAL+ MULTIMEDIA

WESTWOOD ARE introducing new voxel technology to give the third installment in their massive-selling RPG series a boost. Jeremy Wells visited them to talk about elves, orcs, warlocks and 3D accelerators.

Lands of Lore III

ALTHOUGH *LANDS OF LORE: GUARDIANS Of Destiny* was generally well-received, few could argue that it represented a landmark in games technology. The storyline, plot, character development and overall presentation may have been well up to form, but this couldn't make up for the fact that the game engine looked quite dated when compared to the likes of *Quake*.

Westwood are well aware that this was the weak point of their last *LOL* game, but instead of developing a new 3D game engine they decided to work on the 3D sprite technology used in *BladeRunner* and bring it up to date. But why go for voxels over polygons? "We wanted to introduce as much variety and contrast throughout the game as we could," argues producer Chris Longpre. "Voxel technology gives us a much greater flexibility. We've been able to truly model over 1000 faces and really go to town with the detail without everything slowing down."

Unlike the previous games in the series, *Lands Of Lore III* will feature 65 NPCs (non-player characters) and 35 monsters, and offer unprecedented levels of interaction. "We wanted to return to the traditional elements of RPGs," says Chris. "We take you back to Gladstone and just let you explore the town, talk to the people who inhabit it and really push relationships. Our goal is to transport you to this city. Your character will actually live there – you'll have to rent a room and you'll be evicted if you don't pay the rent."

Westwood are focusing more on the character class/skill system, and re-introducing guilds in an effort to get back to return to their KPG roots. As well as choosing their class (mage, warlock, thief and cleric), you'll be able to combine guilds to vary skills, and have familiars on hand that will have real personalities, spells and attacks. However, unlike many other RPGs, you won't be able to put together a party. "The game is essentially plot-lead. We've switched the focus to player interaction. It's like a detective story, and you don't know who the villain is.

Somebody or something has stolen your soul and you've got to get it back. There's only one ending, but you can get there in many different ways. We want the player to be emotionally involved and rewarded."

But will the introduction of 3D hardware technology, new lighting effects, voxel technology and a more scripted approach be enough to make people go back to Gladstone in favour of Britannia? Westwood, at least, are confident they can offer RPG fans a new level of interaction and entertainment. Guess we'll know come the autumn. **Z**

The third instalment will be set primarily within the city of Gladstone, and take in ten different locations spread over 18 levels.

All the human characters have been motion-captured, which means seamless animation.

Nice beard, shame about the jacket.

Westwood have developed a new level-designing tool which enables areas to be designed on the fly.

Remember: don't talk to strangers.

Product details

Developer: Westwood
Publisher: VIE
Release date: September '98
Website: www.westwood.com

HOT Shots

Ion Storm have released new *Daikatana* screenshots, showing off the game in a new, *Quake II*-powered light. How do you think it's looking? If you've got your eye on a particular game and want to see it in Hot Shots, write in or drop us an e-mail and let us know and we'll do our best to get hold of some shots.

Colin McRae Rally (Codemasters)

Rally driving supremo Colin McRae recently came top with a "crushing display of supremacy" in the first true gravel event of the 1998 FIA World Rally Championship, the Rally of Portugal. Dominating the event from the outset, McRae (with co-driver Nicky Grist) did his Subaru team proud by establishing a third-stage lead and keeping it to take the win by the considerable margin of 2.1 seconds.

This has given the *Colin McRae Rally* team a boost over here too. The game, being developed by Codemasters in Warwickshire, looks like being a serious threat to the popularity of *Screamer Rally* and Europress' *World Rally Championship*. Especially in light of the glorious *TOCA Touring Car Championship*.

According to Codemasters, everything is going very much to plan, and we'll see the "definitive rally motor sport video game" come the summer.

Omikron (Quantic Dreams/Eidos)

Completely open-ended, *Omikron* will drop you into the body of an unfamiliar being – trapped inside an unfamiliar parallel universe. So unfamiliar, in fact, that exploration, conversation, fighting, driving and shooting are what you must do in order to piece together some semblance of a story to the game. *Omikron* is to be set inside a huge, domed 'working' city populated by passers-by and floating anti-gravity vehicles. Pretty much every building will be accessible and full of conversant characters – all modelled in glorious 3D(fx) and sporting real-time facial motion-capture for added realism. Developers, Quantic also tell us that *Omikron* is to feature "the most realistic lap-dancing bars ever seen in a video game," which we obviously can't wait to quantify in November when it is released.
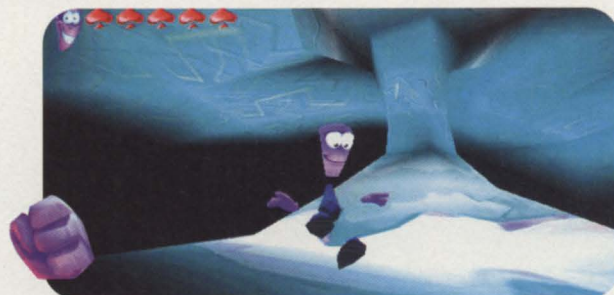
Daikatana (Ion Storm/Eidos)

John Romero and his team were right to delay *Daikatana*. Having seen the leap from *Quake* to *Quake II*, they had no option. As these exclusive new screenshots show, *Daikatana* is currently looking absolutely brilliant. The detail in the monsters is something to behold, and Ion Storm's talented level designers have worked wonders in terms of fine detail and environment complexity. *Daikatana*'s programmers have also got the artificially intelligent non-playing characters working well too, so that even in a single-player game you actually feel as though you're working as part of a team. With the game still on for a September release, *PC Zone* will be picking up the *Daikatana* story in the very near future for a more in-depth look at this new, improved 're-mix'.

Tonic Trouble (Ubi Soft)

Ubi Soft's *Tonic Trouble*, due September, stars a violet-coloured extra-terrestrial called Ed, who must save the world from an environmental crisis that has triggered a severe case of 'jingly-jangly tunes and brightly coloured flora and fauna'. Yes, it's 'jolly, madcap, French adventure game' time again, only this time it's in glorious 3D, courtesy of a new in-house engine that has taken over 50 developers 18 months to complete, at a cost of $4 million. The game also has the distinction of being one of the first titles specifically designed to utilise Intel's new Pentium II chip, which Ubi Soft claim will increase rendering and animation speeds to previously unheard of levels.

Force Comm

Crack out the jokes about the 'Force', dust-down those easily quotable snatches of hokey dialogue... Yes, folks, it's time for another *Star Wars* game – the one we've all been waiting for. In an exclusive interview, LucasArts talk to *PC Zone* about the potentially awesome *Force Commander*, the universe and everything.
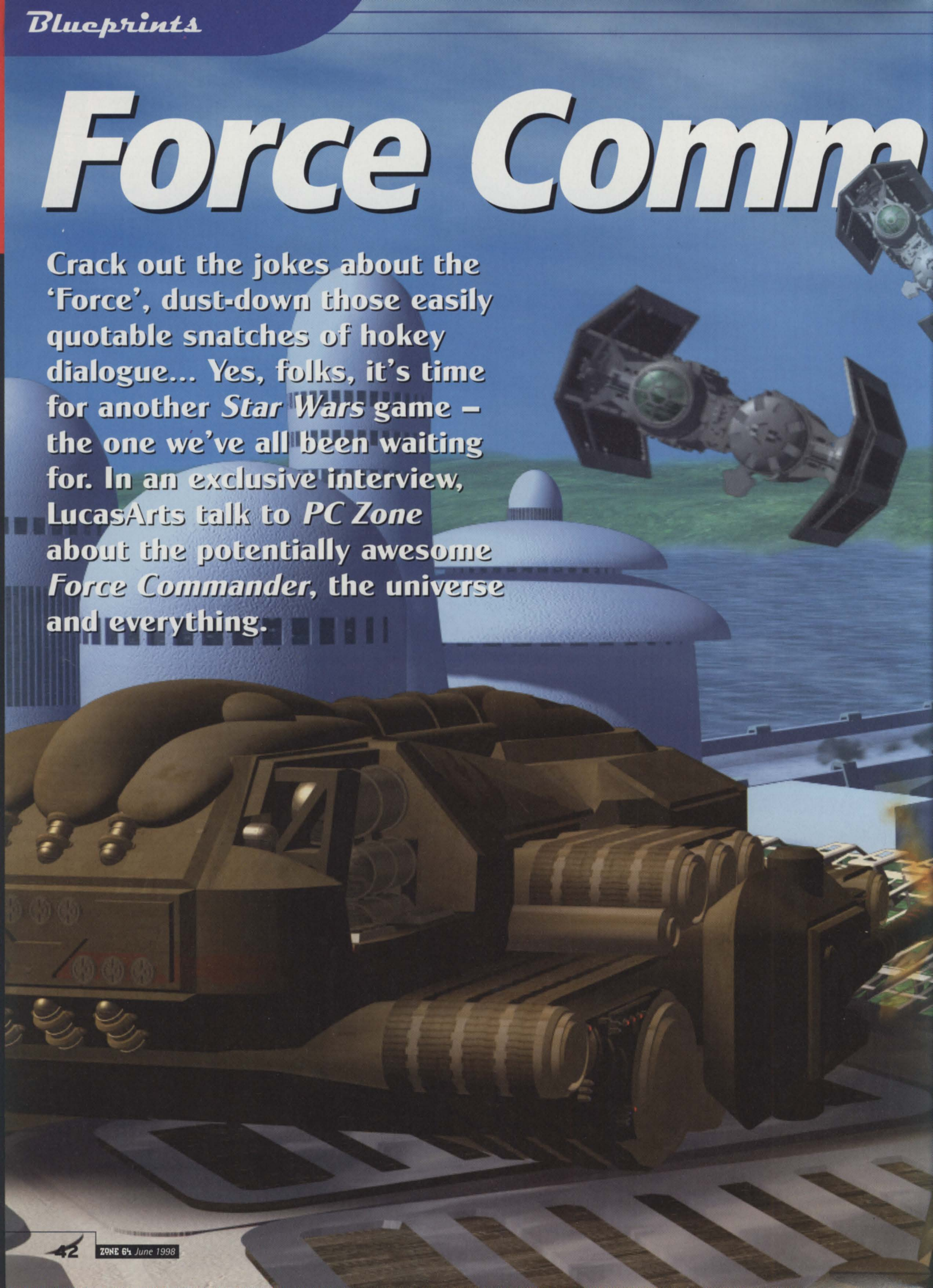
ander

VERY SINGLE PC GAMES PLAYER in the world loves the *Star Wars* movies. Every single PC games player in the world loves *Command & Conquer* too. And every single PC games player in the world *also* loves the abundance of hard-core filth available on the Internet. Right? So, if you thought someone could deliver a game that seamlessly combined all three, you'd go totally ape, yeah? Just imagine: it'd be called something like *Penetrative Force*, and it'd be completely great. You'd be controlling huge legions of buck-naked Imperial Stormtroopers, gigantic four-legged assault vehicles with big rude bits dangling from them, and living in constant fear in case the Wookies decide to pull off a classic pincer movement trap, leaping onto your troops and rutting them to death with a disturbing bestial fervour.

Well keep dreaming. That ain't ever going to happen. If that's what you want, see a doctor and keep taking the pills he prescribes. And once you're feeling better, drool over *Force Commander*, the game

> ## "The game will feature around 50 ground-based missions, covering the same period as the Star Wars Trilogy

which looks set to effortlessly combine the first *two* PC games player obsessions we mentioned, but thankfully omits the third. Which is just as well. For a moment there we thought we might have to endure a cut scene unveiling the Emperor's scaly penis. Can you *imagine?*

Meanwhile, back in the real world...

Anyway, back to reality. *Force Commander* is shaping up to be a very enticing prospect indeed. You take control of either the Rebel Alliance or the Galactic Empire, then lead your assembled forces into battle through a series of carefully scripted missions. It'll be just like being that Admiral Akbar bloke (you know, the one who looked like a cross between Marty Feldman and a goldfish), except that you won't ▶
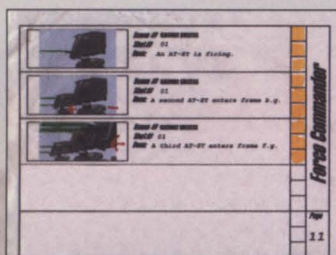
Much of the action will focus on the intense ground battles between the Rebel Alliance and the Imperial forces. Here the Rebels make a strategic retreat from Hoth as seen in *The Empire Strikes Back*.

Defend your base from Imperial forces

The game features around 100 different units and buildings, some of which will be only too familiar to fans of the films.

The artists went back to the Trilogy's original concept drawings for inspiration.

strategies to undo your opponent's plans.

Speaking of units, many of these will be instantly recognisable, with both sides boasting a full complement of familiar seen-'em-in-the-movies *Star Wars* vessels. Alongside the aforementioned Y-Wings and AT-ATs, we can look forward to TIE Fighters and Bombers (if you're playing as the Empire) or X and A-Wings (if you're being Mister Goody Two Shoes). The movies themselves may have been overflowing with hi-tech gadgetry, but the LucasArts posse have still seen fit to create reams of brand *new* vehicles to suit the purposes of the game. Designed with that all-important *Star Wars* 'feel' in mind, *'les units nouveaux'* include tanks, transports and missile

"So much of what we're doing is feasible without 3D acceleration"

Every cut scene was storyboarded down to the very last detail.
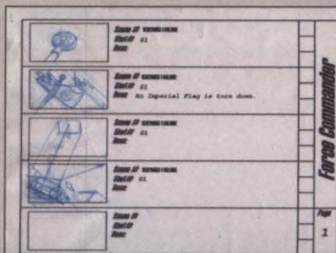
We can expect to see never-seen-before tanks, launchers and transports.
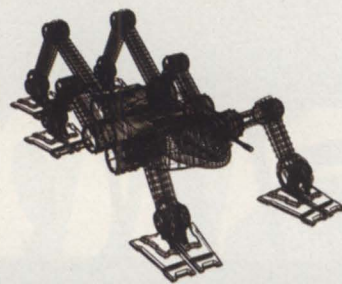

Here we have an early conceptual drawing of the game's interface.

◄ shudder to the core each time you catch sight of your own excruciating physical ugliness reflected in the unforgiving glass of the monitor screen. If you've ever fantasised about commandeering a troop of prowling AT-ATs, or directing a squadron of Y-Wing bombers from the comfort of your own backside, your fantasy is about to come true.

The game will feature around 50 ground-based missions, grouped into progressively unfurled chapters covering the same time period as the classic *Star Wars* trilogy. Although you won't be afforded an opportunity to control Han Solo, Luke or any of the other recognisable characters, you *will* find yourself taking part in some familiar battles – such as the almighty scrap on the ice planet Hoth, the setting for the famous opening scenes in the movie *The Empire Strikes Back*. Naturally, the outcome of that *particular* mission is a foregone conclusion – the Rebels eventually lose – but success or defeat depends on their ability to beat a strategic retreat. Other levels are more open-ended – mission objectives include the capturing of enemy buildings, the establishment of a fully functioning strategic headquarters, and, of course, everyone's favourite: the complete and utter annihilation of the enemy.

Keen management skills will also be a major prerequisite – as commander, you'll also be in charge of gathering resources and producing more units, as well as developing

LucasArts bare their soul...

Sean Clark reveal all about
Force Commander

Isn't it a bit yucky that Luke Skywalker snogs Leia in *A New Hope*... and then in *Jedi* it turns out that she's been his sister all along? Does Chewbacca wipe his bottom properly when he goes to the toilet, or does he let the inevitable residue dry up and dangle off his fur? If the Empire is so dastardly and cunning, how come its finest military technology – those two-legged AT-ST things – can be destroyed by a bunch of simple-minded *teddy bears*? These are just a few of the questions we *didn't* ask Sean Clark, *Force Commander*'s project leader...

PC ZONE: We understand you've had to invent lots of new units with that special *Star Wars* flavour. What kind of vehicles can we expect to see, and how did you dream them up?
Sean Clark: Obviously, if you look at the original trilogy, there isn't a lot of reference for ground battle equipment. So we identified what we could use from the movies, and what else we wanted. Then we (well, mostly the lead artist, Garry Gaber, actually) designed the new units. The designs were dictated by which side the unit would be used on and its function in the game.

We used a lot of *Star Wars* production artwork as reference to keep everything consistent with the pre-existing designs.
PCZ: The landscape is completely three-dimensional. Will it also be interactive? Can you blow chunks out of the hillsides, for example?
SC: As much as we'd like to do this, consumer machines just aren't hefty enough yet. One of the great things about going full 3D is that real effects like this become possible. We are using the 3D world information for a host of other features, including a true line-of-sight system. This really affects the strategy. For instance, if you manage to take a hill, then you'll be able to shoot further with greater accuracy, which means you'll have a real advantage. Vehicles will also go over hills and slow down, then speed up on the way back down. As the hardware gets faster, we'll be able to implement more real effects like modifiable terrain. It all adds up to a much greater sense of immersion for the players.
PCZ: How many levels are there, how do they differ, and what's their single best feature?
SC: There are about 50 levels in all. Each is a 3D terrain with unique features. And there are different types of terrain: grassy, ice,

A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away...

The missions in *Force Commander* span the entire *Star Wars* trilogy, beginning just prior to the destruction of the planet Alderaan from *Star Wars: A New Hope,* and climaxing after the dramatic ending in *Return Of The Jedi.* Much of the action will focus on the intense ground combat between the Rebel Alliance and the Imperial forces as they make a strategic fighting retreat from the planet Hoth, as waged in *The Empire Strikes Back.*

Many of the locations and units featured in *Force Commander* are directly and indirectly related to the trilogy and will therefore be very familiar to fans of the films. The missions will run parallel to the events in the trilogy, occasionally intersecting with films. General objectives will include establishing a base of operations, capturing strategic buildings and units, and the complete destruction of enemy forces. In an effort to keep the plot spinning and the storyline unfolding, before and after each level you'll be treated to beautifully rendered cut-scenes

Beautifully choreographed cut scenes will appear throughout the game.

that help shift the plot along and help convey what the outcome and objectives of each mission are. As you can see from the shot on the cover of this issue and those adorning these pages, the attention to detail is quite amazing, and in many ways acts as a taste of things to come from LucasFilm, who are currently using similar CGI technology.

launchers – the standard fodder of every RTS.

A Force is a Force is a Force, of course

So far, so *C&C...* So what *new* stuff does *Force Commander* bring to the overcrowded real-time strategy genre, aside from the obvious *Star Wars* license? Well, for starters it's entirely three-dimensional, with a floating, roving camera spying on the action throughout – you can tilt, rotate or pan across the killing fields at will, and even set up multiple cameras. Not surprisingly, you'll need a 3D accelerator card – the game just won't 'go' without one. True 3D line of sight is also employed, so *Total Annihilation* fans should feel right at home. As for the levels themselves, we're promised an eclectic mix of environmental 'styles', from the snowy wastes of Hoth to the dense forests of Yavin 4, and you'll need to develop specific strategies to deal with each environment. Be sure to check out our in-depth interview ▶

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snow, farm, sand, spice and so on, so they tend to look different too. Each planet also has a different natural resource – so on Tatooine you'll gather water from the moisture vaporators.

PCZ: Will you be able to control specific characters from the film, like Han, say, or Chewy, or Luke?
SC: Nope. They were all on vacation during the production of this game. Instead you get to control things like AT-ATs and Y-Wings.
PCZ: Cavedog have enjoyed great success with *Total Annihilation.* Part of that can be attributed to their hefty Net support. Do you have any plans to follow suit?
SC: Not to that extent, no. As far as units are concerned, probably not. We're hoping to release a well-tuned and complete set of units with the game. Levels are more likely, as any game player is always looking for new combat arenas.

PCZ: Have you been able to incorporate any 'stuff' from any of the new *Star Wars* movies currently being filmed?
SC: Nope. That would be an anachronism. Since this game revolves around the original trilogy, we're sticking to that time frame. Besides, we wouldn't want to spoil anything.
PCZ: So how *do* the events portrayed in *Force Commander* fit in to the *Star Wars* universe?
SC: The story unfolds in two campaigns, one for each side. The game actually begins before the destruction of Alderaan in *A New Hope,* and ends just after *Jedi*'s Battle of Endor. Each campaign is split into chapters that take place on different planets. As well as the planets shown in the Trilogy, the action will unfold on planets referred to, but not seen in the films, such as the red desert wastes of Kessel. For example, in one mission you must go to Yavin before the attack

on the Death Star to set up a base of operations before you launch an offensive. We never saw this battle take place in *Star Wars,* but it could have taken place while Luke was busy rescuing Leia.
PCZ: If the game supports more than two players in multi-player mode, how exactly will that work, considering there are only two 'sides'? Will we see Imperial troops versus Imperial troops, for instance?
SC: Well, the multi-player sessions are not part of the story, so anything goes.
PCZ: How will the floating camera system work?
SC: Instead of a scrolling 2D map, the true 3D world allows us to position a 'camera' in the environment. We can tilt, pan, orbit, and move it up, down, forward, back, and side to side, just like a real camera. The player has more control of what they see, and can even set up multiple cameras on the battlefield, then switch between them.
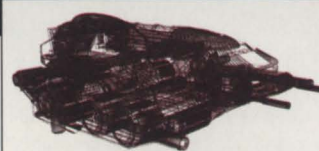**PCZ: Right. Now, what about 3D accelerator cards? Your game is accelerator-only. What led to this decision, and how do you think it will affect sales?**
SC: Much of what we're doing is not feasible without a 3D accelerator. Requiring one frees

Rebel units will look war torn, dirty and battered just as they do in the films.

us to take this game to the next level technically and creatively. The impact on sales is difficult to guess, but 3D cards are here to stay. They are becoming standard in new systems, and a high percentage of players are upgrading.
PCZ: What's your favourite *Star Wars* moment?
SC: Hmmm… Probably Han's conversation with Imperial Guards over the communications panel while attempting to rescue Princess Leia from the detention block in the Death Star… "Um, we're fine… everything's fine here… How are you?"
PCZ: Does 'the Force' figure in the gameplay somewhere?
SC: It surrounds it and binds it together, but it's not the focus of the game.
PCZ: Okay then, who's coolest – the Rebels or the Empire?
SC: I think they're both cool. Each has a different feel, and I suspect there will be long debates as to which one is better than the other.
PCZ: We thought you'd say something like that. We're with the Empire all the way.

Build more power generators

The game will be 3D accelerator only, though LucasArts are confident that this will not stop people from buying it. We tend to agree.

The 3D terrain means that vehicles will go over hills and slow down, then speed up on the way back down.

Product details

Developer: LucasArts
Publisher: LucasArts/Virgin Interactive
Website: www.lucasarts.com
Release date: winter '98

◄ on these pages to find out more.
    From what we've been privy to so far, *Force Commander* looks mighty fine. Let's hope LucasArts can live up to the our massive expectations and deliver a game every *Star* Wars fan wants. ⓩ

"We identified what we could use from the movies then designed the new units"

You'll be able to position cameras anywhere within the real time 3D terrain which incidentally, also features multi-level battlefields as shown here.

The 3D models featured in *Force Commander* are rendered in excrutiating detail before being dropped into the 3D game universe. Many, like this Imperial air base have never been seen before.

At your command

Force Commander will feature around 100 individual *Star Wars* personnel, vehicles and building units that you will be able to control while waging war against the Rebel Alliance or Galactic Empire. Just as in the films, each 'side' will have a distinctive look. The Imperial units and buildings will look brand new and pristine, while the Rebel units will look war-torn, dirty and battered.

    Ground troops will range from squadrons of Imperial Stormtroopers and Rebel soldiers to various different classes of droids. You'll also be able to take control of numerous different vehicles from the stables of the Rebel Alliance and Galactic Empire, including never-before-seen tanks, missile launchers and troop transports. Many of these will be familiar only to to fans of the films, but we can expect some exciting new additions to the fold.

    In an effort to keep everything within the game completely compliant, the game designers and artists actually went back to the original concept sketches and paintings created for the movies for inspiration. They also spent days studying the movies themselves, and managed to create a whole army of new units and buildings that wouldn't look out of place in the new movies.

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HEART OF DARKNESS

Buh? It's here? Following five long years in development hell and a move from Virgin to Infogrames, *Heart Of Darkness* is actually, finally, unconditionally here. **Charlie Brooker** is the welcoming committee.

WE'LL BE REVIEWING THE GAME IN full next issue – below is a look at what to expect. But first, let's step back in time. Back, back, back... back to the May 1995 issue of your wonderful zoaraway *Zone*...

History today

"The first real interactive cartoon", we said. That was on the front cover. Turn to the article itself and the hyperbole starts flowing. "For the past couple of years, Virgin has been hinting that it has something really rather special tucked up its sleeve... the next game in a long line of exceptionally well-produced arcade-style adventure games... (it looks as though) you are actually playing a cartoon... animated in a way never before seen in a computer game."

Look, we were *excited* okay? This was three years ago, and that's a long time in the world of computer games. We were still reeling from *Doom*; *Command & Conquer* had just been announced; our lead review was *Jungle Strike*. We needed something to keep us preoccupied, and *Heart Of Darkness* fitted the bill very nicely, thanks. At the time, it seemed potentially revolutionary: near Disney-quality animation, an orchestral soundtrack, and overall game design from a team previously responsible for show-stopping blockbusters like *Flashback* and *Another World*. It couldn't fail to impress.

In the final paragraph, we wrote that "the release date for *Heart Of Darkness* is currently September or October, however it could end up being slightly later than this." Slightly? *Slightly?!*
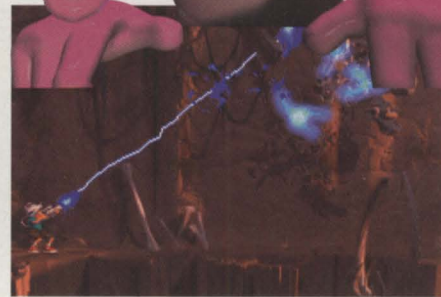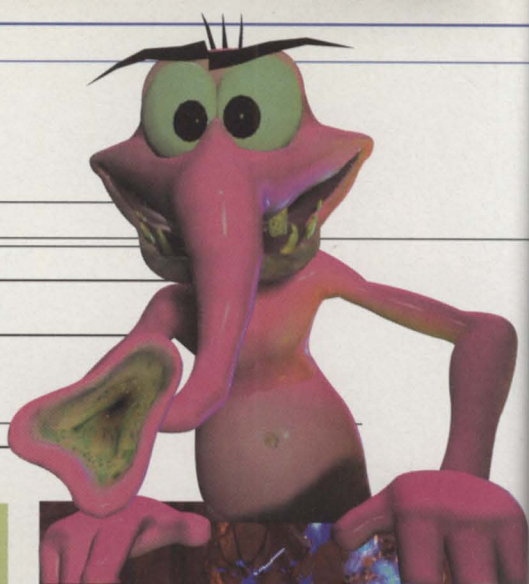
Try three bloody years, mate!

Now it's three years down the line; the game's been in development for a total of five years. It's now overseen by Infogrames, not Virgin. And we've finally had a go on a near finished version. And guess what? It isn't quite as impressive as it seemed back in '95. In the cold light of day, *Heart Of Darkness* reveals itself to be essentially little more than a *Prince Of Persia*-style platformer, albeit one with very pretty graphics and a sweeping soundtrack. The animation is undeniably superb, but the visual clarity isn't – it all runs at a worrisome 320x240 resolution, as was the norm back in ye olde days.

Sweat dripped into Andy's eyes as he tightened his grip on the long, snaking bone, clinging on as if his life depended on it.

His eyes shut, Andy grunted and let off another powerful discharge, strong enough to blow a hole in the roof.

Andy gulped nervously as he stared down at the gaping pink orifice. It looked big enough to swallow him whole.

With consummate skill, Andy dodged the spurting eruptions, which spewed goblets of hot liquid into the air around him.

What took you so long?

We fired off a few questions to Amazing Studios, and after a short delay, they replied – via an interpreter. Understandably, their answers to some of our questions were a tad, er, cagey.

PC Zone: *Heart Of Darkness* **has been in development for an incredibly long time by any standards. Why?**
Amazing Studios: *HOD* has been developed in almost five years. We did everything ourselves, from the original idea to the packaging, to the scenario, all the 3D backgrounds, even the cinematic sequences. We created our own textures. And, of course, we had to go through a trial-and-error process, which takes time, to reach the same excellent level of quality throughout the game.

PCZ: Are you concerned that some players may feel the game is somewhat dated, especially in these days of 3Dfx-assisted graphical splendour?
AS: Using 3Dfx isn't the obligatory way to create a good game. There are very good 2D games. And there are still new ways to be developed to push the envelope of 2D. 2D and 3D represent different means of expression, there is no fight to have about that.

PCZ: The game runs in 320x240 resolution. Are you anticipating much negative reaction?
AS: Honestly, nobody really cares. The game is beautiful and thrilling. The gameplay will draw the player to the screen. That's what we wanted to achieve.

PCZ: What's the story behind the move from Virgin to Infogrames? Is there any animosity there?
AS: Virgin simply did not have the will to continue funding the game's development. Infogrames recognised *HOD* as a long-term asset for them, and forged an amicable deal with Virgin to support the game. That's it. No animosity.

PCZ: The main character tends to meet a violent death many times over. Do you hate American children as much as we do?
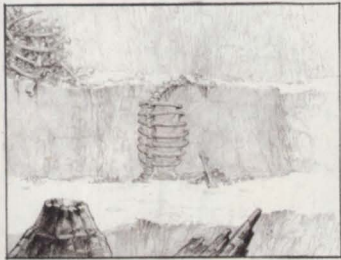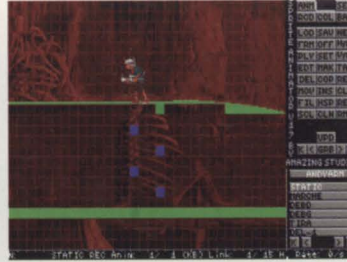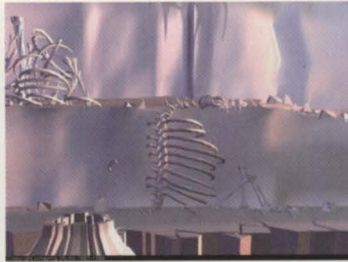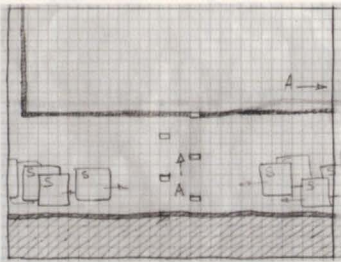
◀ Here we see how a preliminary design sketch becomes part of the finished game. In order to simulate how long this process actually took in real time, focus on each picture for almost an entire year before moving to the next.

But look, we're not going to condemn it out of hand. It's not fair to poke fun at the elderly (although tripping up old ladies with a broomstick *is* funny). The important thing here is *gameplay*, and that's one factor that never ages. Initial encounters suggest a highly involving take on the likes of *Oddworld*, with you guiding 'Andy' (a hateful yankee brat) through a series of cunningly designed platform-tastic levels, encountering maximum peril every step of the way. It ain't easy – you'll die more or less every 30 seconds – but it's likely you'll go back and try again, if only to watch the exquisite death animation that greets you each time Andy meets an untimely demise (there are hundreds of

different examples).

Next month we'll open up the game and pore over its entrails. At the moment its early, days but one thing is certain: no matter how addictive or otherwise the gameplay turns out to be, *Heart Of Darkness* is

> **"The animation is undeniably superb, but the visual clarity isn't – it all runs at a worrisome 320x240 resolution."**

extremely unlikely to make the kind of waves predicted at its inception. There are other, better-looking, flashier games available. *Heart Of Darkness* was designed to push back the boundaries; now it looks a little retro. Sorry, kid, but that's showbiz. **Z**

The sun beat dreamily down as Andy lay back on the grass, whimpering.

Andy fired a salvo of steaming goo at the nearest bird's stomach.

AS: We thought that Andy was English! In fact he doesn't really have a nationality. The town at the beginning looks more European than American. As for violent death, there isn't blood anywhere. The deaths are terrible, but it is done in a cartoon way so it's funny.

PCZ: The game has clearly been influenced by the likes of *Prince Of Persia*. Which other game titles do you admire, and what other influences helped shape the project?

AS: We tried to combine great gameplay with the rhythm and emotions you can feel when you see an adventure movie. So we have been influenced by movies like *Raiders Of The Lost Ark, Back To The Future, StarWars, The Rescuers Down Under (You what? – Cultural Studies Ed)*. Therefore we attempted to forge a unity between gameplay and cinematic sequences. In the game, there is a real rhythm, surprises, and twists. We had to create a new kind of attitude for the creatures. They react in a highly interactive way with the player, and also between themselves. The monsters attack in co-ordination, they have strategies, they look alive, they can be scared by Andy, they can avoid his shots. The universe of the gameplay is alive.

Graphically, we were influenced by comic and fantasy artists like Richard Corben, Michael Whelan, Moebius, Greg Hildebrant. People here have very different gameplay interests (from *Warcraft* to *Virtua Fighter*); it's not the content of a game that really influences us, but more the abstract essence of the gameplay as experienced by the player. All of us are passionate games players.

PCZ: Complete the following sentence: *Heart Of Darkness* is going to stun the gaming public because...

AS: Because from the very first image, you are embarked on a fantastic trip in which you are playing the lead

role. You are in a movie. You live it. And you really want to know what's going to happen next, because nothing is certain.

PCZ: Ever heard of the games *Psyclapse* and *Bandersnatch*?
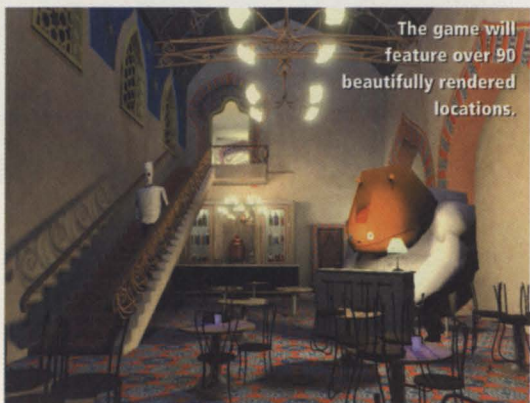
AS: No.

GRIM FANDANGO

Kate Moss sneaks out of Johnny Depp's bedroom unnoticed.

Lead character Manny is constructed from over 250 polygons and changes costume throughout the adventure.

A surreal blend of film noir and quirky Mexican folklore? A blackly comic adventure game starring a cast of walking skeletons? Both of these accurately sum up **Charlie Brooker's** everyday existence. No wonder he's so excited by LucasArts' forthcoming 3D adventure.

"This is, without doubt, LucasArts' most ambitious adventure offering to date."

GRIM FANDANGO IS SET IN THE LAND OF the Dead. No, not Chatham: this is a vibrantly coloured otherworld, inspired by Mexican folklore.

You, mister player sir, don the guise of Manny Calavera, a downtrodden travel agent who sells package holidays to the recently deceased. Manny's dream is to leave the Land of the Dead and graduate to the infinitely superior Land of Eternal Rest (which, as the name suggests, is basically one gigantic *doss*), but in order to do this, he must first deliver a prerequisite number of truly top-notch customers – those who've lived downright saintly lives on Earth. Trouble is, a rival agent seems to be stealing all the best 'leads'... and that's where the story begins. Head honcho Tim Schaffer has been quoted as saying the ensuing storyline is "kind of a road-trip story and a buddy film, and it's also a femme fatale *Double Indemnity*-type deal with a little *City of Lost Children* thrown in, and *Chinatown* and *Casablanca* and *The Big Sleep*." Now *there's* an eclectic brew. Not exactly

The game will feature over 90 beautifully rendered locations.

conventional is it? And a good thing too: there's far too much bland pap in the marketplace already. This, on the other hand, is something that you can really get your teeth into.

As if to underline the project's unique flavour, LucasArts have also opted for a distinctive, highly stylised visual feel. The majority of the characters are skeletons, with bold, simple features, while their home world is as brightly coloured as the famous Mexican 'Day of the Dead' festivals upon which it is based. As the storyline unfolds, Manny is taken away from the carnival atmosphere and led through a procession of impressively varied locations, including an eerie forest, a grim prison colony, a bustling metropolis, and even the bottom of the seabed.

Other developments are afoot that will clearly make *Grim Fandango* a fresh and invigorating experience. The storyline covers a period of four years and features approximately half as many again locations than *Monkey 3* so there's every indication that we're not in for another 'finished in five-hour' *Full Throttle* experience. The characters themselves will evolve as the game progresses and thanks to the graphical mix of 3D and 2D the artists will be able to synchronise limb and head movements with animated face textures for more even greater realism.

Thanks to the miracle of 3D technology the game uses a re-worked 3D engine borrowed from *Outlaws* and *Jedi Knight* and features a movable camera to transport you right into the heart of the rich and densely populated gaming environment. Although the interface is still being worked on, early versions of the game have used the cursor keys to control Manny, which would be another major innovation in terms of adventure gaming, though Tim is keen to point out
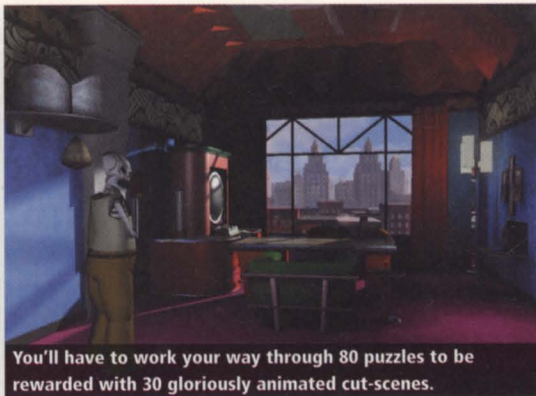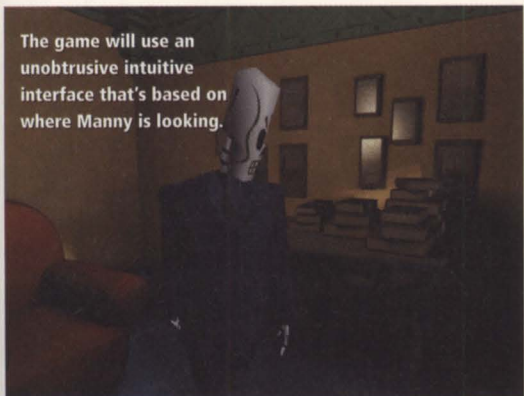

Seems like a nice enough place.

There are over 50 polygonal characters with whom to interact.

The game will use an unobtrusive intuitive interface that's based on where Manny is looking.

You'll have to work your way through 80 puzzles to be rewarded with 30 gloriously animated cut-scenes.

It's a dark adventure in every sense of the word.

that nothing has been decided yet: "Tricky interfaces sometimes alienate people from playing adventure games. There's no reason why they have to be slow and tedious to play – you just have to look outside the genre for inspiration."

So far the numbers are impressive: 90 locations, over 50 characters, 80 puzzles, 30 cut-scenes, 7,000 lines of dialogue... this is, without a doubt, LucasArts' most ambitious adventure offering to date.

All this innovation comes at a price though, and LucasArts have hinted that unless you've got a pretty high spec. PC, you won't be able to play. That said, LucasArts were never afraid of pushing the envelope, that's why they're at the forefront of adventure gaming. Let's wait and see what they come up with this time – from what we've been privy to so far, we at *Zone* are sure it'll be worth the wait. **Z**

Grim Fandango will be approximately half as big again as the huge *The Curse Of Monkey Island*. Which is nice.

At present you control Manny with the cursor keys, though a final decision is yet to be reached.

SCUM II: The Summoning

Grim Fandango is the first LucasArts adventure title to dispense with the famous SCUMM engine. SCUMM was originally created by *Monkey Island* creator Ron Gilbert and first used to power the game *Maniac Mansion* – hence the snappy acronym (SCUMM stands for Script Creation Utility for *Maniac Mansion*). Since then it's been tweaked, overhauled, and generally tinkered about with, but has still provided the skeleton for every one of LucasArts' long line of maximum-quality 2D adventure games. All of them – *Monkey Island, Indiana Jones, Sam and Max, Day of the Tentacle, Full Throttle* et al – all owe their virtual lives to good ol' SCUMM.

But not *Grim Fandango*. The leap into three dimensions has necessitated the creation of an entirely new system, which maintains many of the basic SCUMM principles, but also introduces many startling changes. For starters, there's the interface – or rather, the lack of one. As the years have passed, each subsequent LucasArts adventure has tried to lessen the intrusion of the point-and-click interface – what started out as an 'action bar' taking up half the screen in *Maniac Mansion* eventually mutated into a pop-up 'coin' interface for last year's *Curse of Monkey Island*. Taking this to its logical extreme, *Grim Fandango* has no need for cursors

whatsoever. Instead, the interface and the lead character are one and the same. Sounds confusing? Not really – it's actually more logical. In the 2D adventures, you'd notice a 'hot' object (ie one you could interact with) when you moved the cursor over it. In *Grim Fandango*, Manny Calavera (the hero) will bring such items to your attention simply by turning his head to look at them. In the 2D adventures, to make a character move from one side of the room to the other, you had to click on the position you wanted them to move to. In *Grim Fandango* you have direct control of Manny. You make him walk there yourself.

If you think that sounds a bit like the adventure gaming equivalent of *Mario 64*, you'd be right. The idea is to make interaction with the storyline as seamlessly absorbing as possible – or as project leader Tim Schaffer puts it: "There's nothing slapping you in the face, reminding you that you're playing a game." Cool, say we. *Tres* cool.

Structures are modelled on actual period buildings.

Where's Alec Guiness when you need him?

The rucksack on the left contains the tools of war.

COMMANDOS:
BEHIND ENEMY LINES

War – what is it good for? Absolutely nothing. Say it again... The atrocities of war as entertainment: Steve Hill asks "Why?!"

WAR IS STUPID, AND PEOPLE ARE STUPID, AS androgynous crooner Boy George reminded us in the mid-80s. Can't really argue with that, but bloody military conflict does make for some great games. This particular effort is set during that glorious period of British history, the Second World War, apparently a time of great community spirit. Despite the fact that your home had been obliterated and your old man killed in North Africa, you could quite literally pack up your troubles in your old kit bag and smile, sonny, smile.

It is late 1940, to be precise, and the Axis armies have overwhelmed the whole of Western Europe. Momentarily stopped by the English Channel, the German army concentrates its forces for an imminent invasion of Britain. However, there is a man in the English command who has not resigned himself to play merely a defensive role. His name is Lieutenant Colonel Dudley Clark. His plan is to create a special unit with a fistful of exceptional men: men skillful enough to deal with all kinds of equipment and weaponry; men able to strike at the enemy on the most dangerous missions; men able to change the course

Buildings brandishing swastikas contain Nazis, and must therefore be exploded in a violent fashion.

"It doesn't shirk from the harsh realities of conflict, and accurately depicts the horrors of war."

of the war. These men were destined to make history. Except it's a game, and therefore not real.

Developed by Spanish newcomers Pyro Studios, *Commandos: Behind Enemy Lines* is essentially a game that combines strategy and action in what is being touted as a new concept called real-time tactics. In a break from the all-out attack approach of many real-time strategy titles, the emphasis is on smaller units rather than full-scale war. And whereas it is certainly of that ilk, it also doffs a cap to the likes of *Cannon Fodder*, *Syndicate* and even the *X:COM* series.

Marching off on a mission,
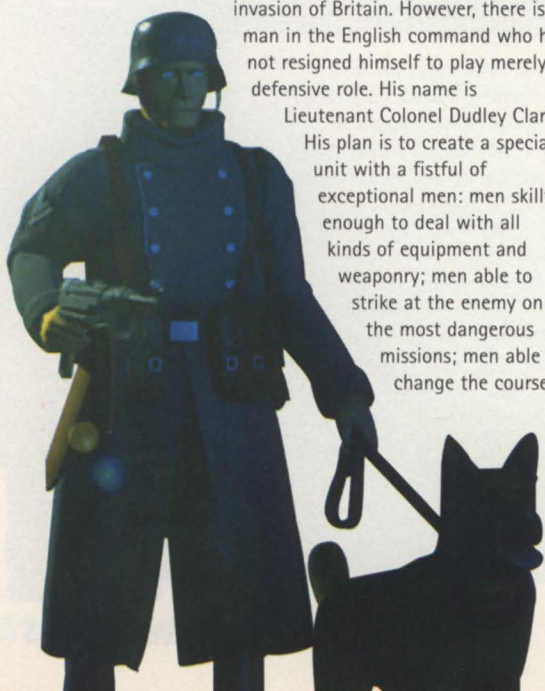
Commandos has a unique line-of-sight feature. Clicking on Germans shows exactly where they can see.

How many war movie influences will you be able to spot?

The developers of *Commandos: Behind Enemy Lines* have clearly had a long, hard look at pretty much every war film ever made, claiming to have sat through no less than 600 of them, which is a lot of Sunday afternoons. It seems to have paid off though, with many ideas and situations being 'borrowed'. And when the game is released, it will

inevitably have film buffs 'pulling themselves orf' as they spot the various influences. We've only played the first six missions, but reckon we've already seen elements of *The Dirty Dozen, The Guns Of Navarone, Devil's Brigade, Where Eagles Dare, Bridge On The River Kwai* and *The Heroes Of Telemark*; although *Carry On England* seems to have been tragically overlooked.

The Dirty Seven

There are 24 missions, spread over such geographically disparate areas as the Norwegian Fjords, North Africa, Normandy and the Rhine Crossing. You take control of a commando unit made up of seven men, each of whom specialises in certain actions or areas. For instance there's a bombs and explosives expert, and a marine who specialises in sea operations, able to swim, dive and handle all kinds of boats. Only those with relevant qualifications take part in each mission. Vehicles on offer include trucks, cars, light and heavy tanks, motorbikes, trains, mini-submarines, diggers and even aircraft. Each commando has his own story and military background which determine his capabilities; each has a distinct personality and even their own regional accent, and the idea is that you develop an affinity for them as individuals. If one dies, the mission is deemed a failure, which could prove frustrating, necessitating a lot of save-games.

After finding out the mission objectives, you will have to carefully study the environment and the enemy's movements, as the emphasis is firmly on stealth. A definite plan is required which will have to be worked out in your mind in advance. Avoiding detection is paramount – simply embarking on a gung-ho attack with all guns blazing will not work.

Your various commandos are represented by pictures of their faces. In this case three of them are dead, so the mission is deemed a failure.

It's war

In war there are always casualties. *Commandos* doesn't shirk from the harsh realities of conflict, and accurately depicts the horrors of war.

Of course, violence in games is nothing new, but in this context it takes on a different aspect in that it is historically accurate. There are no holds barred, though – throats are slit to the sound of a blood-curdling shriek, bullets penetrate flesh and obliterate vital organs, and the mutilated corpses are left stricken in the snow, as their warm blood oozes out into the cold earth. To avoid detection, bodies can even be piled into a mass grave, providing an horrific spectacle of twisted limbs and blank eyes.

It's a laugh though, innit? **Z**

Ichten nichten

Don't mention the w...

Seeing as *Commandos* largely revolves around shooting, stabbing, poisoning and exploding Germans, the question of its reception in Germany is worth considering. Although the violence has been slightly toned down – corpses appearing as gravestones – the concept is essentially the same: slaying the Evil Hun. Apparently, though, the German press have taken to it favourably, seemingly able to totally detach the actions of the Nazis from those of their countrymen, looking upon them as a separate entity altogether. All the same: "Two World Wars and one World Cup, doo-dah, doo-dah..."

Product details

Developer: Pyro Studios
Publisher: Eidos Interactive
Website: www.eidosinteractive.com
Release date: June '98

Commandos features four distinct areas. Geography fans will probably recognise this as North Africa.

SUPERBIKES
WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

From the creators of *Screamer, Screamer Rally* **and** *Screamer 2* **comes** *Superbikes World Championship.* **Richie Shoemaker went to Milan to find out why two wheels are now better than four.**

HE TAXI RIDE FROM THE AIRPORT TO Milestone's offices in Milan was a pant-pooping experience of sphincter-splitting proportions. Clamped to the back seat by the G-forces, my cheeks billowed in the wind as I searched frantically for a seat belt. As the car swerved between lanes, clipping scooters and Fiats, I was sure this day would be my last.

Ten seconds later (though it felt like hours) we were coming to an abrupt stop in an unassuming street in the centre of the city. Pallid and moist, I lifted my body out of the car, kissed the tarmac Pope-style and planted thousands of Lire in the driver's palm. Crossing the street, it became blindingly obvious why these Milestone guys are so good at making racing games.

Blissfully unaware of my pant-wetting journey across town, Antonio Farina, the managing director, greeted me at the door. It was time to compose myself, forget the need for new underwear and find out why years of my life had been lost forever. This had better be bloody good.

It's a, it's a, it's a sim…

As an early version of the game kicked into life, it quickly became obvious that *Superbikes* wasn't going to be a straightforward arcade racing game. It was the main menu that gave the game away – just under the bit that said 'arcade' was the word 'simulation'. Those expecting this to be a pure and simple two-wheeled *Screamer* clone are in for a bit of a surprise.

Time for Antonio to give us the spiel: "*Superbikes* is the only officially licensed game of the Superbike World Championship. It features all 12 tracks from the 1997 season and all 18 official riders from the five main teams.

Imagine seeing this guy coming up your rear.

So close you can almost punch him in the face…

…and then roar into first place.

With graphics as good as these, who needs to watch motorbike racing on television?

The game itself is a very accurate simulation, with support from all the main [bike] manufacturers. We have very close links with the teams' technicians, and they give us as much information as possible, with all the telemetries of all the real races from the whole season." Okay, so it's got the official license, but will it be fun to play?

…but with arcade bits

If first impressions count for anything, then it's got to be said that *Superbikes* looks pretty stunning. A hell of a lot of detail has gone into the riders and their bikes, and serious fans of the sport could no doubt tell all the riders apart just by clocking the slight variations in colour schemes. When things get moving, the graphics are equally impressive. Pop-up is non-existent, and the lighting effects really add to the overall effect. In fact, at first it's difficult to stop gawping at the shadows flickering over the bikes from overhead branches – sad but true. In fact, in playback mode it was like watching it on the telly.

racing games, now it's time to evolve into something more realistic. With all the experience we gained from *Screamer*, we know how to make a racing game playable. People forget that this element is very important in a simulation, and haven't made it a priority."

It's certainly true that *Superbikes* is more than playable, even at this early stage. Both arcade and sim fans are sure to find plenty to keep them occupied even if they don't care much for the sport.

Antonio reinforces the point: "*Superbikes* is more than a bike racing game. It is 'real' and complete. Although it is a full simulation, with all the details you'd expect, there is a special section of the game that is arcade. You have two games in one, basically. You can take the immediate approach or the more serious approach. It's more like two games from the same focus point. Whether

Looks good on Voodoo 2, but playability for all is promised.

Come off your bike in the real thing and it's off to casualty.

A very watchable playback mode.

"Superbikes *is going to be* the game to go for if you want to race on two wheels."

But how did the bikes handle? Well, it took just three seconds to come off. Crashing into some well-placed hay bales, the polygon rider flew over the handlebars and skidded through a barrier. It looked painful. Then, as if to relay fears of internal haemorrhaging and shattered bone, he slowly got to his feet and limped back to the bike, picked it up and got back on. What a hero! After five minutes I'd come off the bike no less that 15 times and I hadn't even managed to complete a lap. Half an hour later I was tenth out of 30. This was in arcade mode, and I was soon ready to become an Italian citizen.

"Everything will be customisable," chipped in Antonio. "You can change the angle of the forks, everything. The aim is to create a more complete racing experience. From the full simulation, the arcade section and the reference section, it will be a complete racing experience."

The amount of depth that has gone into the game is pretty staggering, even if you don't know one end of a handlebar from another. Certainly this is quite a departure from Milestone's previous games (the *Screamer* series). So why make the transition to motorbikes?

"It's been a very long time since any bike simulations have appeared," explained Antonio. "There has been a gap in the market that *Superbikes* intends to fill. Everybody else is doing car games and don't really consider using bikes. These bikes give you a greater sense of speed, of excitement and danger. You won't have such spectacular crashes in any car game. What with today's technology and the excitement that only racing a bike can give you, we thought it was time for a very good product."

More Screamer?

Whether Milestone will provide us with a further instalment in the *Screamer* series remains to be seen. "It's difficult to say," pondered Antonio. "The *Screamer* series has been very successful, but *Superbikes* has been in development for two years and it's something we've had to focus on.

"We want to further specialise in racing games," he continued. "I think we demonstrated in the previous *Screamer* games that we were able to create good arcade

you prefer *Screamer* or *F1GP*, *Superbikes* is going to be *the* game to go for if you want to race on two wheels."

That may be so, but to date bike games just haven't been as enjoyable as car based racers – anyone remember *Redline Racer*? The fact that you can't power-slide around corners doesn't help matters. And while the crashes can be spectacular, who wants to spend half the race dusting themselves down and waiting to get back onto their bike as the CPU-controlled uber-riders whizz past?

By making *Superbikes* more of a sim, the people at Milestone have obviously understood that they need to appeal to the hard-core bike fans. Whether the casual arcade racer fan will be turned on by two wheels as much as four remains to be seen. **Ⓩ**

Each bike will even sound different.
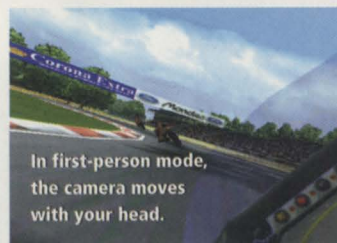
In first-person mode, the camera moves with your head.

"What's that popping sound?... Oh, it's my kneecap.

Goal-scoring, adrenaline-pumping, end-to-end action
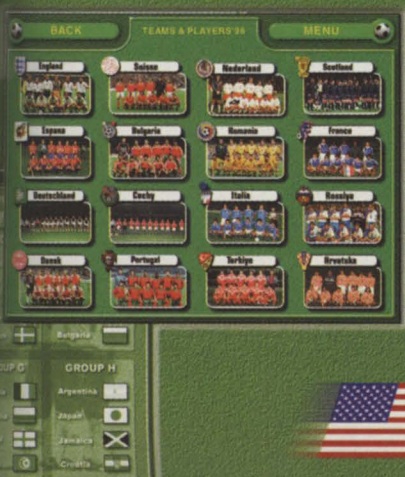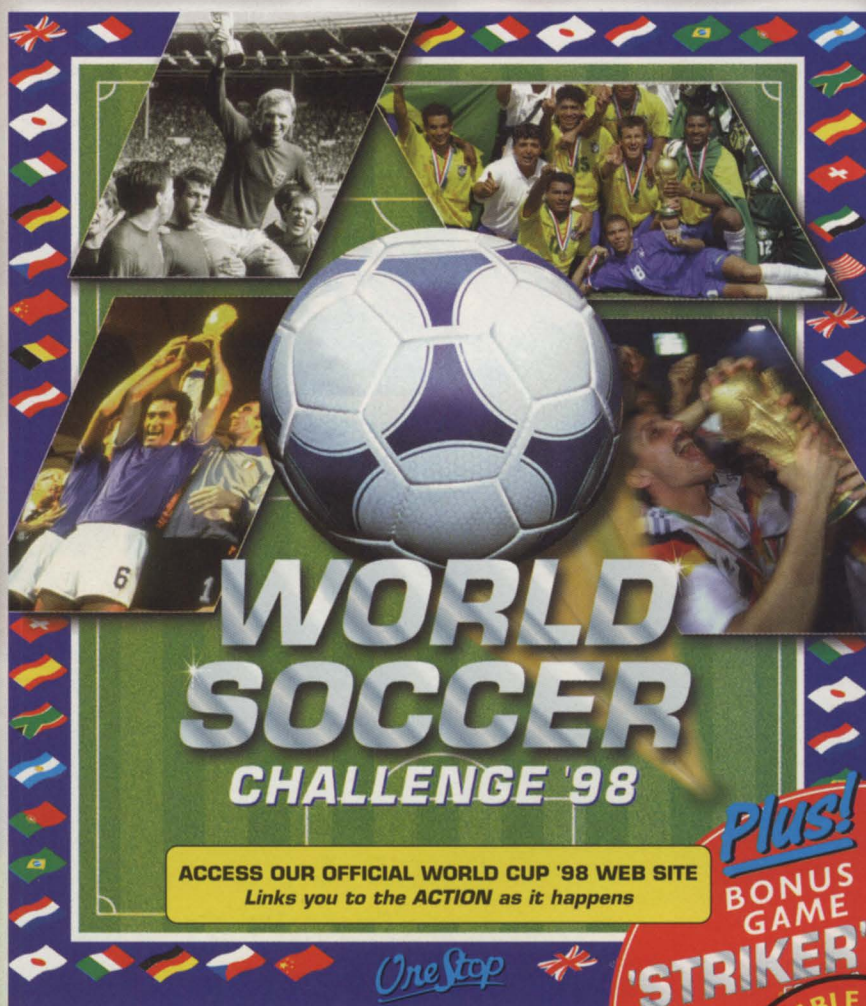
WORLD SOCCER

CHALLENGE '98

Oi!

...Archer!

Because Charlie Brooker is probably the worst pool player in the world, we sent him to interview balls-on-the-table maestro Archer Maclean at his Banbury HQ. To get laughed at.

ISIT BANBURY, AS *ZONE* DID, AND you'll notice two major things. One: the incredibly unsightly Kraft-Jacobs-Suchard factory on the outskirts, a building so unspeakably, unfeasibly hideous it really *does* make your eyes sore. Two: the famous Banbury Cross itself is so small and unremarkable that you wonder why anyone would want to visit it at all, let alone "ride a cock horse" toward it. And what the hell is a 'cock horse' anyway? Aside from a good name for a band, that is?

Anyway, Banbury itself might be a tad disappointing, but it also provides a home for modestly named Awesome, the software development house run by Archer Maclean (of *Dropzone* and *Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker* fame). Archer and his team are currently beavering away at a new game, *Jimmy White's 2: Cueball*. Although balls-on-the-table shenanigans play a major part in the proceedings, there's a damn sight more to it than that. Next month we'll be poring over it in nigh-on pornographic detail, but for now we'll explain it briefly thus: Imagine, if you will, an almost photo-realistic 3D simulation of a sumptuous games room, such as you might find in a wealthy man's mansion. The amount of detail is astonishing, utilising around ten times as many polygons than *Quake II*, and with textures that don't pixelate *at all* as you move close to them. Aside from playing with the various games within, you can simply fiddle about with everything in the room should you see fit. This, essentially, is *Jimmy White's 2* – except it simulates

On the 'ockey.

On the table.

Pocket billiards.

Bit of left-hand side, bit of backspin... Yeah, easy double.

Nice baize, shame about the legs.

several rooms, not just one. The subject matter may seem familiar, but the treatment is entirely new. It's the kind of thing you've really got to *witness* to fully appreciate.

That's the game. And now... heeeeeere's Archer.

PC Zone: So, this new game – could you describe it for us in a soundbite?

Archer Maclean: No. There's too much in it to sum it up. We're having enormous problems from the marketing point of view trying to come up with something that describes it succinctly, because there's too much in it.

PCZ: Is it a bit like *Tetris* in the respect that it's quite simple, but almost impossible to describe?

AM: No. It's... You go into a multi-room environment. Everything in each room is very highly detailed, and everything *does* something. You can play with games, pick things up, move things around... In the snooker room, for instance, there's obviously a snooker table, but there's also chequers and darts, fireplaces, light switches, and a CD player so you can stick your own music in. I also wanted to go to town on detail, so for instance when you pocket a ball, the ball goes *into* the pocket, *down* through the runners, and if there are other balls already in there it'll click against them – and if it's on the left hand side of the table and you've got stereo speakers, you'll *hear* it on the left. It's virtually photo-realistic. *Everything* is in there.

PCZ: And this is also a multi-player game, we presume?

AM: Yeah. Well, obviously it's not *Deathmatch Snooker* with 15 players, so having people running around killing each other isn't really relevant to this game – much as I'd like to do that. But yeah, you can play over networks and the Internet. During testing we've found that networked *simple* things, like darts or draughts, work really well. Actually, the darts game is brilliant. Everyone seems to end up playing network darts all the time.

PCZ: How come?

AM: Well, it's the control system. Everyone we've mentioned this

> ## "The amount of detail is astonishing, utilising around ten times as many polygons as Quake II."

to says: *[disinterested voice]* "Oh, darts, yeah, hmmmm..." But this is far more playable than you'd expect. And you leave holes on the board, so when you come back to it the next day the holes are still there from when you played before.

PCZ: So you're a stickler for detail?
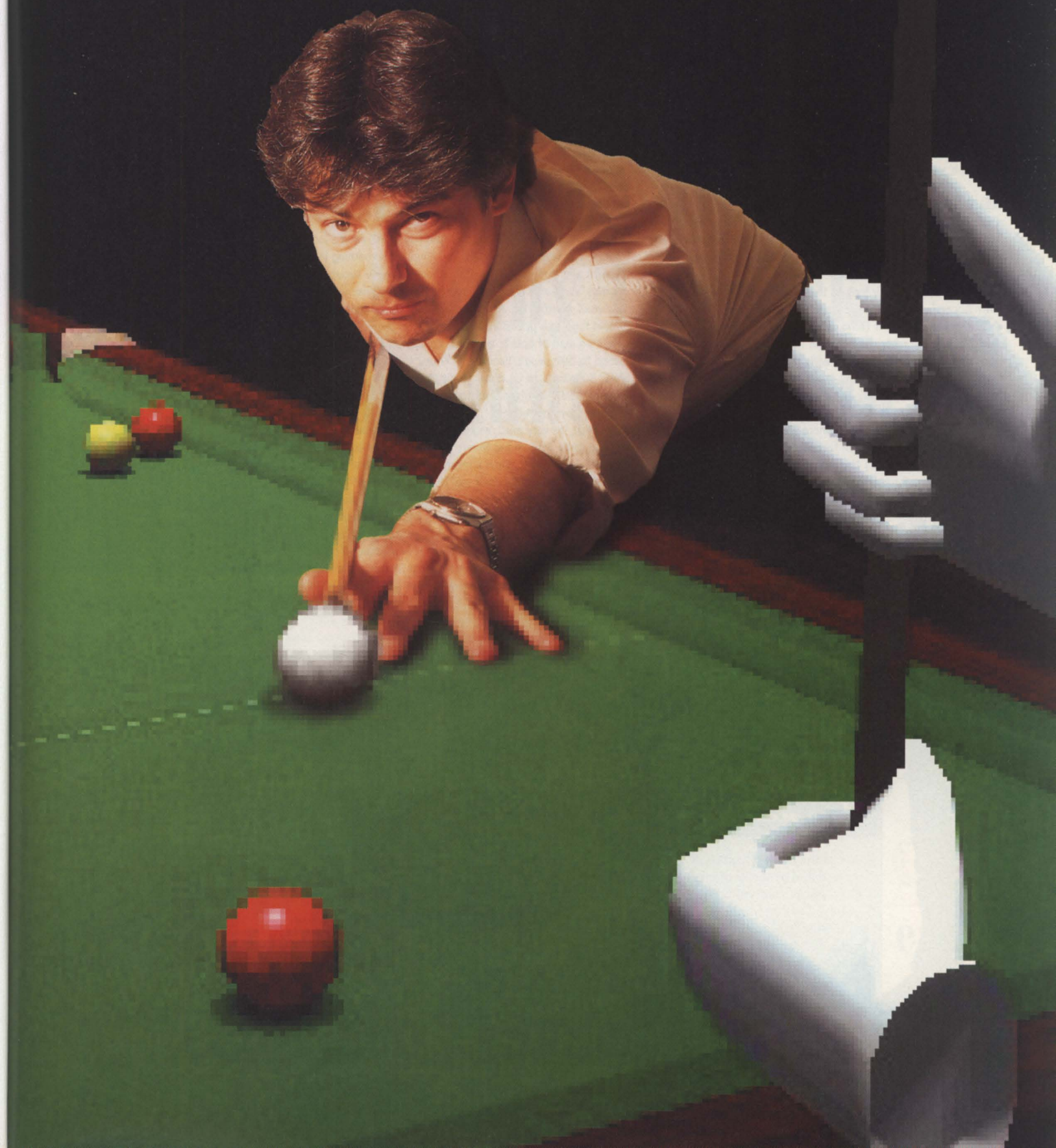
AM: Oh, absolutely.

PCZ: Do you go around examining everything?

AM: Well, not exactly. I just notice tiny details naturally. Most physics programmers can just observe something and then have a rough idea of how to simulate it mathematically. Some people don't notice detail, some do. Back when I did *IK+ [seminal Amiga fighting game – Historical Studies Ed]*, that was a karate game but it also had a hell of a lot going on in the

What's Your Game?

Just like the snooker room we've all got in our own homes.

background. It took place up on a cliff face overlooking the sea, and there was a sunset, the sea was actually rippling and reflecting the sunlight. A lot of people were absorbed into the atmosphere of the game without fully realising what was being done to their eyes. If you turned all that off, and had just a static backdrop, then you'd notice it wasn't there. Subtle, but it worked a treat.

But is it Art?

PCZ: So, being a 'detail junkie', do you get annoyed when you see things in games that aren't quite right? For example, with *Resident Evil*, it all looks great until your character runs against a wall or something.
AM: Oh yeah. And their legs do that [mimics 'scissor-walking' with fingers]... It's like they're walking on ice.
PCZ: Does that kind of thing drive you mad?
AM: Yeah, it does. My characters in *IK+*, if they put a foot down, they then *walked*, without their foot sliding on a pixel. They did it properly. And if you hit the other guy in the face, you had to get him – to the pixel – on the nose. It wasn't like *Streetfighter*, where you can knock someone over from ten feet away.
PCZ: Does this obsession with detail make you a natural for games such as snooker, where you're dealing with physics that have to be spot-on?
AM: Yeah. It can be a bit irritating though, because even now it can't be as good as I want it to be.
PCZ: Is that what drives you on?
AM: Well, I like to be a perfectionist, I suppose. At the end of the day, people notice quality. Games that have it stick out in the long term. They're the classics. What I don't like is when people have obviously thought: "Oh, that'll do." You've got to go that extra ten per cent. It's like artists. Take Canaletto [18th century Italian artist-type bloke – Art History Ed], who does *seriously* detailed stuff.

You get right up to within a millimetre of his paintings and there's *still* detail. And then you get work by the Impressionists, and I sometimes think that was a joke played by the artists on the snobby buffs at the time. You know, that 'magic eye' stuff? That's what Monet was. It's like, "Oh well, if I blink I can definitely see *something*."

'Skunks to blame' shock

PCZ: But you can't just keep adding detail forever, otherwise surely you'd never stop programming?
AM: No, we do have to draw the line somewhere. It's tricky. One thing I've found in this age of corporate publishers is that they expect creativity to happen like clockwork. The way they expect it to work, they've employed me as this artist, who's employed nine other artists to do a square-foot patch each, and they all work simultaneously and patch it all up, and you're left with a three-foot by three-foot painting that's perfect and classic immediately. But it really doesn't work like that.
PCZ: We saw greater originality in the days of the Spectrum and the Commodore 64. Do you think the new corporate culture is to blame for the lack of that these days?
AM: Yeah. The reason is that back then there were people like me, Tony Crowther, Geoff Crammond, David Braben and so on, and we were able to do our own stuff at home and turn an addictive hobby into a...
PCZ: A labour of love?
AM: Absolutely, a labour of love. And you didn't need a lot of money. You were on your own. You could do something in six months and then sell it. You didn't have to worry about people saying: "Well, why don't you change this, otherwise we won't pay you." Another big difference is that *only when it was ready* would it go to a publisher. And they'd say: "Sign here," and "Here's a load of dosh"... and then rip you off [laughs]. Although I tend to take people like that to court.
PCZ: So what's to be done about that? That's the reason why so many TV and films tend to be so bland – because they're designed by committee.
AM: Well, it's very much marketing and sales department-lead. It's the same with all big things – as soon as the corporate lot step in, they have to show a return to shareholders and so on, and if the accountants can't see 10.1 per cent over 10.0 per cent, that's bad news. So creativity suffers. Then again, I also think a lot of British-based publishers are now beginning to think, "Yeah, okay, maybe we should just take a *risk*, and allow a team to go so far with some research" – although 'research' is a word that's not liked in this industry. R&D is not allowed. It's got to be instant creativity or none at all. A *Quake 6* clone – all publishers want the next big thing. They want the killer application, the killer game, whatever it's going to be. But if you take something to them that's completely wacky, they don't want to know. They'll say: "Oooh, no, can't risk that. We want a driving game, or a fighting game." And yet they also want the next big thing. Well, someone somewhere's *got* to do it. **Z**

In next month's issue (on sale Thursday 11th June) we'll be looking at Archer's *Jimmy White's 2: Cueball* in far greater detail – and passing on some 'trade secrets' to any budding pool sharks out there. Stay tuned.

The mighty Wurlitzer: huge choons.

Welcome to the house of fun.

Dropzone: another one of Archer's little creations.

On the pull: your chance to pop three cherries in one go.

You need hands

One of the neatest aspects of *Jimmy White's 2* is the 'virtual ref', represented by a pair of ethereal floating white gloves. It's not often you see motion-captured hands at work in a computer game – and that's a shame when you've seen just how well they work here. And as Archer explains, they're incredibly lifelike: "I wanted the gloves to do everything a real ref would do, as well as have a lot of character. So they have a lot of idle animations – drumming fingers, fidgeting... And then when a ball goes down a pocket, they go over and pick it up, polish it and put it back on the table. And they don't just plonk it down, they roll it into place with a finger. And so on."

Need a hand?

Against our advice little Johnny Laycock bought a giant pumpkin.

Why? When you can have these.
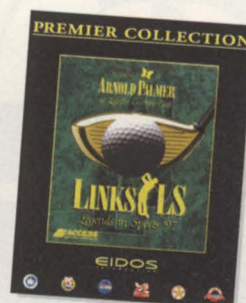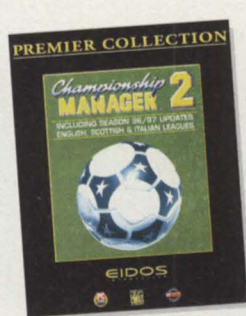
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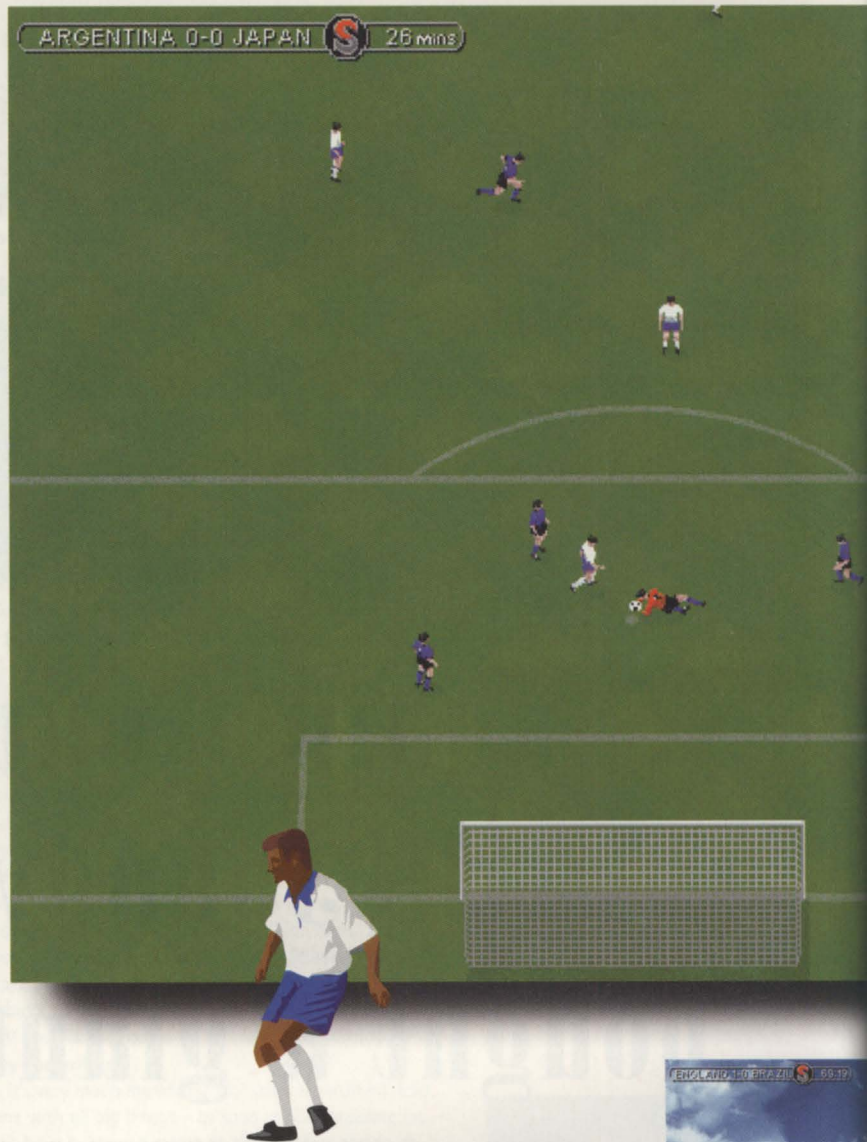
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4	M		R Di Matteo
10	M		O Olbertini
7	RW		A Di Lovio
9	A		C Vaeri
11	A		A Del Puero
12	G		G Foglizza
13	LB		A Punalino
14	RW		L Statuto
15	AM		G Zela
16	A		E Chiesa
4	A		P Cisiraghi

Coach: C Moldini

X ▶ CONTINUE

WIN WIN WIN WIN W

Take cover!

Win a top-of-the-range games PC with Voodoo 2 capabilities!

YOU COULDN'T MISS OUR EXCLUSIVE REVIEW OF the awsome *Incoming* in last month's issue of *PC Zone*. It scored a whopping 90 per cent and was awarded a *PC Zone* Classic recommendation. If you want a game that shows off what the latest technology can do, then *Incoming* is most definitely it. Make no mistake, this is one of the best-looking games we've ever played!

To celebrate Rage's achievements, we want to give you, the reader, a chance to play and experience the game exactly as it was intended to be played – on a ninja PC equipped with the latest super-fast Voodoo 2 technology.

To stand a chance of winning this outstanding prize, you have to do four reasonably simple things: answer three questions of varying difficulty, and come up with a funny caption for the picture on the opposite page. Easy, eh?

Questions, questions

Easy

1. Incoming is…
A: A 'Rummy' simulator
B: An action game for the PC
C: A brand of condom

Medium

2. Which of these games is also by Rage software…
A: Blood
B: Darklight Conflict
C: Forsaken

Hard

3. Voodoo 2 owners can take advantage of the following feature in Incoming…
A: B-buffering
B: Zip-mapping
C: Tri-linear filtering

Send your answers and caption on a postcard or a stuck down envelope, along with your name and address, to:
Incoming Outgoing
PC Zone, CPZ86A, Customer Interface,
Bradley Pavilions, Bradley Stoke North,
Bristol BS12 0BQ

SCENARIO CRITICAL

Tie-break caption bit...

Take a look at the screenshot above. Imagine you're the pilot, all hell is breaking loose outside, and you suddenly find yourself trapped in this position. What do you do? What do you say? What do you think? Come up with a suitable caption of no more than 50 words – make us laugh, cry or hurl – and it could swing the vote in your favour. Righty?

First prize: a Pentium II 333MHz Midi Tower system with PCI/AGP motherboard, Orchid 12Mb Voodoo 2, 64Mb RAM, 17-inch monitor, 4.3-gig hard drive, 24-speed CD-ROM, Creative AWE64 sound card, plus all the other extras associated with a PC of this power and size. On top of that, the machine will come with 12 months on-site warranty, so there's no need to worry if it breaks down. Much.

Ten runners-up prizes: a copy of *Incoming* for their efforts.

Rules: All entries to be received by Wednesday 10th June. No correspondence will be entered into. The editor's decision is final. Boom, boom, boom – let me hear you say 'hosepipe ban'.
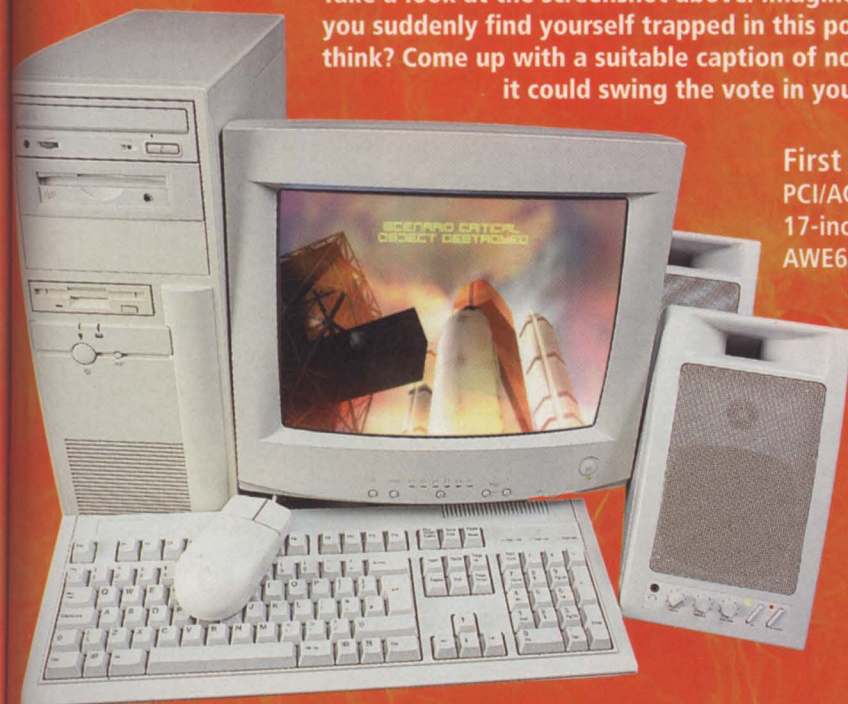
AS ALL BUT THE MORE RECLUSIVE OF you should by now be aware, there's a bit of a kickaround planned for this summer. An international feast of football, even. A celebration of global passion, if you will. Yes, the biggest World Cup ever is coming to France and a month-long festival of The Beautiful Game awaits. It's The Greatest Show on Earth. Nations will unite, heroes will emerge, grown men will weep openly in the street, and others will punch each other hard about the face and neck. And what exactly will you be doing? Sat in the dark playing games, that's what.

But if you do happen to get swept up by the proceedings, you may care to chance your arm at a football game. You certainly won't be short of options. Throughout the tournament – and beyond – the shops will be swamped with football titles, the shelves metaphorically creaking under their combined weight. And that's just from EA's *World Cup 98*. But if you ask
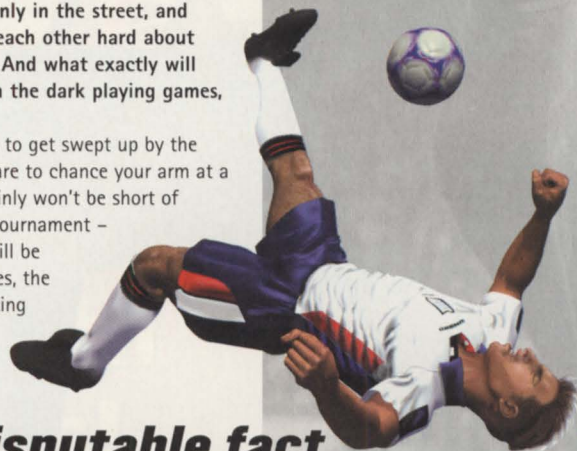
"It's an indisputable fact that EA's World Cup 98 will piss in the eyes of rival football games"

at the counter, a helpful assistant wearing slightly too much make-up will point you in the direction of a fluorescent coated steward who will lead you through some labyrinthine corridors to the poorly tended away end. Here, the massed ranks of rival games will be squeezed into the cheap seats, chewing rancid burgers and scorching the rooves of their mouths with overpriced tea. Leading up to the kick-off, the more boisterous will attempt some half-hearted chanting, supporting their team with enthusiasm but little conviction. Following the inevitable crushing defeat, the champagne will flow in the EA executive boxes, and the losers will traipse out forlornly, left to pick dry sticks and mumble to themselves.

World in motion

It is an indisputable fact that Electronic Arts' *World Cup 98* will outsell all other football titles this summer. Not only will it piss in the eyes of rival football games, but it will also empty its back from a great height over every other game on the market. Industry pundits are predicting that it will be Europe's biggest-selling video game ever. Such is the corporate muscle that EA wield, this was pretty much taken as read before the game even entered development. EA Sports have such a strong brand as far as the FIFA games go, they are way out in front of the opposition before they even start. Thankfully, the latest version doesn't lack potential. Sales-wise, the other companies may as well piss into the wind as try to compete. The best they can hope for is that a flustered parent will buy their game by mistake, or that a miracle will occur and the mindless proles who buy games on the strength of pretty pictures will start taking heed of magazine reviews.

Of all the game genres, football is one of the hardest to do properly, and the number of shit games released is phenomenal. The number of factors that go towards making a good football game is vast, and ▶
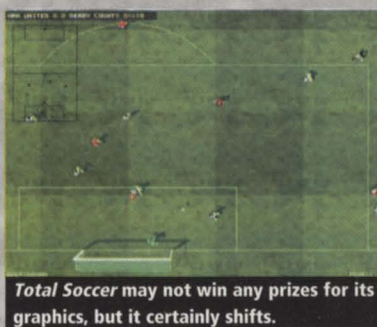
Getty Images

Fever pitch

With a flurry of football games set to flood the shops, Steve Hill asks: "Can They Kick it?"

Adidas Power Soccer 98 is largely an unknown quantity.

Total Soccer may not win any prizes for its graphics, but it certainly shifts.

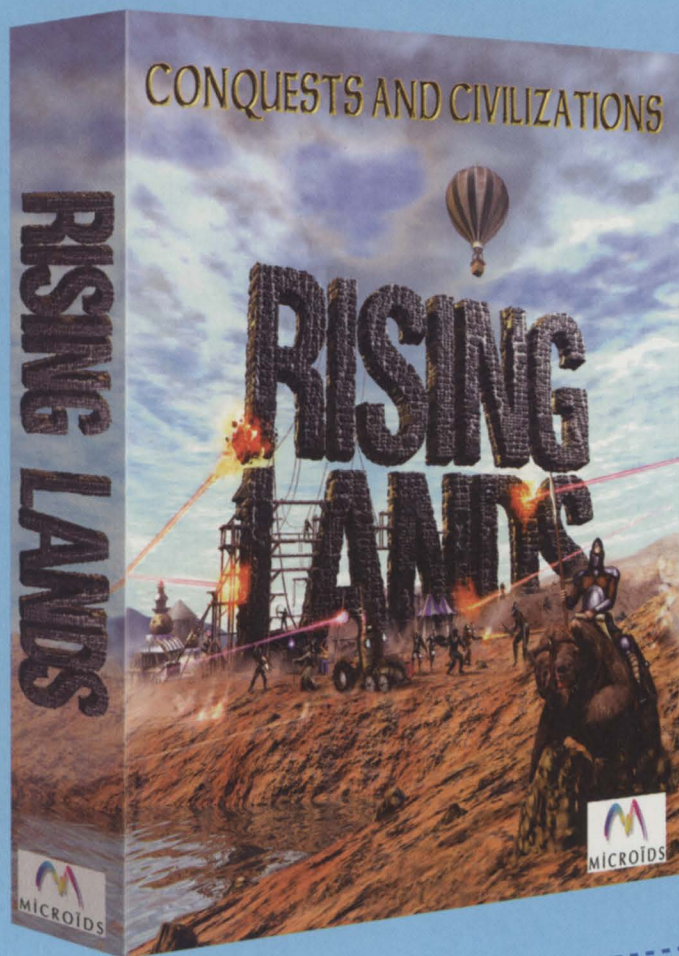*Viva Football* looks set to provide some post-World Cup interest.

Three Lions is the official game of the England team, despite the fact that they seem to be losing here.

World Cup 98 from EA Sports is destined to be one of the biggest-selling games of all time.

Sensible Soccer World Cup 98 suffers as the developers tweak and tweak.

adidas Power Soccer '98

Publisher: Psygnosis
Developer: Shen, Paris
Released: June 8
Gratuitous endorsement: Plimsolls
Quite remarkable: Different developer to previous effort
What they say: "APS'98 is the only football game that brings the gameplay of ISS 64 to the PC. It has far more features, teams and competitions than the majority of PC football games, but we insisted on keeping the intuitive approach and playability of a console game."
World Cup tip: "France, of course!!" (Reza Elghazi, Producer)
What we say: Never seen it moving
Equivalent player: Kevin Noteman
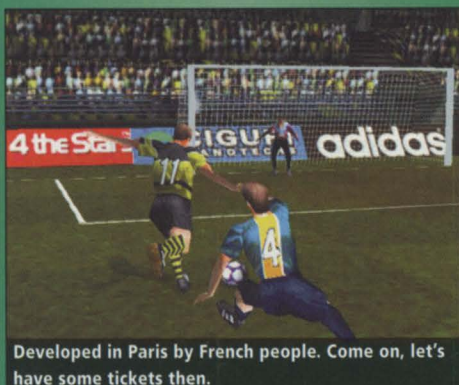
Developed in Paris by French people. Come on, let's have some tickets then.

finding the right blend of AI, graphics, sound, commentary and control system is far from easy, as is coming up with an original slant. Within the trade, it is accepted that there have only ever been two truly great football games: *Sensible Soccer* (ideally on the Amiga) and *International Superstar Soccer* (preferably N64 stylee). If a tenuous analogy is required, in recent years they are equivalent to Liverpool and Manchester United respectively. *FIFA* is Arsenal in that they occasionally come good. But look further, and mid-table obscurity is the best that many games can hope for, with a vast amount of Wigans also thrown in to make up the numbers.

When major football tournaments come around, everyone rushes to get a game out, and publishers pressurise developers into releasing games that clearly aren't finished. What is the thinking behind this? Are they hoping that people will think, 'Oh yeah, football, that's good. Must buy a game.' But it's hardly as if football is kept a secret for the rest of the year. Admittedly, when England do well, new converts to football emerge, insist on calling it soccer, and vainly attempt to explain the offside rule to their giggly girlfriends. But are the kind of people who sit in wine bars asking: "How can Bergkamp play for Arsenal and Holland?" (©*The Fast Show*) really a solid target audience?

Skunks

The fact that such vast numbers of games will be sold is testament to the sinister powers of marketing, and the cynical ethos of reissue, repackage, re-evaluate. It's a well-worn phrase, but many of the games released will inevitably be a case of same meat, different gravy. If a more vulgar analogy is needed, it's equivalent to *Razzle* magazine boasting 'Best Ever Pile-ups,' forcing you to

Sensible Soccer World Cup 98

Publisher: GT Interactive
Developer: Sensible Software
Release date: Out now
Gratuitous endorsement: *PC Zone* All-Stars team (secured for a curry, eight pints of high-strength lager and a cream tea)
Quite remarkable: It's *Sensible Soccer*, what else do you need to know?
What they say: "Our game has more control, more motion-capture and miles and miles more fun. Also, most of the others play like shit. Ours has zillions of different kicks, headers and saves all on one button. We have a second button for two different types of tackle control and a burst of speed, and we've got mega 3D graphics throughout."
World Cup tip: "Romania, because I bet on them. Probably be Italy though." (Jon Hare, Sensible Software)
What we say: For the purist, *Sensible Soccer* is arguably the greatest football game ever conceived, and is still very playable in these hi-tech days. Clearly Sensible couldn't keep releasing the same game, and have taken the plunge into pseudo 3D. It's been delayed for months for tweaking and it had better be worth the wait, or we'll stab them in the face.
Equivalent player: Gazza – used to be brilliant, has been plagued by setbacks, but has the nation's support

It's *Sensible Soccer*, but not as we know it. Fancy 3D replays and everything.

SuperMatch Soccer

Publisher: Acclaim
Developer: Cranberry Source
Released: Out now
What they say: "Unlike the rest, *SMS*, with all the heritage of the *Match Day* series, is a football game on the computer, not a computer game about football. Flash graphics and computer-aided action, no. But for a real game of footie, there is no other choice but *SMS*."
World Cup tip: "England! It's the Final... Hoddle subs himself in, in the last minute of extra time, scores the winner and strips off to reveal an *SMS* logo tattooed on his parts." (Jon Ritman, ex-Cranberry Source)
What we say: We gave it a healthy 75%
Equivalent player: Le Tissier – has some nice touches but requires a lot of patience

The game formerly known as *Match Day 3*, now published by Acclaim. No, really.

Three Lions

Publisher: BMG/Take 2
Developer: Z-Axis
Released: Out now
Gratuitous endorsement: The Football Association license, making it the official England team game. Also some adverts for Lynx, Ericsson and *World Soccer* magazine, who supplied player details. Bloke rockers Ocean Colour Scene provide the music
It's a football thing: Motion-capture by USA's Eric Wynalda, who, along with his USA team-mate Alexi Lalas, also served as design consultants.
Quite remarkable: Unique targeting system; advantage rule; real player names; players talking to each other in their native tongues; authentic kits, names, faces and boots.
What they say: "It's England, the World Cup, and any true red-blooded Englishman should own it! We've got England 66. We've got Pele, Cruyff, George Best and Bobby Moore on the same squad."
World Cup tip: "Brazil. They're fucking tough." (Gordon Bellamy, Creative Director, Z-AXIS)
What we say: Some nice one-touch stuff, but it's clearly a straight port from the PlayStation, and it shows
Equivalent player: David Platt – tries hard and gives it plenty of high knees, but isn't particularly good-looking

The unmistakable sight of Brazil's Ronaldo, about to feel the tackle of Italy's Maldini.

Total Soccer

Publisher: Live Media UK Ltd
Developer: Live Media UK Ltd
Release date: Friday 22 May
Quite remarkable: A surprise return for overhead football
What they say: "Gameplay rules. Nothing else matters. Skill wins games. Faster gameplay, more action, more response, more style. Runs at 60fps, that's why it's soooo smooth and playable. You feel you're in control and not just watching the game. You don't end up scoring the same goal from the same place every time you play it. Our players don't have superglue on their boots. Overhead games are cool, it's how God watches football."
World Cup tip: "England, due to the palindrome effect." (Charles Chapman, Project Manager)
What we say: Looks strangely familiar
Equivalent player: Stuart Barlow – very fast, but strictly lower-division material

The players resemble ants, but somehow ants in football shirts.

rush home and grab for the Kleenex, only to find that it's simply a compilation of the last eight issues.

This won't necessarily be true in all cases, and a game may well emerge from nowhere to claim the Golden Boot, like Toto Scillacci in Italia '90. But with all the inevitability of Scotland's early return home, many football games will flounder in the qualifying stage. We've rounded up the contenders, talked to the people involved, and for a bit of fun 'in the office', assigned relevant players to each game. This is meant as a largely non-judgemental guide, and if you do have to piss your money up the wall, please wait for the *PC Zone* reviews. But more importantly, what the hell are you doing playing kids' games when there's football on the box? **Z**

You're supposed to be at home

Not everyone is frantically clamouring for a piece of the World Cup pie, and notable by their absence from the bunfight are Gremlin, who didn't think it appropriate to knock out a World Cup game so soon after *Actua 2*. They consider themselves above that sort of thing (although *Euro 96* and *Actua Club Edition* would suggest otherwise) and, like Chris Sutton, won't be involved. Another non-qualifier is *Kick Off 98*. Like Robbie Fowler – never really in contention and certainly won't be going now. Fowler is injured, and Ubisoft have dropped *Kick Off 98* cos it was also knackered. Wait, there's more jokes…

Viva Football

Publisher: Virgin
Developer: Crimson (an in-house department of Virgin)
Released: September
Quite remarkable: You can take control of any international team from 1958 onwards, attempt to change history and win the World Cups from Sweden '58 to France '98.
What they say: "*Viva*'s gameplay is the stand-out feature. It plays more like the game of football than any other title, yet retains the fast action you'd expect from a game but don't always get. *Viva* allows you to play the style of football you want to, whether your mind-set resembles Glenn Hoddle or Jack Charlton."
World Cup tip: "Brazil. The way they handled the Germans in their own backyard a few weeks ago shows they've got the steel to add to their undoubted flair. If Juninho can overcome his injury to pull the strings for Ronaldo and Romario, they will be tough to beat." (Simon Humber, lead producer)
What we say: Yet to see it moving
Equivalent player: Nigel Quashie – a lot of talk, but unproven
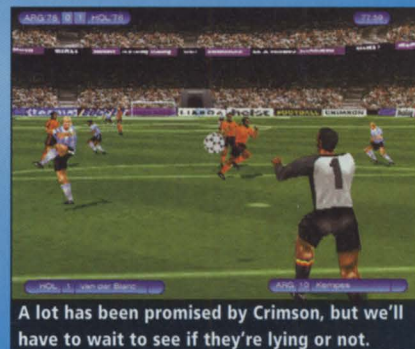
A lot has been promised by Crimson, but we'll have to wait to see if they're lying or not.

World Cup 98

Publisher: EA Sports
Developer: EA Sports
Release date: Out now
Gratuitous endorsement: The small matter of The World Cup
Quite remarkable: Win the Cup and you get to play out some of the classic finals from 1930 onwards, replete with appropriate fashions, hairstyles and monochrome television technology
It's a football thing: Commentary by Des Lynam, Jon Motson, Chris Waddle, Kenneth Wolstenholme and Gary Lineker
**What they say:** "The reason *World Cup 98* is going to be better than any other game – not just footie – is its amazing World Cup feel, its fantastically realistic-looking players and kits, its super-quick gameplay and its amazing responsiveness. Coupled with improved AI – better passing, more variable shooting and realistic player characteristics – it's as real as you're going to get."
World Cup tip: "I'd love to say England will win, but my gut feeling tells me that France will take it." (Nick 'Bat Wings' Malaperiman, Associate Producer)
What we say: It's a lot faster than the last effort
Equivalent player: Alan Shearer – powerful and ubiquitous, but a bit dull
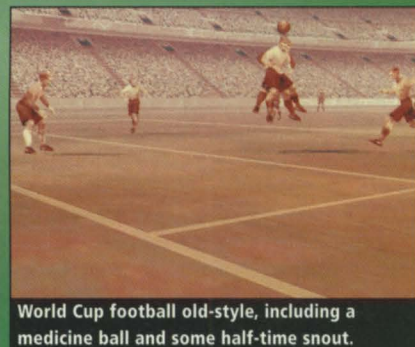
World Cup football old-style, including a medicine ball and some half-time snout.

World League Soccer

Publisher: Eidos Interactive
Developer: Silicon Dreams
Released: end of May
Quite remarkable: Over 190 teams from ten different leagues covering all major soccer territories worldwide. Drone players where computer AI takes control of a player, while you move into a good position and then decide when he passes
It's a football thing: Motion-capture by Les Ferdinand. Commentary by Peter Brackley and the deadpan Ray Wilkins
What they say: "The beauty of *WLS* is the fact that it doesn't place restrictions on the user. It reflects the way in which a real team will build up movement: the solid, calculating defence, the incisive explosion of the midfield and the exquisite power of the forward. The flow is what makes football an art and not a science. That is what *WLS* encapsulates." (Rob Palfreman, Producer)
What we say: Seems all right to us
Equivalent player: Teddy Sheringham – looks classy, but lacks pace and is unpopular

No prizes here for the spot-the-ball competition. That's it there. Look.
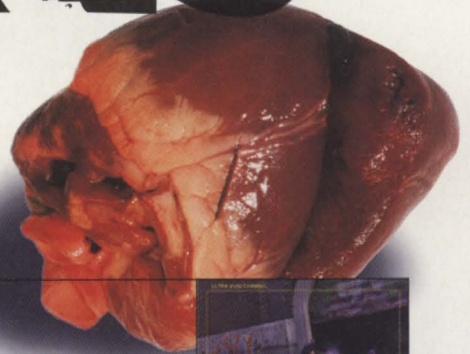
YOU'LL LEARN FROM YOUR MISTAKES

Friday, 8pm:
Level one, enemy round first corner.

Saturday, 3am:
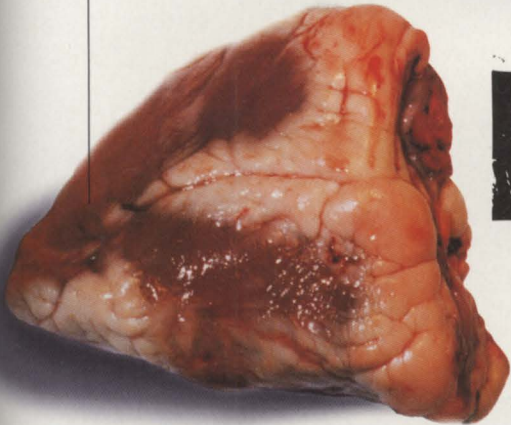Level one, booby trap in lift.

Saturday, 11am:
Level two, blasted in back by own team member.

Sunday, 4am:
Level four, ambushed by three enemy agents.

BUT SO WILL THEY.

Ubik's level of artificial intelligence means that agents react to situations realistically and learn from each mission. Careful, so do the enemy.

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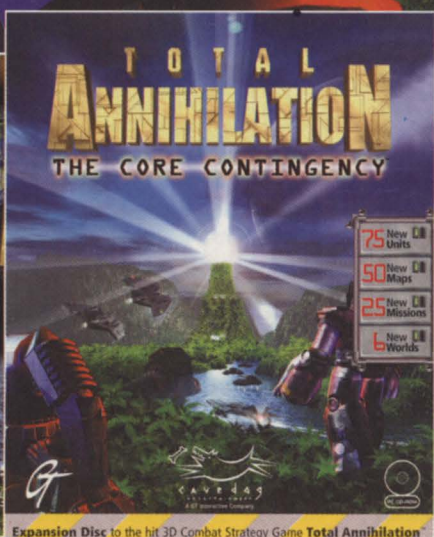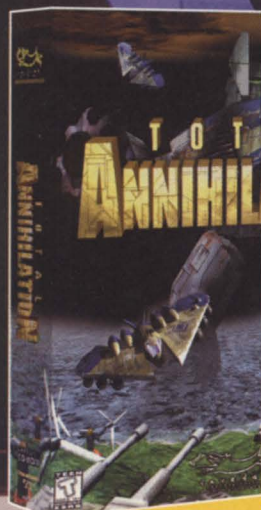
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Strategy Game **Total Annihilation**

Review ZONE

This month

StarCraft finally makes it onto the shelves, but Jeremy Wells wonders if it was worth the wait.
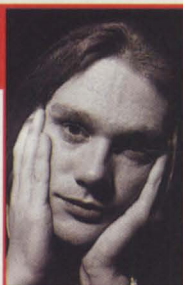
LONG WITH EVERYONE ELSE, WE ORIGINALLY HAD *STARCRAFT* down as a pre-Christmas release last year. Being major fans of the *WarCraft* series, we had high hopes for it and had planned to put it on the cover of the Christmas issue. As you probably know, it slipped until just after Christmas, and then again and again until we finally saw review code a couple of weeks ago, just as the game went on sale. So was it worth the wait?

The reaction in the office was definitely mixed, the overwhelming impression being "Is that it?" Sure, it's a nice enough game, but it doesn't exactly represent a leap forward in ideas or innovation, does it? Similarly, LucasArts' first foray into the strategy genre was also rather disappointing. So where are so many developers going wrong?

From the feedback we've been getting from our chat forum recently, it would seem that what RTS fans crave most is originality and innovation. The overriding message to developers looking to release a real-time strategy game this year would therefore appear to be "make it different". Let's hope they take heed.

After speaking at length with Westwood, it appears that they've got some very strong ideas about how *Tiberian Sun* will look and play when it's released in the autumn. And you can read exactly what they have to say in an EXCLUSIVE interview next month (on sale Thursday 11 June).

If the letters and e-mails we've received regarding last month's Clone Wars feature are anything to go by, real-time strategy fans are gagging for a 'next-generation' RTS. Roughly translated, this means they want a game with a 3D rotate and zoom facility, artificial intelligence that is 'intelligent', levels and terrains that require different strategies and units, all wrapped up in a presentable package. After managing to get an early look at *Force Commander* (page 42), and probe LucasArts for info, it appears they might just have the answer to everyone's prayers. It's just a question of whether they can deliver the goods. In many ways they've taken the opposite route to Westwood: their game uses a 'bells and whistles' 3D engine and is 3D accelerator only, whereas Westwood are looking to a wider audience by ensuring their game will run in software. From what we've seen so far in *Tiberian Sun*, the emphasis will be on building a secure base, with skirmish and guerrilla tactics playing an increasingly important part. *Force Commander*, on the other hand, will be more scripted, which will no doubt set the stage for plenty of huge battles interspersed with single-party missions in keeping with the plot of the films.

What this ultimately means to real-time strategy fans is more choice than ever before as developers attempt to outdo each other, and hopefully produce much better games as a result. In the meantime, you can rely on us to tell you exactly what's good and what's bad, and we'll do our utmost to get your opinions across to the developers themselves. **Z**
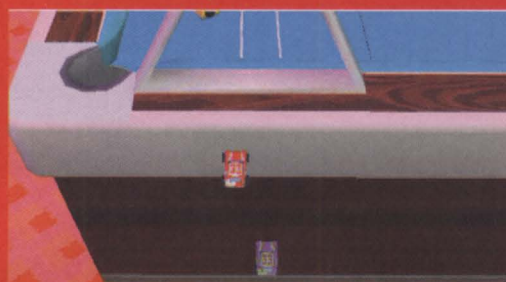
Tib Sun looks like being the new benchmark.
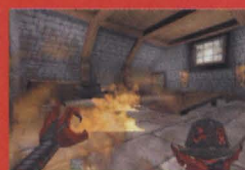
StarCraft is good, but lacks originality.

Scoring system

90+ CLASSIC

The highest accolade a game can attain. Not only is it innovative and highly original, but it's extremely playable and has masses of long-term appeal. Games that receive the 'Classic' award should be seen as a benchmark with which to compare other games of the same genre.

80–89 RECOMMENDED

An excellent game that simply lacks that certain something to make it a gaming classic. It may not be necessarily highly original, but it contains some new ideas and variations that add to the genre that are well implemented. Well worth checking out.

70-79

If a game scores within this bracket it's good, but not good enough to be recommended. It's not exactly original and somebody's probably done it better already, but it's still playable all the same. Basically, it's worth shelling out for, especially if you're a big fan of the genre, but don't expect anything innovative. Whatever you do, don't discount games just because they don't quite hit the recommended mark!

50-69

Games that fall into this bracket are distinctly average and don't really offer anything new. There's nothing much wrong with these titles, but then there's nothing much to recommend them either. They're just average. Okay. Not bad. Alright. We've seen it all before. A lot better on budget. You get the picture.

40-49

Okay, so you're not really going to buy this, are you? We'd advise you not to. It's below average, it's not very playable, you'll probably be disappointed. It had a few nice ideas, but they were badly executed. Give it a miss.

21-39

Oh dear. This should never have got past the ideas stage. It offers absolutely nothing new to the genre, is very limited in terms of gameplay, frustrating to play and ultimately a complete waste of money. Avoid disappointment. Avoid this game.

20 AND BELOW PANTS

Absolutely bloody awful. Unplayable, due to bad design or bugged code. Crap with a capital 'C'. Naff with a capital 'N'. Do not buy this game, it will ruin your life and all those who come into contact with it. It doesn't get much worse than this. Have we made ourselves clear?

In Perspective

This is designed as a purely visual guide to how games of a similar style compare. The bars do not relate to previous review scores... they are simply an indication of how the reviewer feels about the games on a sliding scale.

Game 1

Game 2

ATI 3D Native Version Available	**3DBLASTER** Native Version Available	**3DFX** Native Version Available	**DIAMOND STEALTH** Native Version Available	**MATROX MYSTIQUE** Native Version Available	**POWERVR** Native Version Available	The software is designed to take advantage of **D3D**
The software is designed to take advantage of **MMX**	This software will only run under **WINDOWS 95**	The software may run slowly, especially in hi-res mode	The software supports **MICROSOFT DIRECTINPUT**	The software supports **MICROSOFT DIRECTPLAY**	The software supports **INTERNET PLAY**	The software will run acceptably on a **486DX2/66**

Cool games

We see hundreds of games over the months but there are a few that we hang on to and continue to play at lunch-time/when we're supposed to be doing more important stuff...

◄ **Micro Machines 3**
StarCraft
Jane's F-15
Quake II
Forsaken

Crap games

There are some games that you can leave in the middle of the room with a big sign next to them saying "Please steal me" and you still can't get rid of the bloody things...

◄ **Liberation Day**
Maximum Force
Streets Of Sim City
Queen: The Eye
On The Ball 2

Micro Machines V3

Small is beautiful, maintains Charlie Brooker. So how come we never see dwarves taking part in the Miss World contest? Oh, hold on, it must have been the beards. Yes, that'll be it.

S OME THINGS IN THIS WORLD ARE JUST intrinsically *wrong*, aren't they? Take ears, for example. How ugly are *they*? They look like leftover pieces of biological tissue which our Creator shoved on at the last moment in a fit of 'waste not, want not' do-goodery. If they weren't so bloody useful they'd get sliced off at birth, along with the umbilical cord. Okay, so we'd have to keep our sunglasses on with sellotape or staples, but at least we wouldn't have to put up with those unsightly mangles of flesh poking out from either side of our head.

And what about that new logo for Wall's ice cream? Pardon us, but what, precisely, was wrong with the old one? Its replacement looks a bit too continental for its own good – like one of those unfamiliar trademarks you see adorning beach-side cafés on a cheap package holiday. It's just not *right*.

That's how unsettling shabby design can be. But what about the other side? What about all those elements

Life's a beach. No it isn't, it's a brief, unpleasant journey through a corridor of meaningless despair, punctuated by occasional moments of passable liveliness and enlivened only by the acquisition of material goods.

"This is computer gaming at its most lucidly intuitive and instantly engaging."

A gaggle of Micro Machines racing across a copy of The Jeffrey Dahmer Cookbook. Nice.

upon which the Gods of Design decided to smile? Turds, for instance. They're *beautiful*. They're so beautiful, no one can bear to flush them away without turning round for a quick look first. Check out those tapered ends! Not only are they aesthetically charming, they also perform an important practical function: preventing your buttocks from clapping together each time you drop one off. Make no mistake, the turd is a design *masterpiece*. So is the great white shark. And so is the London Underground map. And so is *Micro Machines*.

Ah, yes, *Micro Machines*. Now *there* goes a lesson in sturdy design.

Tank heaven for little girls. Tanks very much. Tanks for the memory. Tank all over my chest.

Cars in your eyes

The incredible range of vehicles on display in *Micro Machines V3* makes the annual Earl's Court Motor Show look like a Rambler's Association car park. There are 32 vehicles in all – more than is strictly necessary, really – and they all exhibit their own characteristics. Many are available from the very start, but you'll need to 'earn' the more exotic examples by honing your racing skills to the max.

Finish first in a race and you'll be granted a 'bonus car', each of which has its own custom course. Our favourites are the souped-up buggies (which almost

tip onto their sides when going around sharp corners), the Formula One racing cars (as you'd expect, they're incredibly fast) and the pun-tastic 'Conemasters' ice cream vans (complete with nostalgia-inducing jingle). Duff vehicles, in our opinion, include the utterly frustrating powerboats (with a turning circle that resembles the path of Jupiter's solar orbit) and those sodding bloody tanks (too slow, and the ability to continually blow one another up with artillery and landmines can simply become annoying when your opponents insist on continually abusing it).

An example of how a few ordinary objects can suddenly be transformed into a perilous stunt opportunity worthy of Hooper, the world's greatest stuntman.

Shiny happy people

Like its predecessors, *Micro Machines V3* has gone down the Gene Roddenberry route to self-conscious ethnic diversity: every other playable character represents a minority group of some description, usually in the most cheerfully simplistic manner possible. And 'cheerfully' really is the watchword here. The entire cast manages to be so insufferably pleasant and easy-going that you can't help wanting to phone them up individually and claim that their immediate family has just been torn apart by a pack of slavering dingos, just to wipe those smug smiles off their smug faces.

Some might say there's nothing wrong with Codemasters trying to inject a bit of Disneyesque merriment into what is essentially a 'family' game, but here at *Zone* we think it would have been far cooler to replace the happy-clappy line-up with an embittered gang of foul-mouthed borderline psychotics prone to vomiting out of the car windows, inexplicably beating themselves in the eye with hammers and committing suicide at the end of each race. And it should've been packaged in a grimy iron box and re-titled *Honk If You Hate Jesus: The Game of Nihilistic Racetrack Despair* instead. But for some mad reason that simply hasn't happened.
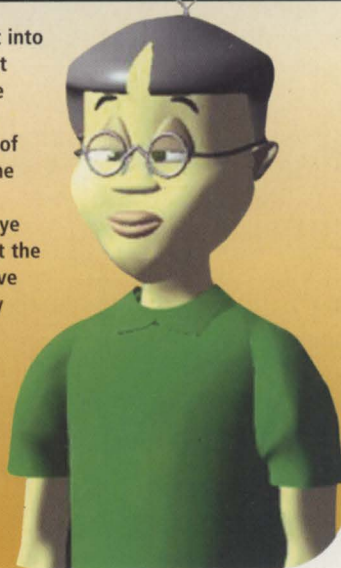
Better by design

Well, it wasn't broke, so they didn't really need to fix it. The single most important thing to realise about *Micro Machines V3* is that in the gameplay stakes it's virtually identical to its predecessors. In other words, utterly simple and totally compelling. Even the most technophobic newcomer will feel right at home in minutes. This is computer gaming at its most lucidly intuitive and instantly engaging. Just pick a character and you're off. There are only three buttons to worry about (well, okay, four if you're going to ponce around with the optional power-ups), and only one aim in mind: to be in front of everybody else. You won't need to look in the manual at all, unless you're an imbecile. Oh, and unless you want to know which key is which. Still, you get the point.

The real-world Micro Machines are, of course, a range of incredibly tiny toy vehicles and figurines so detailed they're almost good enough to eat. Micro Machines are almost unfathomably wee, and Codemasters have made much of this in the design of the 48 racing tracks themselves, with all the racing taking place in everyday environments rendered strange and exotic by virtue of the motorised protagonists' diminutive size. Thus a circuit set within the confines of an apparently normal school room becomes a knuckle-whitening rally that weaves its way over, around and through a selection of mundane objects which suddenly double as outstandingly realised obstacles: the cavernous gap between desks is bridged with a precariously narrow ruler; an unassuming calculator becomes a suicidally ambitious ramp. The genius of the design team – and, we kid you not, there *is* genius at work here – lies in the fact that *not a single object* on or near the track seems at all out of place. It's all perfectly scaled and minutely observed. Combined with the pick-up-and-play nature of the control system, it's this sublime course design that makes up the bulk of the game's almost unstoppable appeal.

Some racing cars tearing it up down an old school desktop yesterday.

Into the third dimension

There's more. Thanks to the march of technology, there's a whole new angle to consider. Now it's immaculately presented in three dimensions instead of two, owing to the advent of those now seemingly obligatory 3D accelerator cards. Inevitably, much has been made of this spatial promotion, and many of the later courses seem to veer up and down as much as they do from side to side. The action used to be viewed straight down from a set height; now, a 'floating' camera pans and zooms
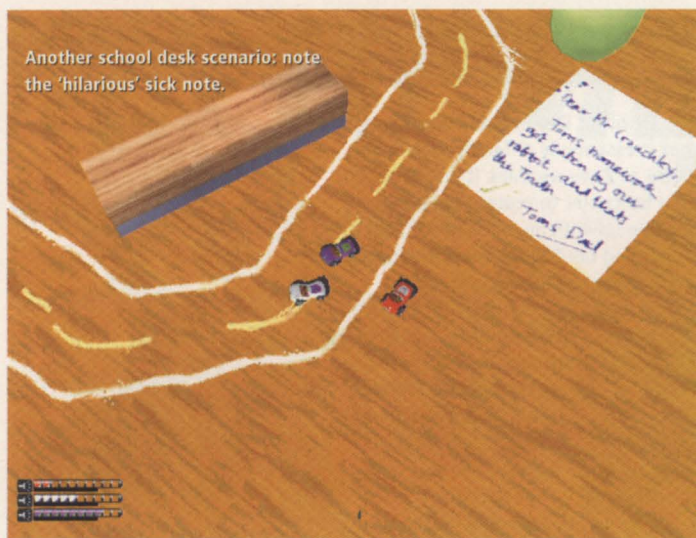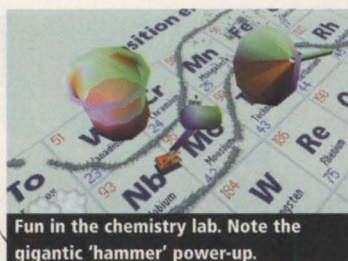

Yeah, it's five minutes down the road, mate. Turn right at the carrot, head past the gigantic ice cream bowl and it's on the left.
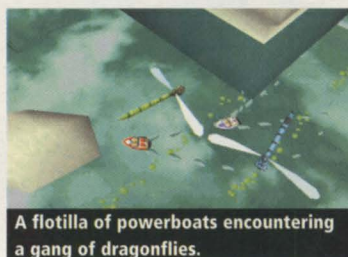

If you fancy seeing a load of armoured vehicles driving up the side of a Jacob's Cream Cracker, you've either got to neck loads of drugs or play *Micro Machines V3*.

Another school desk scenario: note the 'hilarious' sick note.

Fun in the chemistry lab. Note the gigantic 'hammer' power-up.

A flotilla of powerboats encountering a gang of dragonflies.

on the fly to frame the action perfectly. And unlike many old-skool games which suffer in the transition to three dimensions (witness the revamped *Frogger* or the Nintendo 64 version of *Bomberman*), here Codemasters have managed to leave that delicately balanced gameplay resolutely intact – which is a deceptively skilful achievement in its own right.

So, any pitfalls? Well, it's a decidedly average experience when played on your own. The computer opponents (even the 'stupid' ones) simply don't make enough mistakes. They rarely spin off the track or collide with the obstacles, and as such each race becomes an attempt to perfect your own technique rather than a laugh-a-minute *Gumball Rally* in miniature.
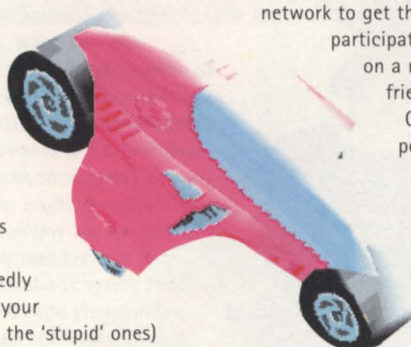
With this in mind, be warned that *Micro Machines* is first and foremost a *multi-player* game. You don't need a network to get the most out of it, since four players can participate simultaneously on a single PC (eight on a network), but you *do* need some friends. So go and make some.

Other gripes? Well, the inclusion of power-ups hasn't made any significant change to the gameplay (although the 'giant hammer' power-up is undeniably cool), and some of you may find that they actually get in the way – but you can switch them off if you want.

All in all though, it's a blast. Unadulterated entertainment shoved right into your head and face. With a great big virtual glove. Oh, and incidentally, it looks *miles* better than the PlayStation version. 🅩

The Micro conspiracy

Micro Machines is the exception that proves the rule. And which rule might that be? Why, the rule that states that anything featuring the word 'Micro' in its title that gets offered for mass consumption is guaranteed to be irredeemable rubbish, of course. Don't believe us? Then look at the evidence...

MICRO LIVE!
Mediocre early '80s computer 'edutainment' show presented by the creepily enthusiastic Fred Harris, proud owner of some of the vilest pullovers ever to grace our screens (though John Craven often came close). Every episode was little more than a vaguely sinister extended advertisement for the BBC Model B home computer system.

MICRONAUTS
Tiny sci-fi figurines which somehow managed to be both disappointingly limited in use (ie they didn't 'do' anything) and flabbergastingly expensive at the same time. Unless you had the whole set, they looked rubbish. And if you did have the whole set, you were probably so rich that you didn't bother playing with them, since you also owned ten jetpacks and a full-scale model of the Death Star. Chiz chiz.

MICROCHIPS
Not those trifling computer-related thingies, we're talking about McCain's miracle foodstuff here. In the olden days, if you wanted an overpriced fistful of unappetising, soggy chips, you had to seek out the worst chippy in town. Now, a comparable dish can be prepared and endured in minutes in your own kitchen thanks to the wonder of our next micro-travesty...

MICROWAVE OVENS
Even in this day and age, does anyone really trust these? After all, they sort of cook food by 'magic', don't they? They've even got an illogical Achilles heel, like all decent supernatural phenomena: werewolves fear the silver bullet, and vampires gasp at the sign of the cross; the dreaded microwave oven can be destroyed by a simple plate with a metallic rim. Thanks to these boxy aberrations of nature, all manner of edibles can now be heated beyond belief in a manner that defies both natural logic and lucid description at a stroke. Ninety-eight per cent of the time, the results border on the inedible. But hey, it's quick, right?

In Perspective

Micro Machines is the simplest racing title you could wish for, and its capacity for swift, trouble-free multi-player satisfaction is second to none.

Micro Machines V3	
Carmageddon	
Motorhead	
Ultim@te Race Pro	
Atomic Bomberman	

Tech Specs

Memory: 16Mb
Processor: P120
Graphics: VGA/SVGA
Sound: SoundBlaster and compatibles
Controls: Keyboard, joystick, gamepad

Score

Crystal clear, razor sharp, and with two players or more it's brilliant

90

Price: £34.99
Release date: May '98
Publisher: Codemasters
Telephone: 01926 814132
Website: www.codemasters.com

dan Personal Computers *The People's Choice*

Enter and you
may never
want to leave...

HEXPLORE
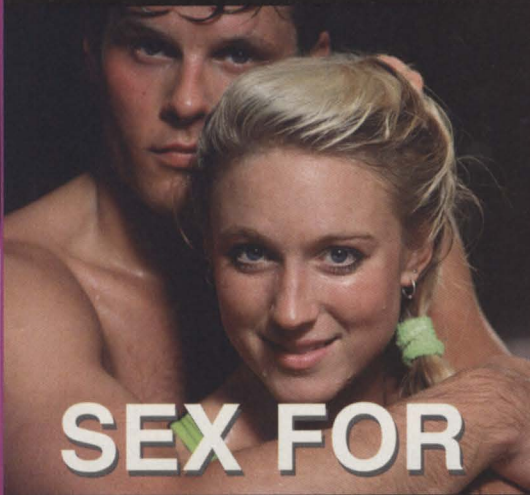
...fortunately
you won't
be alone.

In the past you may have been able to conquer evil on your own, in Hexplore
it could take four of you.

- Control a party of 4 unique characters in an addictive adventure.
- Jump right into the heart of the action as you begin your epic journey through a fantasy world.
- On-line gameplay is boosted by a novel collaborative management feature.
- Stunning new technology allows 360° free rotation within the beautiful 3D isometric backgrounds (no add-ons required).
- 10 vast levels and over 200 maps from snowy European Forests to the Middle Eastern Deserts.
- Monster generators increase the arcade pace of the action.

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CD
ROM

ocean

Some things explained to be ex

An illustrated Guide

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StarCraft

With numerous other real-time strategy games waiting in the wings to pour scorn on Blizzard's latest offering, the long-awaited *StarCraft* had better be good. **Chris Anderson** adjudicates.

B LIZZARD'S RISE TO FAME AS A PROMINENT games developer has been well charted. With *Warcraft 1* and *2* and *Diablo* winning a well-deserved place in the hearts of self-respecting gamers worldwide, hopes are understandably high for their latest title.

But before we go any further, let's ask ourselves what we can reasonably expect from a game that follows in the footsteps of *Red Alert*, *Dark Reign* and *Total Annihilation*. Improved graphics are obviously expected by the discerning real-time strategy aficionado, and Blizzard duly deliver with consummate ease in this department, with highly detailed units and impressive terrain providing a realistic backdrop for your wanton destruction.

How about believable and vaguely realistic AI? Let's face it, strategy buffs have long since tired of giving units the simplest of orders, only to stare at their monitors in disbelief as their computer minions wander off aimlessly around the game map, finally meeting their digital makers at the hands of roaming enemy soldiers. This is the single most infuriating element of the real-time strategy (RTS) genre. Every single RTS game released to date suffers from serious AI problems, and any game that makes any headway in this complex area should be loudly applauded. The law of averages suggests that such a game will undoubtedly emerge sooner or later. Unfortunately its name will not be *StarCraft*.

Anybody home?

Many of the mission maps in *StarCraft* have narrow lanes and passageways your units must traverse in order to get to their destination. A typical *StarCraft* scenario in cases such as this will now follow: order four or five units to make their way through a narrow passageway. One or two will make it through. The others don't fit. What do they do? Do they wait patiently while their fellow combatants filter through and then

The interface, overall look and feel of the game will be very familiar to fans of the *WarCraft* series.

> "No awards for originality, but it's a highly playable, visually impressive example of the genre."

follow suit? Not on your life. Prepare once again to stare in horror as your units travel halfway round the universe to get to their destination. Why on earth do programmers have so much difficulty in getting this right? Surely a simple queuing system would solve the problem, with units waiting their turn to get through tight areas of the map? Whatever the reason, it all seems beyond the greatest games programmers in the world, and the ones who suffer most from this idiotic display of incompetence are the long-standing RTS faithful. Technically, *StarCraft* is a very good-looking RTS game with the same AI problems that have plagued this genre from the very beginning. Once you get past this fact, however, a very playable strategy game awaits you, albeit one which you may have seen, and in many respects played, many times before.

No alarms and no surprises

So sang Radiohead in their infinite wisdom (long may they reign). One wonders whether they were privy to an exclusive preview of *StarCraft*, because we have found through playing the game extensively that there are indeed no surprises whatsoever to be found from one end of the *StarCraft* experience to the other. Build units, send them into battle, upgrade structures for increasingly powerful hardware and defences, search for crystals to provide energy for your

The game is peppered with lush cut-scenes that help set the scene.

The engine may look a bit flat and dated when compared to *TA* or *Myth*.

The fact that there are three different races adds to the replay value, but they are very similar.

While the graphics are competent, they're not exactly ground-breaking.

Single-unit missions make for a welcome deviation from the normal build-and-destroy missions.

buildings and units... It's all way, way too familiar. From the early RTS days of *Dune 2*, right through to the recent success of *Total Annihilation*, the formula remains the same. However, this formula has worked for all *StarCraft's* most capable rivals – a fact that Blizzard are no doubt keenly aware of. But whether or not it will work for you depends on how you take to the later stages of the game. Allow me to explain.

A game of three halves

The *StarCraft* universe is comprised of three warring factions: the Terrans (humans), the Zergs (an organic race) and the Protoss (experts in Psionics). The Terran campaign serves as a tutorial for the game in general, and it works well in this sense, since Blizzard seem to have simply re-designed the graphics for the Zerg and Protoss races based on the Terrans,

while keeping the basic functions of the units more or less the same. For example, the Terran supply depots serve the same purpose as Zerg Overlords, enabling you to create new units. Zerg spore colonies, for their part, serve the same purpose as Terran missile turrets (they both defend your base from aerial attacks).

Similarly, the Protoss have their own units which perform the same basic functions. For this reason you may experience a slight feeling of deja vu as you make your way through the different campaigns. *Red Alert* fans in particular will be interested to note that there are missions in *StarCraft* which give you the task of guiding a single unit through an entire level. These missions prove to be the only deviation from the standard 'build and destroy' missions; and indeed this was the case with *Red Alert*, which seems to be the sole inspiration for *StarCraft's* 'lonesome hero' missions.

RTS veterans won't find anything here to get wildly excited about, but having said that, while *StarCraft* won't win any awards whatsoever for originality, it's a highly playable, visually impressive example of the genre. For some people this will be enough. In fact, if you haven't played many games of this type you'll welcome it with open arms. Even if you've already made your way through *Dark Reign*, *Red Alert* (in particular) and *TA*, you still won't be disappointed by this game. But don't expect any surprises. Think of *StarCraft* as Blizzard's generic mission disk for all your favourite RTS games and you won't be a million miles from the truth. **Z**

The full multi

As you would expect, *StarCraft* has multi-player options galore. You can play the game head to head over a network (up to eight players are supported), with allied and team-play options both available, or you can play on-line using Blizzard's own free Battle.net service and earn yourself a worldwide ranking. As always, this kind of game plays much better when you've got real human opponents, and of course you can rest safe in the knowledge that if your units are wandering all over the shop rather than going where you told them to, your opponent will be having the same problem. Which is nice.

There might not be much in the way of surprises, but it's still a very likeable and playable addition to the genre.

Jane's F-15

PC ZONE Classic

When **Dave Mathieson** lived in Wales, the danger to sheep wasn't from frisky locals but from low-flying military aircraft. So we gave him *F-15* to review (in which low-flying features heavily) and have a turn at worrying sheep.

FLIGHT-SIMS SEEM TO BE PRETTY POPULAR at the moment, and seldom a week goes by without some new title arriving that boasts lovely graphics, eight billion square miles of accurately modelled terrain, and an endorsement from a retired US Air Force pilot who needs some extra cash. And very nice most of these sims are too. The problem is that just about all of them are based on big, flashy planes that aren't out yet, the F-22 being the current favourite.

Why is this a problem? Well, firstly, since these planes aren't in service yet, die-hard authenticity fans know that the real plane will be different from the sim. Maybe not *that* different, but different enough to spoil things for people who reckon that two years of sitting up all night in front of their PC makes them qualified to fly a real plane. The second objection is much easier – simulating futuristic jets is completely bloody unoriginal. Over the past 70 years there have been hundreds of different types of planes in loads of wars, which you'd have thought would be a rich source of ideas for any game developer. But no. All they can come up with is next-generation fighters in either the Middle East, Korea or the ex-Soviet Union, plus the obligatory American training area. Yawn-o-rama.

Bomb the base

Jane's F-15 is unoriginal in that it features a big American plane in a Middle East scenario, but it beats the rest hands down in the authenticity stakes. The plane featured is the F-15E Strike Eagle, which has been around for ages and saw service during the Gulf War. The original F-15 first came into service in the 1970s, and it was a direct response to the Russian MiG-25 which scared the shit out of the Americans when they first saw it. While the F-15E is still used as a fighter, it's primarily used as an attack plane,

The impression of speed when zipping over the desert at 150 feet is striking to say the least.

> "If you fancy screaming along over the desert avoiding anti-aircraft fire and MiGs, *F-15* is the best there is."

which means low flying and loads of bombs. Hurrah!

F-15 is set in the Gulf, and many of the missions and planes featured in the game are based on sorties that were flown against Iraq during the Gulf War. The gameplay is divided up into training and single missions, campaigns, instant action and multi-player missions.

The training missions are pretty comprehensive, covering all the usual things like landing and taking off, flying about, and the array of different weapon systems. This training is pretty necessary, as *F-15* definitely isn't a shoot 'em up, and just about every key on the keyboard does something, with more controls available via the alt, shift and control keys. Obviously this complexity is part of the attraction for some, but people with a shorter attention span are catered for by a reduced 'Easy' control set.

The single missions are varied, ranging from sensible-sounding tasks like taking out Iraqi airfields, to sillier scenarios in which you and your squadron are a bunch of mercenaries available to the highest bidder. If you don't fancy the missions that are provided, there's a comprehensive and easy to use mission editor.

Flying the F-15 isn't actually that tricky, and everything worth knowing is displayed on either the HUD or the two programmable displays. Since the F-15E is a two-seater, you can occupy either position, although in practice you can't do anything from the back seat that can't be done from the front. The smartest thing about the F-15's cockpit is that all

F-15 isn't exactly generous with its hardware requirements, needing a pretty fast PC to run...

...which is why you can change the detail levels in the game to improve the frame rate.
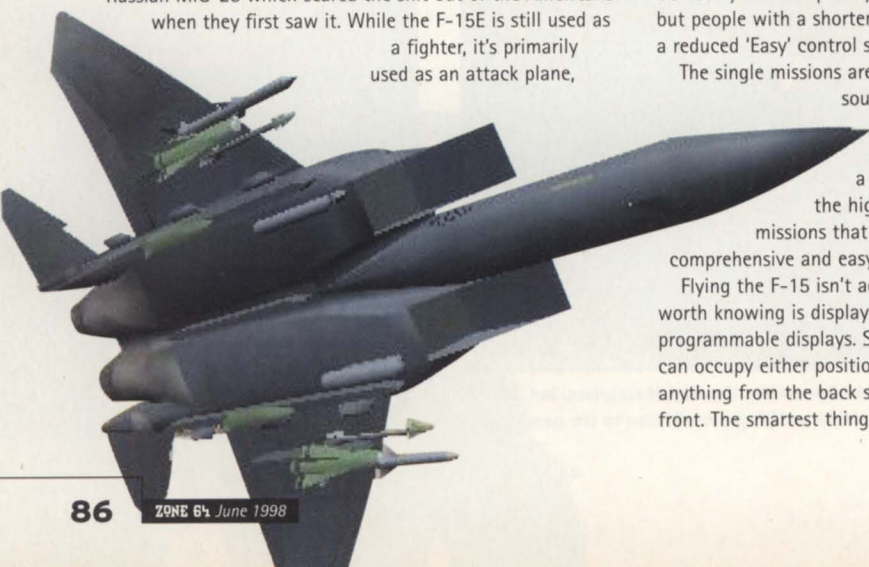
Big maps with lots of threatening-looking circles are pretty much essential for a 'proper' flight sim.

Flying the F-15 isn't actually that tricky.

Christ! Steady on, you could have had someone's very tall top hat off with that low flying.

the buttons and knobs can be changed in-flight by pointing and clicking with the mouse. This means you can adjust things like radar modes and weapons release modes directly without having to memorise endless keystrokes. The only problem with this system is that using a mouse isn't quite as quick as reaching out and pressing a button in a real cockpit, and in the heat of battle the last thing you want to be doing is struggling with the mouse. Luckily though, you can access all the controls while the sim is paused, which, while being a bit of a cheat, makes life a lot easier.

F-15 has been developed by Skunkworks, the same team that created Longbow 2. It uses a very similar graphics engine, and the in-game graphics are therefore pretty damn lush. The terrain in particular is very detailed – at low altitude every small bump is visible, while higher up there's none of that 'flying over a big, patterned carpet' effect caused by repeating textures. Low-altitude flying is where this game's really at though, and the impression of speed when zipping over the desert at 150 feet is striking. The planes themselves are nicely modelled too – very detailed and suitably menacing-looking.

Performance art
Of course, lush graphics are considerably less attractive if they crawl past at only a few frames per second. On our review system, a P200MMX with 3Dfx card, F-15 was very

playable at the higher detail settings, but started to get a bit jerky whenever the scenery got too complex. Unfortunately this normally occurs either over the target or when landing, which are the times when a smooth frame rate is most important. Reducing detail helped a lot, but to enjoy F-15 in its full glory a Pentium II is in order. If you're wondering what F-15's performance is like without a 3Dfx card, don't bother. All you need to know is that if you like flight sims, a decent 3D card is a must. And since 3Dfx cards cost well under £100 these days, you've got no excuse.

Where many sims fall down is in the gameplay department, with dull missions that are easy to complete. Like Longbow 2, to be good at F-15 you have to get your tactics right, which means using the terrain properly and giving the right orders to your wingmen. When the shooting starts, there's a hell of a lot to think about before you can bugger off home, and panicky messages from your co-pilot and wingmen make you wish you'd spent an extra ten minutes reading the manual while on the bog that morning.

This level of detail is F-15's only potential shortfall, really, and it might not appeal to those of you who just fancy some flying rounded off by a bit of light bombing of an enemy village. But if you like something a bit more heavyweight and you fancy the idea of screaming along over the desert in the middle of the night, avoiding hills, anti-aircraft fire and MiGs, F-15 is the best there is. 🅩

F-15 is published by Jane's, who make big books for military swots, so there's loads of info on the game's machines.

Give your co-pilot a nosebleed.

Ooh, look, it's one of those ever so popular lens flares.

Star Wars Supremacy

He fell in love with Carrie Fisher in *Star Wars*, and made his mum buy him a lightsaber after *The Empire Strikes Back*. So who better to review *Star Wars Supremacy* than *Zone*'s very own Chewbacca lookalike, Andrew Wright?

THE MODERATE SUCCESS OF SPACE conquest games like *Stars!* was an obvious opening for LucasArts. They'd already got a *Star Wars* 'universe', so all they had to do was throw in some strategy and a 3D tactical war-gaming engine, and before you could mutter "seduced by the Dark Side" they were beta-testing *Star Wars Supremacy*. In short, *Star Wars Supremacy* (known in the US as *Star Wars Rebellion*, for some reason) is a polished DirectX-based Windows 95 game with neat graphics, competent sound effects (including voice messages), some utterly predictable gameplay and a creaking interface.

You take on the role of either the Rebel Alliance or the Empire just after Luke's fluke shot rearranged the Deathstar into its constituent atoms. In control of the

Battle at Coruscant

The Alliance fleet has entered the Coruscant system. Imperial forces have been detected on an intercept course...

CP3O is always on hand to 'help'.

rebels, you start with all your characters (Leia, Luke, Chewie, Han Solo and a few others) on the planet Yavin, and a secret base placed randomly on one of the outer-rim worlds on which you can start building up your forces. If you start off as the Empire, Emperor Palpatine and Darth Vader are on Coruscant and you have several more worlds under your control, plus many more fleets and ground forces. The basic game starts with ten sectors (clusters of planets), each with ten systems, although you can opt for a longer game with either 15 or 20 sectors and one of three levels of difficulty. The standard victory conditions are to capture the opposing headquarters' system and the two main characters on each side.

Build 'em up, knock 'em down

The game revolves around mines and refineries that produce the raw materials, and maintenance points that enable you to build a variety of units, from army regiments for planetary defence and garrison duty, to various ships and fighters. Some 19 different ships, each with unique characteristics, are available to each side, plus five different regiments per side. These range from standard troops to the Empire's Dark Troopers and the Alliance's Wookie regiments. Not all units are available at the start because research also plays a hefty part in the game. Somewhat surprisingly perhaps, *Supremacy* is played in real time, although you can slow it down to a crawl if things start to get really hairy (insert own Wookie joke here). Units take time to move around, so you've got to plan things very carefully, on the one hand defending your bases and manufacturing planets, while on the other hand

Character assassination!

Kill off all your favourite *Star Wars* characters

One thing that sets *Supremacy* apart from other galactic strategy games is the power of the individual characters, of which there can be up to 30 per side. Some, like Leia, are strong on diplomacy skills, enabling them to influence support, while others can carry out various missions from sabotage, espionage and inciting revolt, to command of multiple units. Missions can be foiled or fail completely, leading to characters being captured, wounded or even killed, but you can improve their chances by sending other units out as decoys – a nice touch – or even attempting rescue if the worst happens. Playing as the Empire, you can even assassinate other characters. Luke will, at some point when you least expect it, bugger off to Dagobah for Jedi training, and Han Solo sometimes gets captured by bounty hunters and whisked off to Jabba's palace. Force-aware characters grow in power as they use the Force, although the benefits seem only a device to push you along in the well-known linear plotline seen in the second and third films. For example, Luke will discover that Vader is his dad and eventually confront the Emperor and his sidekick in the 'final battle'.
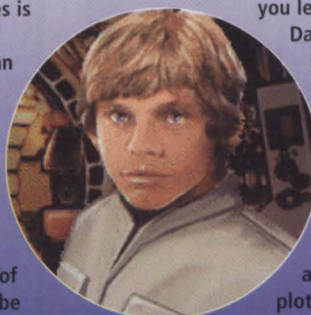
Graphically it's nothing special, but it will run on a P90.

The interface looks nice enough, but is fiddly to use.

Bothan spies are a special forces unit. You use them for, er, spying.

launching strikes of fighter squadrons and heavy capital ships on your opponent's facilities. You can instruct your agent droids (C3PO for the Alliance) to take over production and garrisoning if required, although they do tend to make purely defensive decisions. Fleets can bombard, blockade or invade other systems, but when opposing fleets come into contact, the game switches to a three-dimensional tactical battle screen. Here you give each ship or task force its orders, then sit back and watch what happens. This is a lot more exciting than it sounds, as you can zoom in on the action, watch the fireworks and interfere if you want to. As each side's ships have different weapons and features there's a fair bit of the old cerebral stuff required to succeed.

get to grips with and, although the flash graphics and digitised speech make it fun, in the heat of battle it's very easy to forget how to do something critical. That said, most units can be dragged and dropped, so rearranging fleets is a doddle. However, trying to build the units you want can be bloody frustrating at times.

The Empire wouldn't be the Empire without the Deathstar, but it uses a lot of resources and takes such a long time to build, so it's not always the Empire's best strategy. Often it's better to take advantage of the Empire's slightly better ships and regiments and hammer the Alliance's weak spots.

Unfortunately, the 'multi-player' options are poor, and only two people can play at once, either via modem, serial link, network or over the Internet. More thought could certainly have gone into this side of things, with more than one player per side controlling their own characters and fleets.

"It's just an average – though solid – space strategy game."

Two's company, three's a crowd

The game interface relies heavily on one screen, the GID (or Galactic Information Display), and you can overlay this with different information. For example, the size of each star can reflect its loyalty or the number of idle fleets in orbit. Most windows are modal and can be opened to display planets and systems, but this can get very cluttered, despite the fact that you can minimise them to a task bar. It's a pity that only 640x480 is supported. The interface isn't particularly easy to

There are other minor niggles too – no queue-building, for example, and random disasters that can frustrate your grand strategy. The way the Force is used isn't particularly exciting, and the one-dimensional plot and victory conditions get tiresome after a short while. *Supremacy* hasn't the depth of games like *Stars!* And while you don't need to be a *Star Wars* junkie to enjoy it, it does help. At the end of the day it's just an average – though solid – space strategy game, but not one with long-term appeal. **Z**

The 3D tactical battle screen – an alliance bulk cruiser under attack by Tie fighters. It's more exciting than it looks.

Refined Material Cost: 584
Maintenance Cost: 600
Fighter Capacity: 24
Troop Capacity: 18

It takes a lot of resources, but it is deadly.

Die By The Sword

Considering this is a game about sword fighting, Jamie Cunningham does awfully well not to do his 'big chopper' joke until five paragraphs from the end.

MAYBE I'M ABNORMAL, BUT THE FIRST thing to catch my eye in *Tomb Raider* was not Ms Croft's bouncing charlies but her exquisitely rendered movements. As she walked, her hips wiggled. And when she wanted to stop, she didn't just freeze frame but shifted her weight to help her slow down. She could throw herself across vast chasms, grab hold of ledges, and perform similarly unrealistic feats in the most realistic fashion. She could swim, crouch, run and... yes, there was a rumour she could even do that as well.

Thing is, Lara's actions were formed from 5000 frames of canned footage, mapped out by actors and sewn together by software. So while she was able to perform a myriad of distinct tasks, she was still restricted to what the motion-capture camera had seen.

Have at you!

Tantrum's *Die By The Sword* gets around all that with a pretty natty bit of new technology called VSIM. What this entails is a game full of characters whose movements are calculated 'on the fly' from a physics model, not from a pre-rendered set of images.

To watch, it's a treat. Our hero, Enric, moves like an armour-clad Croft clone but is free to do so much more. A quick run through the tutorial (voiced superbly by Michael York) and a brief waggle of the sword makes that pretty obvious. Using the numeric keypad or the mouse, you're able to make Enric swing his mighty weapon in any direction – where and how you swipe determines how much damage you'll do when the blade hits home. Sounds good? Yeah, I thought so too.

Unfortunately, while the theory is sound, it's extremely difficult – nay, impossible – in practice. Even the most basic attacks, such as a left-to-right hack, require four or more key-presses or complex mouse actions, while more elaborate

The Enric backhand – nothing shaves closer.

"Don't turn and run, you girl! Fight like a man!"

moves and blocks are well beyond the abilities of mortal man. After a while you learn to compensate, but when you have an ogre raining blows on your head, and a kobold carving fillets from your buttocks, a convoluted set of controls is about as useful as an iron parachute. Luckily you can abandon VSIM for a while and resort to a one-key wonder for the dextrously challenged called 'arcade mode'.

None shall pass

However, even with your new-found fighting ability you'll probably spend most of the game having your arse kicked. Because of the control system, right from the start the odds are stacked against you, and poor Enric spends most of his time dying, reappearing at the last autosave and then dying all over again. While the game promises the ultimate in precision combat, the reality is that legging it and cowering

> ## "A very good game that's sadly let down by an ambitious but ultimately flawed control system."

in an adjacent room is often your best option.

Your view on the world doesn't help matters either. Most of us are by now used to the 'intelligent' hovering camera found in games such as *Tomb Raider*, but the bungee-jumping cameraman in *Die By The Sword* hurtles about, fiddling with the zoom and making it difficult to see what the flipping Nora is going on. You can swap between various perspectives, but they're not really much help in the heat of the situation. This, coupled with the awkward control systems, stands *DBTS* in poor stead from the off.

You are indeed brave, Sir Knight

Gripes swept under the carpet, the fantasy quest in *Die By The Sword* is hugely involving. It chronicles Enric's journey to rescue a damsel in distress – his lover, Maya, who was kidnapped and is scheduled for sacrifice by a wizard. This search, the heart of the game, spans seven large levels and encompasses a variety of puzzles and environments.

Oi! Advertisers! No!

Fed up with advertisers spoiling the Grand Prix on telly with messages about winged panty liners? Cross at the way they always cut to an ad break just as Michael Schumacher punts Damon Hill off the track, leaps out of the car and blows him away him with an old Luger? Well, the bastards will soon be crawling around inside your PC too, spoiling all your games. You don't believe me? *Die By*

The Sword is a case in point. Just as you've finished installing the thing, up pops a 'trailer' for one of Interplay's forthcoming titles. This wouldn't be so bad if you could hit the escape key and drop back to Windows, but you can't, because the developers have made sure it's not easy to quit out. In other words, you're forced to sit there and watch all 26Mb of it. Hijacking my machine to play an advert is simply not on.

Top of 1998's 'Revolting Enemy' chart is this mantis, with its razor claws.

Kobolds? They're 'armless (groan).

Yup, even the dire Skunk Anansie are featured in the game.

Certainly the Voodoo visuals are exquisite. There are eerie caverns, ancient temples, swamps and forests, rafts and bridges, even a noisy steelworks. Getting about between them isn't a problem, as Enric is dead easy to move around when he hasn't got his big chopper out.

Accompanying the sights are sounds in the form of a dynamic orchestral soundtrack that not only sounds just right, but also changes to fit every situation – there's a rousing crescendo as you fight off an ambush, followed by the solemn murmur of a choir as you draw your last breath. While alive, Enric can also be rather vocal – shouts of "Bollocks!" and "Bloody hell!" echo through the caves as he flails his sword wildly.

We are the knights who say...

Die By The Sword pledges to introduce a new way of playing games but, ultimately, fails in its mission because of the finicky way in which it's been implemented. Okay, any system that gives 100 per cent free movement is going to be complicated. Wait for a decently priced VR suit, that's our advice.

Control gripes aside, VSIM motion control makes every action and reaction highly convincing. For example, it's possible to put your foot in a rope trap, be hoisted up and then made to defend yourself while dangling upside-down from the ceiling. Or you can come across a room full of orcs playing nine-pin – using a kobold as the ball. You can even

lose limbs and spend the rest of the game hopping about on one leg.

Last but not least, doing battle over a network in one of the four arenas is monster fun, although you'll need four ninja PCs to keep the game moving at a decent rate.

At the end of the day, *Die By The Sword* isn't a bad game. In fact it's actually a very good game that's sadly let down by an ambitious but ultimately flawed control system and eclectic camera movement. If you can put up with the shortcomings, there's enough to keep you interested for quite some time. **Z**

Width is more important than length, as Enric is about to find out.
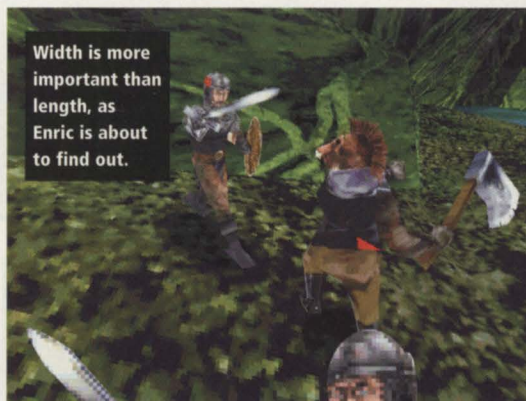
Austrians still can't resist the old tanning pills, as this snap of Arnold Schwarzenegger proves.

Ultimate Soccer Manager 98

Football is a funny old game, whereas Patrick McCarthy is just old and gamy.

SM IS BACK. LAST YEAR YOU GOT THREE leagues; this year you get six – the English, French, German, Italian, Spanish and Scottish – with every division represented. Again, you can play as a coach, ignoring the club's day-to-day financial problems, or get right down to the nitty gritty of the pricing policy of officially endorsed, brushed-nylon, open-crotch knickers in the team shop. You can also choose whether you want to be a straight-ahead kinda guy, or get into bribery, match-fixing and betting. There are five levels of difficulty, which determine how much money you start with. If you pick grandmother level, you'll get 20 million smackers even if you opt to manage Doncaster.

There's a kind of halfway option on the financial front, in that you have an assistant to help with all those onerous tasks you can't be arsed to do yourself (like managing the team, if you're Ruud Gullit). And there's another to keep an eye on training and make suggestions – but mine was shite. I overtrained several players to see what happened, and he never once suggested I change them, even though all their hernias were hanging so badly they looked like cows' udders.

Advanced Tactics

| Defend Posn | Attack Posn | Move | Set Piece |

Set Piece Name: Free Kick Front

1	Peter Schmeichel	G
2	Denis Irwin	DR L
3	Henning Berg	D C
4	Gary Pallister	D C
5	Gary Neville	DR R
6	Ryan Giggs	MR L
7	Roy Keane	M C
8	Nicky Butt	M C
9	David Beckham	M R
10	Teddy Sheringham	AF
11	Andy Cole	AS

Advanced tactics enable you to create special moves and set pieces for your team, as well as make them stand somewhere sensible according to where the ball's positioned.

"The faults gradually accumulate to the point where they make you want to beat it to death."

Transferring affections

The transfer market's slightly more realistic than it used to be – I made 300,000 attempts to sign players to Spurs, and no one wanted to know except for an elderly lady from Walthamstow. (Unfortunately she passed away in the Dial-A-Ride minibus on her way to training, which was disappointing, as we we were relying on her to give the

defence a bit of bite.) But you can still do well in loans. At one point I had Stoitchkov, Pedrag Mijatovic, Patrice Loko and Thierry Henry on loan all at the same time. Mind you, they all pissed off after eight weeks.

You still have that weird skills-improving thing, where you spend 23 weeks getting someone from 66 up to 67 for passing, then they get bored and want to do something else. And since there are limits to a player's ratings according to the division he's in, this means there's no point in buying a lower-league player. At that rate of improvement you'd have them up to Premiership standard just in time to cremate them. You also have to wait about in the hope that a coach

Each area of the game is controlled from a fully realised room. But it's much quicker to use the drop-down menus. Which makes you wonder why they bothered.

The moving picture show

The match itself shows little players running about on the pitch at various speed settings, or you can have instant results (which scarcely ever work in your favour, and seem to involve about as much calculation as a credit card-wielding Chris Eubank in a jodhpur emporium). You can give players individual instructions but, unfortunately, once you're into the match there's no way of checking out the opposition at all. And (again) it takes bloody ages to make a substitution – even if you click when the ball's dead. You might say this is fair enough, but when your geezer's been injured in a tackle and the opponent sent off, it would be nice not to have to wait ten minutes before you can change things about.

The team training can be set by you or your assistant. Note the skilled way he picks long-ball training even though your team plays a passing game.

You can compare ratings for everyone in your team by selecting any number of categories.

becomes available who can actually do what's needed for the team – which gives you the same regretful feelings of chronically wasted time that you get when you watch a Channel Five chat show.

God knows I tried

I've been playing this game for two whole seasons now with Spurs. I've also started another game with Spurs and Inter, and a third with Dynamo Dresden. At first it's quite likeable. Gradually, however, it really starts to get on your tits. There are loads of things that really start to aggravate you the more you play (a few of them are listed in the 'Details, details' panel below – the first version was 500 words long).

And yes, you could make a list of faults with *CM2* if you had a mind to. But there are a couple of huge differences. Firstly *CM2* is the only management game you'll see being played by people who normally hate computer games. Secondly, despite the faults which appear with every version, you still want to do well at it because it tricks you into thinking it's real life. The difference with *USM* is that no one is going to see someone else playing it and become an addict, and the faults, instead of seeming like the winsome foibles of

a loved one, gradually accumulate to the point where they make you want to beat it to death with turn-of-the-century farming implements. It makes you tense in all the wrong ways. Getting back to *CM2* afterwards is like a return to calmness and sanity. ⓩ

As well as overall team training, you can have fun spending years raising someone's heading ability by one point.

Details, details

It's the little bits of attention to detail that make all the difference in a game. And sometimes it's the annoying little things that build up in your mind until you hate it. Like these, for example...

- Players' names are wrong (Vladimir Bout appears as But Vladimir). Many are wrongly positioned
- You can't see the player performance screen from the substitution screen, or who's been booked anywhere except on the main game screen – two screens back
- You can't see the opponents' team at all in-match
- There aren't any black players
- You can only name three subs in FA Cup matches and friendlies
- Players turn out automatically, even when injured
- When someone's injured in a game, there's no indication of that when you go to the subs screen
- You can wait 15 minutes to make a substitution
- You can't undo a substitution if you change your mind before restarting the match

- The opposition will get a penalty in 86 per cent of your matches (and none of the resultant goals will be shown as such)
- Transfer deadline day passes without any of the deals you're negotiating going through – nobody thinks to hurry up
- Injured players automatically get picked if you forget to remove them – one got Man of the Match
- You can loan players from your own division
- My FA Cup semi-final replay against Leeds was at Elland Road
- You can't just switch between teams if more than one one team is being being played. You have to have 'turns'. So your match will come up first if you're the first team to play, but if you try to get to the team selection screen it will only show the second team, because you've already handed control over. Duh...
- The stadium redevelopment thing makes you build terraces (even in the Premiership) before you can make a better, all-seater section...
- There are more, but it gets tiresome.

Triple Play 99

PC ZONE Classic

As the only person in the office who knows that Three-Finger Brown is an old-time baseball player's nickname, rather than something to do with George Michael, Patrick McCarthy gets to do all the baseball reviews.

AH, THE GOOD OLD DAYS OF COMPUTER gaming – we hear so much about them, and all the old hackneyed bollocks always comes pouring out: "Yes, the graphics looked like they'd been produced by monkeys with access to a paint program, but the games were *real* games, weren't they?" Well, no, actually. Not if you liked sports games. There was sod all. The ones that were out there were shite, and looked as if the makers were under orders to base all their work on cave paintings or face having their genitals jammed into a food blender.

Memories

And then there was EA's *Earl Weaver Baseball*. It looked alright (for the time). It played brilliantly (again, for the time), with intuitive controls for pitching, batting, fielding and base running, and loads of in-game and general options – you could make up teams and create your own leagues at a time when most sports games thought they were being pretty fancy if they gave you more than Team Red and Team Blue. But, more importantly, it worked. I wasn't that bothered about baseball at the time, but I wanted a sports game. My mate, on the other hand, was obsessed with baseball and couldn't believe his luck. So I bought it, and the two of us spent so long playing it our hands developed 'the claw' and we lost the ability to see in natural light.

Back to the present

This, basically, is the same game gone all '90s on us. And it's very good indeed. Unfortunately it doesn't have the facility for you to make up your own teams, or have great players from the past like its original incarnation. But that didn't stop the old Three-Finger

"Er, can we have our ball back, please?"
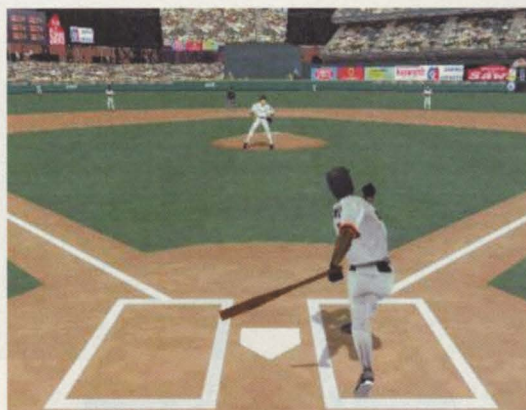
"Is that two strikes or one? Well, punk, do you feel lucky?"
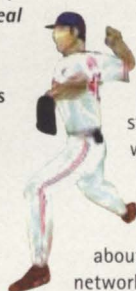
Brown joke, and it shouldn't stop you from buying it. It has everything the other decent EA Sports games have: the graphics are up there with those in *NHL*; the sound effects have similarly flowing play-by-play commentary, stadium noise and all that other stuff; and there's shitloads of gameplay options. As well as the usual Exhibition, Playoff and Full Season games, you can make up a Tournament or just play a quick home-run-hitting competition (if you fancy venting a bit of spleen by whacking a ball about like it was Anthea Turner's head), plus the usual network and modem play.

Mental exercises

For the anal-retentive with the hand-eye co-ordination of a turtle on Mogadon, there are manage-only options, including a full 'college draft' and career management modes which roll over from one year to the next. Even if you're playing, you can still call all the plays and pitches, and shift the outfield and infield about, of course. New to this version, there's a first-person viewpoint when you're batting. It can take some getting used to (especially trying to judge whether a pitch is a ball or a strike), but it's worth a try. I love it – but then I like baseball anyway.

Like *NHL 98*, there's enough here to get into *Triple Play 99* even if you're not normally drawn to the real thing. **Z**

"Hey, guys, I can see the sea from up here."

Tech Specs

Memory: 16Mb (32Mb recomm'd)
Processor: P90 (133 recomm'd)
Graphics: SVGA
Sound: SoundBlaster & compatibles
Controls: Mouse, keyboard, Win95–compatible, joystick, gamepad, Gravis gamepad/Pro/Grip, MS Sidewinder

Score

Good stuff. Even if it is only baseball.

90

Price: £44.99
Release date: Out now
Publisher: Electronic Arts
Telephone: 01753 549 442
Website: www.ea.com

dan Personal Computers **The People's Choice**

Armor Command

Remember the execrable Postal? Well, Armor Command is from the same publishers, but will it be any better? And why is Jamie Cunningham blowing a raspberry?

CAR OWNERS AMONG YOU WILL BE WELL aware of the agony involved in buying a new motor. It's not so much the 15-year finance deals or the ill-mannered salesmen, more that the indicator stalk in your new car is always on the 'wrong' side: where you once flashed your headlights, you now squirt water; what used to sound the horn now opens the sun roof and catapults your passenger into the path of oncoming traffic. And blow me if it isn't exactly the same with computers. Just as you've got used to one game, along comes another with all its controls in peculiar places – R to go left, Z to go right? Are the cursor keys uncool or something? If only there was a standard, things would be so much less stressful.

A case in point

Armor Command may share the same floor plan as *Red Alert*, but it's an altogether more confusing thing to drive. Take the simple task of selecting a unit: you need two hands – one to hold down shift, the other to right-click with the mouse. Right-click by itself designates a target (although the enemy needs to be within firing range or nothing will happen), and control plus left-click leaves waypoints.

To transport tanks, you now have to hold down shift, and right-click on the carrier vehicle, then right-click on the individual cargo units and nurse them in, one by one. Clumsy. What's wrong with selecting multiple units and then clicking the transporter? Where the *C&C* interface is a model of effortlessness, *Armor Command* makes you feel like you're going round the houses the whole time.

Very nice, very... er, 3Dfx.

But what's it about?

Ah yes, the plot. It's the 30th century and you command one of two armies, building buildings and managing resources in a manner to which every game player on the planet should now be accustomed. The United Terran Forces are the good guys with dazzling smiles and Santa Clara accents; the Vrass Slavers are the bad guys who rape old ladies and vote Communist.

Forty-eight missions usher you through the game, and the story evolves nicely. The trouble is that everything moves along at a snail's pace and it soon gets boring; the journey may be scenic but it's all too familiar. While there's a menu option to increase the speed of play, it still suffers from the same problem as *Battlezone* – the units look odd rather than ominous, so there's no adrenalin when you encounter them and no satisfaction when you destroy them. In fact, it's all rather bland.

Bells and whistles

The game engine has four camera positions, enabling you to see the battlefield in traditional top-down or third-person views. The top-down angles are best and enable you to roam freely over the landscape; the others are a gimmick, an attempt to move *Armor Command* from feeling like an entry model to one that's top-of-the-range. Unfortunately it doesn't work. Put simply, its ride feels five years old and the driving position is flawed. And that's about it. **Z**

One indisputably useful feature is waypoints, enabling you to define routes for your units to hunt along.

The mining outpost as seen in the third-person ('Aw, pretty, ain't it?') view.

Review ZONE Extra!

This month we've squeezed in even more games in an effort to give you the complete guide to every new release – good and bad.

PC Zone Recommends

PC ZONE Recommended

OUTWARS

The plot behind *Outwars*, such as it is, is uncannily reminiscent of the recent *Starship Troopers*. The very first level of the game sees you fleeing across a battlefield from an unknown enemy, utterly confused as to what the hell is going on. The action then flashes forward to a training camp, where you must familiarise yourself with new technology in order to repel the badniks who've suddenly arrived in your solar system with ravenous designs on your soft pink guts. In this case the badniks are giant bugs who don't even give you time to finish your training before biting the head off your instructor and breathing down his neck-hole.

Despite the initial similarity to *Starship Troopers*, playing *Outwars* is quite unlike anything else. While at first glance you may witness a sort of cross between *Quake II* and *Tomb Raider*, a more advanced, forensic study reveals a quite different game. Your space marine has both a jetpack and a glider strapped to his back, both of which come in extremely handy for swooping over a squad of bugs and firing a few grenades off at them, or being really sneaky and dropping a proximity mine in their laps.

The levels make the most of the unusual playing mechanics, with plenty of high platforms and rocky outcrops for you to leap or glide between. They also make for great sniping positions for picking the bugs off at a distance.

The single-player levels certainly deserve a thumbs up; they always seem to surprise, often by changing the mission parameters without warning. One minute you'll be protecting your base, the next dumping human waste on your commandant's rose bushes. Or something like that. Even though there's the usual compliment of multi-player missions – and they're a decent bunch, offering a very different experience to the usual deathmatches – you rarely feel alone, even in the solo game. Your character is usually assigned to a squad of CPU-controlled team-mates, and making sure they don't cop one from the bugs is often as important as watching your own behind.

Outwars may not be the prettiest of games – the characters are a little fiddly, the aliens truly awful-looking and the environments somewhat flat – but the gameplay is sufficiently original and engrossing to keep the vomit off your helmet faceplate.

Paul Rose

Publisher: Microsoft
Telephone: 0345 002000
Price: £34.99
86

INCUBATION – THE WILDERNESS MISSIONS

If you were to describe *Incubation* as *Doom* meets *X-COM*, you wouldn't be far off. It's an atmospheric game with incredible sound and graphics – especially if you've got a 3Dfx card – that requires more in the way of cerebral input than an itchy trigger finger and cat-like reflexes. You need plenty of strategic thinking to get you through the average level.

Although developers BlueByte have released half-a-dozen freebie levels in the past via their website, *The Wilderness Missions* is the first commercial add-on pack. It comprises a CD with an additional ten missions, four more monsters, two extra items of equipment and four new weapons, plus a level editor, just in case you fancy putting together some single or multi-player missions yourself.

The missions are pitched somewhere between hard and impossible, which should provide a challenge for anyone who's completed the first game campaign. The new enemies certainly give you something to think about, and the extra blasting power adds to the mayhem.

New weapons include a light plasma gun, enhanced laser, enhanced mine thrower and the ubiquitous chainsaw, plus an absorber to boost armour protection and a cooler to stop guns over-heating. Added enemies include a couple of bug-like things and the impressive Gore'Coo, who have long-range weapons and clever attack routines.

The level editor is strictly reserved for anoraks; aimed well and truly at programmers, it requires heavy use of a text editor and the on-line manual. Given a couple of weeks you could probably just about work it out – but then it could take just as long to figure out how to win through the ten missions.

Some of it is set outdoors, which makes a welcome change, and each one has new traps and puzzles to face. They're not all blast-fests, but if you're an *Incubation* fan, you'll already know what to expect...

Andrew Wright

Publisher: Blue Byte
Telephone: 01604 232200
Price: £24.99
72

LIBERATION DAY

A quick glance is all you need to realise that *Liberation Day* is a sci-fi strategy game. What's less obvious is that it's turn-based, which means that although the stills of the graphics look simple and uncluttered – even detailed next to the steady flow of hex-based titles – as soon as you start playing it you're hit by a deluge of graphical shortcomings. The problem is compounded by the shoddy control interface, which only the deftest of mouse users will overcome.

In hi-res mode it's very easy for small units to get lost in the scenery (and trying to find them by squinting at the screen brings on a thumping headache). If you switch to the low-res option you'll probably feel short-changed, as all the unit animations look twice as bad as they do in hi-res (but at least the pain will abate).

Liberation Day is a game that fails to fulfil even the most basic gaming

Where have those units gone again?

needs. Many ultimately empty games somehow manage to create a good first impression, but *Liberation Day* starts off badly and continues, undeterred, in the same vein. The only potentially original thing about it is its attempt to interpret *C&C* as a turn-based game – but you'd have more fun playing *C&C* on its slowest setting with the sound turned off. At the end of the day this game lacks atmosphere and there's not much fun to be had.

Like many failed concepts, the concept behind *Liberation Day* was probably born with the noblest of intentions, but in the final execution the game has gloriously fallen upon its own sword. Real-timers will, by definition, avoid it. Fans of the turn-based games should follow their example.

Richie Shoemaker

Publisher: Interactive Magic
Telephone: 01344 409399
Price: 39.99
43

MAXIMUM FORCE

Deep down, we all know that scrolling shooters are just point-and-click Aunt Sallies, but decent ones, like *Virtua Cop*, get away with it by offering a variety of weapons, pinpoint ballistics and interesting death spasms. *Maximum Force*, on the other hand, sounds alarm bells as soon as you open the manual and read the suggestion that you shoot background objects "to practise your aim". Take this as a coded warning that after a day you'll be so bored with the game that firing at static objects and setting yourself bizarre challenges such as playing left-handed will be the only way you can wheedle out extra lifespan.

So what's wrong with it? Collision detection - vital in a target game like *Maximum Force* - is worryingly ropey. Shots that should have missed, hit, and vice-versa. It also turns out that the terrorists would have trouble hitting a barn door at 20 paces - I accidentally discovered that if you sit back for a moment you can have the contents of a machine gun unloaded towards you without suffering a scratch. The graphics aren't without merit: backgrounds are detailed, scrolling is smooth and all the enemies are digitised actors. However the realism this adds to the game is shattered as soon as you fire and watch one vanish in a ridiculous shower of ketchup. The action takes place in an eclectic collection of factories, beaches and even a tropical rainforest. The hostages are typically stupid, wandering on screen at the worst of times, and levels are unashamedly stuffed with scantily clad women cowering against walls.

In theory two players can take part in *Maximum Force* but in practice this means awkward fumbling with the arrow keys and, besides, it takes a far better game than this to make me want to cosy up with a sweaty mate. Down the arcade you'd probably see fit to pump in a couple of quid, but anyone buying the PC version of *Maximum Force* will be sorely disappointed - three meagre levels means snow in an oven lasts longer.

Ian Harris

PANZER '44

Anyone looking forward to a WWII rendition of the excellent *M1 Tank Platoon 2* is likely to be disappointed by *iPanzer '44*. You may have the option to trundle around in Panzers, Shermans or T-34's, but unlike the new incarnation of Microprose's classic, the graphics and control interface make things hard going if you're unwilling to memorise the wealth of shortcut keys. Moving your units via the map screen also takes some getting used to.
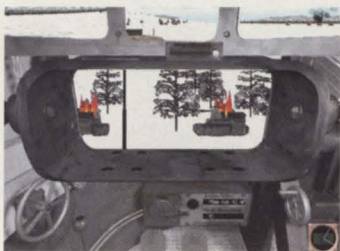
It's snow fun in a tank in winter (ahem).

Without a 3D card, traversing the turret or manoeuvring the tank is slow and jerky. This may be an effort to realistically capture the experience of controlling 50-year-old tanks but it doesn't make for an exciting game. In Direct 3D however the graphics are heaps better, although the bitmapped explosions are terrible close up. The distinction from reality is further heightened when you drive into trees (or rather saplings). You'd expect a German Panther would be more than capable of navigating its through a shrubbery, or ploughing through a flaming jeep, but no. The game may faithfully recreate the Battle of the Bulge or the confrontation on Germany's eastern front, but it makes you wonder how their forces ever got through the Ardennes forest.

Like the vehicles it tries to recreate, *iPanzer '44* is slow and cumbersome. It may be comprehensive and faithfully recreate the way these vehicles handle but it suffers a lack of atmosphere almost everywhere else. Perhaps WWII buffs should stay in their bunkers for the time being. *iPanzer '44* is probably the best WWII tank sim out there at the moment but that's because, apart from upcoming *Panzer Commander*, there isn't much else to choose from.

Richie Shoemaker

PORTAL OF PRAEVUS

Hexen II Mission Pack: Portal of Praevus – to give this new add-on pack its full title – is another 3D-modelled ride through *Quake* territory, with a swords-and-sorcery bent, hub levels and character-specific weapons. Those of you who liked the original *Hexen II* will love *Portals of Praevus*. For starters a new character class – the Demoness –

New weapons and effects look nice.

has been introduced, with new modes of attack (including one called Tempest's Staff which acts a bit like a BFG) and the innate ability to fly (read: 'float'). There are more enemies, including minotaurs and panther-like knights, and more scenery to blow up. Being the 'Tibetan Hub' of *Hexen II*, *Portal of Praevus* carries on from the nonsense story of the first game and into snowier climes, as the player

Don't worry. This won't hurt a bit.

heads off to end a frosty curse found lying at the end of 15 new single-player levels. The graphics, especially in 3Dfx, are gorgeous, and the atmosphere created by the textures and soundtrack is very credible. Sadly, the game lacks 'backbone'. There's a lack of real purpose or immersion. *Portal* also seems slightly dated in terms of scripting and game design. It's fun blasting furniture for a while, but you end up wishing Raven had turned *Hexen* into an RPG instead.

Paul Mallinson

STAR TREK PINBALL

With a deluge of themed pinball games on their way over the coming months it's not really a surprise to see one based on the original *Star Trek* TV series. As you can see, Interplay have taken the 3D approach, which means they can get away with only three tables, one of which - Nemesis - is useless if you're got no friends.

Of the other two tables 'To Boldly Go' is probably the best, as it is based around the fat cap'n himself and features a number of sound samples from the bridge crew. The other table Qapla' (which is the Klingon word for pants), lives up to it's name and is pretty dull and dreary even in comparison. The multiplayer table is the most interesting one, though to be perfectly honest it's more like a game of the old arcade classic *Breakout* than pinball.

For the most part *Star Trek Pinball* is pretty much as you'd expect: a neat way of making more money out of the now quite crusty Star Trek licence just by using some old samples. It's a shame more wasn't made of the opportunity because compared to other

It's okay, but It doesn't exactly boldly go where no game has gone before.

pinball games available for the PC at present it's somewhere at the bottom of the league. In fact unless you're a serious fan of the never-ending series and can name the episode that starred a youthful Joan Collins, you'll probably feel a bit short changed, and by serious fan we mean someone who actually goes to conventions and buys anything that vaguely resembles a phaser. Oh and by the way, we know Qapla' doesn't really mean pants so no stupid letters from disgruntled fans - even though you've got nothing better to do.

Richie Shoemaker

ON THE BALL 2

THE STUFF CHAMPIONS ARE MADE OF

ON THE BALL 2 takes football management gaming into a whole new era. In this long awaited sequel to the smash hit 'On the Ball', you can now play every aspect of management, no matter how unethical some of the methods may appear to be.

As manager, you will have to decide on how to invest your club's money wisely. If you don't have any money, you will need to carefully analyse the myriad of credit options on offer. Depending on how daring you feel, you may wish to dabble on the stock market and even buy shares in a competitive club. If you're the sort of manager that believes that crime actually pays, then why not try drugging the opposition or perhaps you may want to deliberately lose your next fixture to increase share prices. If you are completely desperate there are dubious characters that you can hire to injure players from other clubs.

Of course, there are the normal management activities such as Team and Player tactics, buying and selling National and International players, reviewing contracts, training players, maintaining stadium facilities and just about every other normal management function.

Features include:

- Manage any team from England, France or Germany
- 12,000 players, 295 teams, 130 European Cup Opponents
- Negotiate your own personal contract
- Buy shares from any club and 'dabble' on the stock market
- Bribe your opponent, the referee, or even hire dubious characters to carry out your orders
- "On The Ball 2 is the most serious fun you can get"

www.funsoft-online.com
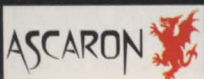
ASCARON

FUNSOFT

Budget ZONE

Splash out on budget releases and save yourself a packet. Over the next three pages, we've picked out all the month's best budget buys.

PC Zone Classic

SCORE 02212250

PUZZLE BOBBLE

In the *Zone* office at least, puzzle games have always been perceived as throwaway, pick up and play distractions that inevitably leave you bored after a few lunch hours, and at first glance you'd be forgiven for thinking that *Puzzle Bobble* was just another game that you'd wipe off your hard drive after a couple of days. Okay, initially things don't look too promising. You've got a couple of cuddly 'characters' that look like they've been drawn by some dropout Japanese student with a penchant for Coco Pops. Then there's the unashamed nod in the direction of *Tetris*, music that belies the game's onerous intent to deprave and sound effects that can at best be described as 'annoying'. Do not be mistaken by the fluffy presentation however, *Puzzle Bobble* is not cute, it's war.

The object of the game is simple. You shoot bubbles onto the screen and when three or more of the same colour match up, they burst. Once the screen is empty, it's on to the next, ad infinitum. The single-player game is simple, addictive and fun in equal measures. However, this changes if you manage to find someone to play against. The idea is essentially the same, but subtle strategies come into play and within minutes *Puzzle Bobble* becomes one of the most perfect pieces of entertainment you can buy. Give it half an hour and the two of you will probably be jostling in your seats as if you were in a chariot race. After an hour the whips will be out and you'll be on each other's chairs, punching wildly, spitting and pulling hair.

If you want to avoid all this off-screen violence, may we suggest that you stick to something altogether more sedate (like *Quake*). If you want to play one of the most addictive two-player games ever, then go out and blow a tenner on this. You won't be disappointed. The fact that it was awarded the *PC Zone* puzzle game of the year award last year – says it all, really.

Publisher: GT Interactive	
Tel: 0171 258 3791	**90**
Reviewed: Issue 50	
Price: £9.99	

AZRAEL'S TEAR

If you thought *Quake* was blighted by a disharmony of brown textures, wait until you get your million-colour-squirting monitor around *Azrael's Tear*. Thankfully though, through the drabness shines a seriously atmospheric and difficult game where you, as a futuristic thief in a nifty powered suit, must find that most sacred of religious nonentities, The Holy Grail.

In many ways it's similiar to Origin's seminal *System Shock*. Moving through the subterranean world is much like *Quake*, and though the action is far more cerebral, there's the odd bit of shooting to be done. With 3D graphics dating faster than ever, it's good to see an aging adventure holding its own.

Publisher: Mindscape	
Tel: 01444 246333	**69**
Reviewed: Issue 39	
Price: £9.99	

BROKEN SWORD

It's no surprise to find our hero holidaying alone through Paris. You may have heard of him – George Stobbart. If you don't know him you'll sure as hell know someone like him: 80s boy, talks too much, and so nice that the filthiest word he'd utter would probably be 'jeepers' after receiving a well-deserved blow to the head.

Broken Sword isn't a bad game, it's just the severe disliking for George and his wordy retorts that hold this attractively stylised game back. He's so clean-cut and utterly nice that it grates on the nerves to hear his inane thoughts and bumbling chatter. It's even more upsetting that he's your only way of interaction with a stunningly attractive and thoroughly absorbing adventure. There are better adventure games around - even at this knock-down price.

Publisher: VIE	
Tel: 0171 368 2255	**72**
Reviewed: Issue 42	
Price: £9.99	

FANTASY GENERAL

Any sane person would turn and run at the sight of hex-based strategy games . They are usually characterised by and who can blame them? spartan sound, tiny inanimate sprites, and reams of tables buried at the back of the manuals. Surprise, surprise! *Fantasy General* is no exception to this rule.

There are a ridiculous number of units that come into play over the course of a campaign, ranging from goblin archers to disease throwers, each of which manage to slot neatly into the framework of the game remarkably well. With the rank of general, you decide what units to buy, where to deploy them and how best to make use of their individual talents on the field.

As with all games of this type there's a distinct lack of atmosphere and tension, but depth of play and competent A/I make this more accessible than most.

Publisher: Mindscape	
Tel: 01444 246333	**77**
Reviewed: Issue 39	
Price: £9.99	

IMPERIUM GALACTICA

Starting out as a lowly lieutenant in Earth's starfleet, you are given a sector in a distant corner of the galaxy which you must defend and build up if you hope to make it to Grand Admiral. Essentially a real-time strategy game, *Imperium Galactica* is a healthy combination of genres that borrows heavily from both *Master Of Orion* and *Sim City*, but adds a liberal dusting of that oft obscured Westwood number *Command & Conquer*.

What is initially so appealing about *Imperium Galactica* is that you don't have to wade through a thick bible-esque manual to get past the intro screen. Though *Imperium Galactica* comes with what can fairly be described as a hefty tome, lengthy reading isn't required to play the game.

Imperium Galatica has indeed got a lot going for it. Instead of plunging you into a massive epoch-spanning epic, you are eased gently into a constantly broadening storyline. You have to slowly build up your colonies to furnish trade routes and defend the spaceways from pirates and scheming aliens. As you ascend through the ranks, you acquire new abilities and responsibilities until, as an admiral, you get to colonise new systems and research new technologies.

While there isn't the scope or replayability of *Master Of Orion II*, *Imperium Galactica* manages to successfully gel together a wide variety of game styles. It probably won't excite the most serious of strategy heads, but it's a wonderfully engaging mixture flawed only by occasionally questionable A/I and some minor interface niggles.

Publisher: GT Interactive
Tel: 0171 258 3791
Reviewed: Issue 53
Price: £9.99
77

INTERSTATE '76

Taking inspiration in equal measure from *Mad Max*, *Shaft* and *Mechwarrior*, *Interstate '76* was probably the most original driving game of last year. With a flared trouser leg planted firmly in 70s Texas, it puts you in the role of an auto-vigilante out to avenge the death of your little sister.

Essentially mission-based, the basic idea is to drive about the desert landscape, shooting up cars and ruling the road. Unfortunately, just twelve months on, the graphics are a bit pants, especially on a P133 with 16Mb of RAM, but there's still plenty there to keep you interested.

This time around, however, we've all got much better machines (well *we* have, anyway) and things are a lot smoother. The only problem you'll have to worry about is the fact that the scenery seems to pop up from nowhere. Still, the game's highly original and seriously cool. If you're bored with run-of-the- mill driving games, check this baby out.

Publisher: Activision
Tel: 01895 4567000
Reviewed: Issue 51
Price: £9.99
80

JONAH LOMU RUGBY

With the Five Nations tournament fading into distant memory, and every home team having had time to lick each other's wounds in the communal baths, it's time to wheel out the tired old puns about mis-shaped balls and post-game willy-waving.

Rugby games on PC are always going to be a minority sport for the simple reason that it's difficult to implement the way in which the real thing is played. That said, Codemasters have had a damn good go and recreating the action on-screen. The graphics, sound and tournament options are all excellent, especially the way in which you can customise the weather conditions. The only problem we found was getting used to the control system - it's certainly a lot harder to play than soccer. If you like rugby, own a gamepad and have an insatiable urge to pour warm beer over your plonker, then look no further. This is the best rugby game on the PC.

Publisher: Codemasters
Tel: 01926 814132
Reviewed: Issue 55
Price: £12.99
74

MECHWARRIOR 2: MERCENARIES

What is this fascination with bipedal war machines? Hasn't it crossed anyone's mind that if *Mechs* were a viable alternative to tanks they would already be in service? That being the case, surely we'd have seen Fergie sporting a pair of alloy pegs and guffawing her way across the mud-soaked plains of Salisbury.

Basically, *Mercenaries* is (or rather was) *Mechwarrior 3* in all but name. Gone is the chivalrous code of honour that characterised the first two games, and in its place enters the pursuit of money and survival at any cost. Big deal, you might think, but this brings a darker feel to the game and introduces a much needed strategy element. As squadron leader, you pick the missions,

buy up spares and hire pilots. For anyone uninterested in such things, there is the option of going through the usual series of linear missions, though you won't find anything that wasn't already in the previous game. If you do fancy delving into this side of things though, then you'll find a new depth among all this Mech malarky.

Inherent problems of realism aside, *Mercenaries* is an excellent game that in many ways is better than the recently released mini-*Mech* game, *Heavy Gear*. Granted, the graphics are starting to look a little dated, but the resource management element certainly adds a much needed weighty element to the linear flight sim feel of old. *Mercenaries* is certainly a worthwhile purchase. And if you've got a 3D card then may we point you in the direction of the D3D patch – go to **www.activision.com** and bring *Mercenaries* bang up to date.

Publisher: Activision
Tel: 01895 4567000
Reviewed: Issue 45
Price: £9.99
76

MEGARACE 2

While there isn't anything particularly bad about the racing part of this futuristic driving game, there is plenty to dislike about the tacked-on gameshow. The between-race FMV sequences featuring the crazed ramblings of host Lance Boyle are perhaps the most tedious piece of filmmaking ever to 'grace' the PC. Granted it does set the scene for the game, but unfortunately it's difficult to sit through because it's about as entertaining as a subtitled Anthea Turner monologue. If you press the spacebar enough times you will manage to find a competent racing game in there somewhere, but it's ultimately all too limited. The cars' handling is somewhat eratic by today's standards and it soon becomes more frustrating than entertaining. The weapons succeed in making things a little more interesting, but with only a few tracks and nothing in the way of multi-player options, it certainly doesn't deserve to set the budget chart on fire.

Publisher: Mindscape
Tel: 01444 246333
Reviewed: Issue 43
Price: £9.99
39

NINE

Big money evidently went into *Nine*. Bob De Niro is listed somewhere as executive producer, and there are a whole host of Hollywood egos who were drafted in, presumably convinced that interactive movies were the 'next big thing'. The problem is that it's all ended up a bit chumbawumba.

First off, *Nine* is nothing new. It's one of those pre-rendered affairs like *Myst* and *7th Guest* in that it's basically a series of puzzles that have been given a huge graphical overlay. The puzzles themselves range from the ridiculously easy to the stupidly difficult, though most are just plain boring. The bizarre plot coupled with the weird graphics barely manage to hide the game's lack of originality, and though it does look quite nice it will undoubtedly fail to immerse you in any sort of atmosphere. Maybe your grandmother will like it?

Publisher: GT Interactive
Tel: 0171 258 3791
Not previously reviewed
Price: £9.99
58
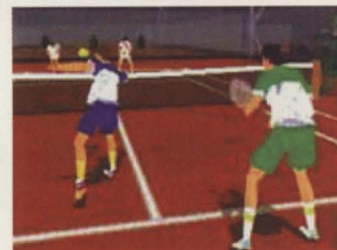
PETE SAMPRAS TENNIS '97

Quite possibly the worst thing about the Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Championships apart from the over-priced strawberries, is the constant threat of rain. That and all the numerous fat secretaries who camp outside the grounds in ridiculous baseball caps, for two whole weeks and the fact that *Star Trek* is banished from BBC2 in favour of endless replays and mixed doubles finals. It's almost enough to make you switch off and go and do something less boring instead.

Thankfully, with the World Cup certain to dominate most peoples' summer viewing this year, you might be able to avoid tennis altogether. That is you might have if Codemasters hadn't re-released what is undoubtedly the best tennis game the PC has ever seen on the PC to date.

As you'd expect, all the usual features are present. There's eight world tournaments to compete in, though for licensing reasons each has been renamed (Wimbledon, for example, becomes The London Open). The same is true of the players, where only Pete Sampras himself has been re-created in motion-captured polygon form; the other players sport made up names like Charles Chumley.

Even by today's 3D accelerated standards the graphics are still fairly impressive in hi-res mode, and the players throw themselves around the court convincingly enough, managing to dive for those tricky shots and even swing the racket in frustration at missing an easy lob.

The sound effects and commentary are both excellent and really help to create tension and atmosphere, with the crowd cheering convincingly after every rally, and gasping whenever the ball clips the wrong side of the net. The control system is easy enough to get the hang of, the skill settings mean you'll be rallying in no time and the number of characters (each with different abilities) means there's a lot of replay value. This is quite simply the best tennis game available, and like *Puzzle Bobble* makes for superb two-player entertainment. Buy it.

Publisher: Codemasters
Tel: 01926 814132
Reviewed: Issue 53
Price: £12.99

88

RETURN TO ZORK

Of all the game genres, adventure games are the ones that grow old more gracefully. Unfortunately this cannot really be said of *Return To Zork*. This game alienated fans of the series by introducing speech and graphics. On the other hand, these new enhancements attracted quite a few new fans. It had an hour (coo!) of speech, video animation (no, really), and came on no less that 12 discs (the unfloppy floppy ones, that is).

Four years on, the game seems incredibly clunky and seems to chug on even a beefy Pentium. If you have an interest in the series, then by all means invest. Otherwise...

Publisher: Activision
Tel: 01895 4567000
Reviewed: Issue 10
Price: £9.99

48

SCREAMER 2

Virgin have bolstered this aging racing game by throwing in multiple 3D hardware support for free. But d'ya know what? It doesn't really need it. As long as you own a modest Pentium. With or without a 3DfX card in your PC, *Screamer 2* is still ridiculously fast and very, very playable which means that if you own anything higher than a bog-standard P90 with 16Mb of RAM and are looking for a superb arcade racer with a good choice of tracks and cars as well as a fantastic multi-player network option then *Screamer 2* is an essential purchase. Got it? No? Get it.

PC ZONE Recommended

Publisher: VIE
Tel: 0171 368 2255
Reviewed: Issue 45
Price: £9.99

88

SENSIBLE WORLD OF SOCCER 96/97

Yet to be bettered in the gameplay stakes, the old *Sensi* is being wheeled out for the last time before *Sensible Soccer World Cup 98* belatedly hits the shelves in time for this year's greatest sporting spectacle. Graphically it doesn't hold a glowing ember to the likes of *FIFA* or *Actua*. In fact, the tiny players have hardly changed since they first ran onto PC screens nearly five years ago.

This version of the game sports last year's updates for over a thousand world teams and the innovative tactical editor. Having said that, there probably isn't enough for owners of any previous versions to get excited about. But if for some unbelievable reason (say, due to alien abduction) you missed one of the greatest footie games ever, then you may want to check it out, especially at this new low budget price.

Publisher: GT Interactive
Tel: 0171 258 3791
Reviewed: Issue 46
Price: £12.99

70

SPQR

More *Myst*-like tomfoolery abounds in another GT budget release, this one based in ancient Rome, of all places. While the city is apparently under threat from an intruder known as the Calamitus, it is almost completely uninhabited. What was so infuriating about playing this game is that it took ages to realise why it was devoid of atmosphere. The music was mysterious enough, and the graphics, for all their *Myst*-like faults, were detailed and highly (I imagine) accurate. But after half an hour of wandering the deserted streets, you end up convinced that there's some Charton Heston end-of-the-world scenario going down. As it stands there's just not enough going on to justify any kind of prolonged attention. Leave it well alone.

Publisher: GT Interactive
Tel: 0171 258 3791
Not previously reviewed
Price: £9.99

45

TOONSTRUCK

While *Toonstruck* may look like your everyday fluffed-up, cartoon-based point-and-click, at its heart lies a humour that is decidedly adult. You won't find strings of obscenities or gratuitous cleavage shots, but by way of recompense you do get to play with Christopher Lloyd and his purple sidekick (ahem).

In true 'Roger Rabbit' style, Christopher Lloyd plays Drew Blanc, a long-suffering animator who falls asleep at his easel only to find himself transported into the land of Cutopia. There he meets up with Flux Wildly, one of his own creations, and soon they're off together to save the land from the evil (boo hiss, "look behind you" etc) Count Nefarious.

The adventuring itself is well up to the standard set by LucasArts in classics such as *Day Of The Tentacle* and *Sam & Max*. That is to say, it's all about solving a few cleverly introduced puzzles and at the same time having a

PC ZONE Recommended

damn good laugh. In the case of *Toonstruck*, the gags are a lot more visual; the spoken interjections often either miss the point or have the subtlety of a sledgehammer. In most cases the humour carries the game along at a perfect pace. Okay, you'll often get stumped, and rummage wildly through your inventory, trying in vain to mate its contents, but that's just part of the fun isn't it (?).

Sadly, where *Toonstruck* falls down is with the central character. In stark contrast to the colourful hi-res graphics, Lloyd ambles along in his tan jacket like a single grey cloud marring a bright blue sky. It's hardly what you'd call seamless character integration. It's not the poor actor's fault, but perhaps an animated Lloyd might have livened up the game rather than limiting it. This problem is obviously a technological one, but one that for the sake of innovation could have meant that we had another classic on our hands. That said, with both *Sam and Max* still playing cameo roles in other games, *Toonstruck* is probably the next best thing to their second coming.

Publisher: VIE
Tel: 0171 368 2255
Reviewed: Issue 45
Price: £9.99

81

WARHAMMER: SHADOW OF THE HORNED RAT

In squeezing a real-time strategy game into a tight storyline, *Warhammer* was a game that managed to be both original and compelling. Unfortunately it was also incredibly difficult to complete without a brief stint in the local sanatorium.

As leader of a band of mercenaries, your job is basically to earn enough wonga to keep your army in wineskins. Battle commences in a small window with a once novel isometric window. Controlling your units is frustrating, and unless you pick exactly the right battle plan it's nigh on impossible.

Being the first game to be based on Games Workshop's fantasy battle system, it was just about worthwhile. Now superceded, it really isn't worth the effort.

Publisher: Mindscape
Tel: 01444 246333
Reviewed: Issue 37
Price: £9.99

57

YOU'LL LOVE THE SMELL OF BURNING PLASTIC

ARMY MEN™

Now you can fight to the death with the little plastic soldiers of your childhood. With 30 different action packed missions and an arsenal of terrifying weaponry at your disposal, you can recreate the mother of all conflicts in this real-time strategy shoot'em up. With deadly airstrikes, tank assaults and flame-throwers to counter, Army Men is anything but child's play.

Ubi Soft

Home Grown

It surrounds us and penetrates us. It binds the galaxy together. No, not the Force, the Internet. And it's full of freebie games, some of which are worth a look. **Richie Shoemaker** dons his waders, ready to trawl the Net.

NYONE WHO THINKS THEY CAN AVOID the forthcoming *Southpark* invasion by hiding out on the Net is likely only to find a plethora of tribute games devoted to the series. Many of the games are, to be perfectly honest, pretty bad. The few that managed to raise a smile were *Southpark Football* and *Southpark Extreme*, both of which, among others, can be found at www. geocities.com/TelevisionCity/Set/2437/. Unfortunately, the first of these two isn't a simulation of the beautiful game played with Kenny's head, but a fairly playable American football game with some excellent samples taken from the show. *Southpark Extreme* is a compilation of small games, the best of which is a duck hunt where you must shoot all the Kenny clones that wander on to the screen.

Most of the games on the Net are clones of old arcade classics. *Asteroids*, *Space Invaders*, *Pong*... they're all there in one form or another and are usually a two-year labour of love by some house-bound retro-spod. The best games are those that are a direct copy of the original. Recently though, we've seen a few games producers making use of 3D
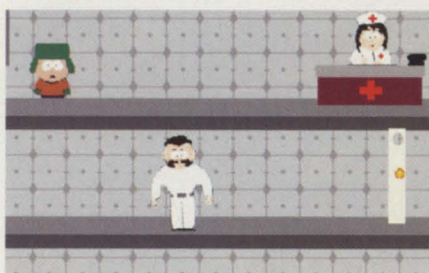
Chef sings a ditty at half-time in *Southpark Football* (top left and bottom right); a platforming Kenny in *Southpark Extreme* (top right); and literal sickness in *Southpark: Avenge Kenny's Death* (bottom left).

The splendid *DX-Ball: Arkanoid* for the 3D card generation.

acceleration, and pretty good the results are too. Choice of the month has to go to *Arseteroids*, an obvious and unfortunately titled clone of the great arcade classic that is anything but arse. Utilising 3Dfaccelerator technology, it's extremely playable and well worth downloading. The playing screen is a bit obscured by a scanner, but apart from that it's damn near perfect. Take a peek at www.3dfxmania.com for links to this and other 3D classics.

For fans of the Amiga/Atari breakout game *Arkanoid*, *DX-Ball* is a superb clone that also makes use of 3D accelerators, though God alone knows why. You can find *DX-Ball* at www.clandt.com/dxb/dxball.htm.

Finally it's on to a classic version of the board game *Risk*. *World Empires* has been around for a while now, and we're on version four and rising. Gameplay is incredibly simple, and there's a nice, neat interface and Internet play if the computer opponent proves too difficult. The place to go for that one is www.viablesoftware, by the way.

If any of you out there have found a little gem that we should know about, e-mail the URL to letters.pczone@ dennis.co.uk and we'll include it in next month's round-up. Happy hunting. **Z**

Where there's a will...

...there's a decent game for free on the Internet

We've all been there – hundreds of pounds' worth of games sitting on the shelf – they just don't cut it any longer. You crave something more, something different. Unfortunately, the last time you went shopping, the smug bastard behind the counter cut up your credit card and called in the fuzz. One probing cavity search later and the only place left to go is the Net. In a final bid to find that new gaming experience, you dial in to a painfully slow download site and spend hours waiting for some obscure zip file to settle on your hard drive. Finally, as BT threatens to cut you off, it's there – Mah-jong Bubblevaders. You run it. And to your utter dismay, you've managed to discover the single most poo piece of programming ever created. Never mind, at least it was free – not counting the ten-pound addition to your already sky-high phone bill, of course.

But don't give up, (as Kate Bush once wailed to a forlorn Peter Gabriel). All you need is a guiding hand. So come on, boys and girls, let's link arms and skip into the digital horizon. It's not all bad, you know.

Essentials

First off you'll need a few essentials if you want to avoid the heartache of wasted download time. Getright (www.getright.com) is a useful utility whereby if for some reason you lose you Internet connection while downloading, you can pick up where you left off. Essential, of course, is Winzip, which you'll find on virtually any cover disk ever made, including ours. If you haven't got it, install it. Now.

World Empires VI: the latest and best shareware title based on the popular board game *Risk*.

10111000000000100111100011011

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FINAL FANTASY VII

Coming Soon...

1011100101l   01101

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UO's coming home

FROM THE FRONT
OUR REGULAR PERSONAL REPORT FROM THE ON LINE GAMING FRONTIER

Don't fear change

The future and beyond: what exactly is in store for the on-line gaming scene? Not to mention your favourite PC mag.

ALRIGHT ALREADY! SO YOU DON'T CARE MUCH FOR *Ultima Online*? You don't play it and you're on the verge of skipping this section for the fourth month in a row? Just hold it right there buddy. Wait a minute. If you've ever played a game against another human being (console/computer/naked Mazola oil Twister/ whatever...) then you must surely know how much fun it can be. Sometimes ten times better than playing solo. Now imagine playing a game where thousands of people participate at the same time, but from all the different countries and time zones of the world. Sounds great, doesn't it? Now apply that idea to any game that you can think of – not just *Ultima Online* – and you've got the future of on-line gaming.
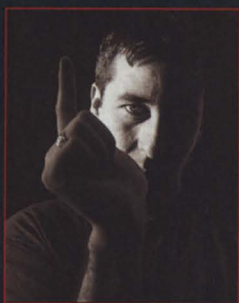
Ultima Online currently sets the standard, and is carving a healthy-looking future for the on-line gaming community – despite much-publicised problems – and deserves support for that reason alone. It's a role model for gamers and developers alike, and many important things have been learnt since its implementation last year. Blizzard have taken a leaf out of Origin's book and are looking to introduce something similar when *Diablo II* arrives on Battle.net. Hundreds of players, conversant NPCs and freedom to do anything you jolly well like.

From your point of view (whether you play *UO* or not) it is a title that *has* to succeed, if only because of the influence it is having on the world's on-line community in general. In the wake of *UO*'s success there should follow cheaper call rates, lower lag times, better tech support and, more importantly, a greater spread of European servers for all types of gaming genre – not just adventure games populated by orcs and goblins...

One more thing before I head off. The magazine is changing next month. Consolidation is on the horizon, and this very section is due to change. Don't worry though, *PC Zone* will remain at the cutting edge of the on-line gaming scene and will continue to report on new and existing titles of interest. So stay with us.
Paul Mallinson

Isn't it about time we had an *Ultima Online* server in Europe? **Paul Mallinson** shakes his fist in an agitated trade union leader-type fashion as his Bring Britannia Back To Britain campaign commences.

ULTIMA ONLINE: WE'VE ALL read about it. Some of us like the look of it, others haven't the faintest. It's orcs, goblins, dragons and archmages – but with one important difference: the game is populated by *real human beings*. Unless, that is, you don't count Americans as 'real human beings'.

To think such a thing would be nought but 'racialistic' in our book. But where *Ultima Online* is concerned, this anti-US sentiment has clearly ingrained itself into the psychological make-up of the majority of European *UO* players, and even we have to say: "It's easy to see why."

Think global, act local

Ultima Online, by Origin Systems – a US development company world-renowned for their quality games – was originally seen as a game of 'global significance'; a game that anyone in the world, regardless of where they were based, could log in to and play. Since the 'beta test launch', *Ultima Online* has attracted thousands

of players from every corner of the globe. And therein lies the problem. Since Origin's servers are located only in the US, most non-US residents are having a hell of a time getting anything at all from the service. There are too many people trying to get onto too few servers, and the ones that are available are a long way away.

Even though Electronic Arts have distributed boxed copies of the game into Europe (less than 1000, we're told), non-US customers are still having no joy.

Living in America

It's not just a lag problem, either, as regular *UO* player Christian Moppett from Maidenhead points out: "In-game support is non-existent unless it's American playing time." So when Christian plays on-line during normal UK daylight hours, Origin's GMs (Games Masters) are drooling onto their pillows. On the flip side, when Christian is tucked up inside his very own 'farting sack', the whole of the US is laughing behind his back because it's awake and having a great time in *UO*.

"The biggest pain is the host of arrogant young teenagers that infest *UO*," thinks Sean Timmins of Bognor Regis. "They can become quite abusive, which spoils things a little." Fair enough.

Jason Holmes from Essex has a different problem: "My gripe with *UO* is the price. The monthly fee of £5 is good, and worth the money for the upkeep of the servers and so forth. What *is* overpriced, though, is the boxed game itself. Forty-five pounds seems quite a lot to me." And a lot to us – especially if the software you paid almost 50 quid for has now been changed and patched beyond recognition.

UO: setting the standard for years to come?

UK *UO* players laying into a bunch of 'daemons' inside Hythloth dungeon. Later they were all killed and robbed.

UO stalwart Adrian Selby thinks the game suffers from a far more fundamental problem than first meets the eye: "It's people that are the problem. Some US players take advantage of the lag to exploit and kill Euro players, which is unfair. A UK server will help because it will cut down on the number of idiots playing, but what we really need is a system where players cannot kill other players."

We like UO

Oh yes we do. And many of us are missing out on the fun because players in America take far greater precedence. We've played the game. Lots. And despite our problems, we really do appreciate Origin's efforts.

"I feel personally that the hours of enjoyment I have had playing *Ultima Online* far outweigh the hassles," comments Tony Marshall, who plays from deepest, darkest Scotland. "And if you are having a bad day on *UO,* then you just put it back on the shelf and play *Diablo*!" Which is great, but not helpful.

"Personally, I think *UO* is a great game," says Garry Holleran, from Mold in North Wales. John Rattenbury from Cirencester agrees with him: "At the end of the day it's just a wonderful game," says John. "*Ultima Online* defines the essence of Internet gaming and breaks through the constraints that so many of its 'non-Net' brethren have suffered from. Most games have bugs of some kind or other. *Ultima* is being re-written and re-designed on the fly. The programmers haven't got just one chance to get it right or release a sequel. It could be a new game any time you log on. This thing will take a *long* time to die."

Good press for Origin

So what do we need to do to get *Ultima Online* launched properly over here? And will it ever happen?

Jed Norton, an IT specialist working with a number of big-name Internet Service Providers in the UK, thinks so: "Origin senior management have convinced me that they *do* want this to happen," he says.

Jed's obsession with *Diablo* initially fuelled his thirst for on-line adventuring, forming a group of like-minded

individuals and naming it Clan UK, and eventually moving over to *Ultima Online* as part of their natural progression. After many hours of frustration and loss, Jed and co began lobbying websites – compiling a petition of over 3000 names in favour of dedicated European servers. Origin were "gobsmacked" by the response and, as a result, began discussing the possibility of a Euro-server with a number of people over here in the UK.

Although Jed has been sworn to secrecy until a deal has been set in stone, he is optimistic about the possibility of a Yank-free *UO* server. "With the current bad press concerning the lawsuit (five US UO players are allegedly suing Origin for breach of contract), it has, politically, come at the right time for Origin. Okay, so I'm being a bit cynical, but Origin have a big opportunity to score a result with European gamers here – 35,000 happy *UO* players in Europe would generate a lot of good press for them."

When, then?

No-one is saying. Unofficial sources have quoted May as a possibility, and all official sources either know nothing or have been told not to say anything to anybody. We know that Origin have discussed technical details with a number of influential 'tech heads' and Net providers, but it is unlikely that a fully functional *UO* infrastructure could be installed before the summer. We at *PC Zone* are at least hoping for a red carpet roll-out by the autumn. In fact we're campaigning for it.

"What we really need is around three to five *UO* servers placed around various places in Europe," says Jason Holmes, from Essex. And we at *Zone* agree. It will cut lag, and serve Origin's customers better. Especially in terms of tech support (which we can only hope they get right over here).

So Bring Britannia Back To Britain, Lord British (try saying that with a mouthful of glass) – and let's have it pretty soon.

Clan UK line up for a group shot. Say cheese, boys.

Thanks to Jed Norton and everyone at Clan UK.
To support their cause, and our campaign, point your web browser at www.clanuk.co.uk/uo_petition_frames.htm.
For general *UO* information, check out www.owo.com.
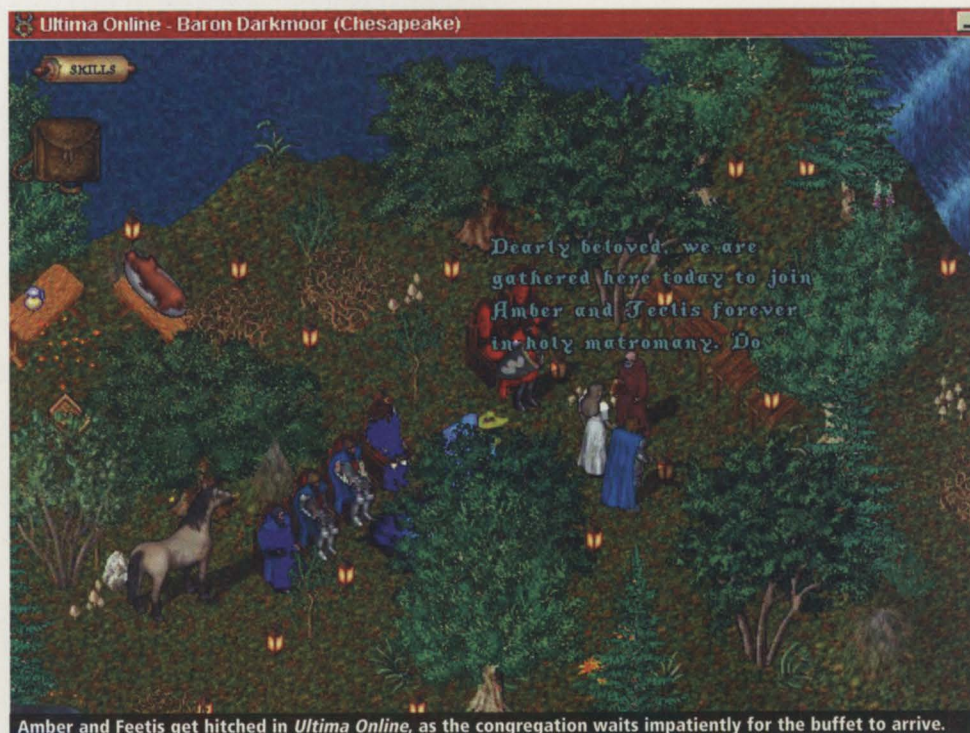
Amber and Feetis get hitched in *Ultima Online,* as the congregation waits impatiently for the buffet to arrive.

Currently happening in Ultima Online

– by Annette Beatwell –

Orc Lord attacks Lord British

It's been known for a number of years that the orc population of Britannia has been increasing. In a recent stylish move – secretly appreciated by many citizens (since it made Lord British look an idiot) – the orc leader, Mag'cho, laid claim to the settlement of Buccaneer's Den for his people.

Lord British fights orcs

The orc produced the Title Deed for the settlement, signed by Lord British (presumably stolen by the orcs). When British contested the legality of the orcs' claim, Mag'cho suggested that he buy the settlement – laying vast piles of gold at the Lord's feet.

While Lord British stammered over his response, Mag'cho noticed that the deed had gone – stolen from under his nose by a bold thief. The enraged orc leader called an immediate assault, and a brief but bloody battle ensued which resulted in Mag'cho's death. Underhanded and caddish? Who's to judge?

Jou'nar's forces again run into trouble with the local orc people.

Jou'nar's campaign continues

The disgraced Paladin Jou'nar continues to terrorise the people of Britannia. Armies of orcs, ettins trolls and lizardmen known to be working under his orders have carried out a string of attacks on the citizens of Lord British's realm.

His forces were responsible for a deadly attack on the Britain to Trinsic caravan, and although heroes of the realm rushed to the scene as soon as they heard of the assault, there was nothing that they could do. Every person on the caravan was found brutally murdered,

A huge pile of gold being laid at the feet of Lord British.

and the shipment of weapons aboard was snatched.

Soon after this incident, another monster horde under the paladin's orders seized control of the orc fort near Yew. They remained in control for but a few days. The fort became embroiled in an escalating clan war, and Jou'nar clearly thought it prudent to retreat with his forces intact.

It is plain that the ex-Paladin leader is attempting to establish a major military force. What his ultimate target might be is unknown, but his vicious tactics present an on-going threat to the stability of Britannia.

Comment

Finally, a word on a few of the peculiarities of the world of Britannia. Firstly, there is the odd lifestyle clearly being followed by most of the land's villains. These dastardly vermin, not content with causing chaos, insist upon doing it in the middle of the night when all decent folk are in bed. Just as annoying, the GMs dedicated to aiding the citizens of Britannia in times of need seem to keep the same hours.

Then there is the periodic phenomenon of heavy gravity (locally known as 'lag'). The evil magician responsible for this deadly effect has never been brought to justice, despite several attempts.

We call on Lord British to do all in his power to resolve these problems. And if he would please take note: obsessively tinkering with the rules of play is not taming the lag monster; it is however, annoying a large number of players… **Z**

After a failed attempt to buy what they want, Mag'cho's orcs resort to violence. Which is more fun anyway.

NewsWire

This month's hottest information from Wireplay, the UK's number one on-line gaming network.

Get into it!

IF YOU'VE BOUGHT THE CD-ROM EDITION OF THIS month's *PC Zone*, complete with bonus Wireplay disc, you've already got everything you need to get going on Wireplay (yeah, yeah, everything other than a PC, phone line and modem, that is – smart-arse), including version 2.1 of the client software, special editions of *Big Red Racing* and *EF2000*, various software patches and all sorts of *Quake* stuff (see page 140). If you haven't got the CD edition, you can help yourself to all the software from the download section of Wireplay's website (**www.wireplay.com/uk/downloads/**). Alternatively, call freephone 0800 800918 and the nice people at Wireplay will send you a CD with everything on it for the princely sum of nothing. Nowt. Ziltch. Nice!

Welcome to the world of Wireplay!

Wireplay
The games network from BT

Get loads of free software from the Wireplay website.

Meet the team

FOLLOWING OUR SUCCESSFUL *AGE OF EMPIRES*, TOTAL *Annihilation* and *Quake II* challenges, the *PC Zone* posse will be making appearances on Wireplay on various evenings throughout May and June (court cases, social engagements and important football fixtures permitting). For full details of specific dates and games, keep an eye on the *PC Zone* chat forum at www.pczone.co.uk. Of course, we're also open to challenges and game suggestions from readers. Come and 'ave a go if you think you're 'ard enough, as they say, and you could win the coveted (probably) Player of the Month award. Not that we're suggesting we're 'ard or anything.

Attack! Attack! Attack!

FLIGHT SIM FANS HAVE AN EVEN better reason to check out Wireplay from this month – they're giving away the software necessary to play World War II aerial combat sim *Air Attack* on-line absolutely free. In fact, if you've got the CD-ROM edition of this month's *PC Zone* you've already got it (see Get Into It! panel, left). All you have to pay for are the usual on-line charges.

Developed by US-based VR-1 (no, we haven't either), *Air Attack* supports up to 80 players simultaneously, flying either solo or in teams. Four airforces are featured (British, American, German and Russian), each offering a choice of two different aircraft. The object of the game? To shoot down enough bogies until you become – quite literally – Ace.

Other flight sims supported on the on-line service include *F22 Advanced Tactical Fighter*, *MS Flight Sim 98*, the special edition of *EF2000*, *Commanche 3*, *Flying Corps Gold*, *Extreme Assault* and *Plane Crazy*. Tally-ho, and all that.
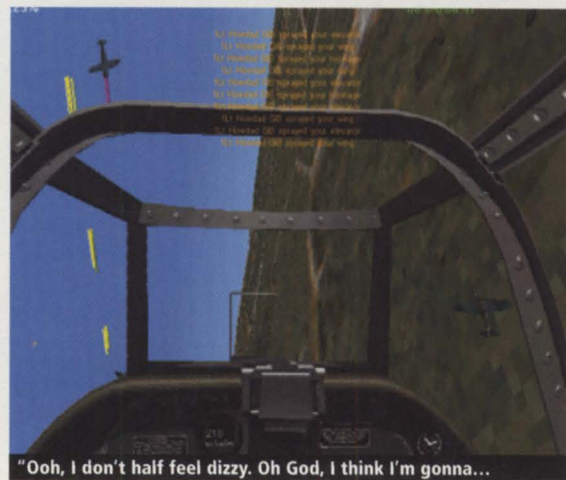
"Ooh, I don't half feel dizzy. Oh God, I think I'm gonna..."

Check! Twist! Er... Snap!

DO YOU THINK *FLIGHT SIM '98* IS A BIT complicated? Find *Quake* a bit too scary, or *Descent 2* too confusing? You wuss! Whatever, if you're an, er, more mild-mannered games player, you might like to know that Wireplay has added a series of new brain games to its service.

The Mind Games Compendium features a collection of 18 of the world's greatest card and board games, including cribbage, nap (whist), chess, reversi and go (snap is not included, for some reason). All the titles support two players and up to four spectators, apart from poker and bridge which accommodate four competing players at each table. Most of them can also be played as standalone games with the computer providing the opposition. And, yes, they're all on this month's bonus Wireplay cover disc. So get onboard.

Player of the Month

Jon Thomson (aka Splitsoul)
Having made our Richie look like the multi-playing equivalent of Nana Mouskouri in *Zone*'s first *Age Of Empires* compo on April 22, Jon has been elevated to the coveted status of *Zone*'s Player of the Month, which by his own admission was hardly difficult to achieve, given the level of competition. Having found out that Jon dabbles in the odd bit of on-line *Quake*, Richie is keen to strip him of his title and show him that the nail gun is mightier than a bunch of neanderthals with sharp sticks. Game on.

One of the cool things about Wireplay is that you can play dozens of different games all from one easy-to-use interface. Here is a list of currently supported games, but keep in mind that new titles are being added all the time.

- Actua Soccer: Club Edition
- Actua Soccer 2
- Age Of Empires
- Armored Fist 2
- Big Red Racing
- Blood
- CART Precision Racing
- Command & Conquer
- Daytona Deluxe (inc demo)

- Descent 2 (inc shareware)
- Doom (v1.9, inc shareware)
- Doom II
- Duke Nukem 3D
- EF2000: Wireplay Edition
- Euro 96
- Extreme Assault
- F22 ADF

- Formula Karts
- Fragile Allegiance
- G-nome
- Incubation
- Jedi Knight
- Jedi Knight: Mysteries Of The Sith
- Microsoft Flight Sim 98
- Mind & card games
- MUD II
- NASCAR Racing 2

- Netmech (MechWarrior 2)
- Plane Crazy
- Quake
- Quake II
- Red Alert (inc Counterstrike/ The Aftermath)
- Redneck Rampage
- Shadow Warrior (inc shareware)

- Sid Meier's Gettysburg
- Terminal Velocity
- Total Annihilation
- Ultimate Doom
- Virtua Fighter 2 (inc demo)
- Virtual Pool
- Virtual Snooker
- WarCraft II (inc demo)

Wireplay

Age Of Empires, April 22

With Chris supplementing his income by working on his back, it fell to lone warrior Richie Shoemaker to carry the hopes of the *Zone* crew into the Wireplay Arena. Especially since everyone else had disappeared down the pub to watch the football.

AFTER A FOUR-HOUR EPIC AGAINST THREE COMPUTER opponents, I thought that perhaps I would be in with some sort of chance against the UK's best. How wrong I was. On-line *Age Of Empires* is quite different from even the times we'd played the game over the office network, where in the past I'd beaten both Chris and Jeremy. On-line, I never stood a chance.

We played two games, the first of which was between myself, Splitsoul and Vizard. My forces were decimated within 20 minutes, and Vizard lasted for only a few seconds more. Splitsoul proposed a rematch, this time one-on-one. No problem.

We both decided to stick to the Sumerian race, as they're pretty well-rounded. I started in the southeast part of the map. And figuring I had to concentrate on hoarding resources, I stupidly sent my villagers on a berry hunt. Splitsoul, on the other hand, had obviously decided to go for the quick kill. Again I didn't last long. Either this guy was good, or I was shit – probably both. I found out later that Splitsoul (aka Jon Thomson) was the club captain of the official *AOE* Wireplay ladder. Trust me to pick a fight with Wireplay's Genghis Khan. Thankfully, Sando and Octavian, two other *AOE* nutters, missed the party.

"You've got to wall-up quickly," said Jon. "You can't afford to build up your economy while leaving your settlement open to attack. I'm known as an aggressive player, but I always like to keep up a solid defence. I usually start off my attacks early on in the Bronze Age just to unbalance the opponents. If I'd known how poorly defended you were I'd have sent all my men in."

I noticed in both games that Jon sent in the archers instead of cavalry or axemen. And effective they were too. "Yeah, it's my trademark," he said proudly. "Usually, people just have footmen in defence that

archers can pick off quickly. Archers will dispense with villagers far quicker than the infantry can."

Well, if our first official foray into Wireplay is anything to go by, we're going to need to go back to the drawing board. We've all been used to taking our time, but on Wireplay time is costly, as I found out.

• Check out the Offical Wireplay *Age Of Empires* UK homepage by going to www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~psando/frames.htm for different strategies. Tournaments take place on Wednesdays.

We came...

We saw...

We certainly didn't conquer.
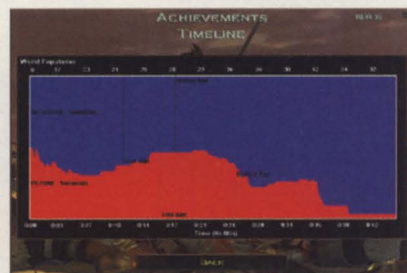
And so endeth the lesson.

Clan by your man

HAVING TROUBLE FINDING SOMEONE TO PLAY AGAINST? THEN WHY NOT GET IN contact with – or, even better, join – one of Wireplay's many clubs and clans? Apart from literally dozens of *Quake* clans, there are clubs for *Age Of Empires, Armored Fist, Big Red Racing, Command & Conquer, Doom* and *Doom II, Duke Nukem 3D, EF2000* club, *Incubation, Jedi Knight, Red Alert, Total Annihilation* and *Warcraft II* and more. You'll find full details at **www.wireplay.com/uk/clubclan/**.

Special mention goes to Chris Krieger, the new club captain for the *F22 Air Dominance Fighter* club. Chris and his crew want to take us on at the game, and we may well do in the future. But that's not why he gets a mention. No, Chris gets a plug because of his on-line handle – Hotpants. Nice one.

Talk to us

IT'S GOOD TO TALK, SAYS WIREPLAY'S BIG daddy British Telecom. And who are we to argue? If you've got Wireplay experiences –

good or bad – to share with us and your fellow *PC Zone* readers, write in to the usual address or e-mail us at: **letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk**. If you're having problems using the service, you can call Wireplay's help desk direct on 0345 577577.

Make Wireplay your best friend!

THERE ARE TWO DIFFERENT WAYS TO PAY FOR YOUR TIME on Wireplay. The Pay-As-You-Play option costs 2.5p a minute off-peak (that's Mon-Fri 6pm-8am and all day at weekends), and 6p a minute at all others times (minimum charge is 5p). Alternatively, frequent users can subscribe to the service and pay reduced phone rates. For a monthly credit card (Visa or Mastercard) payment of £9.95, the Monthly Subscription service offers unlimited access, with on-line costs charged at local rate at all times. If you really get into Wireplay, there's also a Gold Subscription option which gives you a full year's access for £99.50, giving you a saving of £19.90.

Make use of BT's existing discount schemes such as Friends & Family, Premier Line and the new Best Friend service, and on-line charges can drop to as low as 1p per minute. Install the software and you can choose the method of payment before you play.

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WHAT PC, Best Buy *dan Home Plus/233), Oct'97*

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Tech ZONE

Diamond Monster 3D II

WE ALL LOVED 3DFX'S VOODOO CHIPSET, AND WITH GOOD reason: even with relatively lowly hardware it was capable of producing great-looking visuals. Diamond's Monster 3D was one of the first batch of 3Dfx cards to hit the market, and subsequently found its way into a lot of systems.

This new version uses the second-generation 3Dfx chipset, Voodoo 2, and is very similar to the Creative Labs 3D Blaster (reviewed last issue). Indeed, it even comes in the same 8Mb and 12Mb flavours. At the moment, no developer really makes use of the 12Mb version, but that doesn't mean they won't later on. Rich kids can buy two and connect them in what's known as an SLI configuration, enabling ultra-high 1024x768 resolutions and bastard-fast frame rates.

Voodoo 2 doesn't do much in terms of visual quality apart from enabling higher resolutions – the real issue is speed. There's not much between this and the Creative card in terms of performance. In a Pentium PC you can expect a significant speed-up from the same system with an old 3Dfx card; stick it in a Pentium II system and you're laughing. Voodoo 2 and Pentium II work together to create a grotesquely overpowered gaming system. You might think that a 300MHz PII with an old 3Dfx card pushing 42 frames per second on *Forsaken* sounds pretty good, but a Voodoo 2-based card will max-out at a ridiculous 121fps. Even if you push the resolution up to 800x600 you can expect a minimum of 85fps. And *Quake II*? On this kind of set-up you should be getting over 100fps!

You could argue that there's no visible difference between 40fps and 85fps, and you wouldn't be wrong. But if you're serious about gaming, the Pentium II/Voodoo 2 combination will still look pretty good with the latest titles in 18 months' time. Even if you're sticking with your current Pentium system, if you buy a Voodoo 2 now you'll be getting a solid performance boost while you're waiting to upgrade.

Ultimately, whether you opt for the Diamond or Creative card isn't a huge issue. Look at the software bundles (our version of the Monster II came with *Heavy Gear, Interstate 76, Need For Speed 2* and a few demos) and the prices on the street and decide for yourself. Keep in mind, however, that now is not really the time to buy – there's new technology from S3, Matrox and VideoLogic (PowerVR) on the way that could produce similar performance at a much lower cost. And if you're a Pentium user on a tight budget, you'll probably find a standard, sub-£100 3Dfx Voodoo card a more sensible price-conscious decision. Voodoo 2 is a good bet for the future of 3D gaming though, and this is a good way of getting it.

Stuart Andrews

Price: £176 (8Mb); £269 (12Mb)
Manufacturer: Diamond Multimedia
Tel: 01189 444400
Website: www.diamondmm.com

80

World Cup '98 v Windows 98

FOLLOWING MONTHS OF speculation, American software Goliath Microsoft have finally announced a launch date for the next version of Windows – and it clashes with one of the busiest days of the World Cup!

Priced at around £161 (or £85 for the upgrade version), Windows 98 is scheduled to hit stores around the world on June 25, the same day that four important first-round group deciders are scheduled to be played in France.

An independent survey by US-based *Windows* magazine found that 62 per cent of Americans currently using the operating system plan to upgrade to the new version within six months. However, Microsoft were not prepared to speculate on how many UK-based home users are likely to upgrade on the day of release.

Windows 98 is expected to offer improved performance and reliability over its predecessor, with simplified navigation, help and Internet access. For a full report on how it will affect you, the gamer, get next month's *PC Zone* (on sale Thurs 11th June). Meanwhile, in France, Belguim are expected to ease past South Korea on June 25. Holland should beat Mexico, and Germany will no doubt thrash Iran. And USA versus Yugoslavia? Who the hell cares? Microsoft obviously don't...

June 25? We'll be watching the footie, mate.
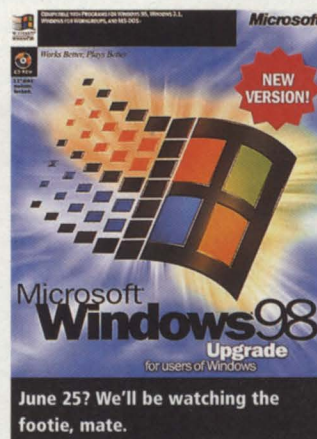
They're football sad!

GLASSES, SOCKS, TOWELS, WALLETS, T-SHIRTS, JUMPERS, KEYRINGS, PENS, dressing gowns, knives, kitchen towel (no, really), watches, rucksacks – you name it, and you'll find a football-related version of it around somewhere this summer. And now there's a mouse to add to the list.

The Logic 3 Sportsmouse costs £19.99, is – and we quote – "shaped like a soccer ball", "feels great in the hand", and comes with a "free" mousemat that looks like a pitch! "All self-respecting soccer fans will be sure to want to operate their PCs with the amazing but true Sportsmouse," say distributors Spectravideo (0181 902 211). "If you can't be in France for the big matches," they add, "at least you can get into the spirit of things." Words fail us.

Meanwhile, Pinnacle Systems (01895 442003) have put together a "limited special edition" pack featuring a TV/teletext tuner board, along with a copy of *Actua Soccer 2* and a World Cup poster. In case you're interested, the miroVideo PCTV Football Version '98 costs around £69.

Sportsmouse: "Shaped like a soccer ball."

Sound sense for gamers

Looking for a new sound card? Warren Chrismas takes a look at six big-name boards you'll find on your high street.

85%

SOMEONE OUT THERE IN COMPUTER land hates us gamers. Just as we've begun to make sense of the oh-so-messy 3D graphics accelerator market, bought (or at least thought about buying) a Pentium II, upgraded to a ten billion-speed CD-ROM drive and prepared ourselves for the DVD-ROM invasion (hey, ready when you are, software developers!), along comes a new type of sound card that we've *got* to have. Money-grabbing bastards!

I guess it was predictable, really – nothing really exciting has happened in the sound card market for years. Compatibility has improved under Windows 95, 16-bit 44.1MHz sampling has become a minimum standard, the quality of music has advanced through improved WaveTables, they're easier to install and, yes, they are cheaper. But *exciting* developments? Not really. Chances are that many of you still have the card that came installed in your PC.

So what's new? Audio accelerators, that's what. And no, they don't speed up the sound, turning even the baddest of baddies into Minnie Mouse. What they can do, however, is some seriously cool tricks – notably 3D positioning, where sounds can be placed anywhere in space rather than to the left or right of the screen. And all with two speakers. Sound impossible? Well, hey, *you* can work in 3D, and you've only got two ears.

Less work is good
There's actually nothing new in all this – chances are you've played a game before with, say, QSound technology, that has a similar effect. The significant thing here is that these new-generation sound cards contain processors specifically designed for doing such work in real-time, taking the burden of the calculations off your PC's main processor (in much the same way that a Voodoo chip calculates and handles the graphics on a 3Dfx card).

Also, because these new boards use the PCI bus inside your machine (which is around 25 times faster than the ISA bus), the sound samples don't need to be held on expensive ROM or RAM on the board

(which explains the low price of the new cards). Instead they can simply be held in the PC's main memory (they typically use 2-4Mb) and transferred as necessary.

A new component of DirectX, called DirectMusic, makes use of this feature, enabling developers to create high-quality interactive soundtracks, rather than having to live with non-interactive audio spooled from CD, or standard (and often terrible-sounding) MIDI backing.

Incidentally, Microsoft introduced a component called DirectSound3D (not to be confused with vanilla DirectSound) in DirectX 5.0, which enables game developers to easily position sound in 3D, and several games currently on the market support this. But just as there are graphics standards (such as native 3Dfx and PowerVR) that go beyond Microsoft's Direct3D, there are several different sound algorithms already being used that go beyond (or at least work slightly differently to) DirectSound3D. These include Aureal's A3D Interactive, SRS (Sound Retrieval System) and QSound 3D. Acceleration and support for each of these is dependant on the card.

Six appeal
This month, we've taken a look at six low-cost boards (the figures quoted are typical street prices) that you're likely to come across at your local hardware emporium – some, like the AWE64 Gold, are istinctly old-school, others offer the latest in fancy-dan technology, including audio acceleration. But which, if any, would we buy today?

We sent the boards down to our labs to be hooked-up to a gigantic oscilloscope and examined by a team of university technicians. Except, of course, we didn't. We actually tested them in a bedroom, in a modest PC, with desktop speakers *and* a hi-fi, and with a shed-load of software including *Jedi Knight: MOTS*, *Quake II*, *Outlaws*, and a *Blade Runner* MIDI file. Oh, and for testing DOS/SoundBlaster compatibility (which is still important if you want to play old games), we used the four-year-old platform game *Cool Spot*. No, really.
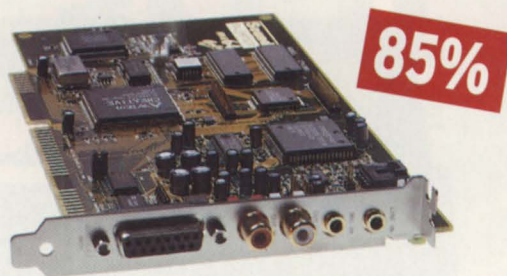
Creative Labs SoundBlaster AWE64 Gold
● £130 ● Creative Labs ● 01245 265265 ● www.creaf.com/

Many gamers still consider the AWE64 Gold to be the ultimate card to own. And that's why we've included it here. The strange thing is, though, it was primarily designed for the home musician, not the games player. Indeed, with the recent developments in game sound technology, it's looking decidedly backward.

Sound quality is good. Noise reduction was improved over its predecessor (the AWE32), thanks in part to the removal of the on-board amplifier, while other features such as the S/PDIF socket (for true digital output) and supplied MIDI leads are useful. But it's what it hasn't got that's arguably more important to the gamer – namely DirectSound 3D acceleration.

The AWE64 is a great card, but if you want to stick with Creative, we'd recommend you wait a few months for their PCI-based SoundBlaster Live. If you're feeling impatient, take a look at the AWE64 Value – it lacks the sample RAM and various other features, but costs about half as much as the Gold. Or look elsewhere.

Specs: ISA bus, 16-bit stereo rec/playback at up to 44.1KHz, 32-voice WaveTable synthesiser using 1Mb ROM/4Mb RAM (max 28Mb); drivers for Win95 only; bundled software includes Cubasis Audio, Vienna 2 and various utilities

78%
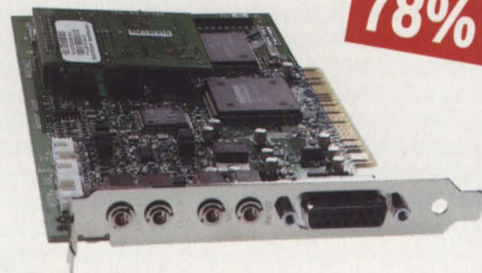
Diamond Monster Sound
● £100 ● Diamond ● 01189 444400 ● www.diamondmm.com/

Diamond always seem to get in early with new technologies. They were one of the first to produce a 3D graphics accelerator and were quick off the mark with the Monster Sound – the first PCI-based soundcard. This is now a year old, however.

Installation was reasonably painless, but we couldn't get sound out of our DOS-based test program, *Cool Spot*. While we wouldn't discount the card's ability to emulate a SoundBlaster purely on this, Diamond themselves recommend that you use the Monster Sound alongside a SoundBlaster-compatible board. What's more, the SoundBlaster and MPU-401 (MIDI) emulation modes both require an extra interrupt each, making three in total. That meant stripping our test PC of several other interface boards.

The Monster accelerates A3D, and the built-in demo program shows off the excellent 3D capabilities well, as indeed do the A3D-compatible titles *Outlaws* (which is provided) and *Jedi Knight: Mysteries Of The Sith*. Duel output for surround effects from two sets of speakers is provided, but the Monster still looks weak against newer boards.

Specs: PCI bus, 16-bit stereo rec/play at up to 48KHz, 32-voice WaveTable synth using 2Mb ROM; digital joystick port; drivers for Win95 only; DirectSound 3D and A3D acceleration; bundled software includes Outlaws, SimCopter and Tigershark

91%

87%

Diamond Sonic Impact

● £49 ● Diamond ● 01189 444400 ● www.diamondmm.com/

A true DirectSound and DirectSound 3D accelerator, the Maestro-2 -based Sonic Impact is the brand new PCI board from Diamond. It uses a 2Mb or 4Mb (selectable) WaveTable library which is stored in your PC's system memory.

It also provides pretty decent SoundBlaster Pro (stereo) emulation. Some of the drum notes from *Cool Spot*'s opening theme seem to have been lost in translation, but the in-game sound worked fine. Indeed, we tesed a couple of other old DOS-based titles – *Prince Of Persia* and the very awkward *Sensible Soccer* – and had good results with both. Our sample MIDI file sounded quite excellent, while *Mysteries Of The Sith* and *Outlaws* still sounded good despite the fact that, unlike Diamond's Monster, there's no support for A3D.

There's little in the way of software supplied (no games are currently bundled with it), but if you can find it for under £50, as Diamond claim, this board is an absolute steal.

Specs: PCI bus, 16-bit stereo rec/play at up to 48KHz, 64-voice WaveTable synth using 2/4Mb sys RAM; digital joystick port; drivers for Win95 only; DirectSound 3D and QSound 3D acceleration; bundled software includes a MidiSoft suite

VideoLogic SonicStorm

● £69 ● VideoLogic ● 01923 260511 ● www.videologic.co.uk/

Launched last Christmas, the SonicStorm was VideoLogic's first foray into the sound card market (they're best known for 2D, 3D graphics cards and video-capture boards) and it's not a bad effort. Its actually very similar to the Diamond Sonic Impact (and yes, we're sure the similarity of the names is just a coincidence), although the audio signal processor used here is the physically larger Maestro-1 from ESS Technology. The output ports are slightly different in that VideoLogic only supply an amplified output, where the rival board has both line and amplified ports.

In tests, the Sonic Storm seemed to perform identically to the Sonic Impact, right down to the same missing sounds in *Cool Spot*. If there are any differences in performance under Windows 95 they're very small. Easy installation and a good, wide variety of software put it slightly ahead of the Diamond board, but the prices quoted by the manufacturers also make it more expensive. A case of you pays yer money...

Specs: PCI bus, 16-bit stereo rec/play at up to 48KHz, 64-voice WaveTable synth using 2/4Mb sys RAM; digital joystick port; drivers for Win95 only; DirectSound 3D and QSound 3D acceleration; bundled software includes Dance E-j and Jet Audio 3.12

90%

72%

MaxiSound 64 Dynamic 3D

● £76 ● Guillemon ● 0181 944 9000 ● www.guillemot.com/

We're big fans of the MaxiSound Home Studio Pro 64 from Guillemont. As the name suggests, however, it's primarily aimed at those who want to dabble in music. This brand new board – effectively a cut-down version – is, however, ideal for gamers.

Unusually, it supports DirectSound 3D acceleration but uses an ISA rather than PCI bus. Nevertheless, we didn't notice any big performance hit under Win95. The sound quality wasn't the best of the boards on test, but it wasn't bad either.

The board also supports a four-speaker surround sound system (unusually, two line outs and an amplified out are provided), with software presets for various games (some of the real-time effects are over-done but they can be adjusted). Fully SoundBlaster Pro-compatible, the Dynamic 3D passed the DOS test (through Win95) with flying colours. Our sample MIDI file sounded just a tad rough around the edges, but pretty good all the same.

The only real problem we encountered was uninstalling the supplied software (which isn't great). Only real power users will be removing the card though. For the money, it's quite excellent.

Specs: ISA bus, 16-bit stereo rec/play at up to 44.1KHz, 64-voice WaveTable synth using 2Mb on-board RAM (max 18Mb); drivers for Win 3.1 and Win95; DirectSound and DirectSound 3D acceleration; bundled software includes *Pod* and various utilities

Turtle Beach Malibu Surround 64

● £120 ● Etcetera ● 01706 228039 ● www.tbeach.com/

Don't be confused by the name of Turtle Beach's entry-level card. The Malibu supports SRS spatialization, but won't accelerate the biggie – Microsoft's DirectSound3D.

Also, the '64' moniker is used (abused?) in the same way as Creative and their AWE64 – that is, it has a 32-voice WaveTable hardware synth which can be combined with 32 in software to make 64 voices in total. Both can be played in sync, however, with the aid of the VSL (Voyetra Synth Layering) MIDI driver, and this produces excellent results.

Performance with the Win95 test games was pretty average. In DOS mode, *Cool Spot* sounded good, but the card switched *Sensible Soccer* into Roland synth mode, using horrible sounds. Our sample MIDI file sounded fantastic though– very clean, and both fuller and richer than any of the other cards.

This superb sound quality (under the right circumstances), the inclusion of an S/PDIF port and some classy bundled software suggest that this is one for musos, but you really wouldn't recommend it as a gaming card.

Specs: ISA bus, 16-bit stereo rec/playback at up to 48KHz, 32-voice WaveTable synthesiser using 4Mb ROM; drivers for Win 3.1, Win95 and WinNT; SRS compatible; bundled software includes AudioStation 2 and various utilities

Conclusion

Audio acceleration and all that it entails may be a relatively new technology in its current form, but it's not 'up and coming' – it's here, now, and being utilised in games such as *Outlaws*, *Heavy Gear* and *Forsaken*. And that's exactly why we've taken a look at a few of the hardware options this month.

If you're desperate for a new sound card right now, we'd strongly recommend that you go for a PCI-based 3D sound accelerator, although less demanding gamers who want a good all-rounder, should definitely take a look at the excellent MaxiSound board.

If you aren't desperate for something new, we'd actually recommend holding off for a few months. Diamond and Videologic have both produced good boards, but the competition is going to hot-up pretty soon with rival products from the likes of Creative Labs, Orchid, Turtle Beach and Yamaha. For the gamer, that should mean better products with more features, extra bundled software and even cheaper prices.

Gulp. I guess we'll be doing another sound card round-up pretty darn soon.

Ask Dr Spod

Ooh, look, it's an all-new problem page.

Speed trap

Q: I've been playing *The Curse Of Monkey Island* for the last few days. The game itself works fine but the speech in the cut-scenes plays really, really fast. What's that all about?

Guybrush Threepwood, Blood Island

A: This problem can occur if you own a Creative Labs SoundBlaster AWE64. To fix it, go to the Control Panel and select System Properties. Double-click on Sound, Video and Game Controllers, select the AWE64 16-bit Audio driver and then choose Settings. Enable the Allow Full Duplex Operation option, click on OK and you're done.

Loadsa DOS

Q: I dug out an old game, *The 7th Guest*, recently, and I can't get it to work under Windows 95. It used to work fine, so what am I doing wrong?

Henry Stauf, Harley, New York

A: Virgin Interactive claim that this DOS-based game won't work under Windows 95 and recommend that you Exit to DOS (if you have it installed alongside Win 95) and try it from there. You'll have to make sure you have the correct memory configuration though, and all the relevant DOS drivers (sound card, mouse and so on) loaded. It sounds more trouble than it's worth.

Card sharp

Q: I get an error message ("Unable to set requested graphics mode...") whenever I try to run *Flight Unlimited*. Why?

Chuck Yeager, San Francisco

A: Sounds like you have a Matrox-based video card, which can cause problems with this game. Check to see if there are any software patches in the Updates directory, and install the relevant driver. If not, call Virgin's tech support department (0171 368 6000) and they'll send you the necessary files. Sorted.

Board games

Q: Is *Screamer Rally* compatible with 3D-accelerators, or what? I can only run it in the low-res 256-colour mode. And why doesn't it support my digital gamepad?

Jeremy Clarkson, Essex

A: *Screamer Rally* is only compatible with the 3D accelerators listed on the packaging – ie 3Dfx and Matrox Mystique. As you don't say which board you own, we can't tell you whether it's supposed to be compatible or not. As for the gamepad problem, it seems you're not alone – several users have experienced incompatibilities with both gamepads and steering wheels. Virgin recommend that you remove troublesome devices and use the keyboard instead. Not very helpful, we know.

Driver error

Q: I've just picked up *Command & Conquer: Red Alert* and can't get it to work properly. All I get is a message which says "Unable to allocate Primary Video Buffer". Help!

Tanya Adams, Allied HQ

A: This, like most video-related problems with games under Windows 95, is down to Microsoft's DirectX graphic drivers. The chances are that the drivers installed for your display card aren't fully DirectX compatible. Try installing the latest version of DirectX (version 5) from this month's cover disc, or obtain new drivers from the video board manufacturer.

A quick FAQ

56K modems come under the spotlight

There are two different types of 56K modem, aren't there? Which should I buy?
Actually, there are now three 'types'. Until recently there were two competing standards – X2 technology from US Robotics (now owned by 3COM), and K56flex from Rockwell and Lucent. The problem is that while modems using these standards are backwardly compatible with older, slower modem standards, they won't talk to each other at maximum speed (56.6kps). But heads have been banged together, and a true international standard, called V90, was agreed upon by modem manufacturers in February.

So which of the three types of modem should I go for?

One which supports the new V90 standard. Simple as that. Or at least one which can be upgraded. Some models can be upgraded with software, others need a new chip fitted – check with the supplier/manufacturer. Before you splash out, however, make sure your ISP (Internet Service Provider) supports 56K modems (if they don't, you won't see any benefit over a 33K modem), and which standard. Most ISPs should support V90 by next year.

Am I likely to get speeds of 56.6kps?
No. You will definitely see a speed benefit when downloading files, but the usual problems – Net bottlenecks, noisy phone lines and so on – come into play. Also worth remembering (for technical reasons too complex to go into here) is that 56K modems aren't any quicker at uploading (sending) data than a typical 33K modem. Really.

But they will speed up multi-player games over the Net, right?
Nope. 56K modems don't send data quicker than slower modems, as such, they just send more data in a given time. This doesn't help on-line games, such as *Quake*, which need small packets of data sent and received as quickly (and as regularly) as possible. The speed problem for games played over the Net isn't down to the speed of the modem at your end, but the infrastructure of the Net itself.

But 56K modems are good if you download a lot of files from the Net?
That's right. Whether you're downloading demos or – how can I put this – 'dodgy' pictures, or simply browsing the Web, you'll definitely notice a significant speed increase over slower models. For more information, try taking a look at www.56k.com.

Warren Chrismas

Plane Crazy is simple to pick up, but really hard to master – PC Zone

You would be Plane Crazy to buy another game – PC Format

The aerial race game for the insane!

Race the Crazy Aces over increasingly insane challenges...

2:09 87
7/9 371 KM/H

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48:39 34
5/9 352KM/H

Collect the power-ups!

1:35:65 28
9/9 333KM/H

PC CD ROM

Available April 9, 1998

Wireplay
The games released than 97
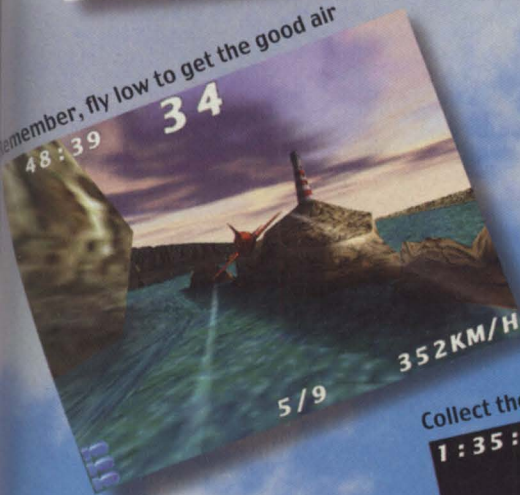
PlayStation

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TROUBLESHOOTER!

Starship Titanic

What we have here is a pretty comprehensive guide to help you on your way to solving the mystery that is *Starship Titanic*. We've outlined how to achieve certain objectives, indicated where you can find certain items and information, and given a brief résumé of the characters. Once you've got your 1st Class upgrade it's up to you...

Getting started

Your Lovely Home

Click on your Start button and select Programs/Starship Titanic/Play Starship Titanic. You will find yourself in Your Lovely Home, the first puzzle in the game (ie How To Start The Game – gettit?). If you move your cursor around the screen, you will see it change into different directional arrows. Clicking with the left arrow will move you left, etc. This is how you navigate throughout most of the game – simple point-and-click. [Hint: to navigate more quickly, hold the shift key down as you click through the game. This will skip the animated transitions and page you through from view to view.]

Turn around to face the computer on the desk. Click on the CD-ROM drive. Click-and-drag the top CD (with the Starship Titanic logo on it) into the drive. It will close and trigger the prologue of the game, in which you meet Fentible the DoorBot. Fentible will introduce himself and take you aboard. You're in good hands, so just do as he says.
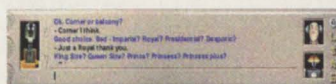
Your PET: house-trained, helpful and highly efficient. It can keep a record of conversations and locations to help you plot your way around the ship.

The embarkation lobby, home to Marsinta, the unhelpful DeskBot. Find her attitude switches though and you can totally change her demeanour.

Your home, pre-renovation. Before you start, try exploring the television for some... advice.

The PET (Personal Electronic Thing)

Among other things, Fentible will hand you your PET, and show you how to use it for character interaction (CHAT-O-MAT mode) and inventory handling (PERSONAL BAGGAGE mode). The other modes, moving down the list of icons along the right, are: REMOTE THINGUMMY, which houses specific controls for different devices you'll encounter throughout the game; DESIGNER ROOM NUMBERS, with which you can store and recall specific locations throughout the ship; and REAL LIFE, which includes your basic Load, Save and Sound options and Exit controls.

Generally speaking, the PET is context-sensitive, and will page to the appropriate mode at the appropriate time. However, you can always switch modes manually (ie to summon a Bot and ask a question) by clicking on the appropriate mode icon at any time.

The Embarkation Lobby

Fentible will let you off into the Moonlit Embarkation Lobby. The ship is basically in stand-by mode, having vanished into hyperspace before it could pick up any passengers. You are the first. Navigate to the right until you face the 'plinth' – a pedestal with a big button on it, reading "WELCOME TO THE

STARSHIP TITANIC. PLEASE PRESS THE BUTTON FOR OPENING CREDITS". Press the button for opening credits.

You are returned to a fully activated Embarkation Lobby. Go over to the desk and click on the bell. You will meet Marsinta, the DeskBot. Talk to her – she'll check you in and give you your room. Stay and chat if you like.

Checking in

Marsinta has given you a Super Galactic Traveler Class state room – a fancy name for 3rd Class designed to make you feel better about being in steerage. Note that the DESIGNER ROOM NUMBERS mode of your PET shows the specific location of your assigned room, including class (3rd), floor number, elevator number, and room number.

This is the ultimate layout for your room. The trick is working out how to get there.

Getting your 2nd Class upgrade

The Top of the Well

Exit the Embarkation Lobby through the big door to the left of the DeskBot. You'll be in the Top of the Well. Step forward and turn left so that you're facing a rotunda of immense marble columns. Take one step forward and:
- Turn LEFT if your room is on Elevators 1 or 2
- Turn RIGHT if your room is on Elevators 3 or 4

Move two steps forward, moving around the Well, and turn toward the centre of the Well depending on which side you're on. If you keep turning, you'll see that you're facing a pair of elevators. Step forward so that you're directly facing one of them. If you click to the DESIGNER ROOM NUMBERS mode of your PET, and click the 'chevron' code on the right, it will identify your current location and the number of the elevator you're facing.

The elevator

Navigate until you're facing the correct elevator, then click the REMOTE THINGUMMY mode of the PET, then click on the icon resembling the elevator, then on the button to 'call' the elevator. You'll be brought inside.

Once there, turn to the left to face Nobby, the LiftBot. Tell him what floor you want to go to and he'll take you there: "my room", "floor 38", "38, please", "38" or several other variations will all work. Stay and chat if you like.

Super Galactic Traveller Class

Each SGT floor has 18 different rooms on it. They're stacked six across and three high, and numbered in ascending order from left to right, as follows:
- Bottom level: rooms 1–6
- Middle level: rooms 7–12
- Top level: rooms 13–18

For example, if your assigned room number is 15, it's on the top level, third from the left.
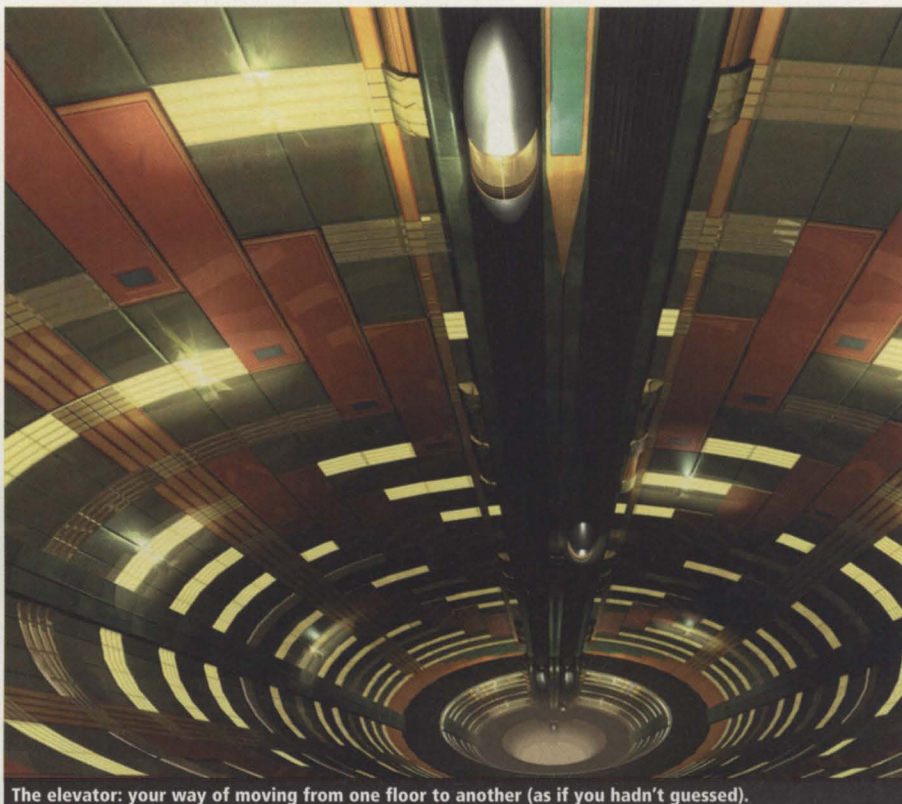
The elevator: your way of moving from one floor to another (as if you hadn't guessed).

The LiftBot can provide loads of info. Just don't ask him about the war.

You'll need to garner a room upgrade out of Marsinta. Just be polite.

The mini-lifts

(If you're staying in rooms 1–6, you can just go straight through the appropriate door marked SGT.) However, if you need to get to the middle or top level, you will have to take the appropriate 'mini-lift'. To do this, navigate to face the appropriate door (you can use the DESIGNER ROOM NUMBER mode to identify where you are in the starship), then turn right. First click on the cylindrical column which is jutting out from the wall. This will allow you to enter the mini-lift. Then click on the appropriate button to take you to the middle or top level.

The SGT puzzle

Enter your room. You will hear a message advising you to turn to channel 3 on the TV for a prize. How to get to the TV? Your room is so small that it's modular, and only certain combinations of furnishings can be accessed at any given time. The object here is to get the bed open with enough under it to support your weight so that you can climb on it to access the TV (which is peeking out in the upper left).

Notice that the PET has changed to REMOTE THINGUMMY mode, in this case providing controls for your SGT state ▶

Don't put items in the Succ-U-Bus unless you really have to.

The 2nd Class room is certainly more spacious, but it doesn't have the refinement of the better rooms. And if the parrot is a nuisance, try distracting him with the treats.

room. Click on different items and then the switch to the right to toggle them open or closed. Solution:

- Deploy personal maintenance hub
- Deploy executive horizontal work surface
- Deploy fully recumbent relaxation device
- Inflate fully recumbent relaxation device

Now click forward to climb onto the bed, and again to zoom in on the TV. Select the TV on the PET to activate its controls. Click the switch to turn it on, then the up arrow twice to find channel 3. You'll get the 'WINNER' message, telling you to get the magazine from the Succ-U-Bus in the lobby.

The Succ-U-Bus

Climb off the bed and exit the room. (Take the mini-lift down to floor level if necessary.) Turn right and head to the end of the lobby, until you're facing a tinted glass cylinder. This is a Succ-U-Bus. These pneumatic tube delivery systems are located in every area of the ship. You can use them to send and receive game objects to and from specific locations.

Click on the glass to activate the Succ-U-Bus. It will slide open and he'll turn on. Chat with him if you like. [Note: The
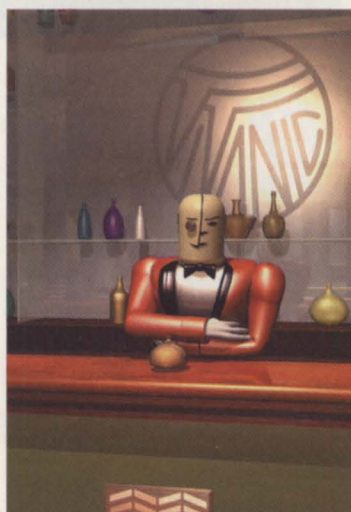
The bar provides you with one of the objects needed to repair the ship's AI.

Succ-U-Bus is voiced by none other than Douglas Adams.] Switch the PET to REMOTE THINGUMMY mode and click on the Succ-U-Bus icon. The SEND and RECEIVE buttons will appear. Click on RECEIVE and he'll spit out a canister.

The in-flight magazine

Click on the canister to reveal the magazine and drag it to your PET. Exit the room and return to the elevator. Call it with your PET, and ask Nobby to take you to the Top of the Well. There, exit and retrace your steps back to the Embarkation Lobby. Click on Marsinta's bell to activate her.

Hand her the magazine and she'll upgrade you to 2nd Class. Stay and chat if you like. Aside from your new 2nd Class state room, you now have access to:

- The Sculpture Chamber
- The Creators' Chamber
- The Bar
- The Music Room
- The Promenade Deck

Getting your 1st class upgrade

The Sculpture Chamber

Exit the Embarkation Lobby to the Top of the Well, turn left again and navigate all the way around to the other end. Turn left and head up the stairs and through the door. You should see an enormous computer cable in the middle of the room. This is the Sculpture Chamber.

The Bots' Cellpoint settings

The Sculpture Chamber contains representative sculptures of each of the main Bots, each with levers on it which control the Bots' cellpoint – or behavioural – settings. When talking to the Bots in CHAT-O-MAT mode, you'll notice that the three crescent dials on the left-hand side of the PET flicker and fluctuate, and sometimes shift dramatically. These are the cellpoint indicators – kind of like mood rings for the Bots. When there's a dramatic shift, that particular Bot has dropped a cellpoint setting and changed behaviours – eg Fentible has fallen into 'forgetfulness' mode.
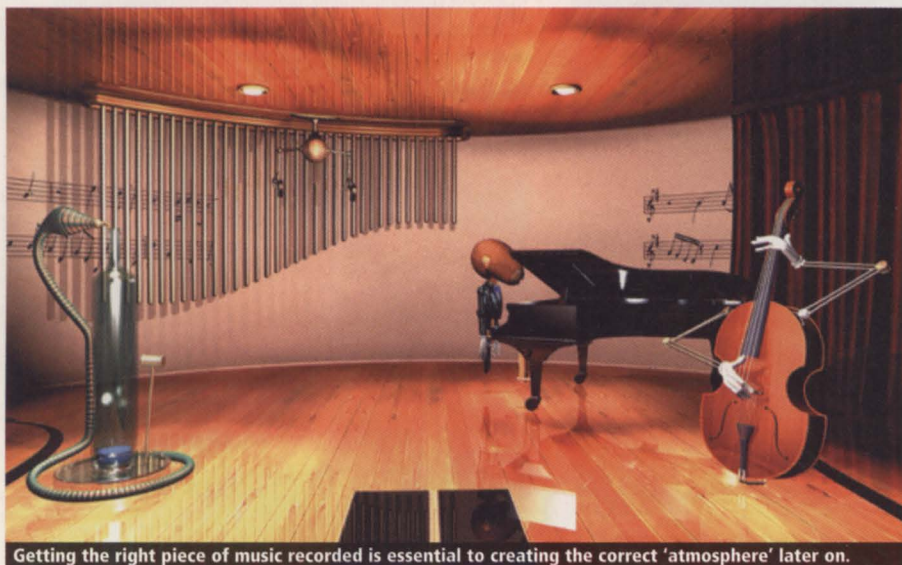
Getting the right piece of music recorded is essential to creating the correct 'atmosphere' later on.

Just turning the lights on is a puzzle in 1st Class. But one that's essential.

◄ The DeskBot sculpture

Turn right and find Marsinta's sculpture (the third on that side). Click to zoom in on it. There are two levers – click on the lever on the left to crank it. Step away, then navigate back to the Embarkation Lobby. Activate Marsinta.

You may recall that she wasn't exactly hospitable to you when you first checked in, but now you ought to notice a major shift in her mood (from 'discretion' to 'pleasantness'). Want an upgrade to 1st Class? All you have to do is ask: "Can I have an upgrade?" or similar and she'll give it to you. Aside from your new 1st Class state room, you now have access to:
- The 1st class Restaurant
- The 1st class Canal
- The Arboretum

Right, so that's more than enough help to send you on your way. Good luck exploring the rest of the ship. **Ⓩ**

The Gondo-Liar is a handy way to traverse the main level of the ship in a hurry.

The characters

The robots on board the Starship Titanic are not ordinary bots, they're genuine 'personality transfer' robots, the result of deep and very costly brain scans designed to produce Bots that behave like people (without the unpleasant bits).

FENTIBLE THE DOORBOT
Long, long ago, Fentible's personality was a senior partner in a law firm. Amiable, charming and trustworthy, he was perfect material to be copied into the DoorBot – apart from the occasional bouts of forgetfulness and the rather surprising mood swings!

KRAGE THE BELLBOT
When Starlight Travel bought Krage's personality, they couldn't have made a bigger mistake. You're only supposed to have your brain scanned once, but his sneaky real-life counterpart has found a way to do it once a week, so that he can use the money to finance all sorts of dodgy habits. Krage's idea of heaven would be driving an open-top down an ocean highway – surfboard on the back, BabeBot in the front, six-pack in the cooler, and one of those romantic lime-green sunsets to look forward to!

FORTILLIAN BANTOBURN O'PERFLUOUS THE BARBOT
Fortillian's personality has run bars all over the galaxy, but like most members of the Blarghish race he remains stubbornly and romantically Blarghish – one day he's going to return home to Blarghland and buy a little pub out on the stormy West Coast. Most of the time he's charming and funny – the perfect barman. Catch him in the wrong mood, however, and he'll either talk you into an early grave or beat you to death with sarcasm, satire or just plain insults. But then isn't that what barmen are for?

NOBBY THE LIFTBOT
Like thousands of lift operatives the galaxy over, Nobby was once a soldier. He's no longer sure which war he fought in (he's seen so many action movies he gets confused), but he knows he did because he came home without an arm. Nobby's had every illness in the book and is determined to let you know the details. Traveling with Nobby is torture unless you have a deep interest in military history or the secret workings of the body.

MARSINTA DREWBISH THE DESKBOT
Normally it takes years to teach prospective desk clerks that unnerving, shriveling "who is this worm that desires to stay in my hotel" expression. Marsinta was born with it. She can hear a mini-bar being raided at a thousand yards. If she caught you at checkout with a complimentary shampoo, you'd be body searched and tortured 'til you admitted all the other offences. Persuade her that you're actually rather important, however, and she'll purr, go into fawning, ingratiating overload and start mumbling phrases such as: "How may I make your sojourn exquisite?", "A Platinum upgrade is not good enough for you" and "I am unworthy to check you in, oh honorable passenger".

SHORBUT SWEET THE SUCC-U-BUS
Normally, you get paid when you donate your personality – the 'better' the personality, the more money you get. When Shorbut offered up his, they looked at it for a couple of minutes then told him not to worry, they'd take it away for free. Shorbut's always worked in muck and he's always worked in the bowels of planets. Being a Succ-U-Bus is a promotion. But it hasn't gone to his head – he hates his work, he hates life, he hates being disturbed. He does like sleep and chickens, but nobody knows why.

TROUBLESHOOTER!

StarCraft

Part 1: Terran and Zerg missions strategy guide

In this first of a two-part guide to the single-player missions in *StarCraft*, **Mark Asher** helps you to complete the Terran and Zerg missions.

The Terran missions

1. Wasteland

Goals: Find Jim Raynor, move to your base, mine crystals, build a barracks and ten marines.

Proceed along a straight diagonal line to your base in the SE corner, finding Raynor on the way. Keep your force together and the Zerg present no problem. Get to the base and start your SCVs mining crystal. Build more SCVs, a barracks, and the marines you need. You may be attacked, so keep your forces together.

2. Backwater Station

Goals: Kill the Zerg and keep Raynor alive.

Build SCVs and mine crystals and build another six marines. Move your soldiers and Raynor north, and liberate the terran structures by 'touching' them. You'll fight scattered pockets of Zerg, so keep your soldiers together. Get a few firebats at the liberated Terran base and two SCVs. Start them mining. Take your soldiers and move them towards the NE corner of the map. You'll fight some more Zerg, and then find the infested Terran Command Center. Destroy that and you win the mission.

3. Desperate Alliance

Goal: Survive for 30 minutes.

Build with defence in mind. A quick scan of your base reveals two choke points. Build three bunkers (don't forget to put

Defend your base and build a barracks, and build the marines you need to complete the mission.

No amount of scrubbing will cleanse an infested command center. Torch time!

soldiers in the bunkers!) and three missile towers at each choke point and you will be fine, as the clock ticks down and the friendly dropships arrive. Back up the choke points with some marines and firebats, and put some marines up on the elevated platforms as well. Keep mining and building supply depots and soldiers and you will prevail.

4. The Jacobs Installation

Goal: Find data disks and keep Raynor alive.

This one's a maze. Keep your force together to mass fire. Use the 'A' key to move them. Make sure that Raynor survives, and eventually you'll find the objective marker and end the mission. There are also teleport pads that look like objective markers. Check the screenshot for the best route to take.

5. Revolution

Goal: Move Kerrigan to the Confederate command center, keep Kerrigan and Raynor alive and destroy the Confederate base.

Move Raynor and your force south and find Kerrigan. Move south across the bridge and then east. Destroy three missile towers. You will encounter light resistance. Further east you will see a missile tower and a bunker. Destroy the tower and then retreat from the bunker. With the tower gone, cloak Kerrigan and move her east and up the hill into the enemy camp and on to the objective marker. You then hear that the base rebelled and is under your command.

Destroy the Confederate base in the south. Mine gas and crystal and protect your base entrances. Build wraiths and research cloaking at your starport. Take eight wraiths, cloak them and fly south and take out the Confederate refinery, Command Center and other units. The quick method is to use your wraiths to take out the missile towers. Replace destroyed wraiths with newly built ones. Once the towers are gone, destroy the rest of the base with cloaked wraiths.

Set up a killing zone to hold off the Zerg rush.
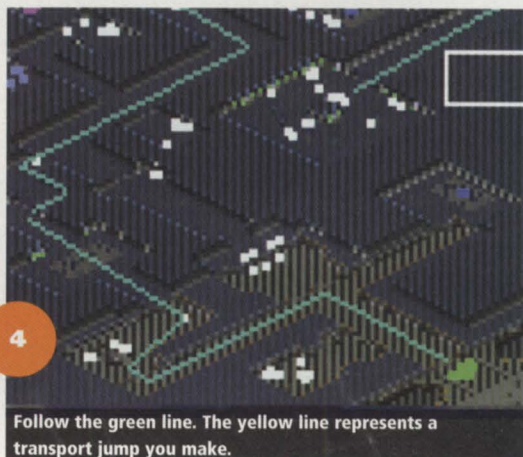
Follow the green line. The yellow line represents a transport jump you make.

To avoid wraith casualties, build dropships and drop marines near the Confederate base to take out the missile towers.

6. Norad 2

Goal: Bring two dropships and Raynor to the downed battlecruiser.

Mine crystal and gas. Build more SCVs. Use the two SCVs to repair the battlecruiser, goliaths, and bunkers near General Duke. Place marines and SCVs in the bunkers. Do not move any of these units up the hill or you will trigger an attack. Use these SCVs to repair throughout. Defend your main base. To the north, up the hill, you will find more crystal and gas, but Zerg as well. To win you need to defend your base well, and then build an attack force, push north and work your way back south through all the Zerg to get to the battlecruiser. A quicker method is to build a dropship and head to the southern edge of the map. Hug the edge and drop marines up on the SE ridge. Your dropship may be destroyed while unloading. Take the marines (may take several loads) and destroy the Zerg Dors and sunken colonies up on the ridge to clear a path for a dropship to fly Raynor directly to the battlecruiser. Unload him on the objective marker and you win.

7. The Trump Card

Goal: Take Psi emitter to the objective marker and keep Kerrigan alive.

Move the Academy and Starport to your main base, along with Kerrigan and the other units. Abandon the base down south next to the crystals. Build SCVs, mine, and build base defences – bunkers and missile towers. Build a small fleet of wraiths and fly them south, cloak them, and selectively destroy whatever enemies you can. Build an army of marines and seige tanks, and move to the abandoned southern base and reclaim it to mine the crystals and gas. Take your army and gradually push east and then north from this new base. There are many enemy goliaths and seige tanks, so don't push too fast. Put a row of tanks in seige mode and use your marines to draw the enemy to them. Use a science vessel to uncover any cloaked wraiths. Replenish your troops and keep pushing until you get to the objective marker, and then bring the SCV with the Psi emitter to it to end the mission.

8. The Big Push

Goal: Kill the Confederates and keep Duke alive.

Start in the SE corner, and transport your forces a short hop to the NW and build a base. Use your wraiths and Duke's battlecruiser to take out light resistance. Place your buildings next to their upgrades. Now build and secure your base. There are three enemy camps: one to the north of your base, one in the NW corner, and one the eastern edge of the map. Don't be afraid to use Duke's Yamato cannon to take out missile towers to clear the way for your wraiths. Build an extra command center or two with nuclear silos. Use Ghosts to spot for your nuclear attacks, but keep them cloaked. They need to maintain visual contact with the target for the strike

Put your tanks in seige mode and draw the enemy to you.

Use cloaked wraiths to attack the southern base.

to be delivered. Take out the bases one by one. Take out the north base first to get more resources.

9. New Gettysberg

Goals: Don't destroy any Zerg structures, kill the Protoss and keep Kerrigan alive.

Seal off your base! The Zerg are immediately to your NW and west and attack throughout. There are three entrances to your base. Use bunkers and missile towers to defend these. Defend your SE border with missile towers as well. The Protoss will launch air attacks against it. The Protoss also attack your base by land at your SW entrance.

Quickly expand, and grab the minerals and gas in the SW corner of the map. Resources are limited. Now go on the attack. Use Kerrigan and her cloaking ability to roam inside the Protoss-controlled areas, and pick off individual enemies. The Protoss have two bases: one in the NE and one in the SE. If you carefully attack by air with a few battlecruisers and cloaked wraiths, repairing when necessary, you can whittle away at the Protoss.

10. The Hammer Falls

Goal: Destroy the ion cannon and keep Raynor alive.

Quickly mine and build. Move an attack force up the ramps and then to the east. You'll encounter some stiff resistance. After defeating this initial force, move to secure this centre portion of the map. To the NW there are additional resources you need later. The NE corner of this map is a hotbed of opposition. The western edge contains another enemy base. They will send attack forces against your newly established base in the middle, so build defences quickly. Holding then enteringresources is the key. Once you successfully establish a presence and defend it adequately, you can build and then turn your attention to the ion cannon located along the NW corner of the map. You will have to use dropships to get to it. Build battlecruisers to take out the missile towers, but beware of ghosts and their lockdown missiles. Once the missile towers have been neutralised, begin ferrying over troops. This is a tough fight. The enemy will continually dropship in reinforcements as well. Once your head is established, it should then just be a matter of time. Use battlecruisers to mount the final attack. When the cannon is destroyed, the mission ends. Congratulations! ▶

Move these buildings to your main base immediately.

Use the battlecruiser's awesome Yamato cannon to destroy missile towers.

Seal your base with bunkers and missile towers to fend off Zerg attacks.

You're Guy Fawkes and this ion cannon is Parliament (sic).

Don't forget to take out this starport near the Terran base.

The Zerg and Protoss are bitter enemies.

Use mutalisks to terrorise the enemy.

Kerrigan, Queen of the Horde appears.

The Zerg missions

1. Among the Ruins

Goals: Create a spawning pool, hydralisk den, protect the chysalis and destroy the Terran base.

Create drones, mine, and build your spawning pool and hydralisk den. Create a dozen hydralisks and march them NE along with some Zerglings. There are two Terran bases protected by goliaths and soldiers. You'll probably have to create two or three squads of hydralisks to accomplish the job. Just keep pressing towards the main Terran base with a sizeable force.

2. Egression

Goals: Use a drone to move the chyrsalis to the objective marker.

Mine and use a unit to activate the hunter-killers guarding the chysalis. Use them and other attackers to clear the area of just to the SE of Protoss. Mutate a hive into a greater hive and create a spire. Build hydralisks and mutalisks. Use a force of hydralisks and mutalisks to clear the way to the objective marker, which is a bit of a maze, and when done move the chrysalis to the marker. The main Protoss base is along the western edge of the map. You don't have to destroy it.

3. The New Dominion

Goal: Protect the chrysalis and eliminate the humans.

Mine and build your base. Build hydralisks and mutalisks. Build detectors and hidden colonies to protect the chrysalis. Move up the ridge to the north and fight the Terrans to claim the area. Build a second base here. Now build an attack force of mutalisks and fly due east and then north and defeat the Terran forces on the NE edge of the map here. Research the overlord transport option. Use overlords to bring hydralisks to the beach head. Now it's a matter of pushing west along the ridge and overcoming the many Terran forces. Use mutalisks to take out seige tanks. Be sure to leave a force behind to protect the chrysalis.

4. Agent of the Swarm

Goal: Protect the chrysalis and infest or destroy Raynor's command centre.

This one's straightforward. Build and protect your base, and then build up a sizeable strike force of mutalisks to take out Raynor's command center in the NE corner. The island in the middle has additional resources, so you can transport a drone to build a base also. Defend your home base – it will be attacked throughout. To get good map intel, use a queen to parasite a Terran transport moving back and forth.

5. The Amerigo

Goal: Move Kerrigan to the supercomputer.

Kerrigan is the key. Using her cloaking, she can run ahead alone and clear the hallways. Use her 'Consume' ability to eat Zerglings and replenish her energy so she can stay cloaked longer. Beware of hidden missile traps though – they reveal Kerrigan. Use the hunter-killers to take out the missiles. Retreat when wounded, and burrow to heal. If all else fails, Kerrigan will also heal over time, so tuck her in a safe spot and get up and take five.

6. The Dark Templar

Goal: Destroy the Protoss and then take Kerrigan to fight Tassadar.

Start in the NW corner and build and fortify with sunken colonies and detectors. Also build hydralisks, and when your base is attacked (repeatedly), cloak Kerrigan and use her – she's your best weapon. Psionic storm is quite effective. The key to winning this one is to expand and grab the resources to the immediate east and south and build new bases. Use overlords to transport drones. The south is protected by a small Protoss force. Once you have expanded, build your strike force. Take 12 mutalisks and six or more guardians along with an overlord (for spotting) and head SE. The Protoss have quite an encampment along both edges of the map down. It may take several strike forces to defeat them. Use your overlord to spy on their defences, and then use the guardians to take out the defences from long range. Expect the Protoss to respond quickly. Use your mutalisks to protect the guardians. Remember to pull back and heal if necessary. For the final battle with Tassadar, just port Kerrigan there.

Use this map to thread the maze. Red spots mark traps, so be wary.

7. The Culling

Goal: Defeat the renegade Zerg.

The key is to expand rapidly. You start with a nice strike force but no base. Immediately go north and encounter a weakly defended Zerg colony. Destroy them and then use your drones to create a new colony. Now it's mine and build time. Put in a spawning pool after your production is ramped up, and create 18 Zerglings. Take these, backed by your starting group of mutalisks, and head due west. You'll find another enemy Zerg base. Destroy it and establish a second colony here. Now it's build and research time. Defend your bases well with sunken colonies and spore detectors. Both will be attacked repeatedly. Hydralisks will also help. The enemy Zerg will use overlords to transport attack forces throughout, so the attacks can be a bit unpredictable. The main enemy encampments are located along the NE and north edges of the maps. Upgraded mutalisks and guardians can take out most of these.

8. Eye for an Eye

Goal: Don't let the Dark Templars escape, destroy the Protoss, and keep Kerrigan alive.

One of the toughest. There are three beacons that the Dark Templars can use to escape. Defend them all. Keep an overlord near each to spot the invisible units. Essentially, you have to manage a war on three fronts. Use the Nydus Canals to shuffle back and forth rapidly.

Build a hydralisk force and use the canal to stage them in the upper left corner. Move back east with these, along the upper edge of the map. Kill the Protoss and build a new base here next to the resources. Now build and research, being sure to protect the three beacons well. Create an airforce – mutalisks and guardians – and head south from the upper right corner of the map. There's a Protoss base midway down the eastern edge and another small encampment in the SE corner. Take these out and build new colonies. Build up a large attack force and take out the largest Protoss base located in SW corner. Once this is gone, move north up the map and take out the final base along the western edge.

9. The Invasion of Auir

Goals: Take a drone to the Khaydarin crystal, mine that crystal, defend the mine, and return the crystal to your beacon.

Another tough one. Build and research quickly. Send 12 Zerglings due east along the top edge of the map to gain control of a second resource area protected by Protoss. Establish a second base there. The ridge to the south of your main base is protected by photon cannons. Use guardians to destroy them. There's a natural alley down the center of your map that you need to control. Build a strike force and slug it out. It may take you several waves of attackers, but grab this centre alley and build a third base. Protect it well with sunken colonies and detectors. The Protoss will repeatedly attack all your bases, using shuttles to drop in troops.

Overrun them early on with Zerglings to establish your second colony.

The Protoss start with well-developed bases in this mission.

After mining the Khaydarin crystal, you must defend this area for ten minutes!

Push down the middle of the map. There are Protoss bases on both the east and west middle sections of the map. The Khaydarin crystal is down near the bottom middle of the map. You can attempt to take out the Protoss bases or push ahead to the crystal. Once you get to the crystal, a ten-minute timer starts. You need to protect the crystal during this ten minutes, so keep building your force and assign the Khaydarin crystal mine as the destination for newly created units. Once the timer expires, take the drone carrying the crystal to the beacon to end the mission.

10. Full Circle

Destroy the Protoss temple.

Build quickly and expand, but protect your main base with many sunken colonies and detectors. There are mineral and gas deposits to the immediate east and west of your main base, so build bases there as well. This should give you most of what you need for the usual airforce – mutalisks and guardians – and begin using them to soften up the Protoss defences. You need to take out those photon cannons! The map is pinched off in the middle by some water, so you can establish some defences at the choke points if you like, though it isn't really necessary. Use a combination of air power and hydralisks to push your way through the stiff defences that protect the temple. When you have destroyed the temple, the mission ends. ⓩ

Use a combination of mutalisks and guardians to take out the Protoss.

The Protoss temple must be destroyed!

Next month: the final missions, and multi-player hints and tips.

Dear Chimpy

Don't have a tantrum, have a tip or two. Keith Pullin, *PC Zone*'s resident hint machine, helps a few worthy souls who are finding some of this spring's collection of game releases a little too hot to handle.
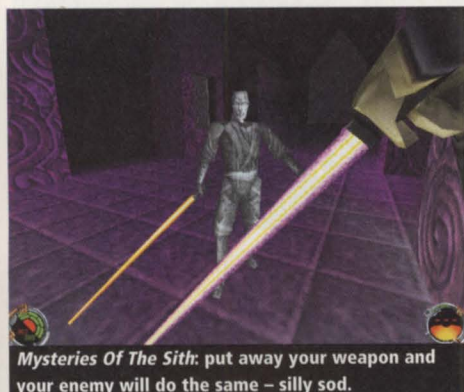
Mysteries Of The Sith: put away your weapon and your enemy will do the same – silly sod.

Not so bad

Q: On *Jedi Knight 2: Mysteries Of The Sith*, there's a Dark Jedi who I just cannot defeat no matter what. I've hit him more than 40 times with my lightsaber and he just will not budge. What the hell can I do to get past this guy?

Annie Motson, Leeds

A: The answer is infuriatingly simple: just put your weapon away! If you do this he will obligingly concur by doing the same and lead you through to the next section of the game. Bad guys just aren't what they used to be.

Tank girl

Q: I've been playing *Grand Theft Auto* and I just cannot jump across to the tank on the island on the Mandarin Mayhem level. How can I do it?

Lily Charles, Norwich

A: Forget cars, the only thing that's going to help you there is the throbbing power of a Superbike. This machine is the only vehicle capable of accelerating quickly enough to make it across the gap. So tweak that throttle and jump for it.

GTA: cars are cool for ram-raiding and stuff, but there are times when only a bike will do.

Racey chicks

Q: A little birdie told me there's a naked chick on the side of the track in *Red Line Racer*. Is this true? If so, where is she please?

Lee White, Farnborough

A: You filthy pervert. Yeah, there is, actually. On the Devil's Canyon course, as you go through the tunnel, keep veering to the right. You'll probably crash by doing this, but just keep pressing right and suddenly a gorgeous, bikini-clad megababe will materialise before you. I'd get a real bird though, they're better at riding choppers.

Kitchen Blade

Q: In *Blade Runner*, in McCoy's apartment there's a cook who throws scalding soup on me. What can I do to stop him doing this?

Alan Treadwell, Bournemouth.

A: The guy's name is Zuben. When he attempts to 'accidentally' spill soup on you, there's a brief moment just before he ends his dialogue where you can move slightly to the right to avoid his clumsy assassination attempt. Now, instead of killing him, just follow him out of the kitchen, up the ladder and on to the next screen. Here he will inadvertently do himself in.

Getting ahead

Q: I've managed to work my way through *Quake II* to level 27 – The Upper Palace. Apparently there are seven secrets here. But more interestingly, you're meant to be able to find John Carmack's head (?!). Could you please tell me where this disembodied prize is?

Paul White, Bolton

A: Of course. Once you've done the second secret on this level, take a close look at the now demolished brick wall and you'll see a puddle of green slime on the floor. Near this, in the corner, there's a small stone sticking out of the wall – push against this. A secret door will open and you can now swim through a slimy

tunnel to the hidden head room – don't forget to take the red key-card though.

Red Baron blues

Q: I'm having some serious problems with *Red Baron II* – it's absolutely impossible. Every mission I go on seems to end in disaster. I can't shoot any planes down and I can't seem to destroy any ground targets. Am I missing something?

Max Ball, Finchley

A: No, you're not missing anything, that's just the way it is. My advice to anyone having trouble with this game is to make use of the accelerated time option as you travel towards your target, and then use the auto-combat pilot during a dogfight to stay on your enemy's tail. When the computer is right behind your foe, switch off auto-combat and pop a few rounds into his rear. Seems to be the only way. Ⓩ

Red Baron: get behind him, switch off the auto-combat and shoot him in the arse.

TROUBLESHOOTER
CHEATMASTER

For those of you who are just browsing through the mag without a care in the world, **Keith Pullin** invites you to cast your eyes over this motley collection of cheats and secrets. You might become inspired to do great things; but then again you might be tempted to cheat at a computer game.

Black Dahlia: eggstra video clips.

Incubation: suddenly everything becomes clear.

Black Dahlia (Take 2)
Black Easter eggs
Seeing as we've all just stuffed ourselves stupid with inordinate amounts of chocolate this Easter, it's only fitting that we should treat you to a few more Easter eggs – but not of the Crunchie or Mars variety, these are *Black Dahlia* flavour.
Egg 1: In Los Angeles, in Pearson's hotel room you'll have noticed that you can use the phone to make a few calls. There's a list of names to choose from, but instead of picking one of those, simply click on Jim. This triggers a relatively amusing bit of film.
Egg 2: And there's more... When you find yourself in the ABC warehouse, search through as many files as you can while you're there. After flicking

through a dozen or so, another humorous video clip will be mysteriously activated.

Longbow: say you want to see, and you get a mouthful.

Longbow 2 (Electronic Arts)
Cheat talking
During the credits, type **IWANNASEE** in capitals. This will activate a selection of amusing quotes from some people you don't know (and probably wouldn't want to, judging by what they say).
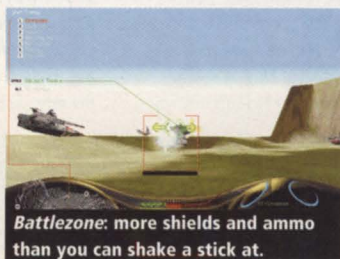
Battlezone: more shields and ammo than you can shake a stick at.

Battlezone (Activision)
Cheats galore!
All these *Battlezone* cheats must be typed in while the game is being played. To enter them, hold down shift and control at the same time, keep them held, and press the following:

BZBODY	Infinite shields
BZFREE	Unlimited lives
BZRADAR	Full map
BZTNT	Unlimited ammo

Die By The Sword: it's amazing what god can do.

Die By The Sword (Interplay)
Dirty rotten cheater
While slashing your way through the game, type the following codes while holding down the F1 key:

Mukor	God mode
Deadly	Dream weapon!
Golrg	Large character
Btiny	Small character

If you want an extra cheat, try adding '-god' when running the main executable program.

Incubation (Blue Byte)
Sly cheats
On the main screen (which is the city map), type in the following strange-looking codes:

ix1	All locations become visible
ix2	Every marine is awarded 10 skill points
ix3	The entire squad is given 500 equipment points
ix4	Skips to next mission

Lego Island (Lego Interactive)
Dancing flowers
Just a bit of fun, really, this one, but here you go.

Inside the Information Centre, keep clicking on the arrows until an elevator appears. Enter the elevator and click on the third floor. Two arrows will materialise. If you click on the right one, a desk appears; click on the middle drawer of said desk and you'll be given clues about a cave code. Now, while playing the game, press T and Z simultaneously to make the flowers and trees dance.

Lego Island: take your partners.

Disclaimer

We would like to make it absolutely clear that if you decide to use these cheats, you do so at your own risk. If you experience problems which you suspect may have arisen as a result of using these cheats (your PC blows up or starts doing really strange things), much as we sympathise, we cannot and will not be held responsible.

Redline Racer: climb aboard a dream machine.

Redline Racer (Ubi Soft)
Stunning motorbike

If you type in your name as **DISSENT**, you'll receive the kind of racing machine Carl Foggerty would have a wet dream about. Yup, you could say it's a bit on the good side.

StarCraft: when the going gets tough, the tough get cheating.

StarCraft (Blizzard Entertainment)
Star cheats

If, during the game, things aren't going too well for you, press return and type the following words exactly as they appear here:

operation CWAL	All units and buildings will be built in extra-quick time
show me the money	You'll receive 10,000 resources
The Gathering	Unlimited mana for psionics

Street Fighter: meet the new boss, same as the old boss.

Street Fighter Zero 2 (Capcom)
Halfway boss

If you defeat the first four characters in two rounds with nothing but Super Combos Finish or Super Art Finish, you will find a hidden boss.

Powerboat Racer (Interplay)
Cheat codes

Enter the following codes on the password screen:

EPS	Championship mode
PBR	Slalom mode
PDL	Enter secret mines level
URN	Catamarans

Well, that's it for now. If you know of any good cheats that you fancy sharing with your fellow *Zone* readers, please send them in to: Troubleshooter, PC Zone, Dennis Publishing, 19 Bolsover Street, London W1P 7HJ. See you next issue, out on Thursday 11th June.

"*Powerboat Racer* you are clear for launch."

CD ZONE

On the disc

This month we've got two CDs for your gaming pleasure, packed with the latest and best playable demos, patches and utilities. Cricket fans are in for a treat this month cos we've got a fantastic fully playable demo of Empire Interactive's *International Cricket Captain*, as well as the blisteringly quick *Motorhead* from Gremlin Interactive, and at long last the massive three-level *Quake II* demo from iD. Speaking of which, if you're a fan of *Quake* and *Quake II*, you'll find everything you need to play on-line and stretch your playing time on our Essential Quake Collection CD sponsored by Wireplay. That's over 1.2 Gig of gaming pleasure!

MINIMUM SPECIFICATION

You'll need at least a Pentium 133 with 16Mb RAM to run the software on this month's CD-ROM.

Many of the programs are designed to run under Windows 95 and, as a result, some of them may require a Pentium 166 with 32Mb RAM to run satisfactorily. Please note that some games also require a 3D accelerator card to run.

Use the browser and menu system to see which demos are Windows 95, DOS and 3D accelerator only.

Help!

CD trouble? HD playing up? Don't worry – phone our helpline and sort yourself out pronto!

HD DISK HELP

Phone Matthew on 01274 736990
Any weekday between 9am and 4pm

CD-ROM HELP

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INTERNATIONAL CRICKET CAPTAIN (Empire)

EXCLUSIVE!

CRICKET FANS MAY WELL HAVE FOUND THEIR ANSWER TO FOOTBALL'S *Championship Manager*. Now, with Empire's *ICC* you take charge of a County team and play a full county championship match and a Sunday league match. All that's missing are the cucumber sandwiches.

Controls: Mouse

QUAKE II (iD/Activision)

Three full levels from the 3D masters at iD Software should be enough to convince you that while *Quake II* is likely to be bettered in the coming months, it's unlikely to lose its well-deserved crown.

Controls: Keyboard/mouse/gamepad
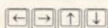
← → ↑ ↓	Movement
CTRL /LMB	Attack
?	Change weapon
SHIFT	Run
< / >	Step left/right
ALT	Sidestep
A / Z	Look up/down
END	Centre view
\	Mouse look
	Up/jump
C	Down/crouch
TAB	Inventory
ENTER	Use item
[/]	Previous/next item
F1	Help computer
F / F3	Save/load
F4	Keys
F5	Multi-player set-up
F6	Quicksave
F9	Quickload
F10	Quit

CROC: LEGEND OF THE GOBBOS (Fox Interactive)

Arrgh, it's another of those cutesy platform games that are so popular with console owners! This one features a 'ickle cwocodile that should've been taken down the handbag factory as soon as it'd hatched. Still, it's the closest your PC'll get to *Mario 64* – for now.

Controls: Keyboard/gamepad

← → ↑ ↓	Movement
Z / X	Step left/right
Left CTRL	Tail snipe
	Jump
L SHIFT	180 degree turn
N	Camera control
Q / A	Camera up/down

USM 98 (Impressions/Cendant)

That *other* footie management sim is back, this time with even more graphical hundreds and thousands and the new option to watch a full match of your hand-picked team in action. Whether *Championship Manager 2* fans will end up switching their loyalties remains to be seen. Check out the review on page 92 then take charge of your favourite team for two months to decide.

Controls: Mouse

MOTORHEAD (Gremlin)

This is certainly one of the fastest racing games available, and you don't need a 3D card to get a blistering frame rate. *Motorhead* scored a thumping 90 per cent last issue and therefore attained *PC Zone* 'Classic' status. Now you can see for yourself what all the fuss was about by installing this excellent one-lap demo. Remember though, this represents just a smidgen of what's on offer when you buy the full game, so get clicking and then get drivin'. You won't be disappointed.

Controls: Keyboard/joystick/gamepad

Key	Action
← → ↑ ↓	Steering, accelerate, brake
⎵	Rear view
F1 - F3	View select
ESC	Exit

ARMOR COMMAND
(Take 2 Interactive)

It's real-time strategy time again, this time in full spinny-rotatey 3D courtesy of Edward Kilham, one of *X-Wing*'s co-creators. This one mission demo features a number of vehicles from the retail version. Is it the future of real-time strategy games? You decide.

Controls: Keyboard/mouse

Key	Action
← →	Cycle through available vehicles/groups
↑ ↓	Select vehicle/building menu
LMB	Activate the next nav point
RMB	Select your target
D	Exits into debriefing menu
ENTER	Activate/build selected items
⎵	Toggle view
I	Toggle health bars
C	Zoom in/out
INS	Toggle interface screen

Key	Action
F	Change formation of ground units
SHIFT F1-F10	Assign function keys to selected group
CTRL +LMB	Add additional nav points to list
CTRL F1-F10	Insert selected group with function key
SHIFT +RMB	Select vehicle to be group leader
F1-F10	Select pre-set group
SHIFT +LMB	Split/join vehicle from/to group
X	Toggle full layout of tactical satellite map
S	Select unit/building for sale
Z	Zoom in radar map
L	Assign group to loop between selected navigation points
[/]	Cycle through manufacturing list
H	Toggle between group modes
DEL	Abort vehicle being built
G	Toggle goal screen on/off
Q	Quit mission
ESC	Exit game and game options

CASTROL HONDA SUPERBIKE WORLD CHAMPIONS
(Interactive Entertainment)

In this demo you start at the back of the grid at the Sukuh Island circuit in Indonesia, in Rookie Single Race mode. Your Honda RC45 can only be controlled with the joystick which controls throttle, brake and steering, while the fire buttons control gears and reverse view. 3Dfx only.

Controls: Joystick only

BARRAGE (Mangogrits)

If more evidence was needed of what a 3Dfx card can do then this is it. What we have here, ladies and gentlemen, are two levels of *Incoming*-style action, featuring more lens flare and translucent smoke effects than you can shake a perfectly rendered stick at. NB: 3Dfx only.

Controls: Joystick/keyboard

Key	Action
Keypad 4, 6, 8, 5	Directional control
? / M	Forward/reverse
< / >	Lateral left/right
INS / DEL	Vertical up/down
Keypad 0	Fire one
Keypad ENTER	Fire two
Keypad 3, 9	Select weapons
← → ↑ ↓	Look
HOME / END	Zoom in/out
H	Toggle HUD
T	Toggle textures

BURNOUT: CHAMPIONSHIP DRAG RACING
(Bethesda Softworks/VIE)

If you can tell a lot about a man by the car he drives, then what does it tell you when he drives a car that can't take corners, goes like the clappers and grinds to a halt after 30 seconds?

Controls: Keyboard/mouse/joystick

Key	Action
← →	Steering
↑ ↓	Accelerate/brake
ENTER	Lock front brakes
A / Z	Gear up/down
R	Reverse
⎵	Lock transmission
T	Rev limiter on/off
TAB	Release parachute
S / F	Look left/right
E / D	Look forward/back
> / <	Display next/previous view
F2	Adjust level of detail of people around the track
F3	Adjust level of detail of the buildings
F4	Adjust level of detail of the smoke
F5	Horizon on/off
F6	Clouds on/off
F7	Motion blur on/off (3Dfx version only)
F8	Dash on/off
F9	Sound on/off
F10	Quicksave current telemetry data

HEXPLORE (Ocean/Infogrames)

The RPG didn't die, it just took a leaf out of *C&C*'s book and came back in the shape of *Hexplore*. The idea is to recruit a full party and kill everyone else in this massive demo. Note: the map screen is fully rotatable by holding down the right mouse button and turning the mouse.

Controls: Mouse/keyboard

Key	Action
TAB	Zoom in/out
F2	Save menu
F3	Load menu
F11	Hi-res/low-res
ESC	Main menu
Shift+LMB	Fight from the position
1 - 4	Select character
⎵	Drink a life vial

PANZER COMMANDER
(SSI/Mindscape)

Two scenarios are available in this stunning-looking WWII tank sim. Choose either the German or Russian side and get to your objective, knocking out all the enemy tanks that get in your way.

Controls: Keyboard/joystick

Key	Action
ESC	Quit game
C	Centre view
V	Change view to next platoon vehicle
R	Return view to player's tank
F1	Three-quarter view
F2	Cupola view
F3	Binocular view
F4	Buttoned cupola
F5	Driver's view
F6	Gunner's view
F7	Gun sight/rangefinder
F8	Machine gunner
Keypad 2/8	Gun up/down
Keypad 4/6	Turret left/right
Keypad 5	Centre main gun
Keypad 7/9	Camera swing up/down

◄ Keypad `1`/`3`	Camera swing left/right
Keypad `-`/`+`	Camera zoom in/out
`DEL`	Apply brakes
`END`	Reverse direction
`-`	Throttle idle setting
`1`-`0`	Throttle presets: 1 = min, 0 = max
`←``→``↑``↓`	Steering, forward/reverse
`TAB`	Select next target
`CAPS LOCK`	Select previous target
`N`	Select nearest target
`S`	Select target centered in gun sight
`PG UP` `PG DN`	Increase/decrease rangefinder setting
`␣`	Fire main gun, or machine-gun if in machine-gunner view
`CTRL`	Fire coaxial machine-gun (if present)

STREETS OF SIMCITY
(Maxis/EA)

If you believe Maxis, the streets are a dangerous place to be, even though your car is equipped with machine guns and missile pods. Sunday drivers might like to forgo all the violence and choose Player's Choice from the options menu and just enjoy a leisurely drive around the city.

Controls: Keyboard/joystick

`←``→``↑``↓`	Steering and acceleration
Shift& `←``→``↑``↓`	Hard steer and acceleration
Shift& `↓` with `←``→`	180-degree turn
`TAB`	Toggle reverse/forward
`M`	Toggle rear-view mirror
`-`/`+`	Zoom map
`C`	Change camera view
`H`	Standard popper
`ESC`	Open settings panel
`W`	Cycle through weapons
`1`	Activate machine-gun
`2`	Activate missiles
`␣`	Fire active weapon
`F3`	Show scenario requirements
`F4`	Toggle dashboard
`F5`	Toggle map mode
`F10`	Self-destruct

KKND: KROSSFIRE (Ocean)

More of the same from the antipodean crew responsible for one of last year's better C&C clones. This demo carries on from where the original left off, namely in the future. Choose from three sides in this urban-based mission.

Controls: Mouse/keyboard

LMB	Select units/move/attack
RMB	Deselect/fast scroll/cancel production
`ALT`	Force attack
`SHIFT`	Waypoint command
`CTRL`	Override smart select
`HOME`	Centre view on base
`ESC`	Bring up in-game menu
`CTRL` & `1`-`9`	Save current selection into group
`1`-`9`	Restore group
Alt& `1`-`9`	Restore group and centre screen
`TAB`	Open/close radar
`-`	Move radar
`<`/`>`	Restore last/next group
`SHIFT` +LMB	Add new unit to existing selection
`␣`	Selected units stop current orders
`?`	Activate unit information labels
`←``→``↑``↓`	Scroll view
`BACKSPACE`	Recall last selected group

`S`	Scatter units
`CTRL`	Defend mode (changes cursor, click on unit or building to defend)
`D`	Stand ground mode
`F`	Fight mode (attack all enemy units that the unit can see)
`I`	Infantry menu
`V`	Vehicles menu
`C`	Constructibles menu
`P`	Aircraft menu
`B`	Buildings menu
`T`	Towers menu
`W`	Walls menu
`M`	Multi-player message

BLADES OF EXILE
(Shareware)

Fair enough, the graphics don't exactly look stunning, but the three full scenarios that are included in this demo should be enough to keep most ardent RPG fans occupied for a while. If you're new to this lark then you'll be pleased to hear that a fully featured help file is included with the game. Check it out for full instructions.

Controls: Mouse

HD ZONE

SUPERNOVA (Freeware/Apogee)

Before point-and-click became the normal way to interface with our adventuring worlds, we had to type in long sentences like GO E THEN GET ALL or HELP ME YOU FACELESS MACHINE I HATE YOU, to which the machine would beep: YOU DON'T HAVE FACELESS MACHINE IN YOUR INVENTORY.

Happy days indeed, and ones we can all revisit in this full text adventure based on a distant mining post in outer space. Who needs graphics? Oh, and if you're unfamiliar with commands such as E, W, INV or GET, then we suggest you read the accompanying text files.

Controls: Keyboard/dictionary
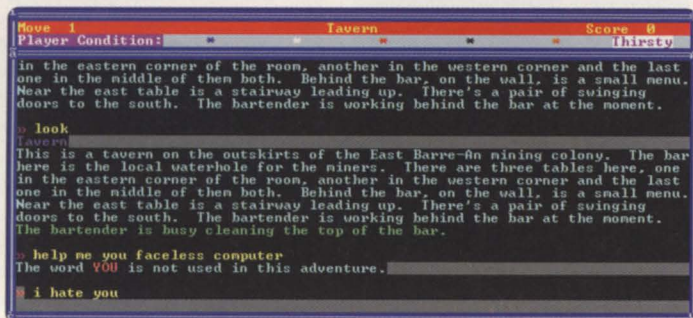
IMPERIAL CONQUEST
(Serious Games)

Up to 16 human or computer-controlled players can take part in this save-disabled demo. Based in the Mediterranean, you can control any of 16 ancient races in the quest for domination of the region. The game may only have the graphical sophistication of the original Civilization, but its depth may surprise you.

Controls: Mouse/keyboard

`ALT` + `W`	News
`ALT` + `B`	Balance sheet
`ALT` + `C`	Show cities
`ALT` + `P`	Show capital
`ALT` + `A`	Show armies
`ALT` + `F`	Show fleets
`ALT` + `L`	Show all
`ALT` + `1`	Light infantry
`ALT` + `2`	Heavy infantry

`ALT` + `3`	Archers
`ALT` + `4`	Light cavalry
`ALT` + `5`	Heavy cavalry
`ALT` + `M`	All types
`ALT` + `X`	Cancel selection
`ALT` + `N`	Show status of current nation
`CTRL` + `C`	Show leader's cities
`CTRL` + `P`	Show leader's capital
`CTRL` + `A`	Show leader's armies
`CTRL` + `F`	Show leader's fleets
`CTRL` + `N`	Show status of leader's nation

HARDBALL 6 (Accolade/EA)

Rounders by any other name. Play an exhibition game between Florida and the Cleveland Indians in this fully-featured demo of Accolade's long-running baseball sim. All the control variations are set out in the game's readme file.

Controls: Mouse/keyboard/joystick
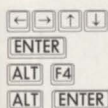
← → ↑ ↓	Select a pitch/hit
ENTER	Choose pitch/hit
ALT F4	Close game
ALT ENTER	Toggle between full screen and window display
1	Normal view
2	Press box view
3	Ground level view
4	Crane shot view
5	Random camera
6 / 7	Tap repeatedly to cycle through outfield alignments
F7	Perspective correct rendering toggle
F8	Pan and zoom mode toggle
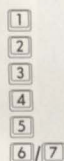
JAZZ JACKRABBIT 2
(Black Friars/Project 2)

Why is it that girlfriends always seem to get the raw deal in computer games? They're always being kidnapped. You'd have thought that Jazz Jackrabbit's bird would've learnt her lesson from the first game, but no. Consequently she's been snatched again and you, with the help of your brother, must save her. Try these three single levels and see if she's worth any extra effort. Two multi-player games are also included.

Controls: Keyboard/gamepad
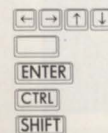
← → ↑ ↓	Movement
	Fire
ENTER	Select
CTRL	Jump
SHIFT	Run

EMERGENCY (Shareware)

Co-ordinate your emergency services in this three-level demo from Germany. In the first mission you have to direct police and ambulance to a dying motorcyclist and keep the traffic flowing.

Controls: Mouse

INDUSTRY GIANT
(Interactive Magic)

This real-time business sim takes the core of *Transport Tycoon* and gives it a sense or purpose. Take charge of an infant business and manage production of goods, transport and sales. A full tutorial sets out all the icons and settings, and we suggest you look it up before wading in.

Controls: Mouse/keyboard
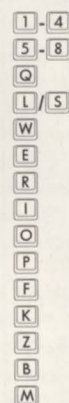
1 - 4	View zoom size
5 - 8	Detail toggles
Q	Quit menu
L / S	Load/save
W	Railway
E	Industry statistics
R	Demolish
I	Info mode
O	Options menu
P	Pause
F	Find
K	Stores statistics
Z	Vehicles stats
B	Balance sheet
M	Switch options bar

JUDGE DREDD PINBALL
(Pin-Ball Games)

Megacity One's straight-laced lawman

gets the flipper treatment in this five-minute time-limited demo that is probably the best game to feature *2000AD*'s favourite son. Expect to see a flurry of themed pinball games from the same developers over the coming months – it's in the name.

Controls: Keyboard
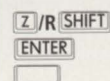
Z /R SHIFT	Flippers
ENTER	Launch ball
	Tilt

RISING LANDS (Microids/Ocean)

Here we have *Rising Lands*, a real-time strategy game combining resource gathering, combat and some bizarre-looking war machines. In this demo you take command of the blue team, and your simple task is to wipe the red clan from the face of the planet.

Controls: Mouse/keyboard
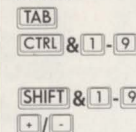
Mouse	Select and direct
TAB	Display mini-card
CTRL & 1 - 9	Assign units into groups
SHIFT & 1 - 9	Select group
+ / -	Increase/decrease window size
E	Make selected units feed themselves
F1 - F4	Game speed
← → ↑ ↓	Scroll map area
ENTER	Select previous unit
	Display life/food points
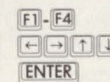
JACK ORLANDO (Topware)

With an unnerving graphical resemblance to *Broken Sword*, this point-and-click adventure puts you in the role of the eponymous gumshoe, out to solve a murder or risk being blamed
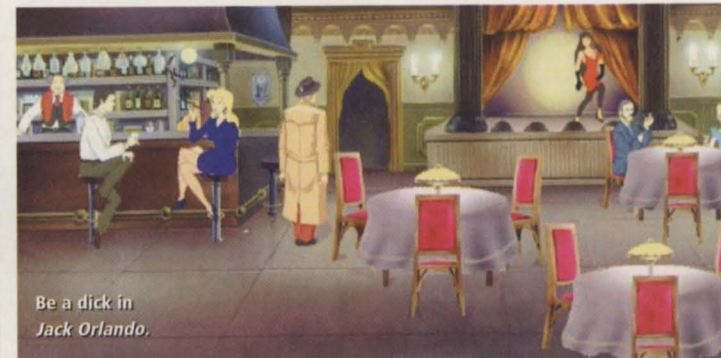
for it. You start off the demo in the hotel where it's time to start gathering some evidence.

Controls: Mouse

QUEEN: THE EYE
(Electronic Arts)

Games based on the music of bloated ageing rock stars have hardly set the games world alight in the past, but that didn't stop these developers from wheeling out this action-adventure.

Controls: Gamepad/joystick/keyboard
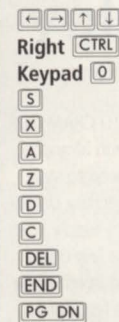
← → ↑ ↓	Movement
Right CTRL	Run
Keypad 0	Alert/defend
S	Jump
X	Duck
A	Punch 1
Z	Kick 1
D	Punch 2
C	Kick 2
DEL	Pick up
END	Inventory
PG DN	Use

JUGGERNAUT CORPS
(Shepherd's Worlds)

A new version of last month's demo. It's another variant of the coin-op classic *Asteroids*.

SEMPER Fi (Interactive Magic)

Reviewed last issue, *Semper Fi* failed to win any allies with its dated look and interface, but its novel way of using initiative to favour units made this turn-based strategy game almost bearable. Check out this one-mission demo where you take command of US Marine forces.

Controls: Mouse

Be a dick in *Jack Orlando*.

THE ESSENTIAL *QUAKE* COLLECTION

Wireplay
The games network from BT

WE'VE MANAGED TO CRAM OUR second CD full with almost everything you need to start playing on-line games, especially *Quake* and *Quake II*. You'll have to supply your own modem and perhaps a few other games, but even if you're starved of the classics there are at least a few demos here to keep you going while you save up the pennies.

Driver Software

This is the place to start if you want to indulge in a spot of on-line gaming. Take a look at the Wireplay tutorial to see what the service offers and how it all works. You need to install the latest version of the client software, QuakeWorld and DirectPlay to make the most of the service.

Quake

All the add-ons and levels supported by Wireplay *Quake* including Rocket Arena, TeamFortress and CTF are on this CD. We've also included all the skins so you can gib up opponents in full Arsenal kit if you desire.

We've been busy shouting off about *Quake II* on our blisteringly fast office network, now you can get almost the same sort of speed on the Wireplay service. Install the software, dial in and frag 'em till they bleed.

Quake II

Here you'll find the shareware version of *Quake II*, a solution to the demo and the latest point release including the official multi-player levels everyone goes on about. Also we've got massive 64-player deathmatch levels, seven weapon modifications and a few other *Quake II* nuggets.

It doesn't end there. A thumping great 27 single player levels are also on the disc – practically a whole mission disc. To run them, just extract them to your baseq2/maps directory where *Quake II* is installed. You can run the levels by typing map <mapname> into the *Quake II* console. You'll also find over 100 deathmatch levels on the disc, many of which are better than iD's efforts. Before iD released their own multi-player levels some of these were all we had to play with.

Rapid Play

Wireplay isn't all about *Quake* however. On this CD are just a few of the demos that Wireplay supports in conjunction with the thousands (well fifty or so) full games compatible with the service. Once you've installed these or any other games you'll have to set up the executable path within the Wireplay setup screen. See the tutorial for details.

Mind Games

Here's where you'll find all of the classic games like chess, poker and (ahem) Nine Men's Morris. These are all full games that should keep the waxed jacket brigade happy while the rest of us stick to the more wholesome delights of *C&C*, *Duke Nukem* and *Actua Soccer 2*.

Depeche Modem

Win!

Three modems are up for grabs this month – US Robotics 56.6k ones, no less and pretty good they are too. If you fancy your chances at scooping one up, then just send us the answer to the question below. To make it worth your while, we've also got ten Wireplay Gold accounts to bung your way, which include free on-line gaming for a whole year, all at local call rates. The three winners will each win a modem and a Wireplay Gold account, while the seven runners up will receive the Wireplay Gold treatment worth around £100.

Q. What was the name of the big-billed yellow bird who fronted the BBC's TV ad campaign back in the Seventies?

Send your answers to: Wireplay Competition, PC Zone, 19 Bolsover St, London W1P 7HJ. Entries to arrive no later than Thursday 4th June.

Rules: All the usual competition rules and restrictions apply. The Editor's decision is final, and no correspondence will be entered in to. Winners will be notified by post.

HELP!

PLEASE NOTE THAT FOR some games, a patch will be required before you can run the game successfully on Wireplay. You can actually find many of the patches on the first disc in the /wireplay directory, but a few (*Total Annihilation* included) need to be tracked down by going to the Wireplay download site listed below.

If you have any problems getting your games to work, or if your computer explodes and sends shards of hot metal through your sister's head, then phone the Wireplay helpline before dialling an ambulance. They're all fully trained and thoroughly nice.

Wireplay Helpline:
0345 577577

To download the latest software:
www.wireplay.com/uk/downloads/

The Lionhead Diaries: Part 5
Not everything in Black And White makes sense...

Steve Jackson breathes a sigh of relief on hearing the news of their first game

WE HAVE A TRADITION. EVERY FRIDAY afternoon, all members of Lionhead have to justify their own existence. This involves showing everyone else what you've spent the week doing. If you've done exceptionally well you receive a polite round of Lionhead applause. No one has yet earned this honour.

The programmers proudly scroll through screens of unintelligible C++ code. Those with no code to demonstrate have to rely on plain English to make their work sound impressive. Artist Mark Healey's turn is everyone's favourite. He shows off gobsmackingly gorgeous graphics drawn up on *3D Studio Max*. "Wow!" "Amazing!" "How the bloody hell d'you do that?" come the responses. Mark grins slyly. Most of his 3D pics probably come from disk libraries. None of us would be any the wiser.

The afternoon is then rounded off with a games session – 'Points to Count' in the Lionhead Olympics, of course. We take our seats around Peter's custom-built gaming table. Our current favourite is a simple yet excellent card game, Bourré – for gamblers only.

Peter is the current leader of our Lionhead Olympics table, mainly thanks to picking Dennis Bergkamp in his Fantasy Football team. When we originally chose our teams, what Peter knew about football could be written on the back of a postage stamp – and still leave room for the bible. Nevertheless, Peter knew the editor of a football magazine who sent him a list of key players in time for the auction. Demis, who considers himself something of an expert, was quick to challenge Peter.

Demis: "Okay then, name me a footballer. Anyone."
Peter: "Well... there's Shear... Shear*ack*! Right?"
Demis: "No, Peter, Chirac's the President of France..."

This particular afternoon, Lionhead's latest recruit is quaking in his boots. Paul Nettleton is a quiet 21-year-old graduate from the University of East Anglia who we have taken on as a trainee programmer. Originally from Leeds, Paul has a broad Yorkshire accent and we tease him constantly about it. Instead of 'yes' Paul says 'aye'; he doesn't say 'no', he says 'gnaw'; he doesn't say 'something smart', he says 'summat smaaaht'. When he joined us he was engaged. It didn't last long after he joined Lionhead.

Paul's first project has been to write The Birthday Game, a program to calculate days of the week – type in any date you like and it should return the correct day of the week. This, I thought at first, was a simple exercise – just tell the computer to count backwards or forwards through the days. But of course it's much trickier than that. There are leap years to consider; and an extra day is added on every century providing it's divisible by 400. Paul's had a week

Mark Webley and Steve Jackson consider the plans for Lionhead's new office.

to complete the exercise. Today is our Friday afternoon meeting and his program is to be tested. He's been told what will happen: his hand will be held. Peter will hold a chopstick above his hand and enter a date on the computer. If Paul's program answers correctly three times, he passes the test; any bugs and the chopstick strikes.

Though this test appears to be a fairly simple exercise, it's not so much solving the problem that is important but how you tackle it. The calculations can be made in a number of ways, some more efficient than others. But what everyone is looking for is the way a programmer approaches the exercise and presents the final version. This says more about his abilities and creativity than any interview could ever reveal. Some people opt for

"The name of the game is Black And White. It will be the best PC game anyone's ever seen" – Peter Molyneux

the purely functional approach: type a date, hit Return, and out comes the day. Others go to town: perhaps the screen displays a graphic representing a swirling time vortex as the program appears to 'think' about the problem. The answer appears on-screen as a rich multimedia extravaganza of exploding rockets and thunderous applause. With this exercise, it ain't what you do it's the way that you do it.

But today Paul will be excused his ordeal. It's a special day. The office is buzzing with excitement. For several weeks the Lionhead team have been building up the basic tools and libraries, the fundamental building blocks our game will need. So far, no one knows what the game itself is. Peter has promised us that today all will be revealed.

We shuffle downstairs with a mixture of excitement and trepidation, and take our places around the games table. Peter fixes a baize sheet behind the glass patio doors to create a makeshift blackboard. Some of us, like diligent undergraduates, have brought pads and pens to make notes. Mark Webley, who is a registered Coke addict, rushes off to the kitchen to get soft drinks for us all. Handouts are passed around and the show gets underway.

"I know you've all been impatient to know what the game is," Peter starts, "but I wanted to make sure we were all ready for this. Don't forget, we're about to start working on a project that we'll be committing two years of our lives to. If I'd have told you weeks ago, before the libraries and tools had been completed, we wouldn't have been starting on the game itself with such enthusiasm. But now we're ready to go."

There's a pregnant pause before Peter makes his announcement (he loves to build up a drama). "The name of the game," he says, "is *Black & White*. And this will be the best fucking PC game anyone's ever seen..." **Z**

We'll soon be leaving Lionhead's cramped office in Molyneux Mansion.

Hot competition: Jonty Barnaes and Peter play *Diddy Kong Racing*.

Kung fu fighting: Mark Healey and Demis Hassabis unwind.

Welcome to the *PC Zone* Recommended section. Here you'll find the cream of the games we've painstakingly reviewed and picked out over the years, plus those we feel should go down in PC gaming history as all-time Classics.

What you will find on the pages of this section are those games that, in our considered opinion, are the very best ever released for the PC.

In an effort to keep it simple, we've spilt it up into genres: Action games, Sports simulations, Adventure games, Flight simulations, Driving games, Role-playing games and Strategy games.

The Top 10 games of each genre are then listed, with a brief summary of the game, review score, publisher and contact number. Most of the games listed here were awarded *PC Zone* Classic status (90 per cent and above), and some managed a *PC Zone* Recommended award (80 per cent and above) at the time they were reviewed.

To achieve the highest accolade, a game must not only be very playable, entertaining and offer long-term appeal, but it must also be original and/or offer something new and worthwhile to the genre. To this end we've included some sequels which, although they scored lower than the original title, are deemed better games (they didn't get a higher score cos it had already been done, and therefore they weren't exactly bursting with originality – okay?). So this guide isn't a list of the highest-scoring games ever reviewed by *PC Zone*, but a guide to the best games now available.

When you're reading the reviews in the rest of the magazine, please remember to bear this section in mind. The highest-scoring game is supposed to represent a benchmark in a particular genre, and we will always be comparing new games with this, in accordance with the above criteria. As a result, you will see games dropping out of this section as new and better titles are released, so keep your eyes peeled for new entries (accompanied by a cunning 'New Entry' flash to make them easy to spot) in each of the genres.

Jeremy Wells, Editor

Action

QUAKE II — 97%
The sequel to "the most important PC game ever" turns out to be more than worth the wait. Despite the odd bit of slowdown, single-player and deathmatch games are in a league of their own. As Macca concluded in his review: "*Quake II* is pretty much perfect." Buy it now.
Publisher:
Activision (01895 456700)

TOMB RAIDER II — 94%
The first game broke the mould, but the sequel even improves on the original. *Tomb Raider II* sports a curvier Lara, massive new levels to explore and a tidier control system. The game comes with native 3Dfx support and looks better than ever.
Publisher:
Core/Eidos (0181 636 3000)

JEDI KNIGHT: DARK FORCES II — 94%
It's not *Quake*, but then it doesn't even try to be. But it is a compelling, technically superb blend of action and exploration wrapped up in the *Star Wars* universe. Altogether most impressive.
Publisher:
LucasArts/VIE (0171 368 2255)

HEXEN II — 94%
The long-awaited, hub-based gib-fest sweeps into action with its trusty sword, hoping to carve a big 'H' on the chest of its older cousin, *Quake*. This is a first-person hack 'em off with balls as well as a big chopper.
Publisher:
Activision (01895 456700)
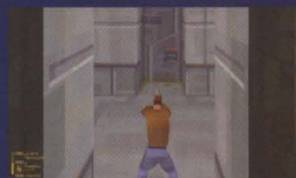
FADE TO BLACK — 94%
The unofficial sequel to the excellent *Flashback*, this is a near-perfect blend of third-person exploration and combat action. The technical precursor to the fantastic *Tomb Raider*, it's a classic in its own right.
Publisher:
Electronic Arts (01753 549442)

FORSAKEN — 94%
Descent is dead and *Forsaken* is now king of the tunnel-based shoot 'em ups. With huge, varied levels, heaps of graphical effects, weapons and a fantastic multi-player LAN-based game, it's up there with the best of 'em.
Publisher:
Acclaim (0171 344 5000)

PRIVATEER 2: THE DARKENING — 94%
The ultimate mix of space combat, *Elite*-style trading and FMV action, *Privateer 2* was the first big budget release from Origin to use live action in a positive way. Packed with stars, this is pukka stuff.
Publisher:
Origin/EA (01753 549442)

DUKE NUKEM 3D — 93%
The debate rages on, and there are still a lot of people who rate *Duke* over *Quake*. It's not as technically impressive, but brags gameplay by the bucketload in one-player mode and when played over a network.
Publisher:
Eidos Interactive (0181 636 3000)

TIE FIGHTER — 94%
Still rated by many as the finest space combat sim ever released, it successfully blends all the kudos of *Star Wars* with a wicked new engine for super-fast *TIE* on *X-Wing* fisticuffs.
Publisher:
LucasArts/VIE (0171 368 2255)

INCOMING — 90%
Rage's awesome all-action arcade epic is quite possibly the best-looking action game we've seen this year. If you've got the hardware and want non-stop action and a dose of strategy, this is a must-buy.
Publisher:
Rage (0121 452 8400)

CARMAGEDDON 95%

Awesome arcade-style racer that's heavy on the hit 'n' run and gameplay. Loads of different cars to choose from, plenty of tracks, three ways to play and a fab multi-player network mode make this one of the most entertaining driving games ever.
Publisher:
SCI (0171 585 3308)

NASCAR RACING 2 92%

A worthy upgrade featuring a new, smoother 3D engine, improved opponent AI, more controllable cars, a simple single-screen car set-up and a multi-player network option. The constant stream of headset messages adds atmosphere. A racing sim fan's must.
Publisher:
Sierra (0118 920 9100)

LINKS LS 94%

The classic golf sim gets an update, and unsurprisingly it's fab. There's more options, luscious graphics, a redesigned menu and a view selection system. There's even a built-in upgrader for all the old data disk courses you splashed out on.
Publisher:
Eidos Interactive (0181 636 3000)

PRO PINBALL: TIMESHOCK! 91%

Remember *Pro Pinball: The Web*? This, the second table in the series, is better in every way. Improved ball dynamics, detail and sound effects, and of course there's the return of the world's dirtiest computer game voice telling you to "Lock those balls".
Publisher:
Empire Interactive (0181 343 7337)

NETWORK Q RAC RALLY 94%

The seminal rally racer from Europress is the ultimate in skiddy, slidey action. 27 (count 'em) stages, loads of cars, a fantastic eight-way network option and varied terrain and conditions make this superior to the limited *Sega Rally*. Go buy it!
Publisher:
Europress Software (01625 859444)
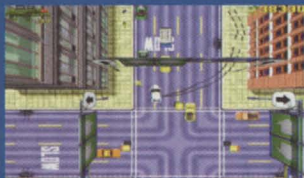
GRAND THEFT AUTO 92%

This is the game that took over from *Carmageddon* as the media's favourite pet hate. Steal cars, dodge police, mow down pedestrians and cause mayhem in city streets in one of the most addictive driving games ever. *Micro Machines* on acid.
Publisher:
BMG (0171 973 0011)

NHL 98 94%

Another year, another *NHL*, but this one isn't just the best ice hockey game, it's one of the best sports games we've ever seen. Super 3Dfx-ed graphics, fantastic animation and awesome presentation make this a sports title not to be missed.
Publisher:
EA Sports (01753 549442)

VIRTUAL POOL 2 90%

Okay, so *Virtual Pool 2* scored one per cent less than its predecessor, but this follow-up beats it hands down. 3Dfx support goes some way to pushing the series further, and the inclusion of English Pub rules make it a more essential purchase than before.
Publisher:
Interplay (01628 423666)

MICRO MACHINES 2 93%

The console classic is converted to the PC as new tracks provide a new challenge. The easy-to-use control system means it's user-friendly for the uninitiated. This version comes with a track designer.
Publisher:
Codemasters (01926 814132)

F1 97 92%

The long-awaited sequel to the excellent PlayStation conversion proved to be worth the wait, with improved driver AI, lusher graphics, a split-screen mode and more ludicrous commentary from Murray Walker.
Publisher:
Psygnosis (0151 282 3000)

PGA TOUR PRO 94%

Nothing really distinguishes this version from the last, except for the brilliant and very easy to use Internet play facility. Waste no time, go and thwack some Americans now. Your country needs you.
Publisher:
EA Sports (01753 549442)

ACTUA SOCCER 2 90%

Instantly accessible footie action in this latest instalment of Gremlin's high profile *Actua* series. Great graphics, easy control and a hidden Super Furry Animals team confirm *Actua 2*'s 'must have' status.
Publisher:
Gremlin Interactive (01142 753423)

F1 RACING SIMULATION 93%

The sheer depth of realism is what makes *F1 Racing Sim* such an outstanding experience to play. Not only that, but it looks an absolute treat too – especially 3Dfx-ed up. A Crammond-beater.
Publisher:
Ubi Soft (0181 944 9000)

MOTORHEAD 90%

With drop-dead graphics and a blistering frame rate, this is a ridiculously fast, fab-looking, intense racing experience. Add a great LAN-based option, and *Motorhead* is the ace of arcade racers.
Publisher:
Gremlin Interactive (01142 753 423)

NBA LIVE 98 93%

With even better graphics and commentary than before, it's one of the best-looking PC sports games. This version sports 'realistic' faces and players of different heights – it's by far the best basketball game available.
Publisher:
EA Sports (01753 549442)

THE GOLF PRO 90%

If you're bored with either *PGA* or *Links*, then this is the best of the 'mouse-swing' bunch. Good course design and excellent tuition means loads of gameplay, though the putting lets it down a tad.
Publisher:
Empire Interactive (0181 343 7337)

FORMULA 1 GRAND PRIX 2 92%

The amazing sequel to the greatest F1 driving sim ever. Updated brilliantly for the 94/95 season with all-new detailed circuits, cars and teams. Ninja Pentium needed to run the hi-res mode – but it's still great.
Publisher:
MicroProse (01454 893893)

ULTIM@TE RACE PRO 88%

This is quite possibly one of the slickest arcade racers we've ever seen. The handling of the cars might be a little erratic, but the game itself is tremendous fun, especially in deathmatch mode over a LAN.
Publisher:
MicroProse (01454 893893)

PETE SAMPRAS TENNIS 97 92%

This game doesn't quite better *Super Tennis* on the SNES, but it's as close as you'll get on the PC. The simple control system means it's instantly playable, but we may as well tell you now that the women's skirts still don't fly up when they serve.
Publisher:
Codemasters (01926 814132)

MADDEN NFL 98 87%

This latest PC incarnation is well up to the quality seen in the console versions, with all the features and slick presentation we now expect as standard for an EA Sports release. When it comes down to it, it doesn't really get any better than this.
Publisher:
EA Sports (01753 549442)

Adventures

ALONE IN THE DARK 3 — 95%
Better than the previous *AITD* instalments, *Alone 3* is a tense, ambient tale of Navajo Indian magic and reincarnation that unfolds in the usual *AITD* manner. Now available as part of a compilation budget pack.
Publisher:
Infogrames (0181 738 8199)

LBA 2: TWINSEN'S ODYSSEY — 93%
Twinsen is back – this time to thwart those pesky Esmers in this sumptuous sequel. The huge play area, coupled with seamlessly linked puzzles, creates a great-looking and atmospheric adventure.
Publisher:
Electronic Arts (01753 549442)

BIOFORGE — 95%
Futuristic *Alone In The Dark*-style game with impressive graphics, puzzles and soundtrack. Often preferred over *AITD* games as its unique blend of arcade combat is explosive. The only drag is EA's refusal to make a sequel for it.
Publisher:
Electronic Arts (01753 549442)

SAM & MAX — 93%
The hilarious dog/rabbit duo's first and only PC outing, in which they need to solve a host of bizarre puzzles. An all-talkie adventure with a gag-laden script, this is an essential budget-priced purchase even if you're not a point-and-click fan.
Publisher:
LucasArts/VIE (0171 368 2255)

SYSTEM SHOCK — 95%
This futuristic first-person cyberpunk adventure from the makers of *Ultima* was initially overlooked by many people. Now available on budget, this is a must-buy for those new to the game. The graphics might be a little dated, but the atmosphere is invigorating.
Publisher:
Electronic Arts (01753 549442)

THE CURSE OF MONKEY ISLAND — 92%
The third game in LucasArts' classic *Monkey* saga delivers the goods big-time, much to the relief of adventure fans everywhere. *The Curse Of Monkey Island* is the benchmark for point-and-click adventure games.
Publisher:
VIE (0171 368 2255)
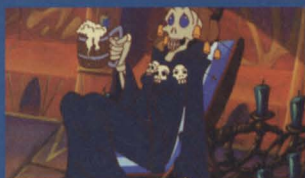
DISCWORLD II — 93%
Perfect Entertainment's immaculate sequel to *Discworld* follows would-be wizard Rincewind in his search for the Grim Reaper. Not as hard as the first game, but bigger and better looking. *Discworld II* is a universally appealing adventure game.
Publisher:
Psygnosis (0151 282 3000)

STARSHIP TITANIC — 91%
Douglas Adams's epic adventure is an innovative piece of software filled with everything that's right about adventure games. With its lush visuals and an innovative user interface, *Starship Titanic* is a must-buy for adventure fans.
Publisher:
Zablac Entertainment (01626 332233)

INDIANA JONES AND THE FATE OF ATLANTIS — 93%
Follow a post-*Raiders* Indy in his search for the submerged metropolis. Three ways to play make for a high replayability factor, and the inter-character banter is brilliant.
Publisher:
LucasArts/VIE (0171 368 2255)

ECSTATICA II — 90%
We dubbed it "aAn adventure with balls". It's hard, but it's one of the most rewarding adventures we've ever seen. It constantly surprises and is sure to keep even the most battle-weary adventure fan busy for weeks.
Publisher:
Psygnosis (0151 282 3000)

Role-Playing Games

ULTIMA UNDERWORLD 2: LABYRINTH OF WORLDS — 94%
This improves on almost every aspect of its prequel, *The Stygian Abyss*. You explore a complex, ever-evolving dungeon; it has unsurpassed atmosphere and interaction.
Publisher:
Origin/EA (01753 549442)

DIABLO — 88%
Standard hack 'n' slash fare, but pulled off with such style that it's addictive. A great storyline compensates for repetitive arcade combat and supremely detailed animation makes it a superb coffee-table game.
Publisher:
Zablac/Blizzard (01626 332233)

REALMS OF THE HAUNTING — 93%
Although overlooked by many fans of the genre, our Mallo gave it a whopping 93 per cent when he reviewed it back in issue 47. Still well worth a look if you happen to see it going cheap, *ROTH* is a well cool mix of adventure and RPG.
Publisher:
Gremlin Interactive (01142 753423)

TERRIS — 88%
A MUD in the old-school style of text-based RPGs, but it's so addictive that we're still playing it. The various quests, puzzles and monsters will keep you going for days. The gameplay is excellent, if you can handle the 'texty-ness'.
Publisher:
AOL (0800 279 7444)

LANDS OF LORE: GUARDIANS OF DESTINY — 92%
Four long years in the making, Westwood Studios' mammoth new adventure proved more than worth the wait. Sumptuous visuals and a tremendous atmosphere combine to make *Lands Of Lore* an undeniable instant classic.
Publisher:
VIE (0171 368 2255)

MERIDIAN 59 — 86%
This ground-breaking on-line role-playing game allows thousands of people to interact with each other in the same fantasy universe at the same time. Garish and horrible graphics aside, *Meridian 59* remains one of the best on-line multi-player RPGs around.
Publisher:
3DO Company (0181 296 1949)

FALLOUT — 91%
This surprised everyone in the office who played it, and proved to be both very addictive and well conceived. Not quite on a par with the mighty *Ultima* series, but then what is?
Publisher:
Interplay (01628 423666)

RAVENLOFT: STONE PROPHET — 78%
Better than SSI's previous AD&D *Ravenloft* RPGs. You have to battle through a landscape populated by stone golems and scorpions. Average graphics, but the intuitive spell/combat system is a joy.
Publisher:
Mindscape (01444 246333)

ULTIMA VII — 89%
Arguably the best of all the *Ultima* games, *Ultima VII* blends character interaction and the exploration of the world of Britannia. The last *Ultima* series to give complete party control. Check out the *Ultima Collection* for a real treat.
Publisher:
Origin/EA (01753 549442)

ULTIMA UNDERWORLD: THE STYGIAN ABYSS (PRE-*PC ZONE*)
This took role-playing games away from first-person tile-based RPGs. Amazing architecture, witty characterisations, layers of storyline and the best ending of any game in history.
Publisher:
Origin/EA (01753 549442)

DUNGEON KEEPER 96%

A game with a genre almost impossible to define, *DK* takes *SimCity 2000*, *C&C* and *Ultima Underworld* and remoulds them into one hell of a title. Fantastic gameplay, and a lifespan on a par with the Queen Mother.
Publisher:
Electronic Arts (01753 549442)

AGE OF EMPIRES 92%

Imagine *Civilisation 2*'s great empire-building gameplay, some excellent graphical touches and comprehensive multi- and single-player options (all in real time). That's *Age Of Empires* in a nutshell.
Publisher:
Microsoft (0345 002000)

SYNDICATE WARS 95%

One of the best strategy games of all time gets a sequel, and what a fabulous sequel it is too. It houses a wealth of intricate levels, gorgeous graphics and enough gratuitous violence to keep anyone happy.
Publisher:
EA/Bullfrog (01753 549442)

SIMCITY 2000 92%

A classic that deserves its reputation as one of the all-time greats in the strategy world. Build and maintain the city of your dreams and cope with all the problems a real-life Mayor would come up against. It's a lot more fun than it sounds, trust us.
Publisher:
Maxis (0171 505 1500)

X-COM 3: APOCALYPSE 95%

A revamped engine and a healthy helping of real-time combat have brought the fantastically addictive *X-COM* series bang up to date. If you like your strategy games deep and meaningful, you should buy *X-COM 3* immediately. It'll keep you busy for weeks.
Publisher:
MicroProse (01454 893893)

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 97/98 90%

The best football management game ever gets its seasonal update and a few added extras – you can now play a number of leagues simultaneously, and change stats. Jeremy plays this every lunchtime, you know. Even when we're all down the pub.
Publisher:
Eidos Interactive (0181 636 3000)

COMMAND & CONQUER: RED ALERT 94%

...or *C&C* in SVGA with a few new units. It's a testament to the original's gameplay that the sequel can get away with adding few new features and still be fun to play.
Publisher:
VIE (0171 368 2255)
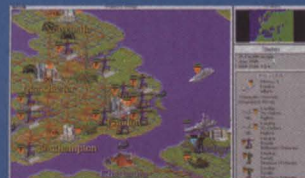
CIVILIZATION 2 90%

Explore the world, conquer territories and research new technologies in one of the most successful strategy games ever. It's not that different to the first one, but it merits a '90s update and a place here.
Publisher:
MicroProse (01454 893893)

PUZZLE BOBBLE 94%

We can't agree exactly where *Puzzle Bobble* fits – should it go in here, with the *Civs* and *Sims* of the PC gaming world, or in the action section? But it most certainly deserves to be in our Recommends section. Totally absorbing and addictive.
Publisher:
GT Interactive (0171 258 3791)

M1 TANK PLATOON II 90%

Almost a decade after the original, MicroProse released this heavyweight real-time, modern-day combat sim to much critical acclaim. It's deep, heavy going and intense, but well worth the effort. A must for hard-core strategy fans.
Publisher:
MicroProse (01454 893898)

FLIGHT SIM 98 94%

Another year, and yet another flight sim from the mighty Microsoft. However, this time, with two new aircraft, a helicopter, hundreds of new airports and impressive 3D acceleration, it's really worth having.
Publisher:
Microsoft (0345 002000)

COMANCHE 3 92%

This latest version is the finest we've seen, sporting juicy terrain graphics due to a revamped VoxelSpace engine. Despite an accurate flight model, it delivers intense gameplay, and is extremely good fun.
Publisher:
NovaLogic (0171 405 1777)

F-22 ADF 93%

DID do it again with this awesome new combat sim that leaves the competition firmly on the ground. Graphics and control to die for, it only really lacks a decent campaign. The *Total Air War* add-on pack will make it near perfect.
Publisher:
Ocean/DID (0161 832 6633)

JETFIGHTER III 91%

The follow-up to one of the most popular sims ever. Fly over three and a half million square miles of accurately-mapped terrain of South America. It really is just like being there. Oh yeah, you get to shoot things too, but sadly there's no duty free option.
Publisher:
Eidos Interactive (0181 636 3000)

LONGBOW 2 92%

"*Longbow 2* is challenging, beautiful, exciting and fun – if you're 3Dfx'd up," we said in our review (issue 59). If you don't have any extra graphics hardware, there's only one thing to do – think 'upgrade', 'upgrade' and 'upgrade'. It'll be worth the investment.
Publisher:
Electronic Arts (01753 549442)

A-10 CUBA! 90%

Functional graphics for a game that really does capture the imagination, mainly because the plane is an absolute joy to fly. Although it's slightly limited due to a lack of a fully-fledged campaign it's still great fun, as well as being pretty speedy on a modest Pentium.
Publisher:
Activision (01895 456700)

US MARINE FIGHTERS 92%

Lovely graphics and a realistic enough flight model. Originally released as a mission disk for *US Navy Fighters*, this now comes as part of the *US Navy Fighters Gold* pack, so go get that instead!
Publisher:
Electronic Arts (01753 549442)

F/A-18 KOREA 90%

Any game that allows you to nuke cities comes highly recommended, especially when you add super-smooth graphics and a comprehensive mission editor. Not the best, but definitely worth a look.
Publisher:
Empire Interactive (0181 343 7337)

FLYING CORPS 92%

Action-packed WWI flight simulation with neato graphics. Some of you may recall *Red Baron* as one of the greatest WW1 flight sims ever – this improves on the old classic to become the best PC WW1 sim currently available.
Publisher:
Empire Interactive (0181 343 7337)
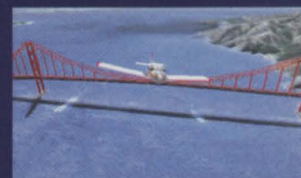
FLIGHT UNLIMITED II 84%

It can't really compete with the behemoth that is *Flight Sim 98*, and as a result is somewhat limited and claustrophobic. However, it does score highly for being more detailed in its smaller area, and much more fun.
Publisher:
Eidos Interactive (0181 636 3000)

NEW ISSUE

FREE CD! BRANDON BLOCK MIX

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...THE HALF OF IT

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TONY DE VIT
Ibiza, pet fish, and why
he doesn't like DJs

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WITH DICKS?**
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Comment

The price of games

£ VERY MONTH WE RECEIVE AT LEAST A DOZEN letters asking why our reviews always seem to have the wrong price. It's always been *PC Zone*'s policy to print the RRP (Recommended Retail Price), which is the price we're given by the publishers who are selling the game into retail.

The thing is, this is very rarely the price the punter on the street ends up paying. Games that we say are available to purchase for £44.95 or £39.95 are often available for £29.95, just as games that we are told are £34.95 can often be found at £29.95 or even £24.95. On the other hand, if a publisher tells us a game's recommended retail price is £29.95, it will often appear in the shops at £29.95 (or maybe even £24.95) depending where you look. So what's going on? If music and video retailers up and down the country can pretty much agree on a standard pricing policy, why can't the parties involved do the same for PC games?

As you'd expect, there are a number of factors that contribute to such a sorry state of affairs. For various reasons, retailers (and we're talking Dixons, HMV, OurPrice, Electronic Boutique etc here) like to take things into their own hands and play by their own rules in an effort to appear more competitive than each other – much to the dismay of some publishers who feel they have no control over pricing policy.

This means confusion for everybody concerned, and makes actually buying a game without the fear of being ripped off almost impossible. Let's explain the system (if you can call it that) as it exists at the moment.

Say a publisher is about to release a new game from a reputable developer, and that it is a re-worked and updated version of a game first published a few years ago. After numerous marketing meetings, focus groups and internal wrangling, they've decided that while 'Product X' is a good game (and

therefore potentially a big seller), it's not completely original. So in an effort to appeal to the punter, they don't want to sell it into retail as a full-price game. This means slashing the RRP from £39.95 to £29.95. They communicate this policy to retailers (who, remember, don't have to take a game if they don't want to – there's no law that says they must stock a game), who don't like it one little bit, because it means they have to cut

> "Retailers don't have to stock a game if they don't want to – there's no law that says they must stock a game."

their profit margins, and therefore they don't make as much as they do on the game next to it. So there's a stalemate. No one wants to be the one who slashes the price and carries the loss. As one retailer rejects the RRP, another follows suit, and suddenly nobody wants to put the game on their shelves.

The publishers panic and re-consider. They've spent £X million developing and promoting this game, and now nobody can buy it! They're forced to re-consider their pricing policy. They bite the bullet and decide on an RRP of £39.95. Retailers agree to take the game, and immediately price it at £29.95 in an effort to beat off their competitors. *PC Zone* reviews the game, and state the RRP as £39.95, when everybody knows that the 'street price' will in effect be ten pounds lower. We can't print the price as £29.95, because some

independent retailer might insist on selling the game at the RRP, and therefore our review would be factually inaccurate and incorrect. Remember, the publishers have told us that the official price is £39.95. They can legally stop a retailer from selling it at a higher price, but not at a lower one.

The game is released, and races up the charts. Retailers get the margin they wanted, the publishers get the distribution they need (at a price), and the punter (if he believes what the retailers tell him) gets £10 off the RRP. Everybody's happy.

Except that it's all a bit of a sham. Ultimately, it's all very confusing for you, the consumer. You see different games at so many different prices on the high street, and it's all very messy.

Things aren't really much clearer with console games, although Sony and Nintendo do have a much stronger hand when it comes to negotiating price points with retail.

When you buy a music CD or video, you pretty much know how much it will cost wherever you choose to purchase it. Therefore it should be possible for the PC games industry to get its act together and agree on a more rigid pricing policy. We live in hope. Ⓩ

Sick Notes

Looking for reasoned discussion and civilised debate? Then go to Word Processor on page 6. Want your queries and opinions not so much answered as torn apart by a pack of wild dogs? You're in the right place. Your host is the caring, sharing Charlie Brooker.

Abandon hope all ye who enter here

In his review for *Forsaken* in issue 63, Steve Hill claimed that life in the *PC Zone* basement was far from pleasant. "The moribund atmosphere (is) punctured only by random cries of despair," he reckons. Talk about whingeing! He should think himself lucky. All he has to do for a living is sit on his backside playing games and then write about them. Had he been born in another age he might have been a coal miner, suffering blacklung and facing constant peril for the sake of a poverty-line wage. All I can say is if he's really that upset with his career, I'll gladly take his place!

Stephan Cooke, Norwich

Go on then. Like to see you try. Especially after correcting all the idiotic spelling mistakes and faulty grammar you managed to pack into a five-sentence letter. Next time we're considering hiring a facetious, barely literate twat we'll give you a ring, okay? And to answer your main point, yes the atmosphere in the Zone basement is pretty despairing. We had four attempted suicides in the last week alone, including one ugly incident where a freelance designer slashed a wrist and painted a disturbing 'smiley face' on the wall with the resultant arterial jet. And what do you do about it? You write in and complain. Well thanks a lot.

Come and have a go – if you're hard enough

If *you've* got a complaint, query or just a stream of poorly written stream-of-consciousness gibberish you'd like to see splashed across this page, and you don't mind being ritually humiliated in front of tens of thousands of sniggering readers, direct your pearls of wisdom to the following e-mail address: *letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk*, with the subject heading 'Sick Notes'. *Or* if you're too poor and stupid to have an Internet account, write to: Sick Notes, PC Zone, Dennis Publishing, 19 Bolsover St, London W1P 7HJ.

We're *especially* interested in seeing any pictures you might care to draw for us, and there could be a prize for the best we receive. (Note the use of the word 'could'.)

That's really constructive. Thanks to you, we may just be pushed over the edge, into a mass suicide pact scenario. I hope you can live with yourself, you f**king murderer.

> ## Next time we're considering hiring a facetious, barely literate twat, we'll give you a ring, okay?

"Oh, for heaven's sake put it away 'ForceBoy'."

It'll stunt your growth

Please, please, please, please, please can you print some more pictures of that new Lara Croft model? Preferably without much on! She's absolutely stunning. Do you know if she's single?

'ForceBoy', via email

Single? We neither know nor care. And don't trouble yourself finding out anyway, she will never, ever be interested in you. She doesn't know you even exist, and what's more she never will. As for those pictures, do you really think we're comfortable with the thought of our readers sitting in front of the magazine in an advanced state of arousal? We're a computer games magazine, for heaven's sake – we don't want you to get turned on. That's your sister's job. Anyway, here's a photograph of gorgeous, pouting Marty Feldman just to put you off the whole concept of masturbation for life.

Why, oh why, oh why, etc

How long are we going to continue to let software houses churn out the same game time and time again? It seems every new release these days is either a *Quake* clone or a *Command And Conquer* lookalike. It's ridiculous! In the days of the ZX Spectrum, almost every game was totally different from the last. Nowadays you're hard pressed to tell any of them apart! Perhaps if we boycott the clone games the software companies will wake up and think of some new ideas.

Paul Baxter, Lynton

What a fantastic notion, Paul. Perhaps you'd like to let us know just how the f**k this consumer protest action plan of yours is going to be organised? Should we start circulating a messy Xeroxed newsletter and handing out lapel badges with 'DOWN WITH CLONES' printed on them? Or how about handing in a signed petition to Downing Street? Okay, so if you spent the afternoon hanging around Oxford Circus, you could probably only get three or four signatures in favour at best – and two of them would be from foreign tourists who couldn't understand what you were saying. But it'd be a start, right?

Incidentally, your meticulously thought-out treatise championing originality was just one of the many hundreds of missives we receive on the exact same subject each and every month. Put down that stone, stay in your glass house, and try talking some sense into yourself. You're an idiot.

Viddy well, my droogs

I am writing because I think the foreigners that read your magazine deserve a chance to enjoy it more. Some of us in lowly countries such as New Zealand live quite happily without the use of the words 'naff' and 'uber'. In your next issue could you please define what these words mean?

"Matchstick Man", via email

Listen here, you parochial little Kiwi, we invented the bloody language in the first place, and we'll do what the damn hell we want with it. If you don't like it, go stick your head down the dunny and leave it there all arvo. Then climb in your yute and rack off. You dag. ⓩ

"It's sick, Dolly. They're even cloning *games* now!"

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