PCZONE

THE BIGGEST REVIEWS!

MASSIVE EXCLUSIVE!

QUAKE IV

8 pages on id's next masterpiece.
Doom 3 was just a warm-up…

REVIEWED…
**FULL SPECTRUM
WARRIOR
FIFA 2005
THE SIMS 2**

WIN!
BE A GAMES
TESTER AT
LIONHEAD!

REVIEW AND DEMO!

TRIBES:
VENGEANCE

9 771471 753016   11

NY COMPO: What's the name of the famous damage multiplier in Quake?
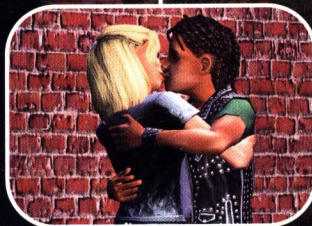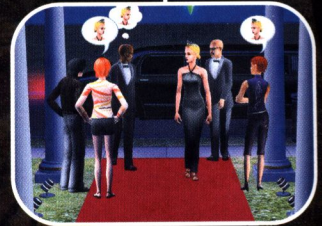
FAINT

CRY

DIE

SHOW TATTOO

FLEE

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AGE 17 Earn the title "Most Popular" by making friends. Any way you want.

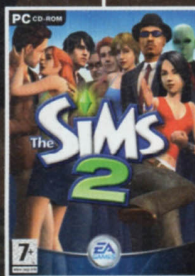**AGE 21** Make a red carpet entrance that turns heads. And drops jaws.

THE FIRST AND BEST FOR PC GAMES

QUAKE IV P38

8 pages on id's next masterpiece piece! *Doom 3* was just a warm-up...

Aftershock

"Games are supposed to be fun." I've said it before and, although I'll probably say it again, it struck me recently that I was being slightly economical with the truth. What I should have said is that games are supposed to be deeply upsetting and frustrating.

Let me explain. On our forums recently, there was a thread chronicling items smashed by people while playing their favourite PC games. Earlier today, Jamie Sefton had a hissy fit playing *Pro Evo 4* and refused to finish the game (he was losing 4-1). "The game's broken. It's stupid and I'm never playing it again. Ever." (Or for at least ten minutes as it turned out.) Over the years I've been on *ZONE*, I've seen colleagues chastised by the management for using the 'c' word playing *Counter-Strike* and hundreds of mice discarded with buttons hanging from a thread. I've even seen a mild-mannered man, and someone described by everyone he's ever met as 'the nicest man in the world', smash a phone and a hard drive in one sitting.

Outsiders looking in might assume we're not having fun. Wrong – only the very best games exert this sort of pull and make you think that winning is the single most important thing in the whole world, and in all my years, no game has caused me as much pain and distress as *Quake III*. Its tales of smashed hardware are legion, but there's one episode I particularly treasure. I used to duel daily with Ant, swapping 20-19 scorelines like football stickers of old, until I had a particularly good run, he a bad one, and I wound up a 20-1 victor. I couldn't resist a deadpan: "I thought you played particularly well in that game," and instantly regretted it. He admitted later that he almost launched himself over the desk and attacked me.

That's why when id announced *Quake IV*, I demanded that *PC ZONE* see it first. Thankfully, id acquiesced and I'm happy to point you in the direction of page 38, where you'll find the first of many stunning visuals from the shooter that could eclipse all others. You won't see these screenshots in any other magazine in the UK, and I guarantee you won't hear the same sort of language in any other office in the UK when the game is released.

Dave Woods
Editor

COVER DISCS P142 →

■ **FOUR EXCLUSIVE DEMOS...**
Tribes: Vengeance, Conflict: Vietnam, Colin McRae Rally 2005, Shade: Wrath Of Angels.
Plus movies of *Fahrenheit, KOTOR 2: The Sith Lords* and *Prince Of Persia 2*!

■ **DVD EXCLUSIVES**
Demos of *Myst IV: Revelation* and *Codename: Panzers*, and a free 14-day trial of *Star Wars Galaxies: An Empire Divided*. Plus, mods, movies and more!

"We're going all out to deliver a fast-paced adrenalin rush of combat"

QUAKE IV 38

COUNTER-STRIKE: SOURCE 104

Friend: Batsphinx Health: 100%

Stevr left the game (Disconnect by user.)
Jacob has joined the game

TRIBES: VENGEANCE 70

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THE SIMS 2 78

contents

OVERSEAS LICENSING ENQUIRIES:

WIN! **TINY COMPO** Correctly answer this month's cover question and you could win some goodies. Send your entry on a postcard addressed to: Tiny Compo (147), *PC ZONE*, 9 Dallington Street, London EC1V 0BQ. The first correct entry plucked out of the hat wins a mystery prize. Closing date: October 13 2004. The winner of our August Tiny Compo (145) is Scott Newman, who knew that *Doom 3* was an 18 certificate game. He gets a copy of *Chaos League* to take back to his London home and we think he's totally great.

FIRST Look!

DRAGONSHARD

We can't stop the joy inside, when D&D and RTS collide...

■ SWAMP DRAGON Will Porter

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

PUBLISHER Atari
DEVELOPER Liquid Entertainment
EXPECTED RELEASE DATE Q1 2005
WEBSITE www.uk.atari.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- It's a D&D RTS, which is a bit of a rarity
- Above-ground battles and order-giving
- Below-ground adventuring and monster slaying
- Highly engaging D&D world and back story

> "Dungeons & Dragons: truly the hobby that dare not speak its name"

GENERIC PUB discussion #54: did the kids in the *Dungeons & Dragons* cartoon ever get back to the real world? It's an endless debate, and one muddled by the episodes in which either a) Venger came with them so they had to lay the smack down on him, or b) they got back and Eric was a bog monster. However, even beneath this discussion there's another deeper, murkier topic: real D&D, real rule-sets, character classes and gigantic imaginary monsters with +4 nerdiness. Dungeons & Dragons: truly the hobby that dare not speak its name.

Now though, we're getting cool with it. And to prove Dungeons & Dragons' potential for life beyond RPG, Liquid Entertainment is taking its rules and eccentricities, and jamming them into a highly promising RTS game. Taking place on the bizarre D&D world of Eberron, a planet that has a halo of giant magical crystals above it that occasionally fall to earth and cause a fracas between four races who want to manipulate its magicalness, *Dragonshard* is truly a game where genres collide.

Above ground, you wage campaigns with a streamlined resource-management system. Technology trees are notable in their absence, but you can still build all manner of bases and juggle your dual resources of magic and gold while amassing your forces. Meanwhile, beneath the ground you control parties of heroes carrying out *Dungeon Siege*-style chest-smashing, gold-hunting and experience-gathering – dodging rolling boulder traps and generally adventuring and slaying all the unlucky monsters that you meet.

Combat on a larger scale, above the hero-only caves, is much more on a *Total War* riff – controlling groups of archers, foot-soldiers and cavalry with deft clicks of the mouse – although the presence of a hero (with all the D&D character class trimmings) gives squads a definite edge, seeing as clerics are able to heal them or a ranger might be able to dole out fire arrows to a group of bowmen. There's also a few, extremely rare, adventuring champions that can be summoned should your army need a real boost.

So far, *Dragonshard* is looking a lot more innovative than the basic cut-and-paste job that a developer could fall into when splicing genres. We're always in favour of people searching out new ways in which we can bother the goblin community. Consider our left eyebrow raised. ■

Beneath the battlefield, adventuring your heroes will go...

Leave all that can be spared behind. We travel light. Let's hunt some orcs.

Horses galloping over snow will leave tracks that your enemy may well notice...

It's Dungeons & Dragons, but not as we know it...

A one-eyed, pointy-toothed, hovering laser beast – a creature that only a mother could love.

AI OF THE BEHOLDER
Enemy AI isn't all-knowing and omnipresent – it has a roving area of attention just like you do. So if you want to take out a distant outpost of dark elves, there's a chance your rival won't notice.

DOWNTOWN
Towns are going to be pretty tricky to lay siege to – what with you having to attack various walls and blocking structures before you can get to the centre and claim it as your own.

CHASING WATERFALLS
Water features often appear on both the top-side and the caves that lurk below it, so underneath a sparkling river there may well be cascades and waterfalls in the paths of your adventurers.

HAPPY TRAILS
One feature that the team is crowing about is 'Hyperterrain', which lets bog-standard ground textures get coated with a deformable layer like snow or sand. In this way, troops leave tell-tale tracks behind them – unless falling snow covers them up again, that is.

GRASSY KNOLL
Grass is set to blow in the wind, while fog will float about and act in a generally mist-like way. It's claimed that environmental effects are set to be a *Dragonshard* speciality.

CREATURE FEATURE
Expect to see all manner of fantasy creatures, from vampires to dwarves to these furry-horned things.

BULLETIN

MUST CONTAIN ANGER

■ NEWS WRITER Will Porter

▲ Now I'm normally quite a passable chap. I'm polite, I rarely shout unless shouted at, and the last fight I was in was over my Micro Machine collection in 1992. This month though, I've been angry. For no particular reason, other than the general injustice of the world and the spiralling cost of Sainsbury's frozen goods.

But how to control this deep, red-tinged anger? Why with our helpful friend the computer game! Without wanting to add to the already cindered, charred and still thoroughly smouldering topic of violence in games, this month I've been on a rampage of epic proportions. All I've been doing is slapping *Max Payne 2* into my disc drive, sticking Marilyn Manson CDs on repeat and turning the volume up to 11, entering the streets of New York and shouting things like "Have it! Have it you gangster bastards!"

But what does this tell us? Through the release of my vitriol in the medium of virtual bullets, slow motion, excessive violence and Havok physics, a lot of needless aggravation has been avoided. My girlfriend remains unshouted at, my workmates have had their tea supply remain constant and, if I owned a dog, then it certainly would not have been kicked.

My love of gaming destruction has made the world around me a thoroughly better place – I haven't wanted to physically assault a stranger since the last time I was in Oxford Street Top Man. So when you hear people bitching about the violence games can trigger in today's youth, it might be an idea to consider the violence that's been avoided as well. Many an angry teenager has had his anger dimmed by an impressive virtual headshot and, God willing, ▼ many will in the future as well.

Dark Stainer

FIRST GLIMPSE OF *DARK SECTOR* CAUSES SOILED TROUSERS

"OH MY GOD, you're going to crap your pants. You're going to crap your f***ing pants!" Thus was the assurance we received from Anthony Holden on his return from a recent visit to Canada, where our usually sceptical reviews man paid a visit to FPS luminaries Digital Extremes (creator of *Unreal* and *UT*).

The trip was actually to see forthcoming shooter *Pariah*, itself looking mighty impressive (full report next issue), but in the process he managed to secure a sneak peek at top-secret next-gen project *Dark Sector*. In development for several years now, the game is one of the most closely guarded secrets in the industry, using as it does a brand new engine designed for the next wave of 3D technology, from Xbox 2 up. The only comparable technology so far revealed is Epic's Unreal Engine 3.0, unveiled in *PC ZONE* two issues ago.

"The game is one of the most closely guarded secrets in the industry, using as it does a brand new engine"

The game itself is a third-person action game set in a dark, anime-inspired future. Says DE boss James Schmalz: "It's not an FPS. We were going to have a first-person mode, but it's more likely to be over the shoulder, as the game is heavily character-based." The character in question is a kind of mystical Zen cyber-thief, working in the 'dark sector' beyond the fringes of the solar system. The sequence we were shown depicts the hero, clad in a cyber-punkish intelligent stealth suit, infiltrating a space station to steal some data, before encountering and decimating a succession of mechanoid defence units. The stealth suit enables a number of abilities, such as extraordinary speed (bullet-time), heat suppression and superhuman agility, while our implant-laden hero also possesses a number of Jedi-like powers. In one incredible scene, he sprouts psychic tentacles and takes control of a giant attack robot.

Anime fans will be in familiar territory – think *Ghost In The Shell*, *Jin-Rô* or *Cowboy Bebop*, only much, much darker. The difference is, this game already looks better than most anime movies, in real-time. The characters look astonishing, the developers eschewing mere poly-pumping in favour of a fuzzy, hand-drawn effect for hair and faces that looks truly superb. In short, this is one of the most exciting games currently in development, and frankly, you're going to crap your pants.

■ Publisher: TBA **■ Developer:** Digital Extremes
■ ETA: 2005 **■ Website:** www.darksector.com
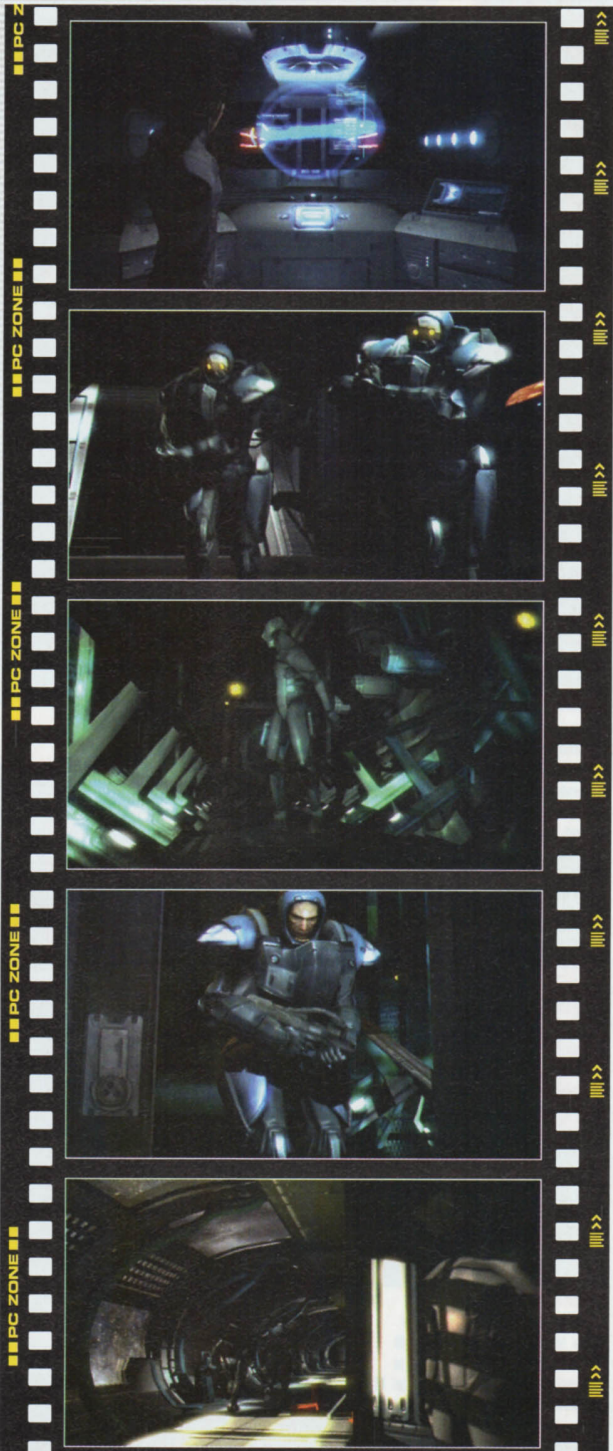
Another stunner for the 2005 wishlist...
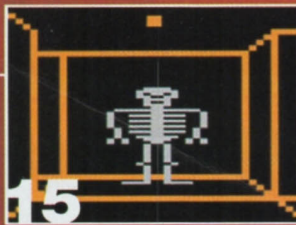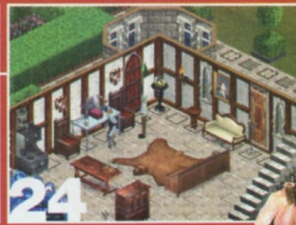
NEVER SAY NEVER. AGAIN!

BIOWARE HANDS OVER THE *NEVERWINTER* REINS TO OBSIDIAN

BIOWARE HAS been on a roll. Not only did it make Dungeons & Dragons commercially popular on the PC, but it took things even further with its *Neverwinter Nights* package – a chart-topper all over the world. After that came a couple of successful expansion packs and then another jackpot with *Knights Of The Old Republic* – and there could be another potential one in the works with *Jade Empire* on the Xbox.

So it's unsurprising that BioWare has decided to share the workload a bit and passed the job of creating *Neverwinter Nights 2* to Obsidian, the guys who are also doing *KOTOR 2* – the jammy devils.

Although they're not saying too much about the game at the moment, one of the first things we wanted to know was what Obsidian would be doing with the Aurora Engine, which due to BioWare's tile settings had looked rather ropey around the edges of late.

"We're undertaking some very big changes to the engine across the board," explains Darren Monahan, *NWN2* producer and co-founder of Obsidian when we prodded him. "Starting with the graphics system, we're completely rewriting how characters and environments are integrated, animated and rendered. You'll see all the latest and greatest technologies for games shipping in 2006, including per-pixel lighting effects such as normal mapping and specular terrain lighting – the latter gives a realistically lit 'sheen' across terrain surfaces based on the position of the sun or moon in the sky."

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

With many members of the team helping to produce *Baldur's Gate 1* and *2* and *Planescape: Torment*, we've got high hopes for a better single-player this time – one that doesn't feel like it's been dumbed down to try and attract the console kids. Monahan assures us that the team will be providing an "incredibly compelling single-player experience". Although he can't talk much about it, he says players will be spending a lot of time in the city of Neverwinter – that'll make a nice change then! Instead, Monahan is very keen to talk about what Obsidian is intending to do with the toolset features in the game, as it's been the main feature that's kept the game fresh in modding circles.

"We plan to add a slew of new tools, including in-game cut-scene and camera control functionality. A lot of the improvements to the toolset come from ideas and suggestions we've received via our website. We'd like to encourage folks to go to our website and discuss what they'd like to see. Seeing what some of the guys out there are doing with *NWN* now is really inspiring, and we can't wait to see what happens with some of the new features we're adding." Brace yourself for more updates…

■ **Publisher:** Atari
■ **Developer:** Obsidian
■ **ETA:** TBA
■ **Website:** nwn2.obsidianent.com

TOY STORY

Pavel Barter finds a way to play PC games that won't tax his graphics card one little bit as he delves into the murky world of plastic...

PLEASE DON'T DAWDLE, ALICE, WE'RE VERY LATE INDEED!
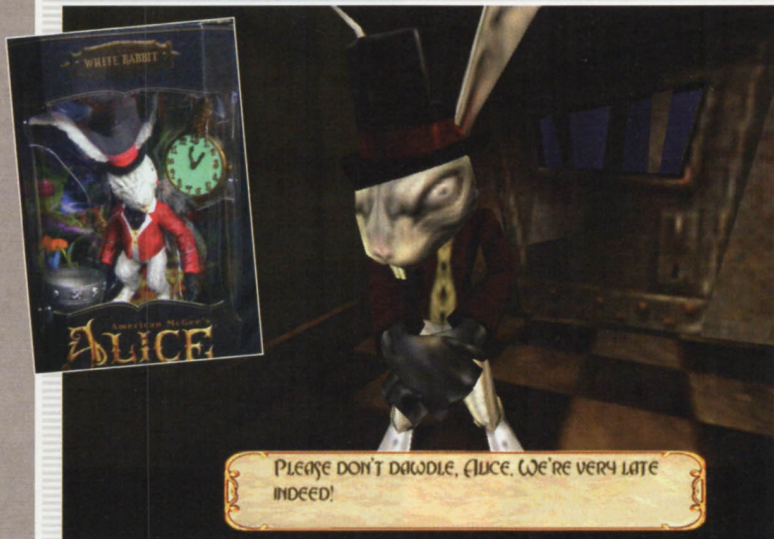
Wasted money for angry loners? Or a worthwhile purchase?

ACTION MAN was overrated. Don't bother sending in any letters of complaint because deep down, you know it's true. OK, so he had the shifty eagle eyes, chivalrous buzz-cut and fetching wardrobe, but the plastic oaf couldn't skydive to save his life. After throwing him out of a third storey window for the umpteenth time and watching him plummet to the ground like a dead pigeon, his parachute fluttering drably behind, my friends and I decided to slaughter him on a bonfire one Halloween. Only then did we discover that he couldn't even melt properly.

Action figures, though, have now journeyed beyond the playgrounds of the early 1980s. A burgeoning market for sculpted videogame characters – featuring every facial scar, grimace and weapon of their digital inspirations – has emerged over the last decade. Sculpted by real artisans, these little critters strike mean poses beside your PC. Killer figurine sets like *Unreal Tournament 2003* and *Halo* are cradled by nerds the world over, while the upcoming *Call Of Duty* range will have grown men reminiscing about the sandbox battles and military assaults that were once unleashed on an angry sister's doll's house.

A spokesperson for retailer Forbidden Planet says that sales of 3D game character models is not comparable to that for movies such as *Lord Of The Rings*, *Star Wars* and *Star Trek*: "However, demand for series like *Street Fighter*,

Master Chief: a man so chunky he was born to be plastic.

Doom and *Halo* is high. Many of today's action figures are so well sculpted that they're plastic art and are treated as such by our customers. They're bought not as playthings, but as decoration."

PLASTIC AMBITION

Back in 1994, *Mortal Kombat* was one of the first PC games to receive action figure equivalents, although they were created from old GI Joe moulds and looked like they were beaten by ugly-sticks before packaging. Four years later, *Quake II*'s Marine and Barracuda Shark, Jungle Marine and Strogg Parasite, Iron Maiden and Strogg Technician and Tank – along with the limited-edition Psycho Marine – changed gamers' opinions about figurines. These evil scamps meant business.

PC gamers have since been treated to tiny takes on Acclaim's *Turok* series, *Diablo*, *Vampire: The Masquerade*, *The House Of The Dead*, *Metal Gear Solid II*, *Command & Conquer*, *Medal Of Honor: Allied Assault* – and plenty more. *Warcraft* fans enjoy fondling highly detailed figurines of Prince Arthas Death Knight, Tichondrius Dread Lord, and Shandris Feathermoon Night Elf Archer.

Some ranges, like *Ultima Online*, look fab and stay faithful to their digital incarnations but, like many, are destined for an even more cult audience. Arty Goths, for example, can delight in the plastic Mad Hatters, Caterpillars, Jabberwocks and White Rabbits provided by cult weird-fest *American McGee's Alice* that have become collectors' items and have a huge following. On the mainstream side, meanwhile, *Tomb Raider* has seen more models than a footballer's four-poster.

There's 'Lara In Combat Training Gear', 'Lara In Motorcycle Gear', 'Lara In Tomb Raiding Gear', 'Lara in Siberia Gear', 'Lara In Wetsuit'. If there were a 'Lara Reading *PC ZONE* While Taking a Dump' figurine out there somewhere, it'd come as no surprise.

Similarly, you might have to wait a while before you can get your sweaty mitts on a PC version of *Halo 2*, but action figures will settle your anticipation in the meantime. The first set of figures includes a Brute and two Warthog vehicles. Master Chief is packaged with more than 18 movable green chunky bits, a reflective helmet visor and an arsenal of weapons, including dual-wielding sub-machine guns.

GO FIGURE

Creating a game action figure involves careful liaison between developer and model-maker. In some cases, such as

How it once was.

"Many of today's action figures are so well sculpted that they're plastic art and are treated as such by our customers"

FORBIDDEN PLANET

Even games like *Dragon's Lair 3D* have had the doll treatment.

Call Of Duty: coming to a toyshop near you.

Halo, the publisher also plays a part in overseeing the creation process. In others, craftspeople are left to their own devices. "We went from initial concept sketches to models pretty quickly," says American McGee of the *Alice* series. "I worked directly with the sculptors, but not a lot of direction was required since the guys were so talented. Mostly, I just needed to get out of their way."

Alongside Epic Games, US toymakers Radioactive Clown released a spanking good range of *Unreal Tournament 2003* figures last year; each was equipped with *Unreal* weapons like the flak cannon, sniper rifle and translocator. "The *Unreal* games have a loyal fan base and we want to keep giving them more. Immortalising the characters into collectible action figures was the next step," says Epic's Jay Wilbur.

According to happy campers at Radioactive Clown, the creative process starts with a drawn prototype, at a cost of around £600. The developer sends the

designer character art and describes the subject's personality in detail. Once the prototype has been approved, the tooling process begins. "The developers we work with are so busy making games, they're really not interested in micromanaging the process. They basically say 'here are the characters you can choose from'. We take the images and work out which characters we think make the best figures, how they will be posed, articulated, and painted." Chris Huisman, senior graphics designer for Joyride (who have been commissioned to make

It's not a toy it's a piece of art – alright?

models based on the *Crazy Taxi*, *Command & Conquer* and *Halo* licences), told us that research and initial tooling of the moulds can amount to around £34,000 – and that's before manpower and product promotion costs. And by the time these charming desk decorations hit the streets, you can expect to pay anything between £10 and £20 for their services.

MODEL CITIZENS

As technology improves, action figures will look better and better, getting ever closer to their gaming counterparts. *Call Of Duty Series 1*, released later this year by Radioactive Clown, will feature six highly detailed soldiers from the American and German military. "The team has worked hard to make sure every aspect of *Call Of Duty* is authentic, right down to the last detail," explains David Anderson, Activision's senior director of business development, and each one is equipped with authentic weapons and accessories. For example, the 101st Airborne D-Day Paratrooper has a 45 pistol with holster, helmet, stick mag pouch, canteen, lineman's kit, Carlisle pouch, entrenching tool, mussette bag and a parachute rig (which will hopefully work better than Action Man's). Anyone who says it's just a doll gets a slap.

ANYONE WANT IT?

PC GAME MERCHANDISE CAN BE FOUND CLUTTERING GAMES MAGAZINE OFFICES THE LENGTH AND BREADTH OF BRITAIN. HERE ARE SOME OF GAMING'S MORE POPULAR SPIN-OFFS...

NOVELS
Walk into any major US bookstore and you'll discover PC game novels next to Stephen King and Tolkien. Pocket Books has sold 750,000 copies of its *Warcraft*, *StarCraft* and *Diablo* series. *Doom* and *EverQuest* novels have also shifted in huge quantities.

GAME GEAR
E3 attendees have T-shirts thrown in their faces every few minutes; most of them horrendous, most of them sized XXXXL. Strangely, if you wear a *Max Payne* T-shirt down your local nightclub you'll get lots of condescending looks – but sport a retro *Pac-Man* top and everyone thinks you're dead cool.

SOUNDTRACKS
Slim chance you'll find *Splinter Cell's* soundtrack down the local record shop, but check out Japanese import sites and you're sure to find it. Square's tuneful *Final Fantasy* CDs have sold millions of units in Japan, while *Silent Hill*, *Tomb Raider* and even (yawn) *Myst* have seen Far Eastern chart success.

What these miniature works of art prove is that they're more than just toys for acquisitive little kids or angry loners who smell of wee and microwave curries. Instead, they're the ultimate 3D accompaniments to our favourite games and more than a few notches up the evolutionary ladder than the toys of yesteryear. Which brings us back to Action Man who, as we left him, remained unaffected by fall or flame. Unfortunately, we'll never know what fate eventually befell him, as I finally tied him to a firework and haven't seen him since. I'm sure he's still rubbish though, wherever he may be. PCZ
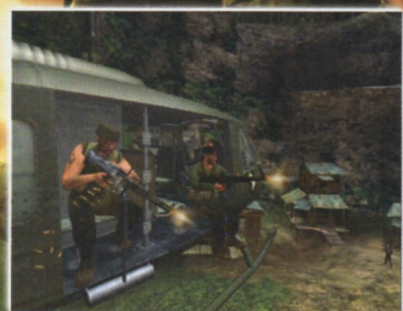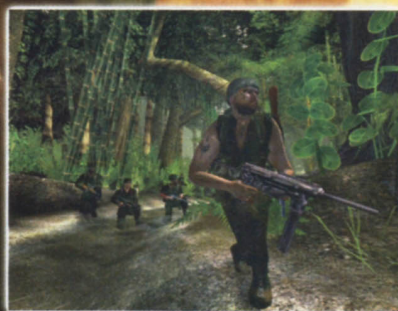
EMULATION ZONE

BREAKING NEWS FROM THE WORLD OF EMULATION, WITH RETRO REANIMATOR *STUART CAMPBELL*

TINY IS BEAUTIFUL

AS ALERT VIEWERS will have noticed, one of the things that Emu Zone loves most of all about emulation is the way that as well as giving coders a place to demonstrate their technical skills, it also provides a platform for people to showcase their creative sides.

Enthusiasts using emulators to develop new software for 'obsolete' systems – many of which were never originally accessible to independent

column up to this point is 1.39K in Notepad.) In 2003 the compo added a category for games in an elephantine 4K, but both years came up with stunning results, running on platforms from the Atari VCS, ZX81 and Commodore Pet up to the Spectrum, NES and Game Boy Color. Arcade

"You'd be surprised how many 1K games stand up to repeated play"

programmers (unless they bought official development kits costing thousands of pounds) have brought us a tantalising glimpse of an alternative past/future. This is what the world would have been like if games machines had been allowed to flower to their full potential – instead of being rushed into an early grave by lazy developers who couldn't be bothered to learn how to use them properly.

IT'S A MINI ADVENTURE

This month, Emu Zone would like to shine a light on some of the most impressive work done by such people, tackling the challenge of producing playable, fun games with the barest minimum of resources. Nowhere will you find those skills better illustrated than

with the MiniGame Competitions. Starting in 2002, the compo challenged coders to come up with games, for any format, which took up just 1K of code or less. (To give you an idea, the text of this Emu Zone

games, driving games, shooting games, puzzle games, typing games, platformers, even RPGs made a showing. Quite a few of the games are pretty rubbish, of course, being made strictly for the novelty of getting something running in a handful of bytes, but you'd be surprised how many are genuinely enjoyable and stand up to repeated play.

Emu Zone's favourite is *Maziacs1*, a remake of the Spectrum classic *Maziacs* (which Free Play brought you a splendid PC update of in issue 141), that manages to cram all of the original's features and gameplay into the tiny 1K space. But with over 100 games across the two compos, there are literally hours of entertainment to be found browsing through these mini marvels. [PCZ]

LINKS
starbase.globalpc.net/~wyndex/
mini03/index.main.html – MiniGame
Competition 2003
www.cling.gu.se/~cl3polof/
minigame/ – MiniGame Competition 2002

Minima Reloaded, the 2003 winner. But do you attack or run?

GOLD:30 HEALTH:19

YOU HAVE ENCOUNTERED A WARG!
(A)TTACK OR (R)UN?
YOU'VE BEEN HIT!
(A)TTACK OR (R)UN?
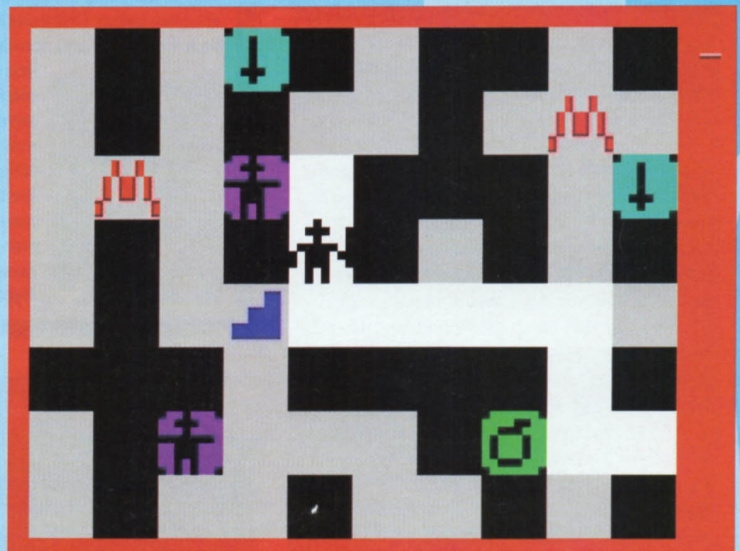
Even in 1K, the Maziacs look menacing. Don't you think?

EMULATION OF THE MONTH

THRUST (ATARI VCS, 2004)

Here's another feat of TARDIS programming, in which the legendary BBC Micro/C64/Spectrum game *Thrust* has been crushed down to squeeze into the tiny memory and primitive functions of the Atari VCS. It's a phenomenally impressive feat,

The highest res seen on the VCS.

retaining all of the original gameplay and looking almost exactly like its parent, and possibly even exceeds the standards of *Space Instigators* – the VCS *Space Invaders* remake (see Emu Zone, issue 133).

Perhaps most heroic of all though, is the fact that like most new VCS games premiered at the Atari Age website, you can not only download the ROM legally for free, but you can actually buy a real cartridge copy of the game, complete with box and manual, and play it on the real VCS in your loft. If you go the whole hog and buy the $45 edition (about £25), you even get a VCS foot controller thrown in, which gets round the tricky problem of having to use Up on the VCS joystick to thrust and Down to use

your shield or tractor beam (something that can necessitate some delicate juggling with the standard controller).

There's nothing Emu Zone likes better than to see emulation being used not only to bring old console games to your PC, but also to give something back in the other direction.

LINKS
www.atariage.com/ – Atari
Age homepage

WHAT IS EMULATION?

By installing an emulator, you can run games that were programmed for different platforms – such as coin-ops – in their original form. The games come in the form of a ROM (Read Only Memory) that you load into the emulator to run. There are legal issues though, and unless you own the original game, it's often against the law to download a ROM. For that reason, we can't give you links to ROMs, though we can give you links to the emulators themselves.

THE MAN WHO KNOWS

HEARTLESS rally ace **Colin McRae** has launched a **scathing attack** on rival game *Richard Burns Rally*. The **millionaire** Scot flew from **Lanark** to **Silverstone** in his personal helicopter in order to promote *Colin McRae Rally 2005*, but simultaneously delivered a **vicious sideswipe** towards the defenceless Burns-endorsed game. "I just played it recently for about five minutes when I was at **Codemasters**," bragged McRae, before revealing that he crashed "quite a lot". Despite admitting: "I never played it long enough to get a good feel for it," McRae sneered, "I think you've got to be very careful and you've got to make it difficult. You don't want to make it too easy but you've got to find that balance and that's where Codemasters have got the experience."

Cruelly mocking the team behind *Richard Burns Rally*, McRae dismissed them as "a new company coming in with a brand new game – it's going to take them time." Although he conceded that the game was **vaguely playable** "once you start to get a feel for it and the response times and the way the car behaves", McRae finished his **bitter broadside** with a **foul-mouthed salvo**, spitting: "How much time do you give it? You can't afford to really piss people off."

The terrifying realism of *Championship Manager* has again intruded into the real world. **Bristol Rovers** scout **Paul Molesworth** explained: "I was at home going through a list of potential left-backs when my son Ryan said: "What about Robbie Ryan? He's out of contract." My son had Robbie in his team on his *Championship Manager* computer game, and knew he was available. I was ready to **dismiss the idea** at first because I never thought he'd come to us. But then I had a **cup of tea** and thought it over, and decided we might as well give it a try. In the end it has **worked out brilliantly** because we've got him. But if it had not been for my son, I might never have thought of going for him as a target!"

"McRae revealed that he played *Richard Burns Rally* for about five minutes at Codemasters, before admitting that he crashed quite a lot"

ROUND-UP

HERDING FASCINATING NUGGETS OF GAMING INFORMATION INTO AN EASILY DIGESTIBLE PEN

Future

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Work continues apace on the bug-stomping *Starship Troopers* shooter – a late yet welcome gaming adaptation of Paul Verhoeven's ace 1997 alien gore-fest. Taking place 50 years after the film on a distant mining planet, the game's first level is set to pit you in a scene entirely similar to the stunning valley bug-assault in the movie. With 14 brands of bug and 12 weapons to slay them with, a 2005 release date has been given for what could be a pretty smart FPS.

ADDED X2-FACTOR

Bigger, better, more productive and with some bloody big space stations is the outlook for *X2* expansion pack *The Return*. Alongside some boring stuff like a more streamlined economy system, there will be a brand new storyline to follow, a raft of new ships and weapons and the chance to super-size your stations and create mega-constructions known as complexes. We're strapping on our space boots in fevered anticipation.
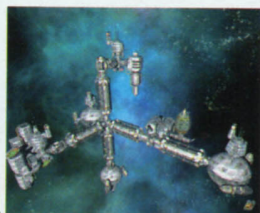
NIGHT BOAT TO PHAROAH

City builders are fun, but ones where you're treated as a God instead of an incompetent bungler are even better. *Children Of The Nile* is shaping up to be a interesting and non-German build 'em up in which you get to order around ancient armies, give humble peasants farming tips and even construct your own giant tomb. No hideous mummies with incredible death-dealing powers seem to be in any build that we've seen so far – so we're guessing they're holding them back as a bit of a surprise.

JUMPING JUPITER

Nexus: The Jupiter Incident has been picked up by VU Games, a publisher presumably in search of a new space-strategy title that'll fill a *Homeworld*-sized gap in the market. We waved some code in the face of space empire boff Richie Shoemaker and he nodded sagely, commenting that (in his wisdom) he first admired it in 1999 when it was known as *Imperium Galactic III*, and that its brand of *Star Command* meets *Homeworld* space antics should impress dangly-haired wastrels such as himself.

WIN! COOL BOARDERS

YOU WON'T HAVE ANY PROBLEMS RUNNING THESE FIRESIDE FAVOURITES

Imagine the scene – your hard drive has died, your monitor flickers forlornly, you're undergoing gaming cold turkey with no hope of salvation. Unless you own a PC-derived board game like what they played in the olden days that is.

We've been proud owners of Warcraft: The Board Game and Age Of Mythology: The Board Game for a few weeks now, and once we'd actually bothered to learn the rules we discovered that there *is* life beyond our keyboards – even if we felt slightly uncomfortable with the experience of rolling our own dice. Even curiouser is the future addition of a *Doom 3* game to the ranks, with little plastic imps and more than a slight whiff of the old Space Crusade game. If you fancy a bash then Warcraft (Fantasy Flight Games, £29.99) and Age Of Mythology (Eagle Games, £34.99) are available from posh toy shops, board game specialists and on t'internet – with Doom 3 joining the ranks in a month or so.

Otherwise you can win one of the five copies of Warcraft that we've purloined for you! Simply answer the following question:

Who killed the Imp on the UAC scientific research base on Mars?

A: Gordon Freeman in the Study with the Crowbar?
B: Master Chief in the Library with the Candlestick?
C: An angry Marine in Hell with the shotgun?

Answers on a postcard to:
Board Game Competition
PC ZONE
Dennis Publishing
9 Dallington Street
London
EC1V 0BQ

Or if you want to enter by text then simply send PCZBOARD to 83125, with your answer (a, b or c), plus your full name and address.
Messages will cost 50p plus your standard operator text messaging charge. For full terms and conditions see page 7. All entries must be received by October 13.

"Mind the gap. And the men with automatic weapons. Mind them too."

Terrorism: bad for mankind, good for games?

Learn to play in tune godammit!

London Calling

MAYBE ITS BECAUSE WE'RE ALL LONDONERS, THAT WE LOVE THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF *THE REGIMENT* SO...

CULTIVATED FRESHLY from the paranoia of your average London commuter, *The Regiment* is a team-based shooter that's piqued our interest through its impressive recreation of our morning routine – albeit with more terrorists and guns.

The game's single-player mode will hook you and your SAS team into various fictional and historical bullet exchanges (including the 1980 Iranian Embassy siege), seeing you freeing hostages in the realistically modelled Underground stations that you see in the nearby screenshots, as well as shooting your way through the corridors of the Houses of Parliament.

In accordance with the spirit of the age, SAS hard men have been drafted in to add an element of authenticity – both in the designing of the game and in briefing videos. John MacAleese (a veteran of many an SAS scuffle – including the aforementioned Embassy siege) will be on hand to guide you through combat while training will be provided in a recreation of the 'Killing House', the specifically designed firing range where the CRW (Counter Revolutionary Warfare) wing of the SAS hone their hostage rescue techniques with live ammunition, room clearance strategies and balls of steel.

Online and co-op capabilities of *The Regiment* are still unclear, although team-based multiplayer firefights seem hugely likely. What's really selling the game to us, we have to admit, is the fact that this is not just another yank-centric title – it even features Nelson's Column and a busker. Nevertheless all the necessary cogs and gears seem to be in place for what could be an enjoyable blast.

Let's kill us some pigeons...

- Publisher: Konami
- Developer: Konami
- ETA: 2005
- Website: uk.konami-europe.com

Real SAS missions in shooter-form.
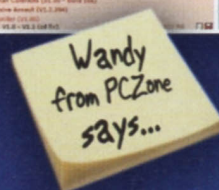
indieZONE

DRAGGING THE WORLD OF UNDERGROUND DEVELOPERS KICKING AND SCREAMING INTO THE LIMELIGHT

THIS MONTH, INDIE Zone encountered something of a dilemma. This column was set up specifically to give coverage and encouragement to independently produced games, so what do you do when something comes out that's interesting, yet not actually very good? After much soul-searching, Indie Zone decided that the best thing to do is offer constructive criticism, on the grounds that online-distributed games are a lot easier to update and release improved versions of. Hey, we're here to help.

FREE PLAY
Lightning Break

(Playaholics)
www.playaholics.com

OF ALL the games we've brought you since this column started nine months ago, this is the one that's occupied most of Free Play's own time – and the one that's been most popular with all of Free Play's friends. It's a (loosely) snooker-based game, and it's a work of genius. On each of the game's 20 levels, you're set a particular task – say, pot two red balls and two coloured balls – and given a time limit to do it in. Potting the wrong ball or the cue ball, or not hitting any balls at all, knocks four seconds off your time, and that's pretty much it for rules. The control system is incredibly simple (aim with the mouse, hold down the left button to set power), and the implementation of the laws of snooker is extremely forgiving (you can hit any ball you like at any time, you're only penalised if you pot them). Plus, there's all sorts of potential for setting up clever stuff like combo shots, whereby you can save time by sinking several balls at once.

As you move through the levels, the challenges get more inventive and more cunning, culminating in level 20's challenge to score a 147-break against the clock. (Don't worry, it's not as daunting as it sounds, thanks to the lax rules and the big pockets.) The game keeps average and high scores both for individual levels and the whole game, and if you're anything like Free Play, you'll be playing it constantly for days – first to work through all 20 stages (after 20, the levels repeat with tighter time limits for extra challenge), and then to better your scores.

Lightning Break is a work of art in 300K of Flash code. If you have more fun with any other PC game this month, free or otherwise, you're probably lying.

TOTAL SCORE 0

Level 19: Breaking Glass
Get a break of 50 or more - one of the balls is glass, changing every three seconds and the next glass ball is random

BREAK 0 **POINTS** 0

sound
pause
exit

Do you love the sound of this level? Ho ho!

There's a lot of empty shelves there. Government cuts maybe...

SKOOLS OUT

£7.99 | **Pub:** Muckybaby | **Dev:** Muckybaby
| **www.muckybaby.com/**

REQUIRES P600, DirectX 7.0, 100MB disk space **DESIRES** That'll do just nicely

Stuart Campbell sticks Alice Cooper on the turntable and dusts off his blazer...

SKOOLS OUT (SIC) is a pretty transparent attempt to recreate the magic of the legendary Spectrum game *Skool Daze*, while transporting it into the modern three-dimensional era. Developer Muckybaby has partially succeeded, which is to say it's got the 3D part down pat. The game is set in a nicely rendered environment, incorporating (briefly) the hero's home, and then a sizeable school with playground, sports field, outbuildings and suchlike. Pupils and teachers scurry around muttering pithy comments, and objects can be examined and manipulated.

Sadly, however, the gameplay hasn't had anything like the same care lavished on it. There's barely a skeleton of a game here, with most of your time occupied simply wandering around the school looking in cupboards. Unlike *Skool Daze*, there's no need to actually attend classes – if you fail to show up, nobody bats an eyelid, and you can have free run of every room in the building. All classrooms are empty except the one you're supposed to be in, and even if you do decide to be a model pupil (attending classes and answering multiple-choice questions is the only way to reduce your lines tally), you'll have a job finding the right room before the end of the lesson, given the absence of any maps, signposts or helpful arrows.

It's a shame, because there are the beginnings of a good game here. As it stands though, it's barely more than a tech demo. Keep a close eye on the website and hope for revisions.

PCZONE VERDICT **44**
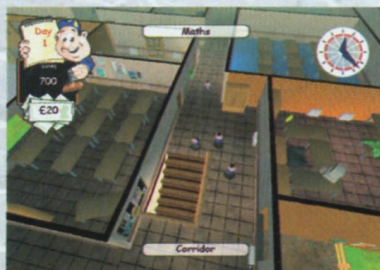
Could do better

Turns out we don't need no education...

*Alexey Sityanov
STALKER lead game designer
at GSC game world*

DEVELOPERS' QUESTION TIME

What PC games are you playing at the moment?
That would be the sublime *Thief: Deadly Shadows*, *NFS Underground*, *Celestia*, *Magic: The Gathering* and *Vangers* – which is this cool Russian top-down sci-fi car game.

What was the last videogame you finished playing?
Ricochet Lost Worlds (which is like *Breakout* on acid), the mental *Crimsonland* and *Max Payne 2*.

What is your favourite game of all time?
Hmm, a toss-up between *Another World* and *Might And Magic III*.

What are you most proud of in your career?
I'm proud of working on a huge project like *STALKER*, and the fact that I directly influenced so much of its creation. There aren't many people who can say that…

Who do you most admire in the industry and why?
Jon Van Caneghem for *Kings Bounty* and the and *Might And Magic* games; the iconic Shigeru Miamoto for his huge stack of top-class projects – *Zelda*, *Metroid*, *Mario* and so on; Sid Meier for the unique *Civilization*; the creators of *X-Com*; Square for *Final Fantasy* and *Chrono Trigger*… the list just goes on and on and on!

What has the PC contributed most to videogaming?
The scope of PC games is the key: their extensiveness, content and interactivity. It all means that large-scale games like *X-Com*, *Civilization* and *Elite* can only be played to their full potential on the PC.

What is your company's philosophy?
Coming up with interesting, innovative projects while pushing the technology envelope. The key criterion is making games which we'd have fun playing ourselves, even after working on them for four years!

What's the best thing about your job?
It's all about creation – being able to create a true, living world and watching this fictional place gradually coming to life.

What's the worst thing about your job?
Time. The years that developing a game can eat up. I just can't wait until the time that a project like *STALKER* will take a year or so, instead of three or four.

What are you working on right now?
Filling in and balancing the *STALKER* world.

What's the Next Big Thing in PC gaming?
To me it's virtual reality and life simulation. And *STALKER*. Obviously.

SMELLS LIKE TEEN SPIRITS

HIGH SCHOOL SHENANIGANS AND BLOOD-DRENCHED GORE IN *OBSCURE*
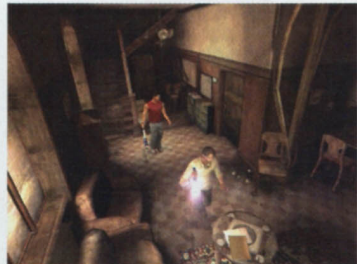
My school didn't have one demon…

Buffy is another major influence.

American teens: iritating.

ESSENTIALLY 'I Know You Played *Resident Evil* Last Summer', *Obscure* takes the teen-horror genre that we all know and love (or maybe, hate) and gives it the *Silent Hill* treatment. We took some preview code for a spin and found it to be a pretty competent affair and, even though it's clearly aimed at a non-hardcore gaming market, it still made us squirm nervously in our seats a few times – and not just when Sum 41 played the song in the intro movie either.

It all starts off in bizarre fashion with the jock character (who's friends with a stoner, a fit clever girl, a fit athletic girl and a guy who does the school newspaper) having his gym kit nicked and, for some reason, ending up in the cellar of the spooky house next door – tying a torch to a gun, finding a half-starved student in a locked room and being pursued by monsters.

With an interesting team-based design and more than a few nods to the point and clicks of yesteryear, *Obscure* is certainly worth checking out if whining, middle-class American kids don't make you want to repeatedly slam your head into rusty nails. It seems basic, but the teen-horror bandwagon is one that surprisingly few people have jumped on – and this is certainly a more than decent stab at the genre.

■ **Publisher:** Ubisoft ■ **Developer:** Microids/Hydravision
■ **ETA:** October ■ **Website:** uk.obscure-game.com

BOSS HOG

WARTHOG'S NEW LINE-UP COVERS GOBLINS, SPACE FLEETS AND PUNK

Johnny Whatever and *Fallen Kingdoms* are the latest offerings from a well respected developer.

THE MEN behind *Mace Griffin: Bounty Hunter* have rolled out a few new titles, some of which are a little bit odd. First up, please bear witness to *Johnny Whatever*, a game that probably wasn't on the Sex Pistols' wish-list when they wrote *God Save the Queen*.

The Iron Lady, y'see, has imprisoned the true queen in a vat of mustard, and it's up to a disgruntled youth called Johnny to fight the robo-bobbies and establishment figures on the streets of Lower London using the sheer power of rock 'n' roll. With a guitar called Nancy (sigh) and a ton of licensed music, we're not sure if this an alright-looking game or a travesty that's pissing on the memory of one of the most ground-breaking and culturally significant bands in living memory. We have our suspicions though.

Elsewhere, there's a sequel to *Conquest: Frontier Wars* that looks set to improve upon the sci-fi RTS stylings of the original, and a competent-looking RPG called *Fallen Kingdoms* that promises all manner of questing, levelling up and beast-bothering, along with some neat features that'll see chairs being flung and fire igniting and spreading among evil woodlands.

They're projects that are still a while away, but Uncle ZONE will keep an eye on them and let you know if they're truly worth keeping tabs on. 'Cos we're nice like that.

■ **Publisher:** TBA
■ **Developer:** Warthog
■ **ETA:** TBA
■ **Website:** www.warthogtx.com/unleashedPR/

Elite 4 Ever

PLANS HAVE BEEN DRAWN UP, THE TECHNOLOGY IS ALMOST IN PLACE AND BUILDING WORK IS ALREADY WELL UNDER WAY ON THE TRUE SEQUEL TO THE BEST GAME EVER MADE*

---- E L I T E ----

Press any key to start game

FORE-SHIELD | SPEED
AFT-SHIELD | ROLL
FUEL | DIVE-CLIMB
CABIN TEMP
LASER TEMP
ALTITUDE
MISSILES

The Cobra Mk II. A thing of subtle beauty.

Actual:159.5 kmh⁻¹   Set:114.9 kmh⁻¹   Relative to Miller Terminal
16 16 36 13 Jan-3209   Manual Control
                                                        External View

A screenshot that represents many, many wasted teenage years.

TWENTY YEARS on – almost to the day – since the ground-breaking original emerged on the BBC Micro Computer – and nearly a decade since the most recent in the *Elite* series launched into deepest space – it somehow seems an apt time to be asking David Braben about a new *Elite* game. We've asked him in the past, of course, many times, and the answer we've received has always been a curt: "Yes, we're making it, but it's still a long way off." This time, as completion draws near on *Rollercoaster Tycoon 3*, Braben appears ready to tease back the curtain on this most secret and eagerly-awaited project.

"It's still a long way off…" he smiles unapologetically, "but you have to understand that I have high expectations for *Elite IV*. I don't want to release something that's rubbish to play. It's been such a long time since the last *Elite* that it has to be just right – and I'm more conscious of that than anyone."

With the aforementioned *Tycoon* sequel to be peddled and marketed, Braben refuses to go into specifics on a game that's still at least two years from completion. He admits, however, that clues to its content have been littered among Frontier's back catalogue.

PEOPLE PERSON

"There are certain things a game needs for it to be absolutely leading edge, and one of the key things in *Elite IV* is to be able to include people. But doing people properly is very, very difficult. No-one's done it properly or even approached it. And I don't just mean *GTA* people, where you club them and nick their car. I mean people you can interact with. So yes, we've had a lot of logical steps to work through to get to our ideal game. We need to be able to do naturalistic animations, we need to understand

Then...

...and now.

character interaction, and – as a parallel thread – we need to display vast numbers of people and to understand crowd dynamics."

Braben clearly feels he's nailed down many of the AI issues already, evident in watching the impressive crowd dynamics at work in *RT3*. Lifelike animation and character interaction – albeit canine – was a feature of last years PS2 curio *A Dog's Life*. However, the tools and rendering techniques behind these and his other games were first developed in 1996. Braben has clearly been making plans for *Elite IV* for a very long time, and each game has been a technological stepping stone that, as he admits, "takes us closer to having all the tools we need to finish *Elite*." But the question remains, where is Braben and his team in the development cycle today?

"We started development in 2000 – that was as a massively multiplayer game. But talking to people who

> **"One of the key things in *Elite IV* is to be able to include people. But doing people properly is very, very difficult"**
> **DAVID BRABEN, CREATOR OF *ELITE***

could have been involved in it, I realised how little the Internet infrastructure was capable of – there were so many problems, I could see us taking a lot of flak.

"What we've got now is a separate design for a game which is single-player and for small numbers of players, up to 16 or 32. We could still do a massively multiplayer game subsequently – we've got the design, it still works, it's extremely exciting and very different to what's out there now in many ways. But for what we're doing at the moment, we want to create something completely new. I know what it is we're going to do and I actually know how we're going to do it. That, I think, is extremely exciting."

DON'T PIN ME DOWN

Braben refuses to allow *Elite IV* to be pigeon-holed so early on, but it seems obvious that first- or third-person combat will be a key feature, as indeed will freewheeling space adventuring. Braben has also made it clear he wishes to replicate the accessibility of the first game with the detail of the two sequels. But the biggest challenge for his Frontier team (one that Braben is clearly aware of) is in recreating a vast universe – one that will display all the colour and chaos of humankind, artificial or otherwise. Braben simply wants to revolutionise games. Again.

- ■ **Publisher:** TBA
- ■ **Developer:** Frontier Developments
- ■ **ETA:** TBA
- ■ **Website:** www.frontier.co.uk

Love and respect to John Mackay at mackayj.doosh.net for the dinky ships

*according to Richie Shoemaker

Got the greatest game idea since *Doom*? Come and put it to the ultimate test – *PC ZONE*'s Search For A Game...

Back again? Yep, it seems as though you wonderful guys and gals just can't get enough of pitching your game ideas to us and suffering the ritual humiliation that comes from our esteemed judging panel. This month Stuart Prosser of Bath tries his luck, with an exciting little number that's sure to have the nostalgia lovers out there fondly remembering the good old days. Stuart hasn't named his effort, so we've taken the liberty to give it a title ourselves. Let's hope the judges share Stuart's enthusiasm for a game that he describes as...

"*Midwinter* meets *Far Cry*"

An artist's impression of the in-game world.

JERSEY UNDER SIEGE

THIS IS based on that early classic from the 1990s, *Midwinter*, but set in occupied Jersey during WWII, and played out on a large island map with many fictional and non-fictional German strongholds. The game is freeform, with only one mission: assassinate the German general who is based at the HQ.

You start with a single character, and although you can do as you like, you're advised to recruit locals with special skills such as the local locksmith.

You're not a wanted person until you start to commit crimes, so you can scout out places with no problems. All actions are done within a real-time half-hour slot. When that's up, you choose your next character until all are used or you have finished. Then the clock goes to the next half-hour slot so all characters are used at the same time.

A typical self-assigned mission would be to rescue an imprisoned character. Weapons, explosives and vehicles would be of the period and found in realistic places, not behind bushes and so on. These can be stored at garages and houses for use when a plan emerges. When there are more characters than one in a certain place, comments can be given to them, like 'Follow Me' or 'Take Cover'. Losing your top sniper (a local hunter) will be a genuine loss and screw up your plans. The game can be lost by either losing all of your characters, or because every time a worthy act of resistance is caused 20 members of the public are shot. Top game or what?

Imagine *Far Cry* but with added Nazis.

Midwinter provides the game's template.

WHAT THE JUDGES SAY

"Yeah, I like this – sort of *Bergerac* with Nazis. There's some decent gameplay ideas in here, such as the recruiting of locals for the resistance and the real tension that your activities could be discovered at any time. However, you can give gamers too much freedom – having only one overall mission to kill a general is just too unfocused for a game of this kind. With a proper structure in there, beginning with small objectives such as disrupting supply lines and moving onto full-on assassination attempts, this could be fantastic." **Verdict: HIT!**

"Overlooking the fact that you can't spell, there are some OK ideas in here. The World War II setting is a bit tired, and Jersey is a bizarre choice of location, but there's certainly room in the world for another *Midwinter*. I agree with Jamie's points – recruiting skilled characters is more realistic than slotting in an implant chip for example – but I'm not sure about the simultaneous gameplay. Doesn't it rule out the possibility of co-operation? I think you need to tighten up your design before the good ideas here can succeed." **Verdict: MISS!**

"I can't help but think that your game would be a lot more fun without all the local recruitment stuff. I'm not trying to turn your idea into *Far Cry* but I would much rather it be a free-roaming, information-gathering, Nazi-sniping solo effort – a man on the run gradually turning into a soldier of fortune. A bit like *Far Cry*. Then again, I'm giving you a hit because this is one of the most original ideas we've come across so far. Good luck finding a publisher that wants a game set in the middle of the English Channel, though." **Verdict: HIT!**

"A little harsh from Ant maybe, but no matter. Two hits out of three is fine for us. Well done Stuart! *Midwinter* lives again... We'll be back next month so see you then!"

Send your ideas in no more than 300 words (along with a one-line pitch and any artwork) to 'Search For A Game' at the usual address.

Not that we're saying Jim Bergerac had any right-wing tendencies, but...

CHARTS

In association with **VIRGIN MEGASTORES**

The Queen of Hearts, she made some charts – all on a summer's day. The Knave of Hearts, he stole the charts, and took them clean away

ChartTrack TOP 10 **elspa**

1

Could it have been any other way? One of the most anticipated and keenly debated games of recent years leaps straight out of Hell and into the charts and cackles inanely at its competitors. It's good to have you back, Marine.

3

Mopping up the last of the cash that can be wringed out of an ageing game before its all-singing, all-dancing follow-up (not that we're cynical or anything) comes *The Sims: Triple Deluxe*. Hoorah. Buy it now kids. And *Rollercoaster Tycoon 2* while you're at it.

		TITLE	PUBLISHER	SCORE
1	NEW	**DOOM 3**	ACTIVISION	90%
2	▼	CHAMP MAN: SEASON 03/04	EIDOS	90%
3	▲	THE SIMS: TRIPLE DELUXE	EA	N/A
4	-	THE SIMS	EA	86%
5	▲	CSI: DARK MOTIVES	UBISOFT	60%
6	▼	SOLDIERS: HEROES OF WWII	CODEMASTERS	90%
7	▲	FAR CRY	UBISOFT	93%
8	▼	JOINT OPS: TYPHOON RISING	NOVALOGIC	83%
9	NEW	CHAOS LEAGUE	DIGITAL JESTERS	78%
10	NEW	ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 2: GOLD	ATARI	N/A

9

Always nice to see a hit for a strange game from a small-ish publisher. *Chaos League* seems to have hit a nerve with those who've had a murky past in Games Workshops the length and breadth of Britain. And it has pigs in – which can only be a good thing.
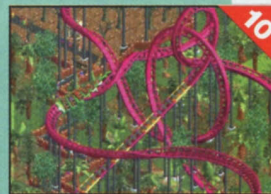
10

Mopping up the last of the cash that can be wringed out of an ageing game before its all-singing, all-dancing follow-up (not that we're cynical or anything) comes *Rollercoaster Tycoon 2: Gold Edition*. Hoorah. Buy it now kids! See what we did just there?

YOUR SHOUT

Have your say at www.pczone.co.uk

Well if *The Sims* have accomplished one unique thing – it's that the sequel will be in the chart alongside its predecessor!
Kaos503

The Sims? Girls play it. That shows proof enough it's not to be trusted.
DavidMc555

Who stole *Thief: Deadly Shadows*? You can bloody well put it back!
Madameye

Virgin megastores TOP 10   COMPETITION **Virgin** megastores

1. DOOM 3	ACTIVISION
2. SOLDIERS: HEROES OF WWII	CODEMASTERS
3. THE SIMS: TRIPLE DELUXE	EA
4. JOINT OPERATIONS: TYPHOON RISING	NOVALOGIC
5. FAR CRY	UBISOFT
6. GROUND CONTROL II: OPERATION EXODUS	VU GAMES
7. DEUS EX: INVISIBLE WAR	EIDOS
8. UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004	ATARI
9. THIEF: DEADLY SHADOWS	EIDOS
10. NORTON ANTIVIRUS 2004	SYMANTEC

Win £100 of Virgin vouchers!

PC ZONE and Virgin have teamed up to give you the chance to win 100 shiny pounds-worth of goodies from your local Virgin Megastore. All you have to do to enter is answer the following:

QUESTION:
What cheat code put on the God mode in the original *Doom*?

A IDDQD **B** IDKFA **C** IDCHOPPERS

Send your answers on a postcard to: *PC ZONE* Chart Compo Issue 147, Dennis Publishing, 9 Dallington Street, London, EC1V 0BQ. Closing date: October 13 2004

■ Please include your name, address, daytime phone number, email address, job title and company name (and age if under 18).
■ Please tell us if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers or new products from other companies.
■ Please indicate whether you are a current subscriber to *PC ZONE*.

To enter the competition by text: send PCZVIRGIN, to 83125, with your answer (a,b, or c), plus your full name and address.

■ All text entries must be received by October 13. Messages will cost 50p plus your standard operator text messaging charge.

For general competition terms and conditions, turn to page 7.

INCOMING!

SEPTEMBER
CALL OF DUTY: UNITED OFFENSIVE	ACTIVISION
COLIN MCRAE RALLY 2005	CODEMASTERS
CONFLICT: VIETNAM	SCI
EVIL GENIUS	VU GAMES
FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR	THQ
HIDDEN & DANGEROUS: SABRE SQUADRON	GATHERING
KOHAN II: KINGS OF WAR	GATHERING
JUICED	ACCLAIM
PORT ROYALE 2	ASCARON
RICHARD BURNS RALLY	SCI
ROME: TOTAL WAR	ACTIVISION
SHELLSHOCK: NAM '67	EIDOS
STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT	ACTIVISION
THE SIMS 2	EA
TOP SPIN	ATARI
WARHAMMER 40K: DAWN OF WAR	THQ

OCTOBER
BLOODRAYNE 2	VU GAMES
CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 5	EIDOS
CLOSE COMBAT: FIRST TO FIGHT	GATHERING
COSSACKS II: NAPOLEONIC WAR	CDV
DRIV3R	ATARI
KNIGHTS OF HONOR	SUNFLOWERS/EA
LEISURE SUIT LARRY: MAGNA CUM LAUDE	VU GAMES
MEDAL OF HONOR: PACIFIC ASSAULT	EA
MEN OF VALOR: VIETNAM	VU GAMES
NEXUS: THE JUPITER INCIDENT	VU GAMES
OBSCURE	UBISOFT
PACIFIC FIGHTERS	UBISOFT
SHADOW OPS: RED MERCURY	ATARI
SILENT HILL 4: THE ROOM	KONAMI
STAR WARS GALAXIES: JUMP TO LIGHTSPEED	ACTIVISION
TRIBES: VENGEANCE	VU GAMES
VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE – BLOODLINES	ACTIVISION
VIVISECTOR	BRIGADES

NOVEMBER
AXIS AND ALLIES	ATARI
EVERQUEST II	UBISOFT
FLATOUT	EMPIRE
FOOTBALL MANAGER 2005	SEGA
GHOST RECON 2	UBISOFT
LORD OF THE RINGS: BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH	EA
NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND 2	EA
PLAYBOY: THE MANSION	UBISOFT
PRINCE OF PERSIA 2	UBISOFT
PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 4	KONAMI
ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 3	ATARI
SID MEIER'S PIRATES!	ATARI
SPLINTER CELL: CHAOS THEORY	UBISOFT

Q4
BLACK & WHITE 2	EA
FAHRENHEIT	VU GAMES
KOTOR II: THE SITH LORDS	ACTIVISION
THE MATRIX ONLINE	SEGA/WB
SETTLERS: HERITAGE OF KINGS	UBISOFT
WORLD OF WARCRAFT	VU GAMES

TBA 2004
HALF-LIFE 2	VU GAMES

2005
ADVENT RISING	VU GAMES
BATTLEFIELD 2	EA
BATTLESTATIONS: MIDWAY	SCI
BET ON SOLDIER	DIGITAL JESTERS
BROTHERS IN ARMS	UBISOFT
DRAGON EMPIRES	CODEMASTERS
DREAMFALL: THE LONGEST JOURNEY	FUNCOM
DUNGEON SIEGE II	MICROSOFT
EMPIRE EARTH 2	VU GAMES
F.E.A.R.	VU GAMES
GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS	ROCKSTAR
MIDDLE-EARTH ONLINE	VU GAMES
PARIAH	HIP GAMES
STAR WARS: REPUBLIC COMMANDO	ACTIVISION
SWAT 4	VU GAMES
STALKER: SHADOW OF CHERNOBYL	THQ
STARSHIP TROOPERS	EMPIRE
THE MOVIES	ACTIVISION
THE REGIMENT	KONAMI
WARTIME COMMAND: BATTLE FOR EUROPE 1939-45	CODEMASTERS
YOU ARE EMPTY	1C

MISSING IN ACTION
The war's not over until the last game comes home...

OPERATION FLASHPOINT 2

2006. It's the sequel to one of the most engaging surprise hits that we've ever played and you're telling us we have to wait until 2006! Slipping alongside the Xbox version of the original game (which now has a summer 2005 tag), the 1960s/'70s military sim is apparently going to blow us away. If it ever decides to come out.

- **Publisher:** Codemasters
- **Developer:** Bohemia Interactive
- **ETA:** Spring 2006
- **Website:** www.codemasters.co.uk/flashpoint2/

CREATURE CONFLICTS: THE CLAN WARS

Creature Conflicts, our primary tool in the ongoing quest to fill *ZONE* with pictures of monkeys with guns, has been delayed so that its animal warriors can be further trained in the ways of 3D turn-based murder. February 2005 is the date being thrown around by Cenega now…

- **Publisher:** Cenega
- **Developer:** Mithis Entertainment
- **ETA:** February 2005
- **Website:** www.mithis.hu

WARTIME COMMAND: BATTLE FOR EUROPE 1939-45

Codies has plucked another WWII strategy game from the depths of Russia, although this one is looking a considerable amount more tech-heavy and serious than the rough and tumble of *Soldiers: Heroes Of WWII*. It's also fallen way into next year, so amateur generals among us will have to resort to the History Channel for their Nazi fixes for a while yet.

- **Publisher:** Codemasters
- **Developer:** 1C Company ■ **ETA:** Summer 2005
- **Website:** http://www.codemasters.com/wartimecommand/

TOP 10 MOST OBVIOUSLY AND BIZARRELY FRENCH GAMES

1. LITTLE BIG ADVENTURE
ELEPHANTS. RABBITS. TWINSEN. BIZARRE. FRENCH

2. BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL
BIZARRE, FRENCH AND WITH BEAUTIFUL GREEN LIPSTICK

3. OUTCAST
EXTRA FRENCH ODDNESS WITH BIZARRE 3D PIXELS

4. CRUISE FOR A CORPSE
BIZARRE FRENCH CRUISE LINER WITH BIZARRE FRENCH MURDER

5. CHAOS LEAGUE
BIZARRE FRENCH COMPETITIVE GOBLIN-BOTHERING

6. RAYMAN
BIZARRE FRENCHMAN WITH NO HANDS

7. ANOTHER WORLD
FLASHBACK WITH BIZARRE FRENCH YETI ALIENS

8. LOST EDEN
TALKING FRENCH DINOSAURS IN BIZARRE FRENCH WORLD

9. TRACKMANIA
TOTALLY CLASS PUZZLE RACER. BUT ALSO QUITE BIZARRE. AND FRENCH

10. XIII
BIZARRE FRENCH COMIC BECOMES BIZARRELY PRETTY SHOOTER

SOURCE National Regulation Board on Gallic Oddness and Spherical Animals
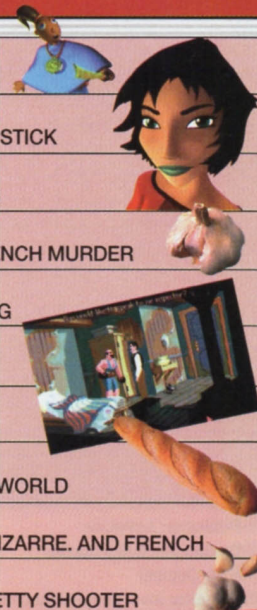
IS THERE A GAMING CHART YOU'D LIKE TO SEE HERE? SEND IT IN AND IF WE PRINT IT, YOU'LL GET A PC ZONE GOODIE BAG!

VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE
BLOODLINES

Character points, cleavage and canines: together at last...

NO GAME has ever come close to recreating the feeling of playing *Deus Ex* – no game has even come within a bio-modded sniff. The first time we saw *Bloodlines* though, well we wondered if it was possible… Some among our number have expressed doubts on exactly how free-form the final game will be, while others have wondered whether the stat-spliced combat is going to be fulfilling enough. However, we still have faith that this is going to be special.

It has the White Wolf RPG canon as its base and the Source engine as its steed, along with seven character classes. Plus, there are powers that let you boil an enemy's blood until they explode, or conjure up a giant spectral wolf to disembowel your fellow vampires. All of which means there's still a hell of a lot to hope for, even if it must have been a task and a half for isometric-roleplayer stalwarts Troika to stretch themselves into shooter territory.

What is certain though, is that there's going to be more swearing, blood-letting and mammoth breasts on show than we've seen in many a month. And for that, at least, we're very glad…

- **Publisher:** Activision
- **Developer:** Troika Games
- **ETA:** October
- **Website:** www.vampirebloodlines.com

NAME: TREVOR

HUMANITY

BASE **SHEET**

CLAN
Tremere

GENDER
Male

HISTORY
None

TREMERE
Blood sorcerors born from mystic rituals and diablerie, the Tremere are rightfully the least trusted of the Camarilla clans.. Because of the ritual the Tremere used to transform from mages into their unliving state, they were stripped of the magic arts of the living and developed the undead blood magic, Thaumaturgy, to compensate. The clan guards its secrets jealously and so are the only Kindred with the powerful discipline of Thaumaturgy.
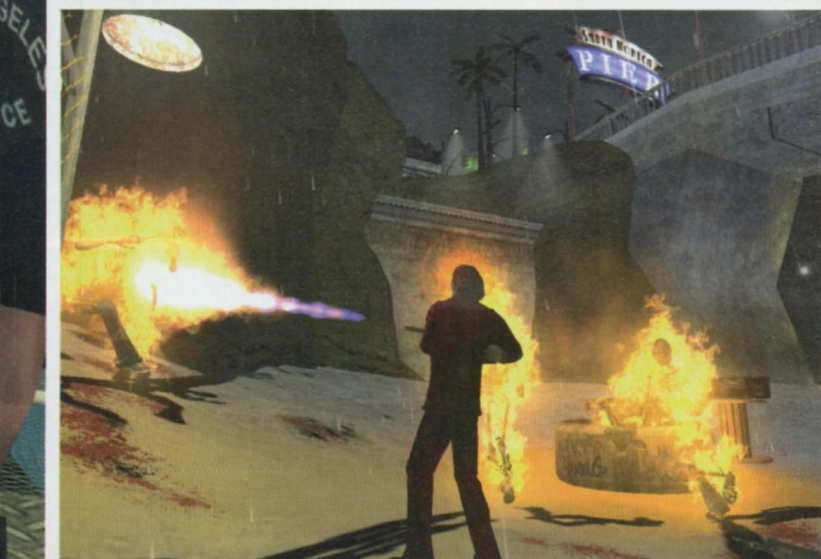
THAT WINNING FEELING!

In the little and big things in life, nothing beats that winning feeling. Ask any poker player. Every day they pursue the sweet sensation of victory. At our tables the winning feeling is ever present. There for you to catch and experience. On PokerRoom.com

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MEET THEM AND BEAT THEM
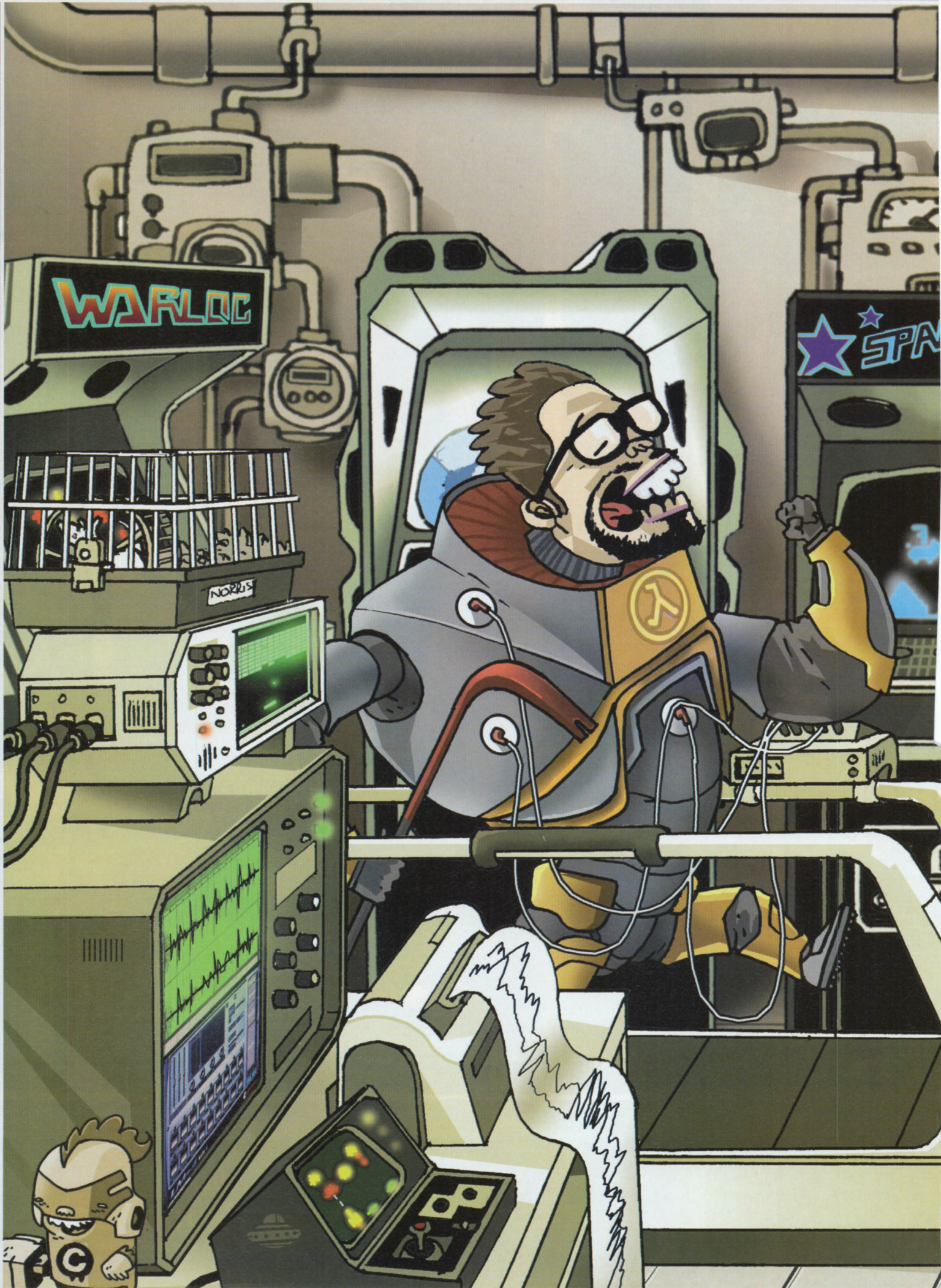
SO YOU WANT TO BE A GAMES TESTER?

A job for wasters or a highly skilled art? *Martin Korda* enters the world of the games tester to uncover the truth...

GAME TESTING. That's got to be a bit of a laugh right? Roll in at ten, drink some coffee, play a game, write down a couple of bugs, multiplayer *UT2004* at lunchtime (two hours of course), bit more playing a game, more coffee, log a couple more bugs, head home at five. It's the kind of job that you imagine would be cushier than being the chief BBFC ratings officer for hot Scandinavian porn flicks. However, say all this to a game tester and they'll probably gouge out your eyeballs and use them as mini footballs. As you're about to discover, not only is games testing nothing like the above fantasy, it's one of the hardest, most repetitive and lowest paid jobs in the games industry.

WHY? WHY? WHY?

So why do it? For starters, it's a bloody good way of getting a foot into the industry, cutting your teeth and learning the intricacies of games development. "Beginning as a tester is a great way into the industry as you soak up knowledge, in essence learning everything from the bottom up," explains Gerald Smith, senior

tester on Elixir's *Evil Genius* (see review on p76). It's a view also held by The Creative Assembly's senior tester James Buckle: "If you're working at a developer, you're in direct contact with designers, programmers and artists, so you can gain a lot of valuable experience."

Testing is also the ideal way of discovering where your true passion (and ability) in games development lies. "You might find you're good at organising and be directed towards being a producer, or that you've got a talent for drawing and become an artist," says Matthew Chainey, QA lead at Deibus Studios. And with the likes of Pete Gilbert (producer on *Evil Genius*) and Sports Interactive's managing director Miles Jacobson having both started out their careers as testers, there's ample proof out there that testing can be an invaluable first step to greater things.

So, testing is no doss, but it can get you far if you stick with it. Want to know more? We caught up with
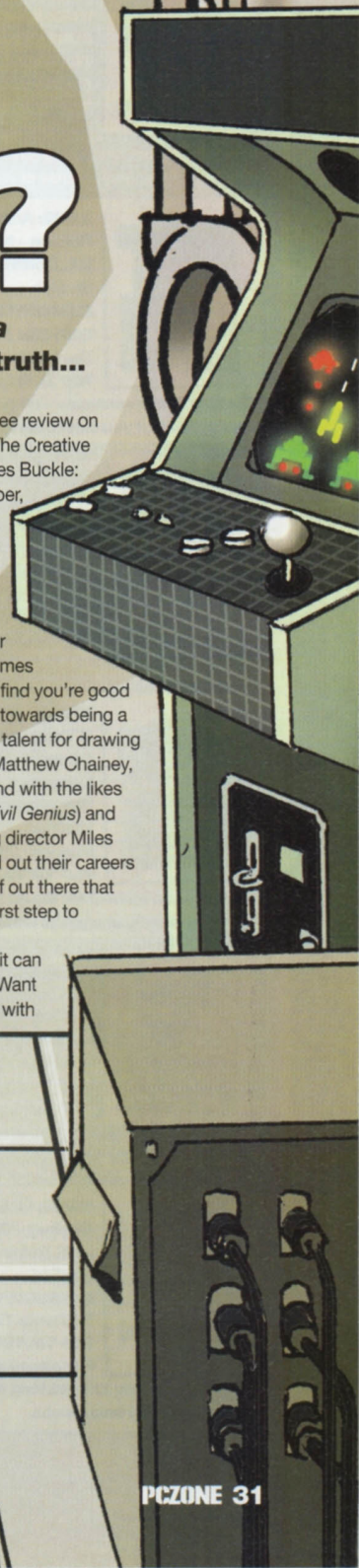
FANCY A JOB AS A GAMES TESTER? HERE ARE SOME TOP TIPS FROM THE BODS IN THE KNOW…

NAME: Evan Birkby – test director, Gearbox Software **CURRENTLY TESTING:** *Brothers In Arms* **TOP TESTING TIP:** Testing involves patience, attention to detail and the ability to describe problems clearly.

NAME: Gerald Smith – senior tester, Elixir Studios **CURRENTLY TESTING:** *Evil Genius* **TOP TESTING TIP:** Be calm, patient, reliable and accurate, and have a deep love of games and a sense of humour.

NAME: Andy Robson – head of QA, Lionhead Studios **CURRENTLY TESTING:** *B&W2, The Movies* **TOP TESTING TIP:** Be able to communicate – no point having ideas if you can't convey them.

NAME: James Buckle – senior tester, The Creative Assembly **CURRENTLY TESTING:** *Rome: Total War* **TOP TESTING TIP:** You need a good eye for detail and a good memory.

NAMES: Joe O'Reilly – senior QA team, Sports Interactive **CURRENTLY TESTING:** *Football Manager 2005* **TOP TESTING TIP:** Have a keen interest for the game genre and the game you're working on.

NAME: Ian Turnbull – director, Black Cactus **CURRENTLY TESTING:** TBA **TOP TESTING TIP:** Testing a game is not like playing it. You have to analyse every aspect – and then try to break the game.

NAME: Matthew Chainey – QA lead, Deibus Studios **CURRENTLY TESTING:** TBA **TOP TESTING TIP:** Pay attention to details, be willing to work long hours for low pay and love games.
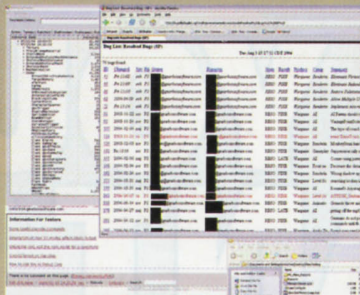
A selection of the hundreds of bugs Gearbox's testing dept find every week.

Gearbox is in the final stages of testing for *Brothers In Arms*.

Gearbox's 'Commando' unit test team is comprised of level designers and programmers who have expert knowledge of game design. Which is handy.

Evan Birkby, test director at US-based Gearbox Software, during the closing stages of testing of forthcoming WWII team-based shooter *Brothers In Arms*. We grilled him about what he and his elite team of bug hunters are doing to make sure that the game runs smoothly when it hits the shelves early next year, in a bid to ensure success.

CRACK TEAMS

Gearbox's Quality Assurance (QA) dept is divided into two teams: the general testers and a crack 'Commando' unit that Birkby leads in a daily quest to target high-impact bugs and balance gameplay. Unlike most other testing teams, the Commando unit is comprised specifically of level designers and programmers who focus on quality assurance and, thanks to their development skills, come up with expert solutions to problems.

"Even though many features are already working and can be tested, our focus hasn't shifted to bug fixing yet," explains Birkby. "There's still a lot of design and balancing going on to make the game as fun as possible, and that's where Commando come in.

"Our other team's role can change from week to week. Sometimes they may be checking a programming script, and other times they may be counting how many times they die before they can get past a particular enemy. There's a lot of data entry and writing involved, since bugs need to be properly reported. There can also be a lot of research to assure the game's meeting the demands of the target market." This is the final leg of a marathon journey for the ten-man team, a voyage that began in the game's early design stages. "When the first deliverable was ready for testing, it was just a single scenario and felt more like a playable demo. Many parts weren't available until later on," says Birkby. "Much of the early testing was focused on verifying that certain features worked as expected. We then moved on to failure testing when the game became more stable. This was where we could finally push *Brothers In Arms* to its limits."

ALL GEARED UP

It's been an incredibly intense and involving procedure, but Gearbox is fortunate to have the added luxury of being able to boast one of the industry's larger testing departments, as well as the financial backing to bring in more temporary testers if required. What's more, Gearbox has full confidence in the invaluable backup provided by publisher

"Testing has moved on so much since 1999. Then, we had two testers sharing one desk"
MARK DUFFY HEAD OF QA, SPORTS INTERACTIVE
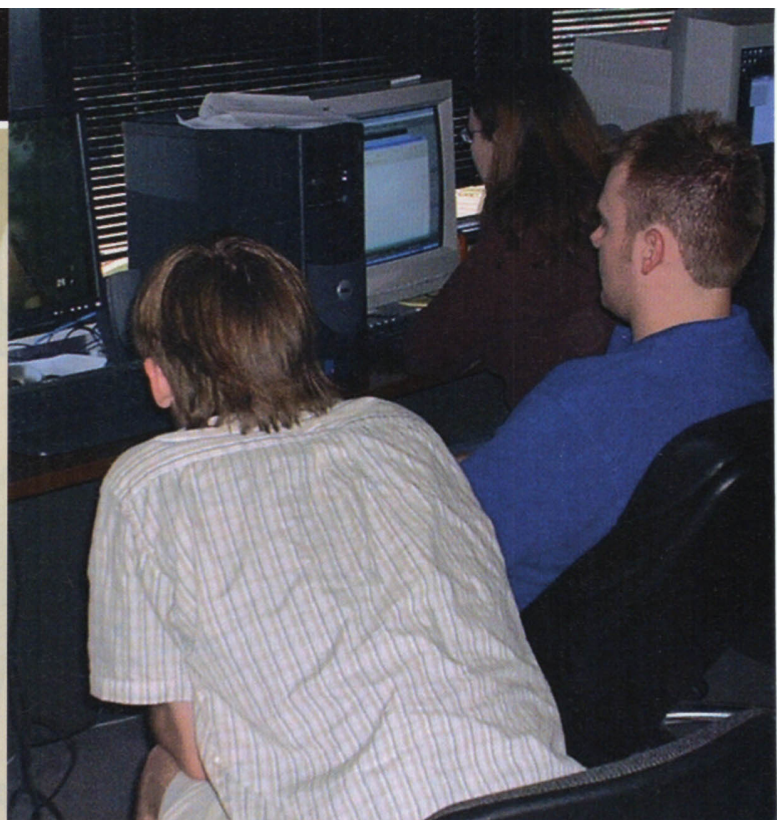
Lionhead's testing team gets ready to squish some bugs in *Black & White 2*. Don't make them angry…

The QA team at Lionhead meet regularly with the developers of *B&W2* and *The Movies* to discuss bugs and new ideas.

With an emphasis on realism, it's essential *Brothers In Arms* is bug-free.

"Where's the testing dept? Past the house, behind the trees mate."

Test a game for too long and you'll get the thousand-yard stare too.

JARGON BUSTER!

DO YOU KNOW YOUR ALPHA FROM YOUR BETA?

ALPHA: After this stage is reached, the product goes through testing and implementation. Alpha means that most or all of the game is accessible for testing. This is also sometimes called 'feature complete'.

BETA: When beta is reached, the game development switches into bug-fixing mode rather than implementation. Some feature implementation may still occur, but it isn't the focus.

GOLD: The final code that's produced on CD/DVD for release.

MILESTONE: A date in the development timeline when specific features are to be implemented or marked as complete. The 'beta milestone' is delivered when all features are implemented.

BUG: An anomaly that doesn't meet the desired design of the product.

BUILD: A version of the game created from game components available at that time. As the game is updated by the development team, there will be a number of builds made.

CONFIGURATION TESTING: Testing different setups is called configuration testing. This includes checking resolutions, controller setups, game options and difficulty settings.

PLAY TESTING: Checking the fun and balance of a game is one of the goals of play testing. The tester isn't only looking for bugs, but is instead looking for things that may be confusing or frustrating to the player.

REPRO STEPS: When a bug is described, there are often a set of steps that can be taken to reproduce the bug. These steps are called 'repro steps'.

Ubisoft's internal testing department, which adds extra support in finding bugs during the closing stages of the game's development. But not all developers are so lucky.

SHOW ME THE MONEY

While researching this article, we spoke to several companies (who wished to remain anonymous due to legal reasons) that weren't so glowing about their publisher's testing departments, stating that they'd merely hindered their internal testing procedures by sending lists of thousands of duplicate bugs that had already been addressed.

What's more, we also spoke to several testers from a leading publishing house's internal testing department (who also wished to remain anonymous), who spoke of weeks of testing work being ignored in order to rush titles onto the shelves several months ahead of schedule. Such,

sadly, are the pitfalls of games testing.

But the problems don't end there. In the UK, many up-and-coming developers such as Black Cactus have had to improvise while attempting to expand. Ian Turnbull, director of Black Cactus, even had to double up as the lead tester on the company's first two projects *Warrior Kings* and *Warrior Kings: Battles* due to a shortage of funds. However, thanks to the company's continuing expansion, its QA department will be bolstered to

three testers for its next as-yet-unannounced project.

Marc Duffy, head of QA at Sports Interactive, recalls a similar time at SI and how conditions have changed as the company has grown. "Testing now compared to 1999 is a whole new world. The first year, we had two testers sitting on one desk. The next year, we managed to cram eight testers into the smallest room possible, and it was then that we set about expanding our offices and taking on

IT SHOULDN'T HAPPEN TO A GAMES TESTER...

STORIES FROM THE FRONTLINE

The hours are long and the pay rubbish, but that doesn't stop the UK's leading games testers having a right ol' laff. Or as SI's Joe O'Reilly recounts, losing their grip on reality.

"We had one *Champ Man 4* tester who had an obsession with Stan Collymore. He changed his desktop to show Stan in an England shirt, and had his *CM* ratings below the picture, all maxed out to 20. He constantly logged bugs about how Collymore was not good enough, how he wasn't being picked for England and how big clubs weren't coming in for him."

In a job where spotting even the smallest irregularity is essential, it's always helpful when the game gives you a hand. "In *Rome: Total War* there was this physics bug where chariots would hit elephants and send them barrel-rolling 100ft in the

air like a spinning top," says James Buckle from The Creative Assembly.

But both of these pale into insignificance compared to the experience that Deibus Studios' Matthew Chainey had to endure while working for Sony's QA department. "I'd just started there when a game was submitted that the publisher *had* to release for duplication within two weeks.

"After a week of testing, they sent their producer along to see how things were going. We got set up in a side room and he sat with us all day, chatting away. At the end of the day, he offered us a straight bribe of £200 each in cash, right there and then, to make sure the game passed first time. After some debate, we decided not to take the money, but we didn't tell our manager what had happened either. The damn game passed anyway."
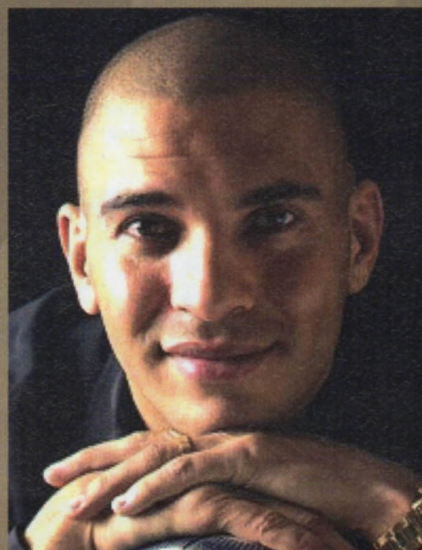
Stan Collymore: 20/20 for off-field activities, but not quite so skilled on the pitch.

Football Manager 2005 is Sports Interactive's big project right now, so it's being thoroughly tested.

Spurs bottom of the league? Surely not.

Only 1-0? There's still time...

Will Wayne be on his game in *FM2005*?

THE BUG HUNTERS

THE FIVE MOST COMMON BUGS FOUND BY TESTERS

1 HOLES IN THE WORLD (EITHER VISIBLE OR INVISIBLE): If you can see out of the world, or fall through an apparently solid surface out of the world, you know something's up.

2 GRAPHICAL GLITCHES: Smeared textures, missing textures, textures being used in the wrong place, distorted models. The list goes on...

3 CRASHES: Code in development is always going to be highly unstable, falling over constantly until somewhere between alpha and beta.

4 COLLISION: Items that don't have collision when they should, items that have collision when they shouldn't.

5 GAMEPLAY: Everything from collectables you can't collect, to missions you can't complete. Also included are tweaking the game's physics and learning curve (although that's often for the designers to handle). Of course, you also have to contend with things not being completed when you want to test them – game modes that don't run, sound controls that don't change the sound at all etc. Like most of the bugs in the game, they're only there because the game isn't finished.

new suites. The second office is where we're based today, and can sit around 16-18 people at any one time. Back in '99, we had no test plans or plan of action, but nowadays we're providing documentation and complex test plans to our testers and trying to test in a more professional way."

It's these kinds of financial constraints faced by smaller companies that can ultimately cripple a developer's internal testing capabilities – meaning many must rely on the help of voluntary testers and that of the publisher's internal testing department. And with the UK development scene currently experiencing a torrid period, the problem is further compounded by a lack of money available for QA investment – despite the entry wage level for many junior testers only being around £10-12K.

However, get your feet under a monitor at one of the UK's larger development houses and you may well find that games testing can be a lucrative career, with wages rocketing up to an impressive 50K per year – and as many Chewits as your jaw can cope with – for head testers.

What's more, if you specialise in a skill like piloting planes, you could be in line for even more. So long as you're testing a flight sim. Obviously.

BREAKING FREE
OK, so let's say you fancy giving it a crack, jacking in the nine-to-five, burning your tie and dissecting games for a living. What can you expect? "On average, a tester is likely to spend around 80 per cent of their day testing games and 20 per cent entering bug reports on the system," says Neil Dejyothin, lead tester on SI's *NHL Eastside Hockey Manager*.

Sounds pretty enticing when you put it that way, doesn't it? But don't be fooled. Thinking that it's fun spending all day, every day playing just one game is a mistake that many budding testers make.

Every week, Andy Robson, one time builder and semi-professional footballer, but now head of Lionhead Studios' testing department, is flooded by hundreds of offers from would-be testers offering their services for free. However, the majority of those who do come in to help are often never heard from again.

"A lot of these people get a real shock when they realise there's not a proper game there for them to test. There's usually just a vague outline of one with a lot of unfinished features," he explains. "I don't think many people realise just how complex a process testing games is. It can be very robotic. We each test the average game for somewhere between 3,500 to 4,000 hours during the course of its development, and this can go up to 10,000 hours on a game like *Fable* (a

> ## "People don't realise how complex testing is. We each test the average game for 3,500 to 4,000 hours"
> **ANDY ROBSON** HEAD OF TESTING, LIONHEAD STUDIOS

Debugging Hollywood ain't as glamorous as it might sound!

The Movies has been tested extensively since day one.

WIN A WEEK AS A GAMES TESTER!

WIN!

DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES?

We've teamed up with Lionhead Studios to offer one lucky reader, aged 18 or over, the chance to join Andy Robson and his team for one week of games testing experience. To win, answer this:

Which Lionhead game currently under production allows you to nurture a giant creature that can lead your armies into war?

a) Evil Genius

a) Black & White 2

a) Brothers In Arms

Answers on a postcard with your name, address, age, email and phone number to: Games Tester Compo, *PC ZONE*, Dennis Publishing, 9 Dallington Street, London, EC1V 0BQ.

WIN BY TXT!

Or why not enter via mobile? Send your answer to *PC ZONE* by texting PCZGAMESTESTER to 83125, with your answer (a, b, or c), plus your full name, age and address.

All text entries must be received by October 13 . Messages will cost 50p plus your standard operator text messaging charge. For full terms and conditions, see page 7.

Lionhead's rules and conditions:
1. Entrants must be aged 18 or over.
2. The winner is responsible for their own travel arrangements and overnight accommodation where applicable.
3. Dates for Lionhead's games testing programme are subject to availability.
4. Lionhead will endeavour to accommodate requests for specific dates but cannot guarantee they will be available.

developer's testing procedure remains virtually unchanged.

"If you think about it, all games will encounter the same style of problems," states Joe O'Reilly, lead tester on Sports Interactive's forthcoming *Football Manager 2005*. "We always have to ensure the game works properly and that no feature crashes, no matter what type of game it is. Another issue that's the bane of the game tester's life (regardless of genre) is when your game looks fine but isn't working correctly. We call these logic errors, which can range from a transfer being completed incorrectly in *Football Manager 2005*, or the rocket launcher in *Doom 3* having far too much splash damage."

THE RIGHT STUFF

Ultimately, being a successful games tester comes down to having the right attitude. "You need to be conscientious, have a good eye for detail and be completely unflappable under pressure. You also have to have a good sense of humour. If you want to be po-faced, then be a merchant banker," suggests Elixir's Gerald Smith. "A good tester tests the game, looks for bugs and hunts them out. It's like a challenge: you think about all the ways you could break the game and then try them. A bad tester just sits playing the game and logs any bugs that come along," adds The Creative Assembly's James Buckle.

Youthful exuberance then, is not enough. Neither is a casual love of virtual entertainment. The life of a tester, contrary to stereotypes and stigmas, is a job that challenges, stretches and often frustrates its workforce to breaking point on a weekly basis. The rewards are often scant and the frustration is sometimes agonising – especially when you see weeks of your work ignored due to the publisher pushing forward your game's release date. However, if you have the right attitude, the rewards and career possibilities can be immense. Just don't expect it to be an easy ride – being a games tester is a testing career. **PCZ**

forthcoming Xbox action-adventure). Sometimes, you have days where you simply can't face playing the game any longer, but you have no choice."

It's a similar story at Black Cactus. "When testing is in full swing I can be testing 12 hours a day, seven days a week. Every bug needs to be documented with a screenshot and save game. It can take hours to get a situation where a bug is repeatable and five to ten minutes to document it," explains Ian Turnbull, the company's director.

CHIN UP

Despite the difficulties faced by many testers though, there are plenty of benefits to the job too. "Testers see so much more of the game than anyone else. Because of this, they can often see plenty

of opportunities for improving it," says Matthew Chainey, Quality Assurance lead at Deibus Studios.

Andy Robson picks up the thread. "A tester can gain a unique insight into a game, which lets them develop a better understanding of how games work. It's an ideal springboard for moving into different areas of games development. It also allows them to flex their creative muscles. We let our testers have quite a lot of creative input into a game. I think that's one of the main differences between us and some of the smaller companies that start testing their games at alpha. When that happens, testers don't get a chance to put their views across. Here, we get the chance to sit down with the designers of *Black & White 2* and *The Movies* once a week and

chat everything through. We're very lucky in that respect."

SAME PROCESS, DIFFERENT GAME

Despite the size discrepancies between many firms' testing departments, it's interesting to note that there's often little difference between their testing practices. The universal template seems to be to focus on making sure a game's framework, features, AI and balance work correctly and in harmony with each other, while attempting to eliminate as many bugs as possible before the game ships.

Equally surprising is how little impact genre has on these procedures. Apart from certain genres proving more complex than others – and subsequently being more time-consuming – a

Games testing can involve repeating yourself over and over again. And again.

If you shoot and the bloke behind gets it, that's probably a bug that needs fixing.

PHOTOGRAPHERS FOLLOW MY EVERY MOVE. ON THE PITCH.

Fernando Morientes

What makes a player great? On the pitch, it's not about image. The boot deal. Or the celebrity girlfriend. It's about ability. It's about great first-touch.

First-touch separates the great players from the good ones. FIFA Football 2005's all-new player kinetic system accurately reflects the first-touch of every player on the pitch at the push of a button, generating breathtaking passages of fluid play.

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FIFA Football 2005's deeper Career Mode takes you through a 15-season quest for silverware. Choose the team and tactics, trade players to enhance your squad then do the business when it matters on match day.

FIFA

FLUID FOOTBALL

Out October

Quad damage...
QUAKE IV

The once and future king of shooters is back! *Anthony Holden* unveils the next chapter...

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Raven Software
and id Software
PUBLISHER Activision
WEBSITE www.ravensoft.com
ETA 2005

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Are you kidding? It's the sequel to the greatest shooter series of all time!
- Built on the *Doom 3* engine in conjunction with id Software
- Single-player campaign that continues the storyline of *Quake II*
- Multiplayer game that picks up where *Quake III* left off
- Full range of vehicles
- Developed by the makers of *Heretic*, *Soldier Of Fortune II* and *Jedi Knight: Jedi Academy*

WELL FRIENDS, here it is. *Quake Oh-Four*. In many ways, the game I've been waiting for my entire career. How do you do it justice? (The world's first look no less!) I wanted to start with a great *Quake* anecdote, relating one of the moments that made this series so special – but after several failed attempts, I realised it was futile. No single moment can encapsulate the enormity of pleasure brought to us over the years by the name *Quake*.

Think about it a second – if you've ever been a fan, the sublime gaming memories will soon form a flood. The first time you played a 'true' 3D game. The sound of a Deathknight's sword clanging against stone. Your first rocket jump. The exultant 'ker-ching' as you grabbed the red armour. Q2dm1: The Edge. Perfect railgun shots across the reaches of space. Q3dm17: The Longest Yard. Mods: Lithium, Action, Jailbreak, Painkeep. The Quad Damage, the nailgun, the lava traps. The Shambler.

To my mind, it's the greatest series of games ever created, and it's sure as hell the one that's stolen most of my waking hours over the years (not to mention sleep – *Quake* dreams are a common sign of addiction). To me, *Doom 3* was always just going to be a warm-up, a chance to break in the new generation of technology, iron out any problems and pave the way for the main event... *Quake Eye-Vee*.

WHO ARE YA?

But what is this new *Quake*? Up till now, all we've known is that Raven is developing it, which is good news – it's made some of the best shooters of all time. We also know that it uses the *Doom 3* engine: this may be obvious, but again it's good news, despite some concerns about numbers of enemies on-screen. There's also been mumblings that the game will be single-player focused, with only minimal effort put into multiplayer, but it's never really been clarified. Clearly, we need some hard ➘

"What do you mean 'they cut the power'? How can they cut the power, man? They're animals!"

answers, and luckily, Raven is finally ready to spill the beans.

"To start with," launches lead designer Jim Hughes, "*Quake IV* is all about being part of an epic sci-fi battle filled with fast-paced, explosive action. We're using the *Doom 3* tech, so you know that we'll deliver an amazing experience, with both stunning visuals and heart-pounding, intense gameplay. You take the role of a marine in a massive invasion of the Strogg home world, where you experience the war while fighting alongside the huge marine invasion force – as well as on your own in some cases."

So this is, in essence, a sequel to *Quake II* rather than *Quake III*? "Well, in terms of single-player, *Quake IV* picks up where *Quake II* left off," says Eric Biessman, project lead on the game. "But the multiplayer experience is more

akin to *Quake III: Arena*." Say what? Multiplayer akin to *Quake III*? Hallelujah and praise to all things good.

"This is a continuation in the *Quake* series," smiles lead programmer Rick Johnson. "We felt that *Quake IV* would best be served by capturing all the things that made *Quake III* great. We've got hyper-fast action, deadly weapons, bounce pads, trick moves – you name it. Die-hard fans will feel right at home."

DOUBLE KILL

So let me get this straight. *Quake IV* is the sequel to both *Q2 and Q3*, revisiting the Strogg vs Marine storyline on the one hand and following-up the best deathmatch game of all time on the other? That's one hell of a task, surely, even for a team of Raven's calibre.

Admittedly, FPS developers used to create full single- and multiplayer

components as a matter of course, but with today's development requirements, it's getting increasingly unmanageable. All the best multiplayer games since *Quake III* have been designed as such – *UT*, *Battlefield*, even *Counter-Strike* – while the likes of *Doom 3* and *Far Cry* have proven mediocre in the head-to-head stakes. How, you might ask, does Raven hope to do both sides of the game justice?

The answer is simple enough. First, the company is building on familiar gameplay rather than starting from scratch – so don't expect the same kind of decisive innovation we saw in *Quake III: Arena*. And second, the engine and tools came ready-built by id, with everything down to physics and vehicle code

> ## "The multiplayer experience is more akin to *Quake III: Arena*. Die-hard fans will feel right at home"
>
> **ERIC BIESSMAN** PROJECT LEAD, *QUAKE IV*

RAVEN SOFTWARE

Based in Madison, Wisconsin, Raven Software has been making games based on id's engines since its early days of development. Together, Raven and id have worked on titles like *Heretic* and *Hexen*, and they remain close partners to this day.

1994 *Heretic: Doom* goes beardy in this excellent fantasy FPS. Introduced the ability to look up and down, and turn people into chickens.

1995 *Hexen*: the same but better, with jumping, a non-linear structure and destructible objects.

1997 *Hexen II*: built on the *Quake* technology, it's another excellent FPS.

2002 *Soldier Of Fortune II*: based on the *Quake III* engine, this bloody shooter is one of our all-time faves.

2003 *Jedi Knight: Jedi Academy* The best lightsaber game ever.

The most detailed man-nipples in all of gameland.

There must be a mistake here – it's not nearly brown enough to be a *Quake* game.

FOR THOSE WHO CAME IN LATE

THE *QUAKE* STORY SO FAR...

It's been a hell of a long time since *Quake II*, so we'll forgive you for being a little hazy on the finer points of the plot (what there was of it). Basically, it goes like this. Earth is under siege by an alien race: the Strogg. Like a meaner, more nipply version of the Borg, the Strogg are a cybernetic scourge who travel the galaxy annihilating other species and using them as living battery cells. In a desperate attempt to ward off a Strogg attack on Earth, humanity gathers its finest warriors and sends them to strike directly at the Strogg home planet, Stroggos. Unfortunately, the whole fleet is summarily wiped out, and you only survive because you crash-land almost before the first shot is fired.

Despite this cock-up, you manage to redeem yourself by wiping out hundreds of Strogg, infiltrating their HQ, bringing down the planetary defence systems and killing their collective brain and leader – the Makron. Humanity assumed total victory, but they were wrong...

Quake II's Makron: resplendent in his robo-suit.

TO ARMS, TO ARMS

EXACTLY WHAT FIREPOWER IS BEING BROUGHT TO BEAR IN *QUAKE IV*?

Quake weapons have a status unlike those of any other shooter. Tools like the railgun, the plasma gun, the rocket launcher, even old classics like the lightning gun have become so cherished that they're practically religious icons. We were therefore surprised to discover that Raven is blithely setting about reinventing the *Quake* weapon set, with a number of changes to the familiar loadout.

"Some of the classic weapons from *Quake II* are coming back," says project lead Eric Biessman. "Weapons like the blaster (with flashlight), shotgun, machine gun and even the nailgun. We've even gone through each weapon to make sure it's been updated and polished to be just right. But we're also adding some new firepower for you to take into battle." Exactly what this new firepower consists of Raven wouldn't say, nor would the team be drawn on the status of the other classics. "Let's just say we're staying true to the *Quake* series and making sure the weapons really shine."

already in place. As Johnson says: "The *Doom 3* tech provided us with many of the fundamental systems straight out of the box, so to speak. Plus, on top of that there's been a lot of involvement from id Software along the way – they would find the best way to do something and pass that info on to us. It saved us a lot of time, so most of our work has been towards the creation of *Quake IV* itself."

WHICH IS WHICH?

All well and good. But in some ways this raises another oft-voiced concern among fans: with the development of the two games being so closely intertwined, are *Doom 3* and *Quake IV* at risk of overlapping? In many ways, the two games are part of the same progression – the *Doom/Quake* series let's call it – and there's never before been an instance where they've appeared back to back like this, on the same technology. So, discounting multiplayer for a moment, what, exactly, is the difference?

Rick Johnson: "Well, *Quake IV* is more like an intense action movie to *Doom 3's* horror movie feel," explains

the ursine coder. "Instead of scaring the player, we're going all out to deliver a fast-paced adrenalin rush of combat."

So you might say that *Quake IV* is to *Doom 3* what *Aliens* is to *Alien*, then? After the hopeless one-man battle against the Strogg in *Quake II* – where your lone space marine got isolated from the main (and inevitably doomed) assault force when his spaceship crash-landed – this time you're bringing the cavalry.

You can read in the screenshots some hints of what this could mean: squads of marines fighting waves of hideous gladiators, dogfights in the skies over Stroggos... A proper, bloody, war of the worlds. It's a bit early to tell for sure, but Raven could well be attempting to marry the intensity of a *Call Of Duty* with the scale and vehicles of a *Halo*. Which is a winner in anyone's books.

A STROGG'S LIFE

According to the storyline of course, the Strogg were pretty much defeated at the end of *Quake II* (See 'For Those Who Came In Late', p41). You destroyed the

planetary defences and took care of the pesky Makron – what could possibly be left to do?

"Ah yes, well," smiles Eric Biessman. "After the death of the Makron, the Strogg quickly regrouped under a new and more powerful Makron." Wouldn't you know it... "However, all is not lost. With the Strogg's planetary defences still destroyed, Earth's forces can now deliver a full and final assault."

So, the stage is set. In many ways, it's the same plot as *Quake II*, except the human counterattack goes a bit more to plan this time – at the beginning at least. Later on, so we gather, the army of soldiers fighting alongside you begins to waver, and it's up to you to plunge single-handed into the depths of Stroggos to defeat the Makron, mark 2.

Shouldn't be a problem for the likes of us of course, but even so, Raven has decided to level the playing field a bit with a rather cool new gameplay device. "Eventually, you venture deep into the heart of Stroggos," explains Biessman. "Past the human factories, and directly into the

"Instead of scaring you, we're going all out to deliver a fast-paced adrenalin rush of combat"

RICK JOHNSON LEAD PROGRAMMER, *QUAKE IV*

It says here this is a giant alien heart-pump. Or something.

Quake II," chips in Kevin Long, lead artist. "But obviously, we've updated it with new artwork, textures, skins and models. We've drawn upon lots of sci-fi and horror novels, comics, anime and films as inspiration, as well as our own ideas. I think we've managed to create a really horrific alien world and culture."

"Many of the original creatures have returned as well," says Eric Biessman. "We've got Gunners, Strogg Marines and Gladiators, to name a few. Plus, we've added new creatures to surprise veteran *Quake* fans, and each enemy's been heavily updated to take advantage of the power of the new technology."

What this doesn't address is the other big concern we've got with the new *Doom* engine – that it was designed to handle only about four or five (highly detailed) enemies on screen at once. Waging a war with only five combatants on the battlefield is going to be difficult to say the least, so unless Raven has found some way of squeezing more power out of the engine and/or our PCs, we can't see the game running smoothly at this level of detail. But then, what do we know?

Technical concerns aside, we're very excited about the addition of vehicles to the *Quake* series. While the team is not

cyber-realm, where you eventually become a Strogg yourself."

Yes, you read right. At some point in the narrative, you're forced to become that which you've been fighting – an ungodly cybernetic freak with metal arms and an oil filter where your genitals once were. While we're yet to see this in action, the gameplay possibilities are superb.

FAT-FREE

From what we can gather, you have to step into a Strogg upgrade booth, where you're fitted out with a range of cybernetic enhancements. What these are we can only speculate – a rocket-launcher arm, a faster nervous system, a George Foreman Lean Mean Grilling Machine? Whatever, it promises to give the latter stages an interesting flavour, and answer some of the problems of repetitiveness found in *Doom 3*.

Quake IV's environments also promise to differ substantially from the

gloomy corridors of id's most recent opus. While these screenshots contain their fair share of dim metallic hallways, we're assured this is only a small part of the game's vision.

"We've worked hard to create an authentic sci-fi world," agrees Hughes. "Without getting too specific, we're creating lots of varied locations that you visit on your trek across the Strogg home world – including both indoor and outdoor environments. From journeying deep into Strogg industrial complexes to driving vehicles across the barren and blasted planet surface, you'll experience a huge variety of visuals and gameplay."

This puts to rest at least one concern regarding the *Doom 3* renderer – that it was designed for indoor locales and would fall over when *Quake* tried to get some fresh air. Don't expect landscapes to rival *Far Cry*, but you will see some sky.

"In terms of art direction, we've tried to retain the artistic look and feel of

This time it's war! With tanks and everything.

Who are you to judge – you've eaten meat haven't you?

Why Don't You?...

FORGET YOUR SPATIAL DISPLACEMENT MAPPING FOR A SEC AND TRY SOME OF OUR IDEAS...

Whenever Raven is making a new shooter, we always put in the same request – implement *Soldier Of Fortune*-style gore and dismemberment. We're not just sickos, we genuinely believe it adds to the immersion and impact of an FPS game, not to mention being extremely funny.

Another good idea would be to use the Strogg upgrade feature to create a new multiplayer game type. You could have two teams battling for control of a number of Strogg upgrade booths, at which players of the controlling team could access a range of new weapons and cybernetic enhancements. The twist would be that whenever a booth changed hands, the player left stuck inside would be killed and stripped for parts by the opposing team.

And while we're at it, how about a new virtual-life sim: *The Stroggs*. In it, you'd have to look after a household of needy Stroggs, managing their demands for entertainment, romance and raw human flesh. I can see the dollar signs already...

being too candid about the full range of transport on offer, we were able to observe armoured jeeps, buggies and perhaps a scout bike or two on the Marine side. There are also a range of hover tanks for the Strogg, along with the various flying craft you can see in the screenshots. Clearly though, there's a war going on, so we'd expect to see a full range of military materiel, it's just a question of which ones we get to pilot – and what part they play in multiplayer.

WE WON'T TELL ANYONE ELSE…

The problem is, the team is still being extremely cagey about details, leaving us with a great many unanswered questions. Lightning gun: in or out? Rocket-jumps: yes or no? Railgun: how cool is it? (There has to be one.) What are the multiplayer modes and do any of them involve vehicles? Will there be gore zones and dismemberment as in *Soldier Of Fortune II*? (Please!)

Id Software, for its part, assures us this will be "a worthy successor to the *Quake* franchise", and at this stage there's little to suggest otherwise. But until we see jump-pads, railguns and boiling, bubbling lava traps, we won't sleep completely soundly. Because for those of us who care, this game is more important than *Doom 3*, *Half-Life 2*, *Halo 2* and any number of other shooters. This is *Quake IV*, and they simply have to get it right. PCZ

To defeat them, you're gonna have to join them…

"We've drawn on sci-fi and horror novels, comics, anime and films to create a really horrific alien world"

KEVIN LONG LEAD ARTIST, *QUAKE IV*
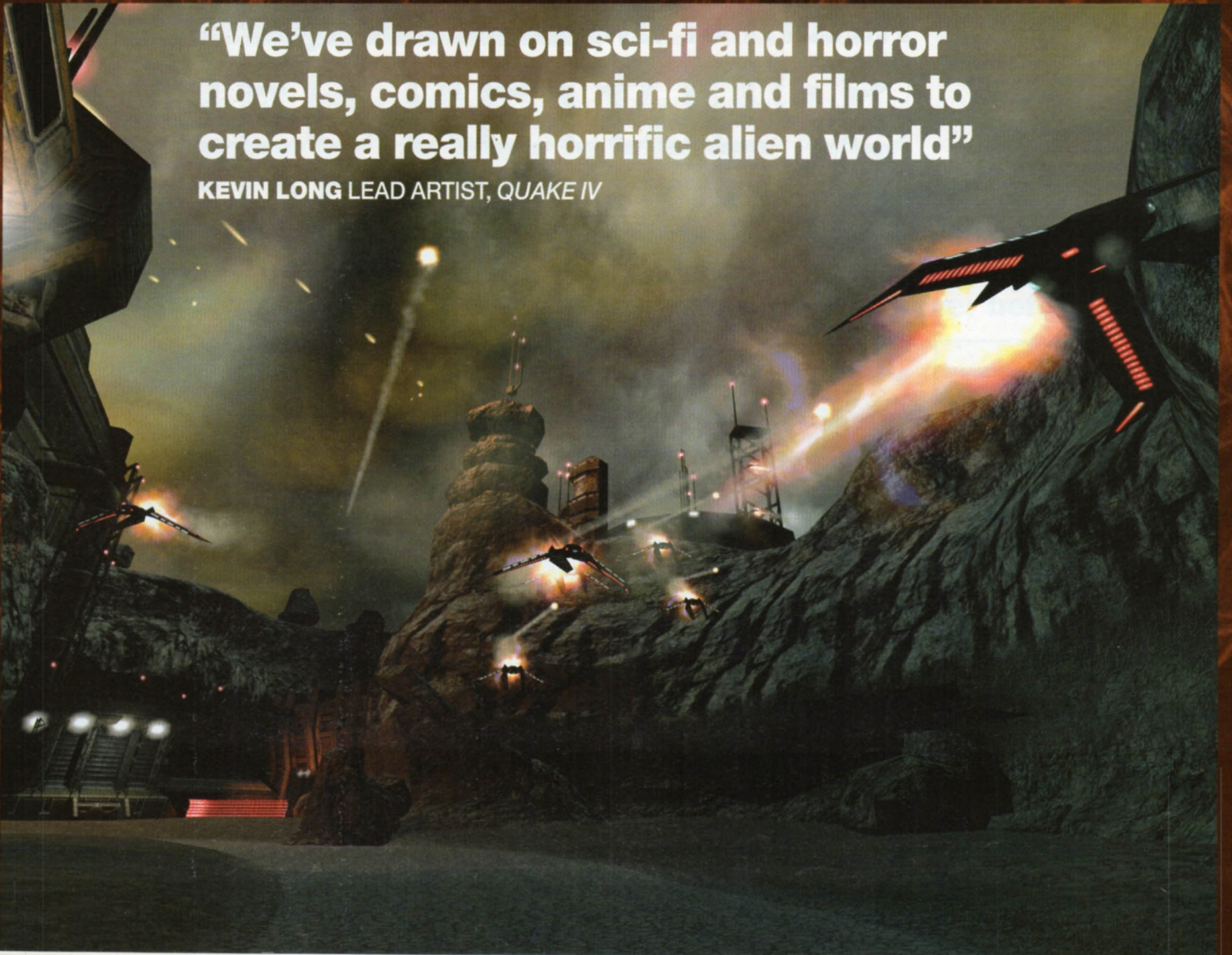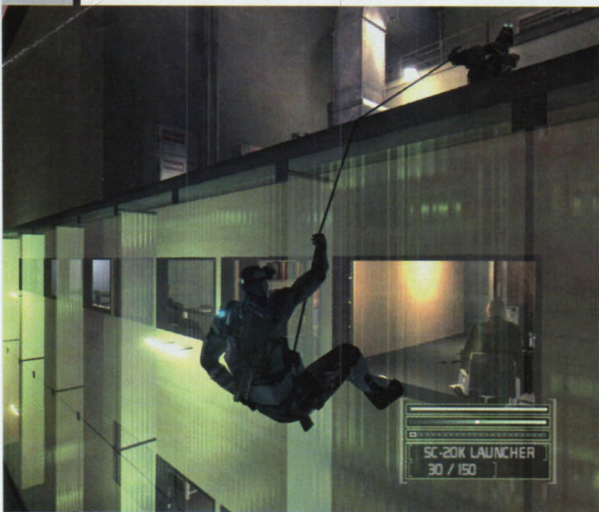
Splinter Cell buddy action.

Thermal vision is back.

Look at the sheer concentration on that face.

LAST PREVIEWED
PCZONE ISSUE 143

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Ubisoft Montreal
PUBLISHER Ubisoft
WEBSITE www.splintercell.com
ETA Q4 2004

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- New moves, new gadgets and an engaging storyline
- Beautiful environmental effects and ragdoll physics
- Two-person multiplayer mode with its own maps and moves
- Diverse, non-linear gameplay and interactive cinematics

CV UBISOFT

UBISOFT MONTREAL

Ubisoft's Montreal studio is the second largest development house in the world, so unsurprisingly, it's got some top titles under its belt. Take a look at the release list for 2003 alone…

2003 *Splinter Cell* hits our screens in February 2003, with a whole host of spy gadgetry inspired by the world of Tom Clancy. And then, barely a month later, up pops *Rainbow Six 3: Raven Shield*, offering more Clancy action, this time in the form of a squad-based tactical ops shooter. November saw the release of *Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time* – the remake of the classic platformer in beautiful 3D with fluid, if repetitive, combat. Also contained the original game as an Easter egg. Tom Clancy not involved.

Return of the Fisher King...

SPLINTER CELL: CHAOS THEORY

Rhianna Pratchett **heads off to Montreal to find Sam Fisher and a burly Canadian mountie. But all she saw were stags**

AFTER development on the original *Splinter Cell* finished, there was no time for Sam Fisher to don a pair of loafers and smoking jacket and gently slip into an alcohol-induced coma. No easy life for our Sam – he was sent straight back into the field to be put through his paces by Ubisoft France for *Pandora Tomorrow*. And if that wasn't enough, he was also limbering up for his third outing *Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory* – courtesy of a 200-strong team at Ubisoft Montreal.

As the title suggests, this particular outing for Sam Fisher revolves around the idea that small things can have a big impact, and the game has a much more of an up close and personal approach. This will see players drowning in the stench of sweat and Hai Karate as Sam gets closer to his enemies than ever before.

"With *Chaos Theory* we wanted to push the concept of stealth," explains Mathieu Ferland, the game's producer. "The most important part is the tension

and power you feel when you're close to danger. You have to make a tough decision as to whether you stay hidden in the dark or come out into the light to perform a specific action. This is what we've tried to build the game around."

SMOOTH OPERATOR

Now Sam has never been much of a man for procrastination, but this new approach to the gameplay gives him a lot more split-second options when faced with either the front or back of a nearby enemy. Thanks to Sam's newly acquired and much-asked-for knife, he can now do a lot more interrogating than ever before. In fact, the developers reckon there'll be about four times the need for interrogations than in previous games.

You've also got the option of knocking your enemy out, or if you're not feeling charitable, then there are quick and deadly knife actions that will do the trick. Other moves demonstrated by the team

Weather effects add a new dimension to the gameplay.

The lighting and shadows in the game are much more realistic.

Do I look like a man who minds getting a little damp?

include lowering yourself down on a rope, kicking doors open LAPD-style, and using your new laser device to disable electric equipment for short periods of time. Sam also has multiplayer specific moves as well (see 'It Takes Two Baby...', right).

"Chaos Theory is in many ways a game about choices," claims creative director Clint Hocking. "You have the choice to pick a door lock or kick it down, execute a lethal or non-lethal move, disable a light or shoot it out. We had to get the balance right between power and tension. Getting closer and closer makes you feel powerful, but at the same time more and more apprehensive."

PATH FINDER

Despite the fact that the developers admit that approximately 80 per cent of players will take the easiest route through the game, the team have tried to make Chaos Theory a more linear experience, building on what Pandora Tomorrow established. The game will have multiple paths to choose from and different ways of carrying out your objectives, of which there are five different types.

Primary and secondary objectives are obvious (although if you don't complete the secondary objectives they'll be bumped up to primary ones in the next mission); collectable objectives may involve things like finding all the documents or taking out all of the cameras. You'll only have fallback

objectives when the shit really hits the fan, and bonus ones are scenarios that the developer has put in where Sam has to make a few decisions of his own. But I won't spoil the surprise.

As he wrote the script, Hocking is keen to press the fact that Chaos Theory has an in-depth storyline, but as it's a Clancy franchise, you can guess it's not really going to involve singing furniture or dancing pink bunnies. The story is what

can loosely be described as a military/geo-political thriller, and what will interest franchise fans is that it brings back characters from the previous games, such as the computer programmer Abrahim Zherkezhi, Admiral Omoto and your old friend and ally Douglas Shetland.

There has also been a concerted effort to clean up the cut-scenes from the original Splinter Cell by er... Not having them at all. This intentional omission is being touted in Prince Of Persia 2 as well (see page 44) which is, unsurprisingly, also by the same studio. The whole idea is to let the player interact with what is happening rather than stopping the flow of the gameplay. Chaos Theory also includes what Clint describes as "memorable moments". This is where players will be shown parts of the story

through dramatic in-game events. When developing these particular scenes, the team worked with Andy Davis, director of films such as The Fugitive and Under Siege, to ramp up the sense of emotion and tension.

STAR TURN

"You can understand that something is being shown to you without resorting to the rudimentary tool of being forced to watch it," comments Clint. He demonstrates this in a level where Sam rather disturbingly sees a prisoner being tortured to death by watching shadows on a wall. Hurrah for Hollywood!

Camp outside your newsagent's door for the latest from ZONE on Sam Fisher – he's looking more and more like a bona fide movie star. PCZ

"Thanks to Sam's newly acquired knife, he can now do a lot more interrogating than ever before"

IT TAKES TWO BABY...

WHY HAVE ONE SAM FISHER WHEN YOU CAN HAVE TWO?

While Pandora Tomorrow offered us four-way action in a spy versus mercenary scenario, it might as well not have happened as far as Chaos Theory is concerned. This time, the multiplayer is very different. For a start it's only for two players and you can only play versus AI, rather than other people – something that we hope the developer will reconsider.

However, a lot of thought has gone into making the multiplayer a unique experience. This includes four special maps and a host of two-player moves such as giving your partner a leg-up, lowering each other down on ropes and a rather precarious flipping move, which is quite elegant when you've learnt how not to throw you partner into a wall.

Due to the superb AI in the game the multiplayer maps are actually a lot of fun, especially if you're in the same room as the person (if you haven't got a headset it's going to be tricky to do otherwise). The maps present a genuine challenge and getting through them gives you a real sense of achievement – and even if you don't, then the flames that engulf you when you both fail to diffuse a bomb properly are really quite pretty.

"Look, see where I grazed my knee? It really hurts."

Spikes: a vital part of any *PoP* game.

Dig those special moves...

I'll be having that, thank you very much!

The prince is no friend to wall hangings.

If the new look *Prince Of Persia 2* doesn't cut it, heads will roll.

Time's running out...

PRINCE OF PERSIA 2

Rhianna Pratchett likes to swing from the curtains, but that's another story...

MARTY MCFLY and H G Wells will tell you that messing around in time can have some unpleasant consequences. For a certain Persian prince, it means that all his tomfoolery with the *Sands Of Time* counts for nothing: just when he thought he could sail off for a royal bunk-up with the princess, a Dahaka was waking up. This ancient creature is the embodiment of fate, cannot be killed and is on a mission to straighten time out and make sure the prince stays where he should've been in the first place. Dead.

That sets the dark tone for this sequel to the 21st century remake of the classic platformer, and according to the game's producer Yannis Mallat, the *PoP2* team have taken a good look at the flaws in the previous game.

"We studied the *Sands Of Time* and were really harsh with ourselves. We particularly looked at three specific areas which we thought could have been better: the repetitive fight system, the fact that there weren't enough bosses and the lack of decent replayability."

Consequently, our prince is a little less wet behind the ears this time around, and he's keen to demonstrate this with an array of new fighting moves that bring stylish death to the 12 different types of monsters in the game. There's decapitation, being sliced in half, the ability to jump on larger enemies' backs as well as multiple death moves, accompanied by splashes of blood, shrieks and gurgles. Without a dagger of time to

worry about, the prince can use two weapons at the same time. In fact, he can execute an incredibly handy move where he strangles an enemy from behind and simultaneously steals their weapon. Fatal and practical.

QUICK, QUICK, SLOW...
However, the prince still has an imbued ability to manipulate time, and here the developer has refined his existing moves. For example, slow mode now only happens to your enemies, and there are new moves such as shockwave and a fast-forward feature that replays your last ten moves. The prince can also now do nifty things like plunge his dagger into a curtain and slide down it, as well as being able to use the environment to aid his fighting.

Yannis emphasises that there's been a conscious effort to try and add more

storyline and depth to the game, and make it even more immersive by having interactive cinematics, rather than static cut-scenes. "You get what we want a videogame to contain – interactivity, dialogue, sound and images all happening at the same time. If there are cinematics in a game and they're not interactive, then that's because the developer didn't find the right way to make it playable." You can see this for yourself when we put the prince through his paces in a future issue. **PCZ**

THE DETAILS

PUBLISHER Ubisoft
DEVELOPER Ubisoft Montreal
WEBSITE www.princeofpersiagame.com
ETA November 2004

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?
■ New darker world to explore, with a deeper more immersive storyline
■ More fight moves, including decapitation and strangulation
■ Interactive cinematic, new NPCs and bosses
■ Manipulate time and space with shockwaves, slow mode and fast-forward

"Our prince is less wet behind the ears this time, with an array of new moves"
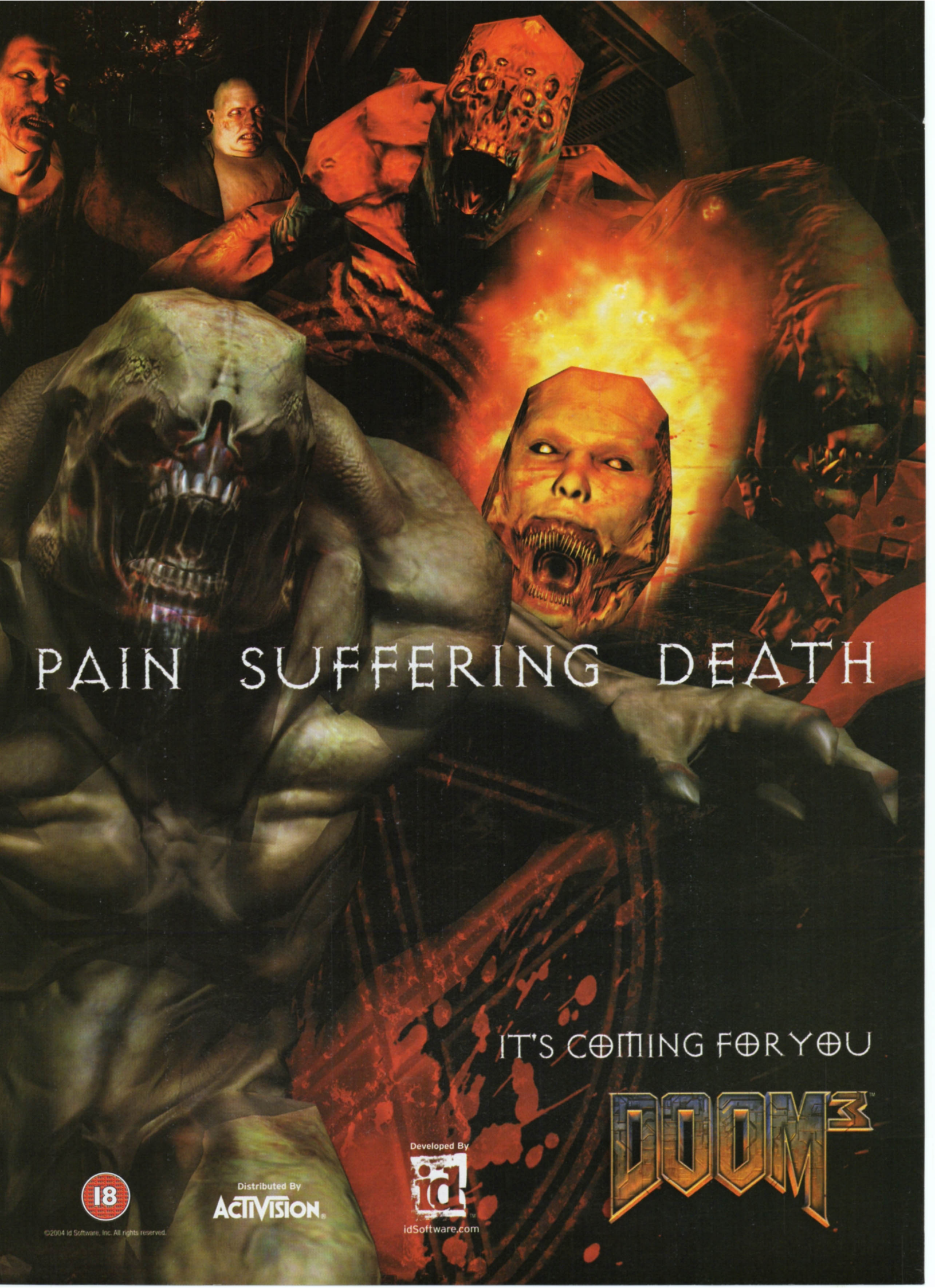
PAIN SUFFERING DEATH

IT'S COMING FOR YOU

DOOM 3

The raid on the boy scouts was going well.

Here comes another one...

AXIS & ALLIES

Richie Shoemaker braves the bullets in his foxhole as the promise of another World War II RTS rains down

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER TimeGate Studios
PUBLISHER Atari
WEBSITE www.timegate.com/aa
ETA Autumn

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

■ Conquer the world – literally
■ Alternative history Axis campaign where you get to win the war
■ 3D battles where the morale and supply of your units is paramount

THERE'S BEEN a constant bombardment of World War II strategy games of late, and it's been so relentless that I'm sure we're becoming numb to it all. Shells from *Commandos*, *Blitzkrieg*, *Soldiers* and *Codename: Panzers* have been landing all around – and there's still no let-up. The RTS cannon is loaded with the likes of Codemasters' promising *World War II: Frontline Command* and the sequel to my personal favourite, *Hearts Of Iron 2*.

Between them and the various war-themed shooters they've covered every theatre of war imaginable, from all sides and every perspective. So why should we be getting excited about *Axis & Allies*? Well, the clue is in the name. In its various board game incarnations, *Axis & Allies* has shifted over two million boxes over the last 20 years. With recent versions of the game set specifically around D-Day and the Pacific War, not to mention a revised edition earlier this year, it's clear the board game still has plenty of fans. Enough, Atari is no doubt hoping, to ensure similar successes will engulf the interactive edition.

WORLD WAR

Common to both tabletop and desktop is the fact that the game allows you to fight the Second World War across the entire globe, from the well-worn fields of Europe to the less travelled regions of central Africa and beyond. Moreover, not being linked to any linear campaign (although the game features those as well) you aren't limited to sticking to what happened in the history books.

As Germany for instance, you could quickly subjugate Russia before hopping over the Bering Straits and fighting battles across the American mainland, or maybe swing down into South East Asia instead. To a certain degree this is *A&A*'s appeal; that it deviates from historical reality in response to the players, but while victory
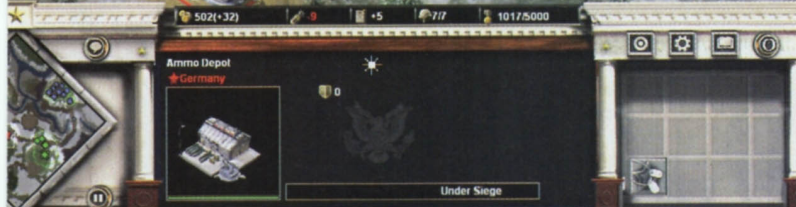
If a division takes too many casualties, it will retreat.

Shock and awe.

KEEPING IT REAL

THIS ISN'T THE FIRST TIME A&A HAS MADE AN ASSAULT ON PC

Veteran war gamers may remember one-time game publisher Hasbro (the worldwide board game publisher that still holds the rights to the A&A board game) released a version back in 1998, followed by an add-on, Iron Blitz, a year later. It was a solid if unspectacular conversion, but it captured the look and feel of the tabletop edition and at long last allowed A&A fans to play the game online.

With TimeGate and Atari undecided as to whether they'll be including the traditional board game rules, it looks likely that if you prefer the board game rules to all the 3D frivolity of this new version, you'll have to trawl a few online auction houses or car boot sales to get the original.

Hasbro's Axis & Allies wasn't a patch on the board game original, but in the absence of friends it was easily the next best thing.

"Axis & Allies' appeal is that it deviates from historical reality – while victory for the Allies is always likely, it isn't a foregone conclusion"

for the Allies is always likely, it isn't a foregone conclusion.

Closer to Risk than something you'd find in an atlas, Axis & Allies' world map is carved into geographical regions and dished out between the five major powers. They're roughly consistent with how they were in 1942 when Germany was marching towards Moscow, Britain was camped in the motherland and America was waking up after Pearl Harbour. The subsequent aim, as either Britain, the United States, Germany, Japan or Russia, is to conquer the capital cities of your sworn enemies, by building up resources from each of the territories under your control and buying infantry,

mechanised or armoured armies and moving them around the map.
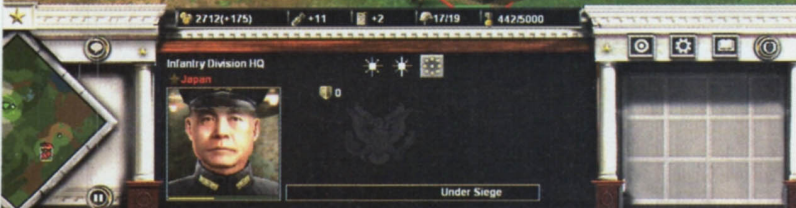
OLD GAME, NEW RULES

In contrast to most of the boardgame conversions we've had to endure over the years, Axis & Allies doesn't just do away with the need to have a flat surface and a couple of friends in close proximity – it does away with most of the rulebook whose title it depends on. Where in the board game you'd move a tank into North Africa and hope to roll a one or a two on a die to dislodge the enemy infantry and claim the territory your own, now you must – assuming you don't want to select

'Quick Resolve' – fight each battle in 3D. As soon as battle becomes inevitable the engine then runs through its map generation routines, and depending on the latitude and whether the territory under dispute is predominantly coastal in nature, will quickly knock up a fitting environment. Despite the fact that the version of the game we were privy to only seemed to know how to construct temperate land-locked levels, we're assured that no map will ever be quite the same in any one game.

Once the computer has decided on the topography of the landscape, it's then up to you to decide how you're going to

CV | TIMEGATE STUDIOS

TIMEGATE STUDIOS

Based in Texas, TimeGate is proud of its record of producing innovative strategy games 'on time and under budget'.

2001 Kohan: Immortal Sovereigns was harshly judged in these pages, but it was an innovative little strategy game that won many awards.

2002 Kohan: Ahriman's Gift was a decent enough standalone expansion, but the graphics had hardly changed and weren't much cop in the first place

2004 Alongside Axis & Allies, TimeGate is aiming to release its 3D sequel to Kohan, Kohan II: Kings Of War.

On the World War map income is derived from each territory.

Icons flag divisions, denoting the type of unit they are.

Nope, the boardgame looks nothing like this.

Position your troops in forests to boost their defensive rating.

Why Don't You?...

HATE TO SAY IT, BUT ALL YOUR BASES ARE BORING TO US

Imagine if in *Total War*'s vast sweeping campaign you had to build a base every single time you moved an army into a province. So, before you could field infantry you had to build a barrack, a stable before knights became available, and so on. It sounds like an appealing prospect, but after the third battle, let alone the 30th, the thought of having to go through the motions of setting yourself up before each fight might become a little obstructive

This is a base: we don't like it.

(which is why *Total War*'s Risk-like turn-based mode complements the battles so well by dispensing with unnecessary base building).

There is a danger in *Axis & Allies* that its base building could have this demoralising effect on the World War mode (less so the linear campaigns), because as the war drags on and provinces have to be fought over time and again, the prospect of building another base may just be too much for some people to endure.

The problem is, that when you instead choose the automated 'Quick Resolve' system, the whole World War option which for the great many *A&A* fans will be the game's biggest draw – becomes even less of a challenge than the board game. This is because the rules have been simplified to allow the inclusion of real-time battles. There are no ship units for example, which means you have the ridiculous prospect barely after starting the game of battling Japan for control of Mexico. TimeGate needs to schedule a meeting.

"With paratroopers, V2 rockets and nukes to look forward to, there'll be plenty of toys in the final release"

Dunkirk goes awry in Axis campaign.

Supply drops provide replenishment.

capture it. At this point, on the face of it at least, *A&A* appears very much to follow the *C&C* template, as a base must be built first and resources hoarded before victory is assured. This design decision actually makes for a lot of sense since whilst the side fielding the most armies will have an obvious numerical advantage, the process of base building gives the defending nation a chance to repel an attack. This is because while one army may be able to quickly get three divisions ready for battle compared to the other side's one, supplies will be stretched so thin that unless victory is quick and decisive, the outnumbered enemy might well deliver a fatal counter-attack.

NUKE DUKEM

The units themselves need to be paid for and in *Axis & Allies* the more supply depots you have in operation, the faster the money stacks up. The problem is that most buildings and units also have running costs in ammo and fuel, so weapons dumps and fuel supplies have to be built as well. As complicated as the

resource management might appear, it is actually very simple to understand – the problem is in trying to keep resources at a healthy level while the enemy are constantly making demands of them.

Since all units are pre-assigned into divisions, the battles are no less

"OK everyone, gather round..."

manageable than any other RTS. Various buildings can be upgraded to instil certain units with various abilities, and depending on the General you choose to play as (each nation has a choice of four), various special abilities will become available as the experience of your troops builds up.

With paratroopers, *Blitzkrieg* tactics, V2 rockets and nukes, there'll be plenty of toys to look forward to when the final release rolls around.

SHELLSHOCKED

Currently we have a few issues with *Axis & Allies'* centrepiece World War mode (see Why Don't You?, above), but there are still some months to release and our version of the game was created back in May. Mind you, with two full-length campaigns in the works (one each for Allied and Axis forces; the former a traditional romp through history, the latter a series of 'what if' scenarios that the developers have yet to fully reveal), you have to admit the game certainly won't be short of content.

Sadly, while there will be a skirmish-style game available online and off, the game will only be single-player. As to whether there'll be a direct translation of the *Axis & Allies* board game included, the generals have still to make up their minds. The good news is we've got complete access to their war room and will have a full review next issue. [PCZ]

KOHAN II
KINGS OF WAR

AWAKEN, IMMORTAL WARLORD!
COMMAND THE ARMIES OF MANKIND AND BATTLE INTO THE HEART OF EVIL.

RECRUIT YOUR ARMY FROM SIX WARRING RACES AND FIVE RIVAL POLITICAL ALLIANCES.

HANDPICK YOUR HEROES, WARRIORS, AND BEASTS TO DEVELOP THEIR SKILLS, SPELLS AND STRATEGIES AS YOU WAGE WAR AGAINST THE ARMIES OF THE SHADOW.

KOHAN'S REVOLUTIONARY COMMAND SYSTEM STREAMLINES EMPIRE MANAGEMENT, TO FOCUS ON CONQUEST.

OUT SEPTEMBER 2004

12+
www.pegi.info

PC CD

TIMEGATE
STUDIOS

GS
GLOBAL STAR
SOFTWARE

23 David Beckham (Madrid)
AM English (66 Caps, 13 Goals), Age 28

PROFILE		INFORMATION		FORM	
TECHNICAL		**INTELLIGENCE**		**PHYSICAL**	
Crossing	96	Anticipation	63	Acceleration	68
Dribbling	78	Creativity	84	Balance	66
Tackling	49	Decision Making	68	Jumping	45
Heading Accuracy	46	Movement	57	Pace	62
Passing Accuracy	93	Positioning	65	Stamina	79
Shooting Accuracy	76	Team Work	90	Strength	58
Marking	45	Work Rate	92	Passing Power	89
Feinting	78	Concentration	80	Shot Power	81
First Touch	83	Vision	89	Head Power	51
Throw-In Accuracy	50			Throw-In Power	50
GoalKeeper Rating	0			Preferred Foot	Right

SELECTION DETAILS

Injuries
Bans
Fitness
Condition
Morale
On loan at
On loan from

STATISTICS FORM: (FORM: - - - -)

	APPS	GLS	ASTS	MDM	YEL	RED	RCK	PASS	SHTAR	FLS	FLS AG
Non Competetive											
League	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cup	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Continental	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
International	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Overall	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

COMPETITION | NATIONS AND CLUBS | SCREEN HISTORY | OPTIONS | VIEW RESULTS

Welcome to Championship Manager 5 | ACTIONS

12:00 WED 02-07-03

Nothing here about his text messaging ability now is there?

Arsenal 3 28 0 **Chesterfield**

It's easier to see where you're being skinned.

Alessandro Nesta | **Sol Campbell**

Player comparisons are colour-coded.

Who are ya...?
CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 5

Steve Hill reports on the first half of the battle of the North London rivals

THE world of football is riddled with off-the-pitch incidents, be it missed drug tests, illicit bungs, fan-baiting betrayals or bed-hopping antics – and that's just in the closed season. Football's accompanying scandal is arguably one of the factors that keeps the sport interesting, allowing it to migrate from the back pages to the front

with all the ease of Wayne Rooney scoring (in a toilet or otherwise).

To date though, the world of football management games has been relatively controversy-free. Sports Interactive's long-term deal with Eidos saw a steady supply of successful *Championship Manager* games, and it seemed that all

was well in the world of make-believe. However, last year SI rocked the football management world to its rafters by failing to sign an extension to its Eidos contract, a momentous decision that stunned the legions of fans. In tabloid speak, SI issued a 'come and get me' plea to rival publishers, which was eventually heeded

by Sega, who will publish the next game from the veteran developer under the name *Football Manager 2005*.

Of course, this left Eidos with the biggest name in the business, but without an actual game. Behind the scenes though, preparations were already being made for the inevitable bombshell, with

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?
- It's the latest incarnation of the best football management game ever
- But it's being developed by a whole new team
- Not Sports Interactive, home of creators the Collyer brothers
- But they have got Steve Screech, who did *Kick Off*

CV bgs

BEAUTIFUL GAME STUDIOS

A bespoke developer set up expressly to continue the *Championship Manager* franchise, *CM5* will be the first game from the fledgling BGS.

2004 *Championship Manager 5* is released towards the end of the year and punters are appalled/indifferent/ecstatic (delete as applicable). It's shortly followed by Sports Interactive's *Football Manager 2005*, which cleans up/does OK/fails dismally (delete as applicable).

Arsenal Tactics 4-3-3
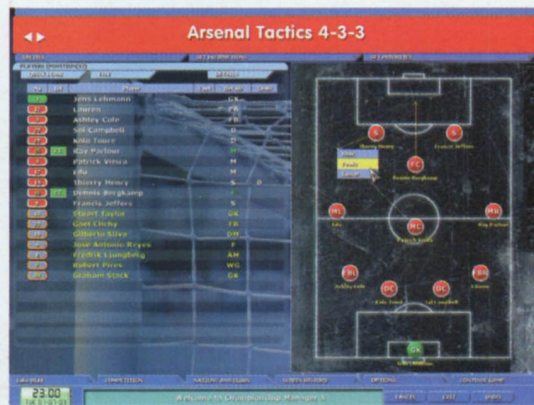
Players can now feed the ball into areas and make runs.

Arsenal Training
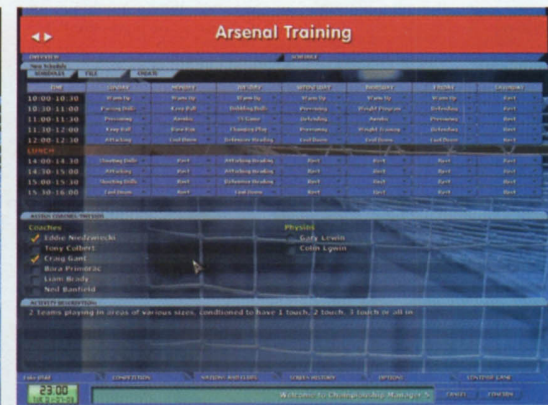
The training has been totally revamped – in a good way.

the formation of Beautiful Game Studios, situated barely more than a few errant goal kicks from the SI office. Employing some 30 people, it's a professional-looking outfit, as emphasised during ZONE's obligatory tour of the building, where we met such luminaries as the head of logic. Whatever the team are doing, they look busy (although for all we know they could be staring into the hollow abyss of their monitors while downloading brutal Eastern European pornography).

REVOLUTION NO 5

What they're being paid to do is develop Championship Manager 5, the next incarnation of the definitive football management game. Something of an onerous task, it's a bit like getting the Bootleg Beatles in to record the follow-up to The White Album.

Understandably, the size of the job in hand hasn't been lost on executive producer David Rutter. "It's a huge undertaking," he admits. "Terrifying and exhilarating at the same time. It's completely mad just getting your head round it really. You play it and play it and play it for years and you still don't really appreciate what's in there. It's an absolute monster. But we haven't cut corners – we've not gone out of our way to turn it into a plastic-fantastic eye-candy version of nothingness. It's utterly, utterly focused on being what it's always been, rather than turning it into a namby-pamby affair. That's what we're all proudest of – that we managed to resist all the kind of niceties that we could have gone for."

NEED FOR SPEED

What the team has done is take a long hard look at Champ Man – with the aid of some focus groups – and set out to improve the areas that were lacking. While CM 03/04 is still monstrously addictive, it is cripplingly slow, and this is the first area that BGS set out to tackle.

The team has been promising a significantly quicker game, and we can now confirm that we've seen it with our own eyes. Even with all 25-plus leagues loaded, the game was up and running in under a minute. By comparison, the equivalent task in CM 03/04 would not only have given you time to make a brew, but also to nip to Argos for a new kettle. Obviously, there's the suspicion that there's nothing going on under the
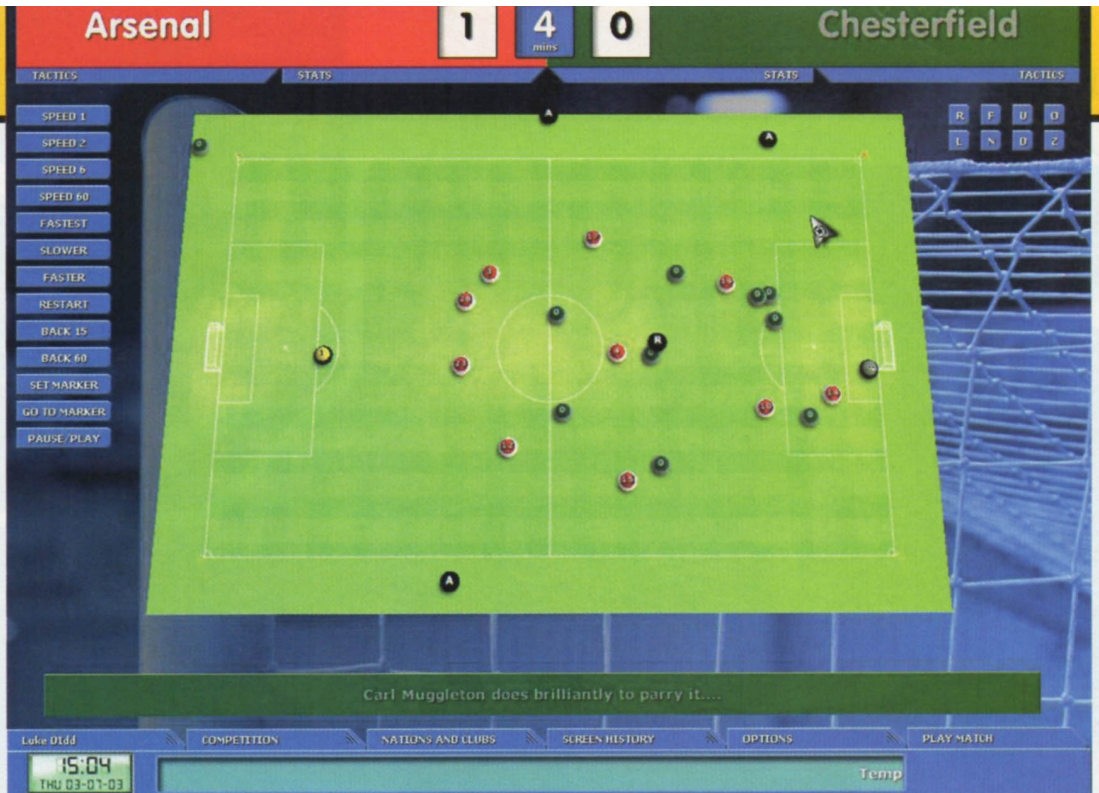
The 'spot the ball' contest ended in utter confusion.
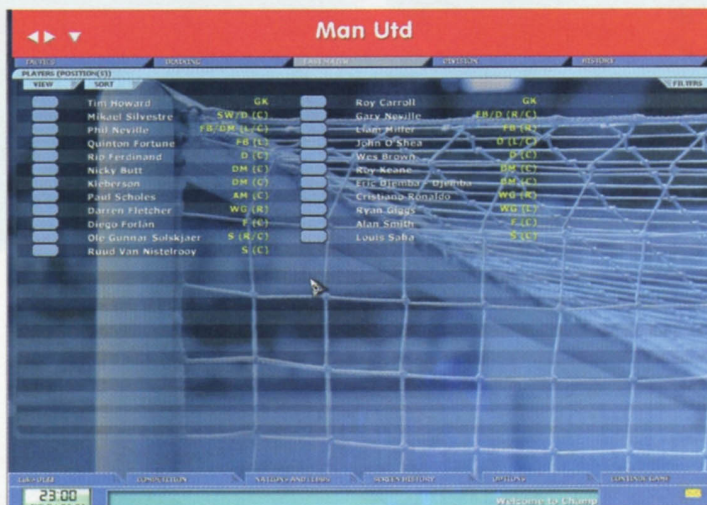
Alan Smith at Man United. It could send Sefton off the Richter scale.

bonnet, but a cursory glance revealed all the key elements to be present and correct. Furthermore, every area of the game can be accessed while matches are being processed, something that never really worked in previous CMs. It's a phenomenon that's already been dubbed 'constant gameplay', and should make for a measurably swifter experience.

Elsewhere, the match engine now

appears with a tilted viewpoint, enabling the height of the ball to be better judged. It will be possible to view a full match, or whizz through it at double speed, six-speed or 60-speed. Of course, a proper highlights mode is the only acceptable way to watch the action, and while it wasn't in the version we saw, we were promised that it was 'upstairs'. Areas such as scouting, tactics and training are

"Our mantra was 'simulation first, game second'. It's not about zapping aliens – it's about divorce, stubble and coffee cups"
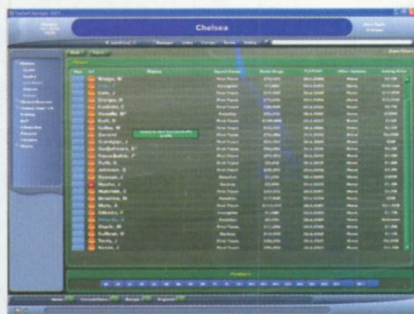
DAVID RUTTER
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER, CM5

also being overhauled, with the help of Charlton Athletic coach Mervyn Day, who's been giving the team a useful insight into the machinations of running a professional football club.

Although it's impossible to tell how deep the game is at this stage, BGS is taking an admirably hardcore approach. As Rutter says: "From the outset, our mantra was 'simulation first, game second', and that's what it's about. It's not about zapping aliens or thrashing your mate via a bicycle kick. It's about divorces and relationship break-ups, stubble, cigarettes in ashtrays and piles of coffee cups."

If BGS manages that, CM5 can be considered a true sequel. PCZ

WILL THE REAL CHAMP MAN PLEASE STAND UP

In the grey strip, Football Manager 2005...

IT'S A LOCAL DERBY EXTRAORDINAIRE...

Although it's tempting to think that rival developers BGS and SI despise each other, CM5 executive producer David Rutter disappointingly reveals: "I don't think there's any unpleasantness between us and them at all." Where's the tabloid scandal in that?

Indeed, not only don't they hate each other, there's even talk of the two companies arranging a football match. That could be very interesting, with SI fielding ex-Liverpool midfielder Ray Houghton, and BGS able to call on the tactical nous of Charlton coach Mervyn Day. "We've nothing to gain by going out of our way to piss them off," claims Rutter. "I think there'll be very little divergence initially, but I think they'll go their own way a bit and we'll end up with two cracking games." We hope so too – look out for the PC ZONE reviews which will, of course, be definitive.

...And in sky blue, Championship Manager 5.

Build # 8.0

2
25 Mph

WATER

399 SEW

Build # 8.0

5
10 Mph

What it looks like when you crash.

3
47 Mph

GB

Drive a rubbish old car? Of course!

The Peugeot 206, a popular rally car. And in silver – that's the best colour you know.

Wheel him out...

ON THE CD

ON THE DVD

COLIN MCRAE RALLY 2005

Steve Hill finds out why this will be the best version since the last one

SINCE 1998's ground-breaking *Colin McRae Rally*, we've had a digital *2.0*, a plain old *3* and a frankly arrogant *04*. This year's calendar-oriented sequel would appear to signpost the way the series is heading, following the time-honoured template of a number of sports games. The irony here is that Colin McRae no longer competes in the sport that the game is based around, having been dropped

like hot shit at the end of last season.

These days he can pick and choose his events at will, and this year competed in the Le Mans 24-hour endurance race. He also had a stab at the gruelling Paris-Dakar rally, during which he suffered what he described to *PC ZONE* as "probably the most uncomfortable six hours of my life," stranded in the desert at the mercy of bandits in fear of "my virginity". As he explained, "It wasn't the helmet on my head they were after."

SILVER LINING

One positive aspect has come out of the experience though, in that the very same vehicle he drove – the Nissan Pickup-Dakar 2004 – will appear in the new game, apparently at McRae's behest (an unlikely story, but it makes for a good press release).

According to McRae: "Piloting the Nissan in the Dakar Rally was an incredible experience and I was keen to see it have a part in *Colin McRae Rally 2005*. The game's development team have done a great job in modelling the car and setting the handling. It's an excellent vehicle to take out on the new game's different road surfaces, and makes for one of the most entertaining elements of my preparation for next year's event."

Elsewhere, it's business as usual, with a slew of high-powered vehicles traversing some of the world's most diverse terrain. Although the recent *Richard Burns Rally* has taken the genre into the realms of simulation, McRae insists that his game is still realistic.

"Definitely," he says. "When you get the bumper-cam on, especially in Australia, you get a real sensation of speed and really that's what it does look like when you're doing the real thing."

We've done the real thing, and we've also played the game, and while we have to concede there is a vague similarity, the latter was a great deal easier. A couple of tweaks have been made, there's a dazing effect after collisions, a new 'hard steer' function and Nicky Grist is back in the passenger seat. Ultimately though, fans of the series should find it familiar, and at least you can't get lost in the desert... **PCZ**

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Codemasters
PUBLISHER Codemasters
WEBSITE www.codemasters.co.uk/colinmcrae2005
ETA September 24

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

■ Latest instalment of the definitive rallying series
■ Released simultaneously with console versions
■ Extensive career mode
■ Nine international locations and over 30 cars

The London Eye in Japan, anyone?
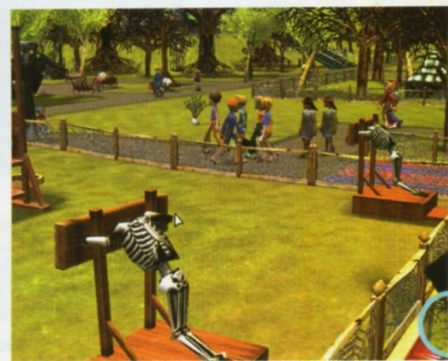
Two supermodels meet their maker.

"Aaaargh! Those teeth! He must be English."
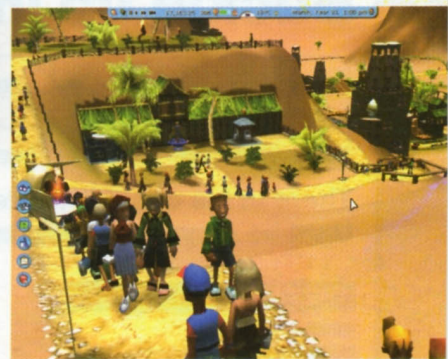
Happy punters spend money.

Theme park heaven...

ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 3

With opening day fast approaching, *Richie Shoemaker* blags his way into Frontier Towers and tests out all the rides

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Frontier
PUBLISHER Atari
WEBSITE
www.rollercoastertycoon.com
ETA November

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

■ All the fun of *Theme Park* and the gratuitous detail of previous *Rollercoaster* games combined
■ Scalable 3D graphics and vastly improved interface
■ Paying customers that are endlessly watchable

HOWEVER charmingly retro its graphics may be, after playing the latest *Command & Conquer* it's unlikely you would ever need to revisit the original game, unless pressed to relieve a bout of annual nostalgia. The same will be true when the latest *Rollercoaster Tycoon* trundles onto the shelves this autumn, because, as with *Age Of Mythology* and *C&C: Generals*, *Rollercoaster Tycoon 3* belatedly sees the blockbusting series burst into the dynamically-lit 3D limelight, dressed top-to-toe in polygons and sporting pavement pizzas that can be appreciated from all angles.

Much more than kitting out the old game in a new engine however, we're assured there is more gameplay content in *RT3* than the previous two games and their six expansion packs combined, and having spent the last few days tinkering with an early preview version of the

game, we're inclined to believe the marketing guff.

Of course, the switch to 3D has necessitated a change of interface – one that, you'd have thought, would be a hell of a lot more complicated than before. Not so – unobtrusive and powerful, the means to create and manage your park is easily done, in spite of the obscene amount of building options and park rides there are to contend with.

PEOPLE WATCHING

But the problem with the *Rollercoaster* games (and *Theme Park* for that matter), wasn't that you'd couldn't build outlandish rides, but that after you'd built your perfect park, the realisation dawned that there actually wasn't much else to do apart from keeping things ticking over, balancing the books and making piles of stinking cash. Yes, there was a certain

amount of satisfaction in watching minuscule sprites shuffle between the various attractions and occasionally spewing up afterwards, but generally the game was about making money and after the attractions faded, you realised that the ones having all the fun were the little computer people.

Now, like the hands-on park manager who likes to mingle with the customers, there is much more satisfaction in watching the game's 'peeps' mill about. Focus on some teenage adrenaline junkies for example, as one of their number stumbles from your gravity-defying ride, trying not to throw chunks – closely watched by a queue of customers waiting to board, some of whom may have second thoughts and move on to something more sedate.

Watching individuals and groups respond to the rides and to each other is almost a game in itself, and with the added bonus of being able to join them on the rides and hear their tortured screams as they hurtle at near-lightspeed past a roaring animatronic shark... well, it all adds immeasurably to the sense of fulfilment. After all, a healthy bank balance is all very nice, but what price for a smile? £34.99, sounds about right. PCZ

Oh no! The bridge has gone, old red car just can't carry on...

Tyres: hours to stack, seconds to topple.

Innnn... One. Your very own dual-speed food blender.

Buckle up in the back...

FLATOUT

There in his car, *Will Porter* felt safest of all. Until he played *FlatOut*. In cars

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Bugbear
PUBLISHER Empire Interactive
ETA November
WEBSITE www.bugbear.fi/flatout.htm

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

■ Seems that physics ain't just for shooters then
■ Ludicrously stupid bonus games
■ Scenery an active part of gameplay
■ A game that prefers fun to realism

A GOOD test of a driving game is generally to race at high speed straight into a telegraph pole. In really bad games you'll sail straight on through and get stuck in a nearby ditch, and in slightly better games you'll slam into the wood as if it were bark-coated titanium while your bonnet crumples a little. In really quite impressive games, like Mr *FlatOut* here, you'll find that your car wraps around the pole, the pole shakes, the wires attached to the pole are thrown around in physics-led abandon and your flailing body is hurled through the windscreen in slow motion – ragdolling as it flies and landing with a nasty crunch in the aforementioned nearby ditch. *FlatOut*, as they say, is hardcore.
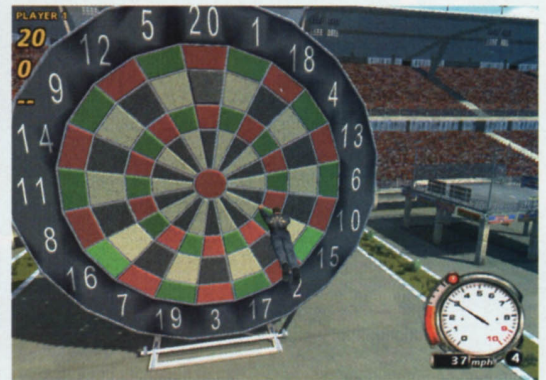
A game that's taken the car-buying, car-tweaking, car-racing, car-crashing template we've all seen before and fused it with both high-end technology and the spirit of the ace *Destruction Derby* games of years gone past – *FlatOut* oozes class as much as it does impending controversy. Traffic cones fly, tyres scatter, bodies get tangled beneath wheels – the physics take a relatively basic driving model and inject the potential for so much spectacle, chaos and carnage that each race is gloriously, and realistically, unpredictable. Track furniture, previously just there to look pretty, now actually becomes an integral part of the gameplay

I wish I could fly, right up to the sky, but I can't. For long.

– or at least it does when you shunt large metal tanks onto blind corners.

GO SCRAPE A FARMHOUSE

There's still work to be done. Beneath the glossy sheen there are a few AI issues that need addressing – *FlatOut* really needs rival drivers that are complete bastards... at the moment they're all slightly too sensible. Then again, that doesn't stop you from ploughing into the

scenery – the more things you throw into the air, the more 'nitro'-style boost you get, and the more stupidly fast you can go. With environments that vary from towns, to gravel pits, to hicks-ville farmland (and the statutory 'ice' track in a frozen fishing village – where, for once, it actually feels like you're driving on snow rather than glass) there's a lot of variety here, and a multitude of secret shortcuts and jumps for the adventurous to seek out.

It doesn't stop there though, as *FlatOut* has some bonus games that put *Crazy Taxi* firmly in its big yellow second place. Take the High Jump for example, which doesn't quite do what it says on the tin: after you've left the top of the ramp you have to time a power bar so that your driver is hurled up out of his windscreen – the higher he goes the more points you get. Elsewhere there's a long jump, a game of darts and a mode in which your flailing accident victim has to be landed in various parts of a clown's face – it all seems very slightly wrong, yet immense fun at the same time. Forget your Tufty Club, forget your Green Cross Code Man, forget your animated hedgehog children – these are the new rules of the road, and for once there's no risk of hospitalisation whatsoever. **PCZ**

More speed, more haste, more twisted metal and shattered windscreens...

SUDDEN 3 STRIKE

Arms for Victory

A World War II Real-time Strategy Game

Battles for the Pacific Islands

The soldiers who won

www.fireglowgames.com

The US 'reverse flying' aircraft was a disaster.

Where there's smoke...

Expect a realistic flight model.

Rule the waves...

BATTLESTATIONS: MIDWAY

Admiral *Jamie 'MacArthur' Sefton* boards his battleship and sets sail to liberate the Pacific. If he can keep his lunch down...

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Mithis
PUBLISHER SCi
WEBSITE www.mithis.hu
ETA Q3 2005

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- A mix of RTS and full-on arcade action
- Jump in and command any ship, plane or sub at any time
- Huge open maps of at least 1600 square kilometres
- Historically accurate units and missions

CV

MITHIS ENTERTAINMENT

Hungarian company Mithis was set up in 2002 with the aim of producing quality cross-platform games. No releases yet, but the company is currently working on three titles for three different publishers: *Nexus: The Jupiter Project* for VU Games (due Q4 2004), *Creature Conflict* for Cenega (out Q1 2005) and *Battlestations: Midway* for SCi.

DARK CLOUDS are now gathering over the Pacific for the next generation of WWII-themed games, with *Medal Of Honor: Pacific Assault* and *Pacific Fighters* (see page 64) already sailing east. *Battlestations: Midway* from Hungarian developer Mithis, is the latest title to document the bitter confrontation between Allied and Japanese forces; a mixture of seafaring action and strategy beginning with the attack on Pearl Harbour in Hawaii on December 7 1941, that brought America into WWII, and ending with the pivotal Battle of Midway six months later.

You can choose either a US or Japanese campaign consisting of more than 20 authentic missions, where, in addition to commanding over 100 air, sea and land units in a *Command & Conquer* RTS style, you have the option of taking direct control of any of them at any time. This means you can, for example, switch in real-time from being a submarine captain stalking an enemy aircraft carrier, to piloting a dive bomber flying high above a cargo transporter.

You do this with the tap of a button, and the AI immediately jumps in to take care of the craft you've just vacated.

GO DOWN FIGHTING

Battlestations: Midway is concentrated around the use of over 50 different ship types, all based on actual designs borrowed from the National Maritime Museum, with each mission played out on a huge map of at least 1,600 square kilometres of islands and open sea. Early missions only involve a small flotilla, but that evolves into complex missions with multiple objectives and fleets of up to eight different vessels including submarines, aircraft carriers and destroyers that you have to keep shipshape and Bristol fashion.
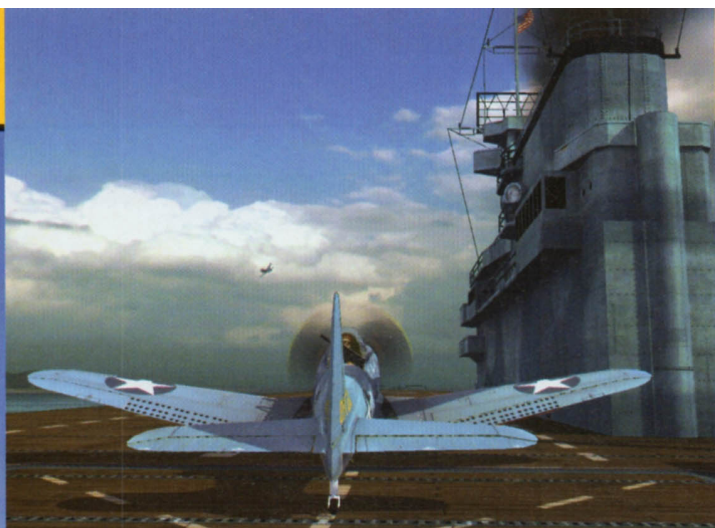
Each craft in your fleet can be controlled in real-time by pointing and clicking on the command map (which when called up, is superimposed over the action), or moved directly using a controller, with weapons fired independently – which in the case of a King George V battleship include depth charges, torpedoes, anti-aircraft fire and gun batteries. As with real sea battles, moving your ship so it's side-on to the enemy vessels will make you a bigger target, but enable your guns to have a clear shot.

A detailed damage model is being developed for *Battlestations* that will correctly work out the direct consequences of a strike against a unit – if a shell hits the engine room, for example, there will be a bigger explosion than if a shell hits the side of the ship. Fire can spread to other parts of the vessel, gun turrets can be destroyed, steering can jam and the ship can actually start to list badly if the hull is breached too.

However, you do have repair crews on board that can man the pumps or fight raging fires, but it's up to you how you manage your ship's resources. Left to the game's AI, crews will automatically try and save the ship without your intervention, but a skilled general – as in war – will sacrifice his vessel with a controlled flooded descent

You play through the story of the US campaign as Lt Henry Walker.
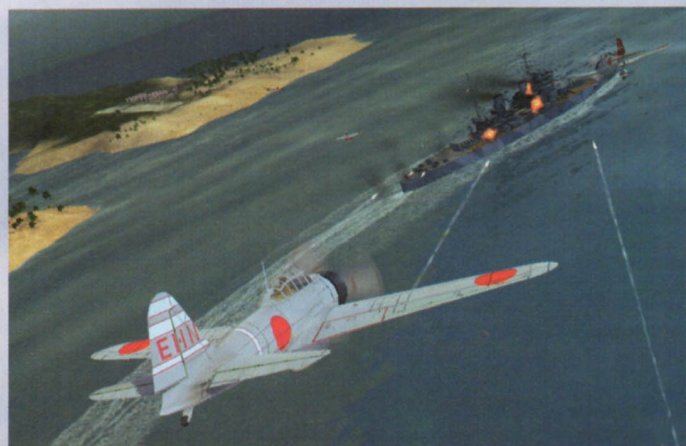

The crew enjoy a barbecue on deck.

You can take control of gun batteries.

GUNBOAT DIPLOMACY

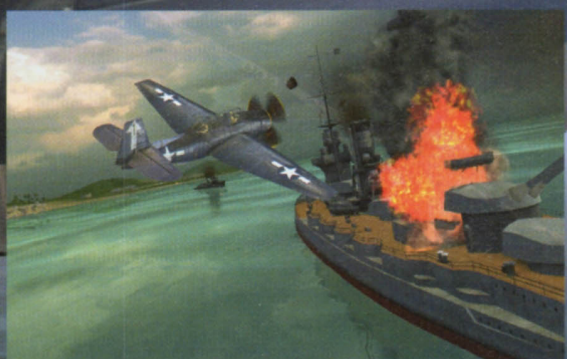### WE'RE ALREADY LOOKING FORWARD (AND AFT) TO *BATTLESTATIONS'* MULTIPLAYER

Although much has yet to be revealed, Mithis is promising that the multiplayer modes in *Battlestations: Midway* will blow other WWII action games out of the water. The aim is to have a minimum of 16 players, each able to command fleets of up to eight craft, with all the accompanying aircraft and ground forces. A co-op mode has been hinted at, although it's more likely that you'll be teaming up with friends' fleets, rather than joining them as a wingman in their squadron. Submarines haven't been implemented yet, but these silent underwater craft will effectively be a sniper role in the game, perfect for camping and taking out any craft that stray into your path.

You can choose a first- or third-person view when flying the planes.

to ensure that the guns are kept operational and aimed at the enemy for as long as possible.

CHOCKS AWAY!

As well as manning the ships and gun batteries, you can also take to the air in over 25 aircraft such as Recon planes and Torpedo runners. Each carrier in your fleet is able to support 12 craft (four squadrons of three units) at any time, and dozens of replacements are available below deck in case Ginger buys it at 10,000 feet. Each of these planes, like the ships, can be ordered around, left to the computer or directly controlled by you – and they should handle perfectly (unlike the recent *Secret Weapons Over Normandy*, which Mithis felt was too dumbed down).

These babies have a proper flight model, so they can loop the loop, do rolls – even pull off a stall dive – so that any dogfights should hopefully feel just right when the development team has properly implemented the enemy AI.

You also have free reign with the game's camera, so unlike a lot of other flight sims, when you go on an island bombing run, you can swing the view right around and witness all that lovely destruction you've just created. Once you've dropped your lethal payload on the enemy, you can return to an aircraft

carrier or nearby island base to refuel, re-arm and conduct any repairs.

The amount of detail present even at this early stage of development is already impressive, with flags blowing in the wind, smoke trails from shells, plumes of smoke from violent explosions and of course, wet-looking sea. Which is always useful.

WHATEVER THE WEATHER

Weather will be an important element in certain missions too, with storms raining down on your ships, causing great waves that will affect your visibility and capability of spotting and firing upon enemy vessels. Mithis will also be bringing the world of *Battlestations: Midway* to life, populating the ships with animated crews, and having packed troop ships that will drop legions of soldiers onto the island beaches in what will no doubt be another videogame homage to *Saving Private Ryan*.

With nearly a year to go until the champagne bottles will be smashing to launch *Battlestations: Midway*, there's a great deal of potential here. The ability to command great fleets of ships like an RTS, but be able to jump in and take direct control of AA guns, planes in the air or ships out at sea whenever you like, could prove to be a high water mark for war games. ◪

Missed bombs can still damage the hull.

The Imperial Japanese Navy take a battering.

In the Navy, you can sail the seven seas...

Open Field Battle
(balanced)

8   10

Take command of battles, or let the AI decide the outcome.

Spahias

If in doubt, select all and hope for the best.

CV   BlackSeaStudios

BLACK SEA STUDIOS

Based in Bulgaria, Black Sea Studios has only been around for a couple of years, but its leader does have a history to speak of...

1999 *Backstreet Boys: Puzzles In Motion* was a puzzle game starring the Backstreet Boys. Not having played it, it would be unfair to slag it off, but it probably wasn't for the likes of us.

2000 *Tzar: Burden Of The Crown* was a competent *Age Of Empires*-style RTS with some RPG leanings.

2001 Vesselin Handjiev sets up Black Sea Studios and development on *Knights Of Honor* begins.

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Black Sea Studios
PUBLISHER Sunflowers/EA
WEBSITE www.knights-of-honor.net
ETA September

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

■ Detailed empire management
■ Satisfying castle combat
■ Over 100 kingdoms to control
■ A big play area that should take weeks to conquer

Arise...
KNIGHTS OF HONOR

Richie Shoemaker rides ahead as the latest challenger to *Total War* sharpens its sword

WITH ITS armour all rusted and caked in mud, lance worn down to a nub and tattered banners clawing at the wind, it's all too tempting to dismiss the Dark Age isometrics of *Knights Of Honor* as it stands ready to do battle against the three-dimensional finery of *Medieval: Total War.* Looking at the two medieval 'empire conquering simulations', you would be forgiven for thinking *Knights* was the two-year-old game struggling to stay on the throne – not the sharp-witted suitor challenging for it.

But as we know, it isn't always the knights in the shiniest armour that win the battle – or even the ones with the longest lance. Often it's decided before a single blow is landed, and while both games share a common heritage and must fight for the loyalties of the same oppressed mass, after playing *Knights Of Honor* it's clear that the game's strengths lie not on

Animation is crude by modern standards – but it's gameplay that counts, right?
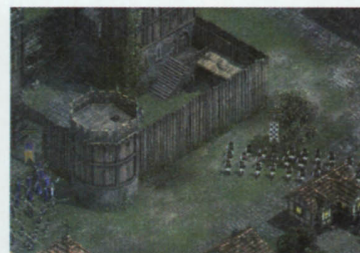
Generals can earn skills for winning.

Mel Gibson's stirring up the Scots again.

Knights Of Honor still requires some time in the oven – at the start of the game, resources are rather low.

A jest, surely.

Never read a map near a naked flame.

"It isn't always the knights in the shiniest armour that win the battle – or even the ones with the longest lance"

the battlefield itself, but rather in the fields surrounding it.

GET MEAD-IEVAL

As our reviewer pointed out in last month's preview (before he took one swig too many of mead and started on about skinning cats), Knights Of Honor isn't all about military manoeuvring across the feudal fields of Europe with hundreds of generals to do your bidding. Here, you can field a maximum of nine active armies, since you can only have up nine of the titular marshals among your court. However, although you could have each

one leading an army, unless you task a couple to manage your cities, aid your economy or spy on allies and enemies, you're not going to get very far at all. Do that, and your burgeoning empire will soon fall apart from within.

Much more than was the case in Total War, you also have to piously bend to the will of your larger neighbours, while behind the scenes trying to turn his allies to your cause and then, when the time is right, strike out. There is no Blitzkrieg, where you can take half of the continent in a few years. After all, history tells us it took the English over a hundred years, and they still couldn't tame France. Considering your ultimate aim is to rule an area from the Highlands to the Middle East, a considered approach is the only way.

RAID AND PLUNDER

Whereas Total War featured a main game board split into geopolitical regions (with a

battlefield for each one that was called up whenever two armies met), Knights Of Honor squeezes in an extra cartographic layer that enables you to see and manage the cities and villages common to each province. Click on a city, for instance, and you can gauge the happiness of its citizens, check that enough gold is being raised and food stockpiled, build civil or military upgrades and recruit soldiers.

Moreover, if an army is barracked within its walls, you can have them march out and across the province to camp alongside your borders in case your neighbour sneaks in to plunder your villages. It may not sound like a big deal, but this adds a much greater degree of flexibility when it comes to siting your battles, because if you have siege engines in your army, you need to take a direct route to your enemy's capitol. With an abundance of cavalry, sometimes it's better to skirt around and burn down his villages, thereby inciting revolt and reducing his economic stability.

Of course, when two armies eventually do meet and it's time for the arrows to fly and swords to clash, the game switches

to the battlefield view. Here, even the most accomplished EA marketeer would have to admit Total War is far more visually impressive. However, let's not dismiss Knights Of Honor completely; getting your troops into positions is easily done since you don't have to contend with a 3D camera, and although viewing the entire battle can be difficult because of the unscaleable 2D graphics, battles can be just as tense and rewarding. During castle sieges, unlike in Total War, you can station your troops atop towers and battlements, and attackers can employ ladders instead of having to batter down walls.

GAME ON

Yep, it may turn out that Knights Of Honor has much to recommend it over Total War. Sieges are definitely a lot more satisfying and there appears to be much more depth behind the scenes when it comes to managing your kingdom. So, Total War fans, the forthcoming battle might not be as one-sided as you first thought – not until reinforcements from Rome ride out, at least. PCZ

All the strategic options and orders have been lovingly transferred into 2D.

Is that the Olympic riding team I see?

You can place troops by battlements.

"Careful Ginger, they've got giant flamethrowers down there."

Now I'm no engineer, but that must invalidate the warranty.

The fried egg disguise didn't work.

Early jet technology. Not good.

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER 1C: Maddox Games
PUBLISHER Ubisoft
WEBSITE www.pacific-fighters.com
ETA October 2004

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- All-new planes to fly
- New setting gives your naval wings an airing
- Carrier takeoffs and landings
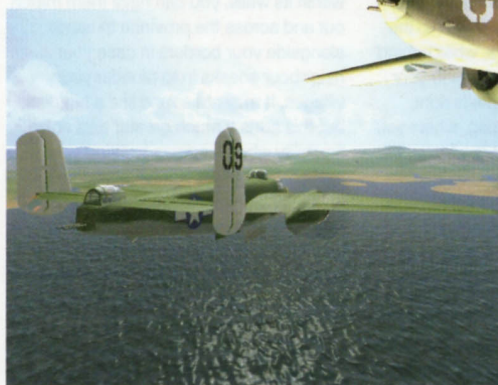- Standalone product – IL-2 not needed

Water wings...

PACIFIC FIGHTERS

How do you follow up the most popular flight sim of recent years? *Paul Presley* **puts on his swimming cossie**

Come in No.9, your time is up.

Not exactly a textbook approach for a landing.

WELL, IT WAS never going to be a platform game, was it? For Oleg Maddox, creator of the frankly stupidly popular *IL-2* flight sim series, with the war over Europe's skies well and truly chronicled, there was only ever going to be one place left to turn.

Pacific Fighters pretty much does what it says on the tin – though it's a tin that's never been opened much in terms of flight sims. "At the moment there is only one real competitor for us," says Maddox during a trip to sunny Manchester, promoting the game ahead of its October release and referring to Microsoft's *Combat Flight Sim* series. "It's good that we have competition because if we didn't we'd stay at the same level, only adding new aircraft each time, for example. Companies that we've seen going this way always go down after some time. My principle is to keep raising the level – and to try and not make things worse than they were before," he laughs. Would he prefer more competition? "No! One competitor is enough," he grins. "Especially when it's as big as Microsoft!"

COME SAIL AWAY

Maddox's demonstration centres around the main hook for this new title – the aircraft carriers. An impromptu carrier landing competition (in which yours truly makes it looks like child's play while everyone else ends up swimming with the fishes) shows off the complexity of the new weather and environmental systems. As the waves crash against the side of the ship's hull, the carrier bucks and rolls with uncanny precision. While there aren't any

actual carrier controls in the game ("This is a flight sim," Maddox growls rather disdainfully when asked why), small touches such as taxiing around the deck, folding the planes' wings up to make room for parking and landing guidance all help the mood.

As does the totally enhanced graphics engine. While it's not fair to say that *Pacific Fighters* is a complete departure from *IL-2*, the added visual effects – rolling waves along beaches, sun reflections of the sea, lagoons and coral reefs, ships creating spray and leaving a wake as they sail – do enough to make things a worthwhile investment for existing *IL-2* owners.

ORIENT EXPRESSED

As has become the norm with Maddox's titles, the choice of planes ranges from the familiar to the never before seen. "For years we've never seen more than about
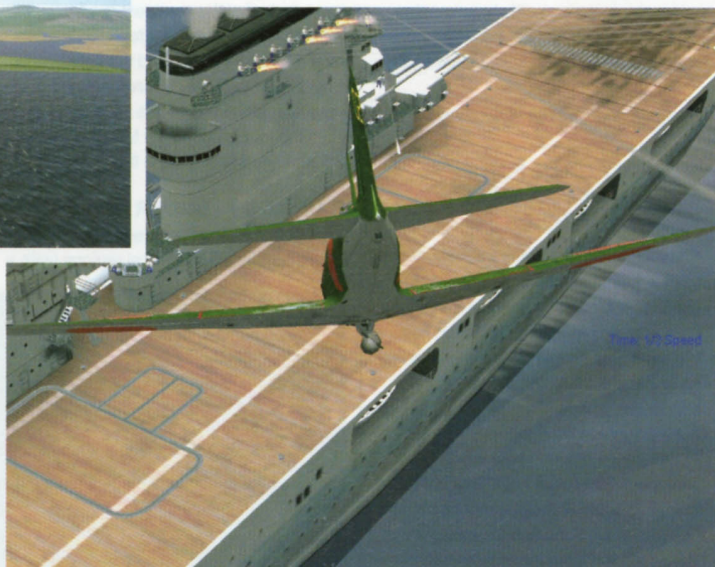
three per cent of the Japanese aircraft in games. We've never seen the Seafire or the seaplanes flyable for instance," he explains. "The Japanese authorities have made many, many blueprints available to us that have never been published in the west." To further aid the research, Maddox and his team even travelled to Japan to look at one of the only surviving Mitsubishi Zero cockpits.

Despite all that, *Pacific Fighters* will be for many simply an interim pleasure, until the long-awaited *Battle Of Britain* project arrives some time next year. Maddox graciously granted us a sneaky peek at some of *BOB*'s object models while we were there and, frankly, if you think the screenshots on this page look good, you ain't seen nothing yet. Maybe there's life in the flight sim genre yet. **PCZ**

Looks like a job for Titchmarsh.

"With the traditional Tourettes-inducing puzzles it's business as usual, but on a grander scale"

Who said adventure games went the way of the dinosaur?

Probably some puzzles and stuff here.

Play Misty For Me...

MYST IV: REVELATION

Steve Hill makes an unlikely journey to Paris to explore the mystery of this enduring series

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Ubisoft
PUBLISHER Ubisoft Montreal
WEBSITE www.mystrevelation.com
ETA September 10 2004

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

■ Bona fide next instalment of the long-running series
■ Features a (supposedly) original track by Peter Gabriel
■ Live action video
■ Mind-bending puzzles

EIGHT HOURS. Eight. That's how long it took to get from Waterloo to Paris, thanks to the wrong type of tree on the track. Eight hours. I could have played through the whole game in that time. Actually that's not true. I attempted the first puzzle, and instantly got stuck, having to shamefully ask for help. I then spent what seemed like eight hours rolling cannonballs in and out of a box in order to facilitate a makeshift pulley to get to the top deck of a ship to discover the whereabouts of a mythical winged creature...

Berated over the years by hardcore gamers, the *Myst* series has nevertheless spanned over a decade, with the original shifting some six million copies. The big guns have been wheeled out for the fourth instalment proper, which boasts an original track from none other than coffee table favourite Peter Gabriel (apparently Enya was busy).

PC ZONE was present at the worldwide premiere of the song, *Curtains*, (*It's actually an old B-side – Ed*), and we have to say it was an absolute dirge, with Gabriel crooning something about 'Lions on our curtains'. The song appears at a key moment in the game, with the rest of the music scored by respected composer Jack Wall, who revealed, "It was a real pleasure to meet him and to be able to work with him on this project. I'm still mostly just a fan."

STORYVILLE

Storywise, it's a fanciful affair, but fans will be pleased to learn that it answers questions left hanging since both the original *Myst* and *Myst III: Exile*. Essentially a family drama, it involves the two brothers from the first game, Sirrus and Achenar, who have been trapped in separate prison worlds, abandoned by their father for crimes against literature.

The engine is developed from scratch, and in a return to the mid '90s, the game features live action, with video of actors integrated directly into the storyline. Throw in the traditional Tourette's-inducing puzzles, and it looks like being business as usual on an even grander scale.

With the game taken out of the hands of long-time developer Cyan and placed in the hands of Ubisoft Montreal, creative director Patrick Fortier revealed, "We didn't want to go off and do something that would lose the essence of what *Myst* is all about. We obviously wanted to capture that, but in terms of the content we were very free to do what we wanted. When we presented the game to Cyan they said it's really cool how you guys did it because you added your own signature, your own flavour." Taste our review next month. PZ

A home for techno-hobbits.

That'll never be ready in time for the next Olympics.

REVIEWS

SO LONG

■ **ASSOCIATE EDITOR** Anthony Holden

▲ So it comes to this. After three and half years of living and breathing *PC ZONE*, I'm calling it a day – hanging up my keyboard and mouse and heading off for the big game server in the sky. Well, OK, I'm not actually *dying*, just re-joining the ranks of idle freelancers whence I came.

Flicking back through the first issue of *ZONE* I worked on full-time – issue 103 – it's great to see how far the magazine has come in 40-odd issues. We work hard to bring you the best, most entertaining and (god forbid) honest PC games mag in the world, and I feel pretty confident in saying that right now, we're doing just that. As such, it feels like a good time to leave.

Just as much, it's almost funny to see how little the industry has changed. A new football game, a new racer – on page 13 of issue 103 we even bemoan the fact that *Half-Life 2's* been delayed (again). Further in, you'll find a review of *Tribes 2*. Fast-forward to issue 147, and it's *Tribes: Vengeance* (see page 70). As it happens, it's a pretty great little game, and takes the series in some interesting new directions – but it's also a tangible sign of the lack of ideas in PC games. *The Sims 2*, *FIFA 2005*, *Port Royale 2* – it's hardly the feast of the imagination we were promised all those years ago (when we first played *Doom* or *Mario*) now, is it?

Luckily, that's what *PC ZONE* is here for. We're always going to fight for innovation and creative excellence, and we're always going to support the games we love (like *Quake 4*) over middle-of-the-road fodder like *FIFA* or *The Sims*.

I don't know whose mug you'll see adorning this column next issue, but whatever happens, keep supporting the mag, keep loving your PC and keep the hardcore ▼ dream alive.

TRIBES: VENGEANCE 70

Has the cult online shooter lost its hardcore edge? First UK review, page 70.

THE ZONE SCORING SYSTEM

Some people (mainly games publishers) say that our scoring system is harsh. It's not. It's honest and built around the seemingly outdated idea that 50 per cent is an average score. Likewise, 70 per cent is a good score, anything above 80 per cent is excellent, and 90 per cent and above is a Classic (see below). Talking of Classic awards, don't expect to see one every issue as we don't chuck them around like confetti.

OUR REVIEWERS

We think our reviewers are the best in the business. Each one is a specialist in numerous genres and will have played every major release, so no game is judged in isolation. We also make sure the right game gets reviewed by the right person, which means you won't see Steve Hill reviewing an RPG and we won't let Will loose on *FIFA Football 2005*. You can have your say on the games and our reviews as well. If you have a comment to make, please email your views to letters@pczone.co.uk and entitle your email 'Feedback'.

ONLINE REVIEWS AND MULTIPLAYER UPDATES

We review a lot of games before they go on sale and if there are no public servers running before we go to print, we won't second-guess how the game's going to play online. Instead, you'll find dedicated online reviews of all the major releases in our regular Online Zone section.

Online Zone is also the place where we review online-only games, mods and major updates of online games. Between the two sections, we've got every gaming angle covered!

OUR PCS

We test games on a variety of systems so we can report how they perform in the real world. All our reviewed games are played on the manufacturer's minimum specification, as well as our own top-end rig – the Area-51 from Alienware (below).

PCZONE Z CLASSIC

Only games that score 90 per cent or more receive the coveted Classic award. The best of the best.

PCZONE Z ESSENTIAL

The second tier award for games scoring between 80 and 89 per cent. Essential purchases.

MEET THE TEAM

QUESTIONS

1. Currently playing?

2. Worst/best memory of Holden from the last three and a half years?

DAVE WOODS
Doom 3, Joint Ops

The time he almost ripped out my throat after a particularly abusive *Quake III* session

JAMIE SEFTON
Doom 3, Nintendo Virtual Boy

It has to be last year's E3 when Ant and myself went cruising round LA with a car full of honeys

DEFINITIVE REVIEWS

EVIL GENIUS 76

THE SIMS 2 78

FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR 80

ANTHONY HOLDEN

Joint Ops and Gish

So many memories, but the free meals were definitely a highlight

PAUL PRESLEY

EverQuest II (beta), Final Fantasy XI and The Saga Of Ryzom

Going for a sarnie yesterday lunchtime. My memory's not what it was

WILL PORTER

Tribes: Vengeance, Doom 3 and Joint Ops

The time he sniped me 15 times in succession in a *SoF2* deathmatch. The bastard

MARTIN KORDA

Rome: Total War (beta) and Doom 3

Pretty much every night, April 2001-April 2002. (Does that sound gay?)

STEVE HILL

Pro Evolution Soccer 4 and NHL 2005

He once gave me a lift

RICHIE SHOEMAKER

Frontier: Elite II

Dangling participles and chicken espadrilles (you had to be there…)

SINGLE-PLAYER REVIEW

TRIBES: VENGEANCE

■ **£34.99** | **Pub:** VU Games | **Dev:** Irrational Games |
ETA: October | www.tribesvengeance.com

REQUIRES PIII 1.3GHz, 256MB RAM and a 64MB 3D card **DESIRES** P4 2.6 GHz, 512MB RAM and a 128MB 3D card

Will Porter **finds himself leaping from life to life and facing mirror images that are not his own. With a jetpack**

FOR several years now, a tight-knit group of the gaming elite have been off in the far-flung corners of the Internet enjoying a highly tactical, nicely team-centric game known as *Tribes 2* or (if they're a bit more traditionalist) *Starsiege: Tribes*. Central to the mastery of these games is the jetpack: here only he who truly understands the power of his own momentum, and the artful downhill sliding known as skiing becomes l33t, and his skills are shown in more ways than lying on a hill and endlessly sniping at spawn points.

Now, for once, the publishing peeps were paying attention, and when they saw all the cult fun being had their exploitation antennae started twitching. If a highly respected developer was entrusted with the *Tribes* format and tailored it for the mass market, who knows what wonders might occur? And, while Irrational is at it, why not develop a single-player contingent with all the ski-fresh goodness of the online game? And why not make it one big tutorial so that noobs are given a couple of seconds before having their arse handed to them when they plug into multiplayer games?

WHY NOT INDEED
So here we have the fruits of this labour. A giant tutorial that doesn't resort to endless target ranges and angry men shouting instructions at you about how to crouch. It's a game that appears to lag

Mercury's missions are by far the most slinky.

You'll learn to fear the firepower of the Heavies.

behind the current crop of high-budget, high-intensity shooters, with comparatively basic graphics, sound, ragdolls and peculiarly bouncy object physics – but it's also a game with some rarely seen sparkle. Whether you're marvelling at its remarkable fluidity (milked straight from the bosom of the goddess of gameplay), or ogling the epic, five-character narrative that leaps from generation to generation and consistently flicks your intrigue switch – it's clear that Vengeance is on to something good.

IT'S LIKE DYNASTY

There are three main factions within the game – the sniffy Imperials who control interplanetary affairs with a royal blue iron fist, the Phoenix tribe that the Imperials have forced into the wilderness that lies within their territory, and the Blood Eagles – who are a lot like the Phoenix but markedly more evil.

The action kicks off aboard the regal Imperial flagship with a princess called Victoria being coerced into a politically-minded marriage, before (one sudden Phoenix attack and a fairly casual kidnapping later) having a bit of a culture shock. Seduced by the charms of her Phoenix abductor Daniel, she begins to see the truth behind her royal parents' heavy-handedness and the plotline kicks into gear. The action then flips between this timeline (which is actually the past) and the exploits of her daughter Julia – who 30 years later has used bitter memories of her childhood to become a battle-hardened tribal sports star. Levels then skip back and forth, raising and answering questions about the eponymous lust for vengeance that plagues many of the cast. Over the course of all of this you get to control five characters: Victoria, Julia, the impressively side-burned Daniel, a battle-hardened Phoenix

Heavy called Jericho and, best of all, a mysterious metal-bodied cybrid known as Mercury. If you're slightly geeky, he's a bit like the Silver Surfer. If you're not at all geeky, he's like an extremely cool man who's been made out of metal.

Now I'm not saying that Tribes: Vengeance is set to win any virtual Oscars for Best Cannon Fodder in a Supporting Role, nor am I going to suggest that you won't find the petulant princesses more than slightly annoying to control when you start the game. I'm not even going to refute the claim that cheesiness is only ever a step away from the Victoria/Daniel

Daniel's sideburns steal the show every time.

> ## "The epic, five-character narrative leaps from generation to generation and consistently flicks your intrigue switch"

Death results in your corpse jetting around uncontrollably.

> **"Tribes: Vengeance just feels satisfying in the same way that ice cream tastes nice"**

TRIBAL TRADITION

THE ONLINE CAPABILITIES OF VENGEANCE PRODDED WITH A STICK

Some quarters have been worried about core tenets of *Tribes* multiplayer being lost in *Vengeance*. The big fear was that teamwork wouldn't survive the supposed *Unreal Tournament*-ization of affairs, coupled with the belief that much loved aspects such as the Shocklance, cloak pack and sensor-jammer had been lost in transition. We'll have an in-depth review of *Vengeance*'s multiplayer masterclass in Online Zone as soon as servers are up and burners are burning, but until then my initial impressions of the beta test are a broad thumbs-up.

I'm a mainstream muppet, and I don't speak for the purists, but myself and Mr Holden have been having a blast with it and will continue to do so for many months to come. Capture the Flag will remain our main focus, but my fiddles with restricted-spawn Arena deathmatchs, fuel-stealing, a superb game in which opposing teams attempt to throw a ball into a goal and the classic Tag-style game known as Rabbit have all felt like someone's actually managed to give me the moon on a stick.

There are some superb maps in the full package as well – from Garuda Gorge's simplicity to Junk's vehicle battleground – and all the smugness I've spoken about in single-player is magnified many times when you actually connect your discs with a real human player.

Aficionados will moan – it's in their nature, but they needn't worry that much since they'll be more than catered for by the deluge of grumble-fixes and mods that'll flood fansites after *Vengeance*'s release. Everyday folk like myself, meanwhile, will be left with the vanilla version – and it's looking like we'll love every minute of it.

Stay tuned for our *Vengeance* multiplayer review.

love plot. What I will say, however, is that the structure of *Tribes: Vengeance* is a hugely brave, original and thoroughly excellent attempt to break convention – taking you away from your accustomed shootage blueprint and into pastures new. It's true to say that *Max Payne 2* did similar things with time-skips and parallel levels for separate characters. It's also true to say that these were more effectively signposted, and done in a more coherently cinematic style. That said, in terms of chin-stroking, information dripfeeding and coaxing 'WTF?' moments out of apparently simple (yet simultaneously illuminating) moments in the script, *Tribes: Vengeance* is an experiment that's been pulled off with

stunning flair. I, personally, see this as the best shooter plot since the original *Deus Ex*.

AIRBORNE AEROBICS

All this would come to nowt, however, if the gameplay wasn't worth buggery. So be thankful that the fluidity of movement provided by the game's slipping and sliding makes it such a joy to play. At first you'll be clueless, but as time goes on you learn how to ski towards bumps in the environment and use them in conjunction with your momentum and your jet's power reserves to reach great speeds and elevations. The way you learn all this is by trial and error, and the way you improve through practice is a lot like honing your skills in the *Tony Hawk's* series – as demonstrated by the

considerable number of natural half-pipes you'll discover throughout the game.

The early chapters are designed to familiarise you with this system but then, all of a sudden, it throws a hairpin into the learning curve. Julia's stadium-based sports events (which lack teamwork, but remain conveniently similar to *Tribes* multiplayer) are addictive to play, yet border on the infuriating for the casual player. Then again, this is presumably intended as a clever way of ensuring that you're up to speed with the essence of *Tribes* combat before getting you back into the story proper.

If there's one adjective that describes the action in *Tribes: Vengeance*, it's 'satisfying'. It's an excellent shooter in itself, but its true charm lies in the fact that it consistently manages to conjure up moments that make you feel pretty impressed with your new-found skills and tribal finesse. Even combat in its simplest form can pump you up. One situation had me as Mercury, poised with a sniper rifle on the edge of a valley. I had just left a lone sentry with the merest smidge of health – and a slight boost and a carefully managed ski down the hillside brought me straight to where he was standing in seconds. A sharp blaster shot to his chest saw him cartwheel backwards while I carried on sliding, speeding on over the lip

of the opposite bank in a metallic blur. This straightforward frag made me very smug indeed, and it's this recurring smugness that kept me coming back to the game. And the fact that I was reviewing it, of course.

TRIBAL MASTER CHIEF

Level design echoes *Halo* in that you're often presented with fantastic rolling panoramas to navigate before venturing down into sci-fi bases – generally being tasked with knocking out three points on your map before gaining access to your target. Uncannily observant grunts and a good but not great draw distance mean that long-range combat isn't as wonderful as it could have been, but there's

still a lot of enjoyment to be had scouting out the terrain before skiing your way into outposts and duking it out with the defence system.

Below ground, meanwhile,

Insert lighting fart caption in here...
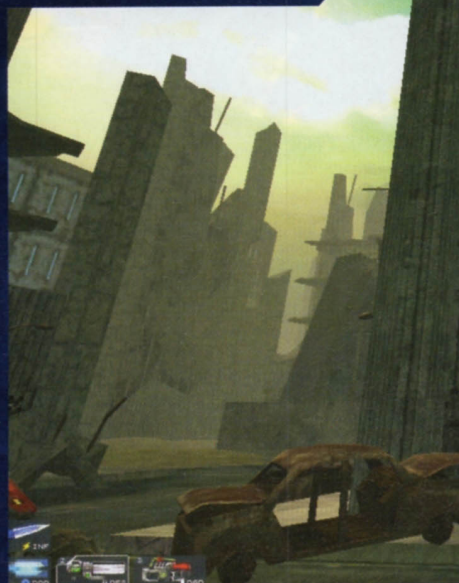
I remember when all this was fields. Green *Tribes 2* fields.

matters don't quite match the fluidity and freedom provided by the cliffs and hummocks of the tribal terrain. However, they do still manage to charm with their odd architecture (who needs stairs when you have jetpacks?) and carefully choreographed ambushes.

It's fair to say that there are a couple of dodgy levels knocking about (generally the ones where the developer seems to feel

obliged to include seen-it-all-before elements, like moving gun emplacements or excessive corridor killing). However, any early fears of repetitive gameplay are soon allayed by the varying styles of each character you play and the weapons they are allocated. The first time you play Jericho you may moan about the sudden restriction in speed and his clunkiness in the face of Victoria's lithe manoeuverability, but you soon discover

that his massive destructive power makes for an entirely different style of play that is welcome when you reach the midway point of the game.

Each level tends to have a gimmick; you could be guiding a Heavy around a map and taking out gun turrets, for example, or more mind-blowingly, you could be controlling a defenceless Julia racing a besieged palace in a

flashback where she's no more than six years old. As such, the repetition that could have plagued the game is neatly side-stepped – apart from in one or two duff levels.

UP THE ARSENAL
The eclectic range of weapons is also well managed in both your own inventory and that of the soldiers you square off against, teaching you how to

use your armaments as well as how to evade them. You may face the mortar early in the game (and you'll know its incredible power through the international language of the save game) but you won't get to love its green whistling beauty until your much later Heavy missions. In fact, the lion's share of weapons available to you are all winners; partly because they're so different
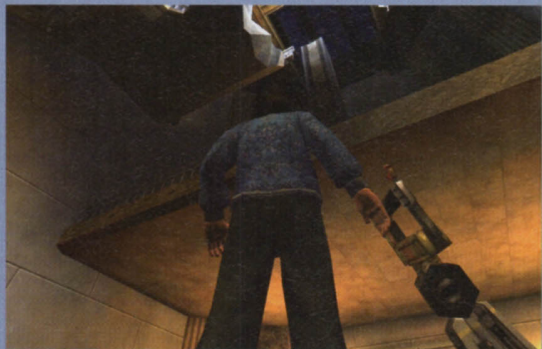
A six-year-old killing a grown man? Get me the *Daily Mail*! Now!

GRAPPLE-MANIA

GETTING TO GRIPS WITH THE GRAPPLER IS MORE THAN WORTH THE HASSLE

It may seem odd to have a grappling hook in a game that's so jetpack-heavy – but its inclusion is presumably to encourage l33t showboating from online tribal prima donnas. It first crops up when you're controlling the kiddy Julia – where its bastard-hardness and reluctance to bend around overhanging ledges is cruelly exposed. It's great to swing back and forth, peppering bemused tribesmen with blaster shot, so it's definitely a worthy inclusion. However, it's more of a tool for the pros than the plebs like myself, who somehow manage to make a character like Mercury – who exudes coolness from every pore – look like a Cyberman strapped to extension cable.

The grappler recalls the happy days of *Quake* modding. Ah...

AI team-mates aren't over-smart, but they do the job.

Mercury has by far the most stylish jetpack.

from the usual FPS template (which, thinking about it, might explain my intense dislike for the Rocket Pod and the Grenade Launcher) and partly because, again, you feel so damn smug when you manage to hit a moving target with your Spinfusor's flying discs.

The vehicles you won't be quite so fussed about. Take a long hard look at the war machines lovingly laid out on these pages. If you're not already doing so,

Jericho's moon-bound prison incursion level is one of the best on offer.

look again, this time with a curled top lip. As you'll see they're not particularly sexy in any way, shape or form. Even the best of them (the one-man Fighter which is an absolute joy to fly and star of the young Julia's mad dash through the besieged palace) looks like it's been entirely constructed from Technics Lego. As for the Tank, Rover and Bomber – well, none of them are really that bad, but all are well and truly outshone by their counterparts in *Planetside*, *UT2004* and, above all, *Halo*. There's a

definite mark of 'could do better' stamped on the armaments and controls of ground vehicles – and it's not helped by the fact that the levels that showcase them are often among the more uninspiring. It's usually more fun to travel on jet-boot anyway.

A BIT TRICKY

Another issue that'll raise hackles is difficulty, because when it wants to be, *Tribes: Vengeance* is extremely challenging. As I've mentioned, I thoroughly enjoyed the nail-biting provided by the ludicrously tight time limits in Julia's arena challenges, but there's more than a little dissent in the *ZONE* ranks as to how unforgiving it gets. The game never reaches *Far Cry* Volcano levels of keyboard battery, but later levels do set up ambushes that (coupled with an occasional hazy objective) are guaranteed to set your teeth on

edge. Then again, my greatest fear for *Vengeance* was that the AI wouldn't be able to cope with the extra dimension, and this really hasn't become a huge issue in the final product. It's clear that you're not playing online (the opposition don't ski as much as you do and run in odd patterns when you fire at them from a long range), but they are still proficient enough in the exchange of the explosive disc and the general skirmish that you rarely notice the cracks in the set-up.

ICE CREAM

I was making notes on a train last night in preparation for this review, and in a clearly countryside-addled state wrote the apocryphal words, "*Tribes: Vengeance* just feels satisfying in the same way that ice-cream tastes nice." Now this quote will clearly never be emblazoned on the game's box, nor should it ever have been included in a review of a triple-A title – but I was getting close to the truth.

Tribes: Vengeance just feels right. Its fun lies in simple movement – something overlooked in all other high-

octane blasters, and it gives you such a feeling of fluidity, control and desire for self-improvement, that on a basic level it's extremely hard to dislike. There are issues, yes, but coupled with such an intriguing narrative structure, you get the impression that this is a game that will be fondly remembered for many years to come. Personally, I'm hooked. I want a pair of jet-boots and I want to be a princess more than ever before. **PCZ**

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✔ Hugely impressive and well-constructed narrative structure
- ✔ Highly enjoyable skiing and jetting about
- ✔ Varied characters and gameplay styles
- ✔ Wide-ranging multiplayer capabilities
- ✘ There are a few dodgy levels knocking around
- ✘ Lack-lustre vehicles

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Satisfying, intriguing and consistently fun

Armand Krishnan - Indian Crime Lord.

The obligatory evil conference table, with laser attachment.
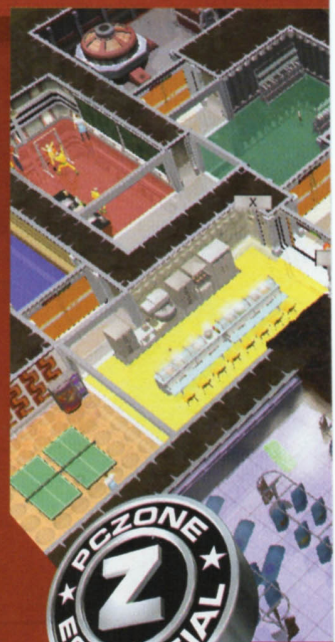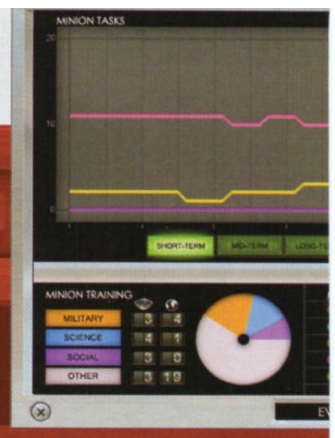
EVIL GENIUS

■ £29.99 | Pub: VU Games | Dev: Elixir Studios | ETA: Out Now | www.howevilareyou.com

REQUIRES PIII 800, 256MB RAM and a 16MB 3D card **DESIRES** P4 1.5GHz, 256MB RAM and a 64MB 3D card

Mwahahahahaha! *Rhianna Pratchett* retreats to her secret island hideaway and prepares a fiendish assault on the free world. Again

WHETHER they were strapping people to an impossibly slow laser cutter, encasing them in gold or just dropping them into a pool full of peckish piranhas, the type of super-villains typified by the *James Bond* films always seemed to have a tremendous amount of fun. And I'm about to do the same, because with the aid of a few of my evil minions I'm about to steal the Eiffel Tower. See if you can beat that, David Copperfield!

Of course, I'll have to make room to house my new frickin' laser, and I really should expand my freezer room as the body bags are spilling out into the corridor – I found a pathetic A.N.V.I.L operative sobbing over one only this morning. I immediately had him captured and tortured to death by one of my most evil henchmen. Well, it would have been rude not to.

As you've probably guessed, Elixir's new game *Evil Genius* is all about being evil and well… being a genius about it, which generally means not getting caught or letting people do things like infiltrate your base and blow up your command centre. You get to assume the role of one of three evil dictators, whose only real difference seems to be their henchmen (see 'For Those Little Oddjobs, right).

Of course, being evil isn't about doing all the heavy lifting, so your evil avatar will spend most of his (or her) time in an inner sanctum plotting evil plans and practising his maniacal laughter. Needless to say, your first order of business

is to build an evil base to house your plans, full of training equipment, torture devices, research labs and dastardly traps. You'd better build it well, too, as your base will soon be flooded by investigators, infiltrators, saboteurs, burglars and probably those who just want to check out what games you're playing and rock music you're listening to.

All these do-gooders will be looking for fame and fortune

INPERSPECTIVE

FREEDOM FORCE
Reviewed Issue 115, Score 82%
This superhero-based action-strategy game has a similar kind of attitude to *Evil Genius*, but this time with the good guys in the spotlight. A fully destructible 3D environment makes you feel like a true hero.

SPACE COLONY
Reviewed Issue 136, Score 82%
No heroes, no villains – just a bunch of guys trying to get along in space. Building a working space colony while juggling the whims of your picky colonists is challenging and smirk-inducing at the same time.

The radio broadcasts news after every mission – even if you fail.

"Packed full of great touches, such as your guards doing Michael Jackson impressions to torture prisoners"

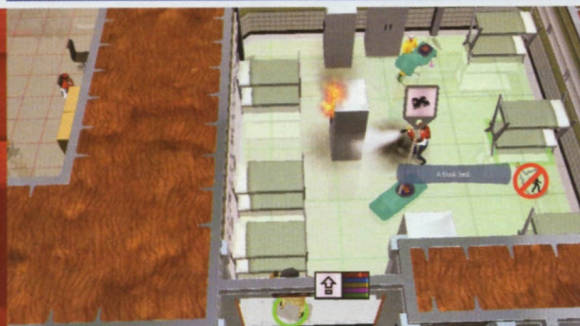Your genius exudes a sphere of influence that boosts troops.

Fires need to be put out quickly or they'll spread.

Torture by mixing bowl. That's a good one.

Use your genius to attract useful allies, like this bodyguard.

Ahhh... An evil base is a happy base.

Chalk another one up for The Matron!
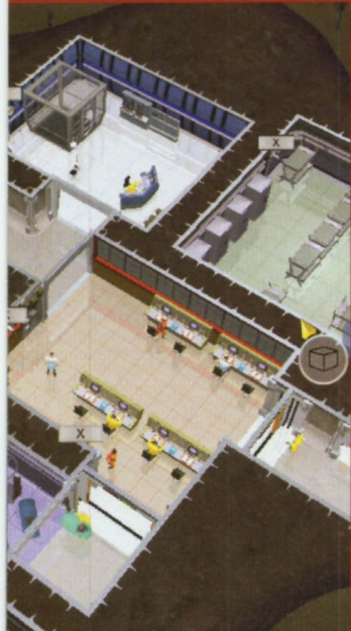
FOR THOSE LITTLE ODDJOBS

EVERYONE NEEDS FRIENDS

Each genius comes with a set of unique henchmen. You start off with one and then you can pick up several more as you progress through the game. These are the strongest of all your units and can even be sent out on your missions of infamy. Every henchman gains evil points as they fight, which can then be used to purchase special abilities and skills, some of which affect your own minions, while others impact on your enemies.

So, Eli Barracuda has a Ghetto Posse skill that allows him to get out a Ghetto Blaster that all nearby enemy agents will start dancing to. My personal favourite however is The Matron. Like Mrs Doubtfire gone bad, she runs around your base shouting things like "Who wants a smacked bottom?" and "You've got to be cruel to be… cruel!"

Your henchmen will be valuable weapons in the fight for evil.

The world at your fingertips.

and, more importantly, to take down your evil self. You can let them have a nose around if you want, maybe even trick them into stealing something fake, practise using your torture equipment or send them to fill out the next body bag.

THE HEAT IS ON

But that's only half the action. When you're not building up your base, you have to carry out masterful plans of world domination. These take place on a Risk-style campaign map, which allows you to send out your various operatives into different regions (once you've researched those areas in your command centre), and kidnap useful hostages, steal loot or carry out acts of infamy. It's actually quite a challenge to keep one eye on who's wandering into your base and the other on overseeing your acts of evil. But no-one ever said being an evil dictator was going to be easy.

Carrying out all these evil activities gains you 'heat', or notoriety in the various areas in which you deploy your minions, all of which are controlled by their own political and military forces. Heat can be good for attracting the attentions of other crime bosses and potential henchmen, but it also can make things hard for your guys when they're trying to carry out acts of infamy or are just creaming off a bit of wealth from the region's fat cats. Too many body bags left around also generates heat as does killing tourists – but when you see them you'll certainly want to.

NEWSROUND

The graphics in *Evil Genius* aren't really much to look at. They're done in a blocky, slightly cartoonish style that isn't too pretty, but it's quite entertaining, especially with all the little details that Elixir has added. In fact the game is packed full of great touches, from your guards doing Michael Jackson impressions to torture prisoners to the funny news reports you get from the various nations after you complete or fail missions. There are also some eminently hummable evil tunes that help the humour along nicely.

It's a shame that your geniuses can't get involved on a more hands-on level, but their henchmen certainly add a bit of personality to the game. Rather than being a traditional mission by mission affair, *Evil Genius* simply gives you new options as you go along so you'll actually be maintaining the same base for quite a while. It's a little boring to start with, but once the heat starts ramping up you'll have plenty to do and you'll actually get quite attached to your desert island home.

There's definitely a lot to enjoy about *Evil Genius*. Like *Austin Powers* it adopts the faux-*Bond* villain theme very well, without becoming too camp or dampening the challenges. Above all, it's hugely entertaining and manages to keep dishing out the surprises all the way through. For now at least, evil wins the day.

PCZONE VERDICT

✔ Lots of evil challenges
✔ Great atmosphere
✔ Extremely entertaining
✔ Packed with little details
✘ Not enough difference between the evil geniuses
✘ Graphics are fun but quite basic

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Embrace the evil

THE SIMS 2

■ £34.99 | Pub: EA Games | Dev: Maxis
ETA: September 17 | www.thesims2.com
REQUIRES PIII 800, 256MB RAM and a 32MB 3D card
DESIRES PIII 1GHz, 512MB RAM and a 128MB 3D card

The little computer people are back with a vengeance. *Steve Hill* **keeps it in the family**

That it should come to this.

WE REALLY hate *The Sims*. Despite our glowing review of the ground-breaking original game, our patience has been tested in the four years since by its ubiquitous chart-clogging expansion packs, its cloying saccharine tweeness, its overwhelming jauntiness, its indefinable *Sims*ness.

The whole idea of the so-called 'Sims Community' makes us feel physically sick. We can't help but conjure up a mental image of an archetypal *Sims* fan being a bitter divorced woman, filling the yawning hours of her gnawing existence by knitting virtual cardigans in cyberspace for an extended family of imaginary friends. The phrase 'get a life' is lazy and over-used, but it's more than appropriate here, with some 20-million punters choosing to live their lives through the garbled exchanges of *The Sims*, comfortably making it the best-selling PC game of all time.

WE'RE ALL DOOMED
Forget your *Doom 3* and your *Half-Life 2*. In the real world of non-*PC ZONE* readers, this is the biggest game of the year by a country mile, dwarfing the slew of titles offering the violent thrills traditionally associated with gaming. Not readily quantifiable or pigeonholed, when the *Daily Mail* implores us to 'Ban These Evil Games', *The Sims* must throw it into even deeper confusion, as success is largely built on nurturing traditional family values, something that doesn't make for such a simplistic headline.

However, lurking beneath the veneer of conservative respectability is a mildly subversive world, with *The Sims 2* boasting such tabloid-baiting standards as polygamous relationships and same-sex parenting. And of the three ready-made scenarios, Strangetown is more *Sunday Sport* than *Daily Mail* with its alien crossbreeding, Veronaville blatantly bastardises the bard with an MTV version of *Romeo and Juliette* (sic), and Pleasantville is a rampant hotbed of wife-swapping, crystal meth abuse and badger-baiting (probably).

You can jump straight into any of the scenarios, and it's a beautiful world in there, as the surrounding screenshots attest. The all-new 3D approach may irk the purists – and the legions of housewives who've never even heard of a graphics card – but if you're going to spend as many hours in front of the screen as the game encourages, it might as well look good. Getting to grips with the interface can be tricky, but as well as the cosmetic improvements, the details of your sims' faces and movements enables them to display nuances of emotion way beyond their previous incarnations.

And they certainly need every ounce of emotion, faced as they are with an onslaught of births, deaths and marriages. In stark contrast to the deathless and useless sims of yore, the inhabitants of this shiny new world visibly age through five phases of life and eventually cark it, whereby their ashes are placed in an ornamental urn, the smashing of which causes no small amount of upset.

SHINY HAPPY PEOPLE
With death's icy grip growing ever closer, the idea is to achieve some spurious life goals before

INPERSPECTIVE

THE SIMS
Reviewed Issue 87, Score 86%
You may have heard of this. You may even have played it...

SINGLES: FLIRT UP YOUR LIFE
Reviewed Issue 142, Score 48%
Essentially the same concept, but with the bonus of hard, naked rutting.

"Hello, can you send me some clothes please?"

BODY TALK

**YOU'RE IN THE GAME. RECREATE YOUR UGLY MUG (AND YOUR MATES') WITH *THE SIMS* BODY SHOP**

Thanks to the highly detailed Body Shop function, *The Sims 2* enables you to replicate your own (or anyone else's) domestic circumstance, either as a bit of fun or a serious experiment in social engineering. As the pack was made available before the game, the Internet is already awash with ready-made families. Think carefully before replicating your homelife though, as it can actually have real-world repercussions. Following half an hour of painstaking identikit work, your frazzled reviewer was firmly informed by a significant other: "My arse isn't that big."
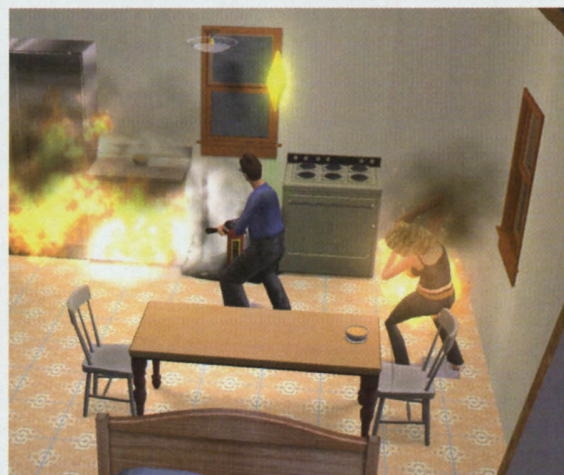
"Whatever you say, now please get out of the way of the TV."

"In contrast to the sims of yore, the inhabitants of this new world visibly age and eventually cark it"
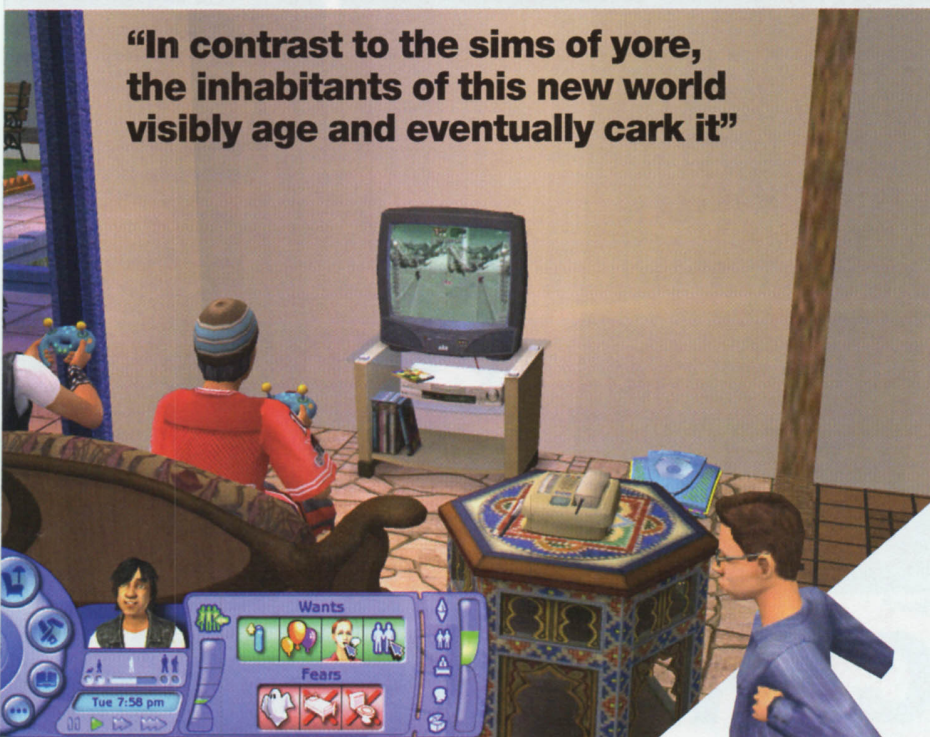
If it's in the game, it's in the game. Sims enjoying *SSX3* from EA.

"That's the last time I do the cooking."

videogames. We're not even lying – you can actually go down to the mall and buy a selection of (EA) games, including *The Sims: Bustin' Out*, a concept that contains too many leaps of logic for our fragile minds to countenance.

A GAME OF TWO HALVES

Given that we've been slagging off *The Sims* for the last four years, it would be hypocritical for us to lavish too much praise on what is essentially the same concept, essentially an amalgam of the worse elements of TV – cooking, home improvements and soap opera. It's undeniably an extraordinary creation though, and the moment we realised it had got under our skin was when we sat in a (real-life)

doctor's waiting room in some discomfort, idly musing as to the welfare of individual sims. This particularly applies to the sims that you create yourself, and guiding them through the pitfalls of their lives is a curiously absorbing experience, even to the point of inadvertently missing half of *Match Of the Day*…

By the same token though, there are moments of clarity when you become almost ashamed at what you're doing, such is the senseless waste of time and effort. But the fact that it can actually make you care is a definite achievement. And while we fully expect to grow to hate it – and the inevitable flurry of hateful expansion packs – for the time being we're hooked. The backlash starts here. **PCZ**

Nothing like a good read with your morning turnout.

you buy the farm, and ideally leave behind some selfish grabbing offspring to inherit your widescreen TV. Aspirations are laid out in the 'Wants' meter, with success adding to your life score. Conversely, realising your 'Fears' drops you back down to the depths of despair.

Ultimately, this approach provides you with a more focused direction for your sims, rather than the aimless cycle of

eating, pissing and shitting. Naturally, these functions are still essential, but it's a bigger and brighter world out there, with a world of entertainment to be found.

Keeping your sims happy is hard work though, and in many ways it mirrors your own existence. Let things slide and you find yourself sat up all night in your underpants eating low-grade food and playing

My Brother Is An Alien II.

PCZONE VERDICT

✔ Absorbing
✔ Deep
✔ Addictive
✔ You can play it while watching TV
✘ Basically the same
✘ Occasionally irksome
✘ Lengthy loading times
✘ Housewife-scaring minimum specs

82

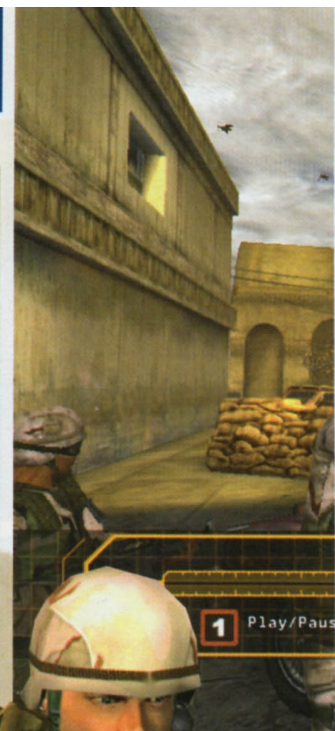Similar

Click Left Mouse Button

016.9m

Issue a fire sector on the OPFOR.

100%

TL
A R R
G

Button pad is able to

1 Play/Paus

"Oh, sod the tactics – just shoot anyone shouting 'Death To America'."

FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR

■ £34.99 | Pub: THQ | Dev: Pandemic Studios |
ETA: Out Now | www.fullspectrumwarrior.co.uk

REQUIRES PIII 1GHz, 256MB RAM and a 32MB DirectX 9c-compatible 3D card
DESIRES P4 2GHz, 512MB RAM and a 128MB DirectX 9c-compatible 3D card

Jamie Sefton goes to war in the city and puts
his money where his MOUT is...

INPERSPECTIVE

SOLDIERS: HEROES OF WWII
Reviewed Issue 144, Score 90%
Squad-based war action, this time
in true RTS form. Lacks *FSW's*
great third-person views, but with
far more tactical options and
gameplay longevity.

CONFLICT: VIETNAM
Reviewed Issue 146, Score 75%
Squad-based shooter set in 'Nam,
but with simpler control mechanism,
only one squad and no multiplayer.

IT'S A SAD fact, but the
conflicts in the Middle East are
showing no signs of cooling off
any time soon. However, if there
is a small silver lining in the black
clouds of burning oil, it's that
they make a damn fine
videogame setting. *Full
Spectrum Warrior* is the latest
PC wargame to storm the
desert, and this third-person
squad-based action title,
already released on Xbox,
is certainly one of the most
original and enjoyable.

Set in the fictitious country of
Zekistan – a sort of hybrid of Iraq
and Afghanistan – the game puts
you in command of UN and
NATO-backed American soldiers

on a mission to depose the
terrorist leader Al Afad, blamed
for the genocide and sterilisation
of the ethnic Zeki people.

TWO'S COMPANY

There are two fire teams under
your command – Alpha and
Bravo. Each is made up of four
soldiers with special skills.
There's a high-ranking Team
Leader for issuing commands
and taking charge, as well as an
Automatic Rifleman armed with
a fast-firing M249 machine gun.
Plus, there's a Grenadier holding
an M203 grenade launcher, and
a Rifleman packing a light rifle,
available for giving aid to injured
soldiers in battle.

*Full Spectrum
Warrior* is not
your standard
third-person
shooter – for a
start, you only
directly control the
aim of a weapon
when you're using
grenades. Basically, the
gameplay is about
deploying your two
light infantry
squads
(sometimes
growing to three)
to the best of your ability. Use
the best tactical positions, take
cover at all times, take out
opposition forces and make it to
your next objective without
getting any soldiers killed. In
some ways, it's like a more
complex, true 3D *Cannon
Fodder* – but maybe I've
spent too much time in
combat lately...

You certainly learn an
army-dictionary worth of new

phrases, the
first and most
important being
MOUT, or Military
Operations in Urban
Terrain. This is how
you operate in a
hostile, built-up
environment teeming
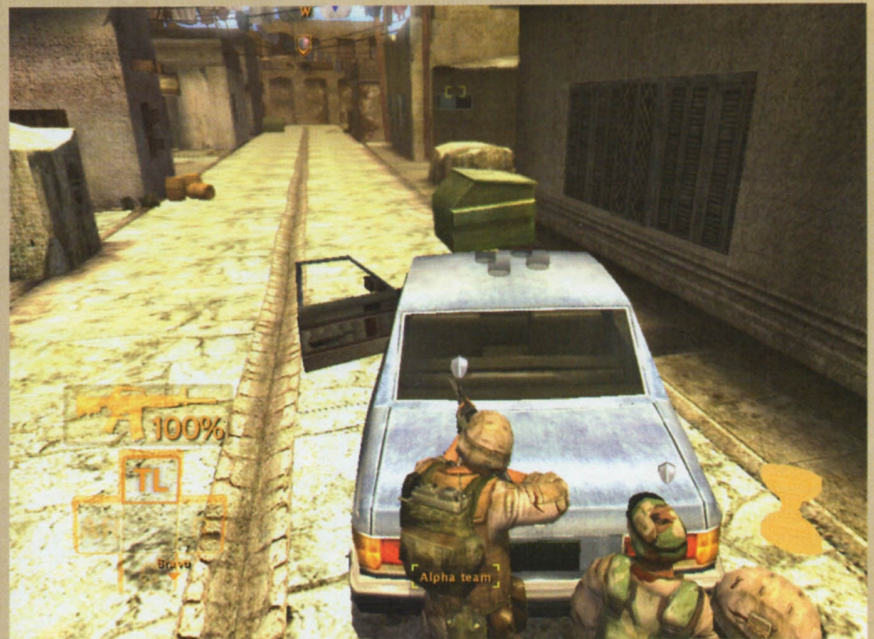with dug-in enemy snipers,
mortars and tanks.

This is one of the best
elements of *Full Speccy Warrior*
– that it actually teaches you
much about how soldiers plan
and execute military operations
in urban areas. No great surprise
really, considering that

3D fog of war allows you to spot danger areas.

"Doggy want a finger?"

You have frag, smoke and rocket-powered grenades.

A Skoda is no protection against a rocket launcher.

"One of the best elements of *FSW* is that it teaches you how soldiers plan and execute military operations"

Pandemic initially developed the game as a training tool for the US army.

WHERE TO, SARGE?

Moving your Alpha and Bravo squads is simple and intuitive. First, choose which team you want to control by clicking the mouse wheel, then tap the right mouse button and you instantly bring up four location markers that represent where your four soldiers can be positioned in the environment. You can now move these circular markers around the gritty 3D world, and watch as they automatically suggest correct formations depending on the context – in a line behind a wall, for example, or in a wedge

shape behind a burnt-out car.

It's beautifully simple, but also brings an element of tension as there's always a few seconds between issuing commands by tapping the left mouse button, and seeing them carried out on the battlefield. This delay can be fatal if you don't give your troops enough cover from enemy fire, as it's difficult to react quickly if you make a duff decision.

Actually, yomping your fire teams around the environment is when *FSW* makes its first big impression. The juddering, handheld view of the game's camera as it follows behind the shoulder of the soldiers is truly fantastic, giving a real

documentary feel to the action – you half expect a flak jacket-wearing Kate Adie to pop up from behind a pile of sandbags.

COVER STORY

As well as rushing your troops around, you can move them using a 'bounding' move, which is a slower, but more methodical manoeuvre. Your team of four troops split into two smaller teams of two to cover each other, with the added bonus that they'll be on alert and react instantly if fired upon. The animation of your troops during this move – as with most of the game – is impressive, with your soldiers holding their weapons menacingly, constantly checking for enemies in the direction you've ordered them to face.

When they've reached their destination, you can then define a 'fire sector' for your team, so any enemies that blunder into it are shot immediately. Alternatively, you can use suppressing fire to make any of Al Afad's goons duck for cover and allow your other team to move safely, but this burns through bullets very quickly – run out, and you're a sitting duck.

Most certainly, the key in *Full Spectrum Warrior* is to always move from cover to cover, such as shielding your squad with an obviously-placed pile of rubble or the corner of a wall. Also, placing your Team Leader correctly means he can lean out

and call out any opposition forces he sees. If your team is in cover, a shield icon appears above their heads meaning that any amount of enemy bullets won't hurt them. Of course, the flipside of that is that if an enemy is behind cover, they can't be hit

MEDIC!

TREATING WOUNDED SOLDIERS IN THE FIELD IS A VITAL PART OF *FSW*

You won't find any convenient health packs in *Full Spectrum Warrior*. If any of your soldiers are shot and injured, they become incapacitated, leaving you with only a short time to treat them at a mobile CASEVAC aid station before they die. To do this, you have to actually pick up and move the wounded fella with your Rifleman – of course, this means that your fire team is immediately two weapons down and has to move at a slower pace.

Here's where you need to use your other fire team to suppress any nearby enemies, so you can make a retreat for the nearest CASEVAC, indicated by a cross symbol on your HUD and GPS. Once there, a medic will treat your soldier, returning them to full health, and your other troops will be re-supplied with ammo. Although this can often be a painstaking process, it brings a real tense realism to the missions and shows the horrible consequences of a bad decision in battle. Remember: the US Army has 'zero tolerance for casualties'. Ahem.

"Dead man coming through."

The shield above you and your enemy's heads indicates you're both protected by cover.

MISSED OPPORTUNITY (O)

The use of helicopters in-game would be great for a sequel.

WOT NO WHEELS?

Full Spectrum Warrior has some rather spiffing squad-based on-foot action, but we sorely miss the ability to load up a truck or other vehicle with men (as you can do in other strategy games such as *Soldiers: Heroes of WWII*). Tanks appear in the game, but are operated by NPCs, so they have little effect on the missions. For the inevitable sequel, may we suggest to Pandemic that you can commandeer vehicles in the field, for example, or call in a helicopter if you're surrounded by enemies? This would add more gameplay variety and get those teams moving quicker.

with bullets either, which often results in both sides firing upon each other in a lengthy but futile exchange of hot lead.

TRUE TO FORM

Missions are pretty straightforward, with variations on search and destroy/disarm, and rescue, organised into bite-size chunks with save points and CASEVAC stations where you can reload with ammo and treat any fallen comrades (see 'Medic!', page 81). It's really a great shame, but the initial excitement of *FSW* soon pales when you realise that the game is really just a series of quite linear puzzles. You solve them by inching forward using cover, flushing out foes with grenades

Bullet hits are suitably violent.

and mortars, and using your other team to flank enemies by using smoke grenades and convenient alleyways.

Although you can use it to call in a recon helicopter flight on occasion, the handheld GPS device is really poor, only offering a confusing view of the area, with no way of rotating the map or zooming in on your squads' positions. Plus, although your own men react to situations and, if prompted, will automatically fire or find the best place to shelter from firefights, the AI of enemies is often suspect. For instance, throw a grenade towards them and they shout and scream, but also stay rooted to the spot, waiting patiently to be blown up.

SANDSTORM

Graphics textures are sometimes basic, but there are some really excellent particle and dust effects in *FSW*. There's also some polished soldier animation that has them coughing and shielding their faces in a sandstorm, as well as the de rigueur Havok physics, that sees soldiers slumping to

The search for WMDs goes on.

the floor and bleeding in gruesome super slo-mo. Also included are wooden boxes that splinter and cars that fall apart.

All of the soldiers have their own voice and react to the situation with lovely phrases such as: "If that bastard kills me, I will kick his ass!" Plus, the general standard of the sound effects and music is top notch. We have to award points too for the superb replay feature, which, while enabling you to watch your battles in Benny Hill-style double-speed, also means you can jump in at any point to rectify mistakes made.

Finally, there are two extra missions for the PC edition (although these are available on Xbox Live too), and co-op multiplayer, enabling you and a friend to play as the Alpha and

Bravo fire teams. So, despite a few shortcomings – such as having a name like a Greenpeace anti-whaling ship – *Full Spectrum Warrior* has much to recommend, delivering a unique squad-based action game that Storming Norman himself would be proud of.

YOU FLANKER!

THE ADVANTAGE OF HAVING TWO SEPARATE FIRE TEAMS...

A major tactic in *Full Spectrum Warrior* is out-flanking opponents – in fact, the levels have been designed specifically to encourage this sneaking-about behaviour. While one squad keeps enemies busy with suppressing fire, you can sneak your other team around behind them to give you an unrestricted shot at their soft fleshy bits.

Keep enemies occupied...   ...And sneak up on them.
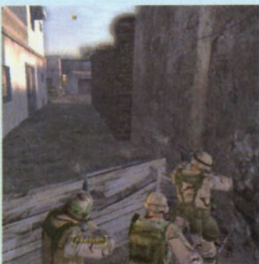
PCZONE VERDICT

- ✔ Fantastic mix of squad-based action and strategy
- ✔ Really gives you a feel for urban combat
- ✔ Impressive animation and great physics effects
- ✘ Becomes repetitive very quickly
- ✘ Some difficult camera angles
- ✘ Often dumb enemy AI

80

Desert Storming

CORONER'S DEPT.

RANK: Major

NAME: Mayhem

CAUSE OF DEATH:
Moron behind the
keyboard activated
his flashlight
instead of his
rocket launcher
in the middle of
a firefight.

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INTRODUCING THE WORLD'S FIRST INTERCHANGEABLE CUSTOM KEYBOARD SYSTEM. ZBOARD'S ULTRA-INTUITIVE KEYPAD LAYOUT ALLOWS YOU TO CHANGE WEAPONS, RELOAD OR JUST GET THE HELL OUT OF THE WAY, WITH LIGHTNING FAST MANEUVERABILITY. NO MORE FUMBLING THROUGH THE MANUAL. NO MORE DROPPING A GRENADE WHEN YOU SHOULD BE CROUCHING. WITH ZBOARD™, IT'S ALL THERE IN FRONT OF YOU. AND WITH ZBOARD'S CUSTOM GRAPHICS AND LABELED COMMANDS, YOU'LL BE GETTING THE ULTIMATE GAMING EXPERIENCE. VISIT ZBOARD.COM FOR MORE INFO.
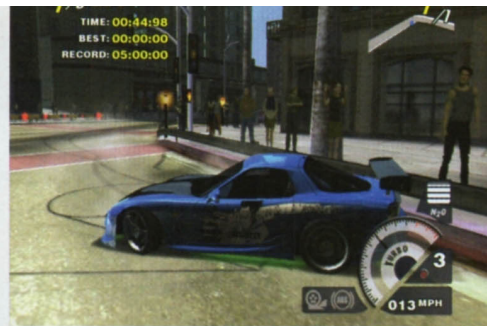
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MAPLIN
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Now this is more my era of motoring.

Showing off for cash rewards.

Not the prettiest of settings.

JUICED

REQUIRES PIII 933, 128MB RAM and a 32MB 3D card (DirectX 9.0b compatible)
DESIRES P4 2GHz, 512MB RAM, a 128MB 3D card and a joypad

Japanese muscle cars are all well and good, but *Paul Presley's* longing for a Hillman Imp

BEFORE I get started on the actual game part of *Juiced* (and trust me, I will get started on it), I want to address an issue I have with the presentation of the damn thing. Basically, I've never played a game in the whole 16 years I've been toiling these fields that's made such a concerted effort to alienate me.

Let me explain. Following the installation of Acclaim's answer to EA's answer to *The Fast And The Furious*, a dazzling young urbanite making her way in the world of UK garage music by the name of Shystie proceeds to throw lyrics along the lines of, "Tits up, clutch down, pedal to the floor" in an irritating high-pitched whine. All accompanied by the kind of low-rent music video that normally gets played at three in the morning on cable-only music channels. This is carried through the game, with

the Shysters appearing as an in-game racer, the soundtrack comprising urban beats and flavas from all corners of the UK garage scene and every piece of text appearing to have been sprayed on the screen by a passing tagging crew.

Now I'm not saying youth is evil or that garage rap is a gateway genre to the horrors of trance or anything like that. But when that's the only presentation theme on offer in the game, well,

you are kind of limiting your audience appeal somewhat.

AGE CONCERN

Juiced attempts to ape its console brethren at every corner. But genre-defining titles like *Gran Turismo*, *Project Gotham* and *NFS Underground* at least give you plenty of options to tailor the game's feel to your own tastes. Personally speaking, an Xbox hard drive filled with

Lemon Jelly, 4Hero and Eric Cartman belting out *Come Sail Away* while screaming around a digitally rendered Leicester Square makes for a perfect evening's entertainment.

Instead, *Juiced* constantly seems to be screaming, "For God's sake OLD MAN, why are you playing this? Trying to keep IN WITH DA KIDZ are you? Sad GIT" at me. Not strictly speaking the game's fault of course, but

INPERSPECTIVE

NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND
Reviewed issue 137, Score 85%
Similar street racing shenanigans, but stuck in a perpetual twilight and without the extensive career and team options *Juiced* offers.

TOCA RACE DRIVER 2
Reviewed issue 142, Score 89%
Not street racing, but the best in terms of 'proper' driving action. Plenty of race modes and beautiful graphics. Doesn't make you feel ancient either.

An FTO, yesterday.

One careful owner? Who, Burt Reynolds?

Her tits are up, her clutch is down, but I bet her tax disc has expired.

The PC Zonemobile. Whaddaya mean, you feel sick?

"Every piece of text appears to have been sprayed on by a passing tagging crew"

then anyone who doesn't fall squarely into the 14 to 18-year-old inner city audience bracket that Acclaim has decided are the only people worth making games for is going to feel irritated, slighted and more than a little put out.

DANCING DADS

Which is annoying as hell because a) I really, really like driving games like this, and b) I'M ONLY 32. I'm not old (and this is an autonomous collective etc etc). That said, as long as you don't mind having your tastes in modern popular culture ridiculed at every turn, there's a lot to enjoy in *Juiced*.

The premise, as you've probably gathered by now, is *The Fast And The Furious* in game form. Treading a similar path to *Need For Speed Underground* and *Midnight Club* (must be one of those 'youth trends'), here you also get the chance to sample life as leader of a 'street crew', a gang of designer label-clad drivers and mechanics trying to earn 'nuff respect to dominate the illegal street racing scene in a fictional LA-style setting.

RESPECT MAH AUTHORITAH!

These elements of crew leadership and respect points are key to why *Juiced* scores over the previous entries in the boy racer genre. There's as much at stake off the racetracks as there is on. The way you paint, fit and mod your cars, the tricks you perform while racing, the amount you're willing to bet on races – it all has a bearing on how the other tattooed lunkheads in da hood treat you.

You don't even have to drive yourself, if you feel that your skills are under par. Although we're not talking *Champ Man* levels of interaction, there's just enough of a tactical edge to the game to put *Juiced* ahead of other street racers.

There's plenty of variety too. Aside from the sheer number of cars on offer and the amount of personalisation to be had (although you can't help feeling that progress up the tech tree is a little too linear), the actual events offer plenty to keep you busy. Standard circuit and point-to-point races, speed challenges, drag races, show off modes, one-on-one challenges with money, prestige or even entire cars on the line.

POSITIVE SPIN

Aside from my personal levels of social discomfort with *Juiced*, there's not much to fault here. Acclaim does need to tweak some of the car handling – especially in the higher-powered muscle cars, which have a tendency to spin out of control before you've moved three feet off the line. Also, don't even think about playing the game unless your PC is similarly muscular – you'll need *Far Cry* levels of compatibility at least. Saying that, if you are running at a full spec, you'll be able to enjoy some of the most spectacular-looking street racing to date. Just make sure you turn the volume down and hide the screen when the kids walk past your window – or you'll quickly feel very, very old indeed. **PCZ**

CREW CUTS

TRAIN 'EM UP, KIT 'EM OUT, SET 'EM OFF

Online play in *Juiced* has the same basic arcade racing options available offline, but also comes with a global 'crew' match-up in which you can take your personalised garage of motors and drivers and put your virtual money where your virtual mouth is.

Global rankings show you how you're faring against the rest of the world, while online events give you plenty of betting options if you feel confident. Best of all are the Pink Slip races, identical to the single-player car-on-the-line wagers, but with the stress factor of knowing that your prize modded Mitsubishi FTO is about to fall into the hands of some undeserving teenage bastard in Ohio.

Hardly the fairest match-up in the world.

PCZONE VERDICT

✔ Great sense of personalisation
✔ Team modes add new tactics to the racing
✔ Gorgeous on high-spec PCs
✔ Impressive AI
✘ Dodgy handling in the more powerful cars
✘ It will make you feel old (unless you're 14)

85

Excellent, or should I say 'wikkid'

It may not be the most tactical affair, but it's damned exciting to watch.

"Run away!"

WARHAMMER 40,000: DAWN OF WAR

■ £34.99 | Pub: THQ | Dev: Relic | ETA: September 24
www.dawnofwargame.com

REQUIRES PIII 1.4GHz, 256MB RAM and a 32MB DirectX 9.0b compatible 3D card
DESIRES P4 2.2GHz, 512MB RAM, a 64MB 3D card and a fast Internet connection

Warhammer **makes its way back onto our screens and this time, as** *Richie Shoemaker* **discovers, the lead really is flying**

PC ZONE
Z
ESSENTIAL

INPERSPECTIVE

WARCRAFT III: REIGN OF CHAOS
Reviewed Issue 119, Score 85%
Orcs, humans and elves in more traditional surroundings, but the action is just as hectic.

GROUND CONTROL II
Reviewed Issue 143, Score 84%
Similar capture-and-hold style gameplay that offers a greater tactical challenge, but lacks the visual style and visceral punch of *Dawn Of War*.

AS GAMERS we expect certain things from our game developers. Of id Software we ask only that it provides us with a new 3D engine every five years or so, one so advanced it will power another half-decade of first-person action. Of LucasArts we vainly hope that at least one of the trio of *Star Wars* games in a particular year will fulfil our Force-fed fantasies, while from the latest no-name Eastern European codeshop we expect not very much at all.

From Relic, creator of the wondrously epic *Homeworld*

and the indulgent, whacked-out *Impossible Creatures*, we've come to expect games of distinction and individuality, and although *Dawn Of War* has a few problems, lack of identity isn't one of them. Against the morass of other RTS titles that demand your attention, *Dawn Of War* certainly stands out.

Partly, the game's unique appeal comes from the *Warhammer 40,000* setting, which to the uninitiated could be likened to a kind of *Lord Of The Rings* in space, only darker and far more brutal. It's these qualities that Relic has

Never go swimming when the red flag's flying.   Messy, ain't it?
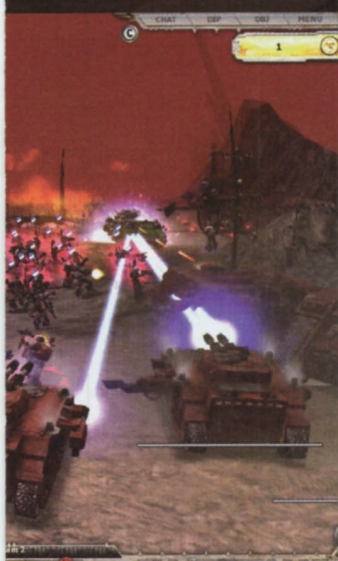
"If you want to go on the trip to the zoo, play stay in the circle."

endeavoured to capture, rather than the impassive atmosphere of the more static tabletop *Warhammer 40K* wargame. *Warhammer* fans will not be disappointed however, for in distilling the comprehensive *40K* rule system, *Dawn Of War* achieves a potent and frantic level of gameplay.

BACK TO BASICS

Aside from the graphics – more on which later – *Dawn Of War* doesn't stray too far from established RTS precepts. Each level invariably begins with a handful of units stationed around your stronghold and a clear aim to harvest enough resources to fund the future conflict. However, instead of wood, gold or oil, the currency of import is Requisition – capture certain Strategic Points or mission objectives and the Requisition rate goes up. If the enemy takes back these locations, it decreases and your ability to bring expensive units to the battlefield is somewhat diminished. Additionally you

have limits on how many units you can field, either squads or support vehicles, which can be increased by upgrading certain buildings and conducting research. To all intents and purposes however, it's the same game mechanic that drove *C&C* over a decade ago: build a base, collect a mass of troops and dash them against the enemy until victorious. Load next level, repeat.

TARTARUS SAUCE

While there are four playable races for Skirmish and multiplayer games, only the Space Marines are available during the single-player campaign. Here, you play the commander of the renowned

Blood Ravens, sent to the planet Tartarus to put a stop to an Ork invasion. As it turns out, the swarming Orks are just a diversion and over the course of the first few missions, it's revealed that the real enemy are the demonic forces of Chaos.

As a simple mechanic to dripfeed new units to you the storyline works well, even if it is a bit obvious and heavy-handed. The voices and dialogue are excellent however, with the Orks sporting the now-standard English thug accent, while the Marine vocals are of the booming 'thou art' variety – all in keeping with the fantasy setting. The cut-scenes, which show off the 3D engine's capacity to

render impressive close-up detail (for an RTS at least) also help propel the game along at a healthy pace, but the problem with the single-player game is the gameplay itself. Here's the rub: aside from a couple of early missions where the enemy is on the offensive, each mission and the means to complete it are invariably the same as the last. While there is an impressive variety of units on offer and a great deal of tactical flexibility required to beat off human enemies, the AI-assisted foes are not so subtle – wall yourself in, build up insane levels of resources and then burst out and wipe away all before you in a staged advance. Works every time.

CANDID CAMERA

Ultimately, it's the visuals rather than the strategy that will endear *Warhammer* to the interactive generation, and it isn't stretching things to proclaim *Dawn Of War* one of the best-looking strategy games we've ever played. High detail models of Space Marines, Chaos Demons, Ork Killa Kans and Eldar Farseers stride around in all their high-polygon finery. Every unit looks spot-on, but it's the animation that really cherries the cake. Take the lumbering Dreadnoughts for example, which will pick up an enemy troop, impale and either slice the body in two, or whisk it until it's drained of blood and throw the corpse aside.

Many strategy games offer the option to zoom in on the action, with little or no benefit. Here the camera is an essential aid in appreciating the carnage Relic has choreographed. In one memorable encounter, a unit of Space Marines was being cut to pieces by Eldar Banshees (close-combat specialists) and as the last Marine fell to his knees, his victor lowered her sword, pulled out a Shuriken Pistol and submitted the last rites. It was a wonderfully dramatic moment and just one of many in a battle

that can easily be missed as the camera zooms across the map.

TOTAL WAAAGH

Without wanting to appear shallow, *Dawn Of War* is initially a game that's far more impressive to look at than it is to play. The scripted AI in the single-player modes doesn't hold much of a challenge on the regular difficulty setting, while the unchanging mission objectives let down the variety of foes and units on offer. Perhaps if aspects like elevation, changing weather conditions or buildings you could occupy had been incorporated, it might have added another layer of strategy to the game.

That said, what *Dawn Of War* does it does very well: it's fast, simple and glorious to look at, with an aesthetic to the gameplay that follows in the grand tradition of *C&C*, *Warcraft* and *StarCraft*. Were you a fan of those games it's difficult to envisage you being disappointed, certainly if you intend to play the game online. If, however, you prefer a more considered approach to tactics and strategy and a single-player campaign that will take more than a couple of days to exhaust, then perhaps it would be best to try something else. *Dawn Of War* is distinct and individual, it looks amazing, but it's no *Total War*. **PCZ**

SERVERS NOT READY

BUT WE'VE BEEN PLAYING THE GAME FOR MONTHS

The game may not be out at the time of writing, but the *Dawn Of War* multiplayer beta servers have been up and running for months – and have been fuller than a Glastonbury Portaloo.

Gameplay modes are similar to the regular Skirmish game, with both Annihilation and Control Point game modes, but in terms of pace and difficulty there's no comparison. The online hardcore have already devised some deeply devious strategies, and online play could ultimately be the game's real strength. We'll have a full review in Online Zone once the retail version goes live.

"The lumbering Dreadnoughts will pick up an enemy troop, impale and whisk the body till it's drained of blood, and throw the corpse aside"

PCZONE VERDICT

✔ Super-gory animation and stylish visuals
✔ Varied and balanced units
✔ Excellent multiplayer game
✔ Good voices and dialogue
✘ The single-player campaign can get repetitive
✘ Unimaginative AI
✘ A bit old skool

81

Fast, furious and gorgeous to behold

SHADE: WRATH OF ANGELS

■ £29.99 | Pub: Cenega | Dev: Black Element Software | ETA: October 1 | www.shade-game.com

REQUIRES PIII 700, 128MB RAM and a 32MB 3D card **DESIRES** P4 2GHz, 512MB RAM and a 64MB 3D card

Michael Filby may have the face of an angel, but he's got plenty of wrath for this monstrosity

Set fire to boxes. Ho hum.

IT'S NOT often that a game's history turns out to be more interesting than the game itself. *Shade: Wrath Of Angels* started life a few years back as *Nefandus*, a dismal-looking action-adventure from Czech-based nobodies Black Element Software. While the first batch of screenshots, being almost entirely black, didn't cause much of a splash at *PC ZONE*, they must have caught someone's svengali-like eye, as the studio was soon acquired by high-flying Czech outfit Bohemia Interactive Studio (the developer of *Operation Flashpoint*). Under the direction of BIS, the game was overhauled, and actually started to look quite good for a time, prompting the developer to state

Someone hasn't been using sunblock...

that its creation would be "perfect in every respect."

The wrath of the gods duly invoked, the project soon went a bit *Daikatana*, and for one reason or another the game never looked as good again. Another year, a name change and a new rendering engine later, the game has now been overhauled more times than the EU constitution. Frankly though, they needn't have bothered.

Shade's inconsequential story sees you as your typical wisecracking hard man who, after being summoned to a deserted village by his estranged archaeologist brother, is transported around several time zones in order to do the bidding

of a mysterious entity. Although the main task is to collect various artefacts from each level, the crux of the gameplay is to fight your way through a horde of demon beasties, and tackle the odd puzzle.

HELL ON EARTH

Unfortunately, *Shade* is left wanting in both of these areas. In terms of combat, the focus is kept squarely on melee, with a lightsaber-style sword your primary weapon. Weapons dropped by fallen enemies can be temporarily picked up and used, including a few ranged arms, but the versatility of your Jedi pig-sticker renders this somewhat pointless.

"How d'ya like them winds of change?"

"Talk to the sword, 'cos the face ain't listening."

No matter which weapon you use, the button-bashing combat interface is weak, and ranged attacking suffers from an inability to run and shoot at the same time.

The puzzle aspects of the game also fail to provide any real enjoyment. Most tasks are as facile as finding switches, and even the slightly more cerebral challenges fail to surprise. Annoying platform jumping is also in evidence.

A series of sub-*Nukem* wisecracks is contributed in an attempt to lighten the mood, but for the most part all you'll hear is the mantra "it's blocked," as you try one of the countless doors the game doesn't want you to go through. The presentation in general – aside from a few competent lighting effects – overshoots the dark and moody mark, and ends up in the vicinity of dingy and dull (if not quite as

black as the early screenshots that we saw).

If *Shade* was scrapped and given yet another redesign, the to-do list would be endless – wishy-washy combat, braindead AI, insipid level design, soul-crushing puzzles, a towering stack of bugs. If that formidable collection was sorted out, then the multiple endings and the fact that you can transform into a demon might actually count for something. As it stands though, *Shade* is quite simply shite. **PCZ**

"If *Shade* was scrapped and given yet another redesign, the to-do list would be endless"

PCZONE VERDICT

✓ Some pretty lighting effects
✓ Decent length
✗ Poor combat
✗ Lacklustre puzzles
✗ Unimaginative level design
✗ Save points too far apart

41

Left in the dark

Land combat = rubbish.

Reservoir Sea Dogs, anyone?

There are 60 towns across the Caribbean, and enough land space for you to build four more.

PORT ROYALE 2

■ £29.99 | Pub: Koch Media | Dev: Ascaron | ETA: September 10 |
www.ascaron.com

REQUIRES PIII 700MHz, 128MB RAM and a 32MB DX9-compatible 3D card
DESIRES P4 1.6GHz, 384MB RAM and a 64MB DX9-compatible 3D card

Richie Shoemaker joins the crew of the good ship Ascaron as it attempts to draw the wind from Sid Meier's sails

IN TWO months time, Sid Meier's *Pirates!* will be returning to the high seas after a decade long exile. This is bad news for the developer of *Port Royale 2*, because while Ascaron has done a consistent job of creating trading games set during the golden age of sail (through games like *The Patrician*), over the past ten years it hasn't so much

mounted a challenge to the captain's chair as kept it warm for Sid's eventual return.

Effectively then, *Port Royale* is a *Pirates!* tribute, with the focus shifted away from adventure and excitement. Here, your objective is to foster a corporate fortune by trading with the four major powers and building industrial centres across 60 towns in and around the Caribbean. Producing goods cheaply, ferrying them around

and selling them on to whoever offers the highest price is about the gist of it. There is some combat, but it doesn't feel as dramatic or as central to the game as it should – the 1600s were relatively lawless times, after all.

One new feature is land-based combat, where you can disembark your troops outside of a town and make an assault. Soldiers are automatically grouped into a mass of rifle or

cutlass and you simply point-and-click at the enemy blobs. The only problem is it's effectively a numbers game, and looks and plays dreadfully.

Much better is the ship combat, which again is directed RTS style. In it, you control one ship at a time – and as unrealistic as it sounds, the method is surprisingly effective, making it easier to access the firepower of your entire fleet.

BUYERS' MARKET

As with its predecessor, trading is well done, as prices fluctuate in response to the various convoys zipping across the tropical waters. Setting up trade routes is a relatively easy affair, and with some investment in warehouses, plantations and workers huts (no mention of slaves, you'll notice), it isn't long before you have a thriving business empire stretching from Florida to Havana. Better yet, you can also secure permission from local

governments to build your own towns from scratch.

Although improvements to the original game aren't immediately obvious, they are there. A set of tutorial missions is designed to break in the newcomer, while a giant open-ended game is available if you prefer to dive in at the deep end, with missions to conquer towns, pirates and trade routes. And, of course, no pirate game would be complete without a treasure map.

However, as solid as *Port Royale 2* is, few people can afford to have more than one seafaring adventure in their collection. With Sid Meier's *Pirates!* due in port very soon, we reckon you should hold fire on this one. While Sid's new game certainly won't be as deep, we'll wager it will be more action-packed. If you've been waiting patiently for ten years, we're sure you can hold out a little longer… PCZ

Each town usually has a shipbuilder, an inn from which to recruit ship captains and a council building.

It's just like a scene from *Watercolour Challenge…*

PCZONE VERDICT
✔ Excellent trade features
✔ Unrestricted freeplay mode
✔ Develop your own towns
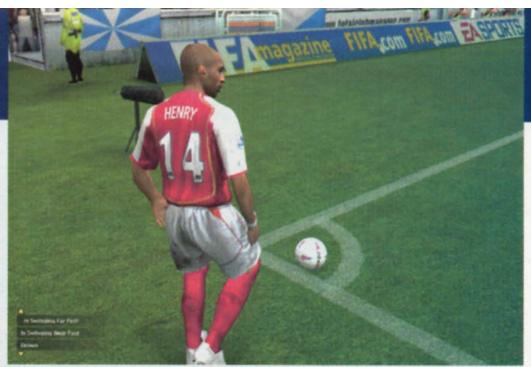✘ Combat lacks excitement
✘ No multiplayer mode

75

The calm before the storm

Henry about to give it some va-va-voom.

"Remember the name! Wayne Rooney!" No sign of the Auld Slapper, though.

You can't fault the realistic goal netting.

FIFA FOOTBALL 2005

■ £29.99 | Pub: EA Sports | Dev: EA Sports | ETA: October 10 | www.fifa2005.ea.com

REQUIRES PIII 700, 256MB RAM and a 32MB 3D card **DESIRES** P4 1.2GHz, 512MB RAM and a 64MB 3D card

Steve Hill tackles the annual update of the other football game

BY A cruel stroke of fate, the review copy of *FIFA 2005* dropped on my doormat on the very same day as an early copy of *Pro Evolution Soccer 4*. Guess which one I've been playing the most? The one I'm being paid to, naturally, as beyond all else, I am a professional. Not that it makes an iota of difference. Anyone who can distinguish between shit and treacle knows that *PES* is by far the superior game, yet *FIFA* continues to outsell it by the bucketful – thanks largely to official licences and a marketing budget that could buy Rooney.

Much of the game's appeal has to do with aesthetics, and while there's undeniably a minor thrill to be had in running out at Old Trafford in this year's kit, for all the difference it makes you might as well be watching it on TV. And while *Pro Evo* is traditionally categorised as the more hardcore game, in actual fact this is something of a red herring – it's *FIFA* that actually requires the greater joypad

gymnastics to instigate such half-baked ideas as the Off The Ball controls.

This year's gimmick is the First Touch feature, whereby a tap of the second analogue stick causes the receiving player to play the ball into space. At best you'll buy yourself half a yard, but as often as not it results in losing possession and is scarcely worth the risk.

PERVERSE

So with the main new feature largely redundant, you're simply left with yet another sluggish, indistinguishable *FIFA* game. It's also tactically perverse, with defenders lurking on the edge of the box, and forwards showing little inclination to push up.

The counter-intuitive control system means that you're often

DAILY STAR

HIRED!

Chester Board of Directors was pleased to announce the signing of new manager Stephen Hill today, promising the fans a renewed commitment to...

'BIG CHALLENGE'

'If I didn't think I could make an impact I would not have taken the job on,' newly signed manager Stephen Hill said today...

He'll never score an easier goal.

battling against the game rather than the opposition, and it's mainly unsatisfying. The set pieces remain dreadful, and in football you're only as strong as your weakest link. Overall, it's a remarkably uninvolving experience, and scoring or conceding goals barely registers a flicker of emotion.

If you can cope with it, there is a 15-season career mode in

place, although it's not entirely realistic. For instance, having been sacked from Chester City following a dismal start to the season (that bit is realistic) I immediately secured a post at crack Brazilian outfit Vasco da Gama. Along with these two ends of the footballing spectrum, there are more than 350 official team and league licences from

around the world, as well as some 12,000 licensed players.

But I'll never see more than a fraction of them, as *FIFA 2005* has already been ditched in favour of *PES4*, a game that will comfortably last through winter and beyond. I'm wasting my time. Thank you and goodbye. **PCZ**

Time for a bit of Brazilian flair.

This is what it really looks like.

PCZONE VERDICT

✔ Features Chester City
✔ Looks good
✔ Online play
✗ Uninspiring gameplay
✗ Ill-conceived First Touch feature
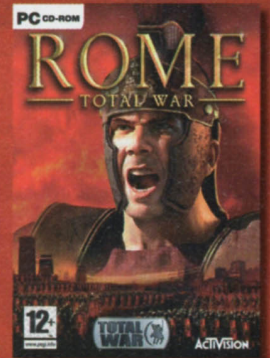✗ Seen it all before

60

Makes football boring

KOHAN II: KINGS OF WAR

■ £29.99 | Pub: Gathering | Dev: TimeGate Studios | ETA: September 1

REQUIRES P4 1.5GHz, 256MB RAM and a 64MB 3D card **DESIRES** P4 2GHz, 512MB RAM and a 64MB 3D card

Regal or illegal? *Sam Kieldsen* rates these Kings

THE FIRST *Kohan* outing was a critically acclaimed cult hit upon its release in 2001, gaining mucho props for the way it flung new ideas at the rapidly stagnating RTS genre. This long-awaited sequel boasts many of the same unique features. For example, you recruit whole companies of troops rather than single units, and you can attach powerful characters to these companies to boost their effectiveness in a scrap. But it's also simplified the game mechanics and tarted things up with fancy 3D visuals.

The single-player campaign revolves around a typically hackneyed fantasy yarn of undead hordes, immortal heroes, ice monsters and suchlike, but features over 30 missions and a generous assortment of races and factions to command. And while the resource gathering, settlement building and research are all standard fare, the gameplay is elevated by nifty features such as resupply (where decimated companies enlist reinforcements when taken back to a friendly settlement), a simple economy system and a nod to the tactics of terrain and unit formation.

Standard-issue multiplayer and skirmish modes are also chucked in, each of which uses a random map generator.

While there's little here that we haven't seen before in some shape or form, *Kohan II* brings it all together tidily. RTS fans, or those looking for a better than average example of the genre, should lap it up.

PCZONE VERDICT 75

Not 'king bad at all

If you look past the silly name and untidy visuals, there's a solid little game in here.

ARMY MEN: SARGE'S WAR

■ £19.99 | Pub: Global Star Software | Dev: Tactical Development
ETA: Out Now

REQUIRES P4 1GHz, 256MB RAM and a 32MB 3D card **DESIRES** P4 1.8GHz, 512MB RAM and a 64MB 3D card

Will Porter gets to wondering whether or not there is a God. And then gets his question swiftly answered

He's poised to kill.

Evil. In toy form.

I WOULDN'T buy it, you wouldn't buy it, but it seems that someone, somewhere, somehow would. *Army Men: Sarge's War* is here and my torrent of abuse, outrage and general uppityness starts... now.

Why? What's the point? You grab the licence, you dispense with the bargain-basement RTS stylings and you jam in a rudimentary third-person action engine. Fine, I understand all this – there's clearly money to be made from the slack-jawed idiots who buy *Army Men* games and it most definitely could have done with a lick of green paint.

But from a publishing point of view why make it a 16+ rated game with cut-scenes that feature oodles of melting plastic corpses when it is, by nature, such an obvious kids' game. From a developer's point of view, why include a camera and targeting system that is actually (with no element of reviewer overstatement) capable of making one physically nauseous. From a basic human angle, just why? Why God? Why?

No the maps aren't diabolical, no the cut-scenes aren't that bad and yes it is quite nifty the way melted green chunks get blown out of Sarge's body. But this is gaming at its most depressing – it's clear to man and beast that the controls of this game simply do not work and are no fun whatsoever. Why don't you just fix it? Or, perhaps, you could just STOP MAKING *ARMY MEN* GAMES. Stop the pain. Stop the madness. Make our suffering end. Please.

Sarge prepares for another level of painful rubbishness...

PCZONE VERDICT 28

About as much fun as eating grit

ZOO EMPIRE

■ £19.99 | Pub: Enlight Software | Dev: Enlight Software
ETA: Out Now

REQUIRES PIII 800, 128MB RAM and a 16MB 3D card
DESIRES PIII 1GHz, 256MB RAM and a 32MB 3D card

Michael Filby sees a monkey with a toy typewriter, and wonders why it looks so familiar...

One of the smaller zoos available.

I BET THAT after looking at that title, you're expecting yet another management sim in the same vein as the *Tycoon* and *Theme* series. Predictably, you'd be right. *Zoo Empire* is the follow-up to last year's *Restaurant Empire* (what do you mean you've never heard of it?), and draws several close parallels with the bafflingly successful *Zoo Tycoon*.

The game offers a freeform sandbox mode for you to design and build your own zoo in from scratch, with nothing but a wad of cash and a plot of land. There's also a career mode containing around 21 zoos for you to manage, the first few of which act as a rather drawn-out tutorial.

"Shit – fetch me a shovel."

This penguin is trained to make tea.

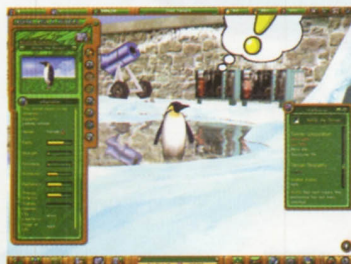Who wouldn't pay to see stripy horses?

It's the polar bear dentistry show!

Although it seems like there's a fair bit to get to grips with, it's actually nowhere near as deep as it first appears. Once you've marked out some pens, stuck some beasts in, hired some staff to look after them and erected some money-grabbing food outlets, there's not actually that much left to do.

The look is reminiscent of *Theme Park World* – colourful, but not particularly detailed – although the animals have been put together with some charm. This, coupled with the lack of any real challenge, makes the game a reasonable option for animal-loving kids, but not a lot more. And no, you don't get to watch elephants having it off...

PCZONE VERDICT

59

Not quite animal magic

REPLAY

Economies shudder as *Anthony Holden* rips the wrappers off the latest budget releases

DUNGEON SIEGE

■ £9.99 | Pub: Xplosiv | ETA: Out Now

BEST BUY

Caverns, treasure chests – you know the deal.

"Can't see a thing in these stupid helmets..."

DUNGEON SIEGE is primarily remembered for two things: its revolutionary, beautifully streamlined interface, and its pioneering use of donkeys. Apart from this, the game is very much a straightforward action RPG – a better-looking, party-based *Diablo*. In 3D.

As such, it suffers from many of the common problems of the genre, with a risible plot, dull fantasy setting and some deeply repetitive hack 'n' slash action. Indeed, the combat is nigh-on relentless, and those looking for a more story-based quest (in the *Baldur's Gate* mould) had better stay home. The real fun, of course, is to be found in the development of your characters and the attainment of ever more powerful combat abilities, and in this area *Dungeon Siege* delivers nicely.

However, what truly sets *DS* apart is the supreme level of polish and style. The graphics, stunning two years ago, still look sharp today, and the lovingly rendered environments are a constant pleasure to discover. Indeed, at this end of the RPG spectrum, where depth and complexity are sacrificed in favour of guts-out action, *Dungeon Siege* remains untouched, and is likely to stay that way until next year's sequel.

If it's action you want and you've got ten quid to spare, you can't go wrong.

PCZONE VERDICT `80`

HITMAN 2: SILENT ASSASSIN

■ £9.99 | Pub: Mastertronic | ETA: Out Now

"And here we have another fine example of Japanese screen printing."

HITMAN 2 is a tricky one to judge. On paper, it's the strongest of the series, improving virtually every aspect of the original game and not suffering from marketing pressures and timetables as did the third. On the other hand, it takes the stealth-assassin formula and squeezes out all the moral ambiguity and grittiness, rendering it far too timid to match its brutal premise. There's still plenty of fun to be had, with all the fancy dress disguises and huge sense of freedom, but it doesn't sit well with us regardless. It's technically solid, certainly, but the soulless, clichéd atmosphere may leave you wanting. *Splinter Cell* is a safer bet, though this is still better than most.

PCZONE VERDICT `70`

LEFTOVERS

▲ **PLEASE SIR, CAN I HAVE SOME MORE?**

Lots of leftover poop to get through this month, so no time for preamble. First up is *Tomb Raider: The Angel Of Darkness* (Mastertronic, £9.99, Out Now). Remembered primarily for its bugs, glitches and development cock-ups, this deeply average Lara Croft adventure has a few well-crafted moments but is mostly just for completists – 50 per cent.

Slightly more interesting is *Praetorians* (Mastertronic, £9.99, Out Now), a Roman-era RTS from the makers of *Commandos*. While certainly no match for the imminent *Rome: Total War*, *Praetorians* has plenty of redeeming qualities, and at this price may be worth a sniff – 67 per cent.

Needing no introduction next is *Wolfenstein 3D* (Xplosiv, £4.99, Out Now). While largely unplayable compared to today's efforts, this ancient FPS has a place in any serious games collection, the only caveat being that it's freely available on the Net – 49 per cent.

Next up is *Might And Magic IX* (Mastertronic, £9.99, Out Now). Observant readers will recall that *MM8* took a beating here a couple of months back, and part nine is only marginally better. The creaky old RPG series has been running on a waft of nostalgia for years now, and this horrendously dated entry deserves just 15 per cent.

MechWarrior 4: Mercenaries is next (Xplosiv, £9.99, Out Now), a standalone expansion that manages to capture everything that made this series great – including the superb online play. A steal for a tenner, we're giving it 78 per cent.

And finally, we have a Public Service Announcement – the following games must be avoided at all costs: *Delta Ops: Army Special Forces*, *Donald Trump's Real Estate Tycoon* and *US Most Wanted* (Xplosiv, £4.99 each, Out Now). Every one of these titles is an evil, cynical piece of corporate treachery designed to sucker unsuspecting shelf-browsers, each equally shit. In a better world they would not exist – 3 per cent each. ▼

Tomb Raider: arse.

Praetorians: worth a look.

Might And Magic IX: muck.

STRANGER

FEEDBACK

**Some love it, some hate it – but every bugger has an opinion.
Will Porter unleashes *Doom 3* – the marmite of modern PC gaming**

The nail extensions had taken on a mind of their own.

DOOM 3

REVIEWED ISSUE 146 (BY WILL PORTER), SCORE: 90%

What we said

"As the *News Of The World* might say, *Doom 3* is a stunning roller coaster ride to hell and back. Its pleasures are tempered by a few lapses in variety as the game progresses, but it's still gaming at its most vital."

What you said

Your review of *Daikatana 2*… Um, sorry, *Doom 3* was woefully lacking in constructive criticism. Nothing on that infernal torch, or the lowly two to five enemies at a time. *Doom* is not the full-on carnage old-skool shooter you compare it to. It has awful texturing close up, low poly counts and angular levels.

My opinion? It stops being frightening through repetition. Zero replayability – you even get bored replaying sections when you die. Good, but not worth the wait or inflated price.

Sham B

Come to daddy…

No matter how stunning a graphics engine is, it's nothing unless the game backs it up. And to my mind, *Doom 3* delivers in spades.

First things first: the flashlight. I like it. It adds a dimension to the gameplay that I've not seen in any other FPS before. I love the shock of switching your torch on, only to see a zombie poised to rip your throat out. I've tried out the duct tape mod (the one that enables you to have your torch and your shotgun active at the same time), and for me this just ruins the suspense of the game. Others may well disagree.

The second point I want to make is about how close to the original games the gameplay actually gets; hidden wall panels open in unlikely places, letting out all sorts of nasties throughout the game. This really is a throwback to the originals. After playing the likes of *Far Cry*, this could be seen as a step backwards, but I'd disagree. I suspect that those who were not brought up on the originals may feel a bit lost though.

Overall, this game has it all: gameplay by the bucketload, a genuinely creepy atmosphere and a flourishing MOD scene. Worth every single penny.

Edcourtenay

I was really disappointed with *Doom 3*. The graphics were amazing, but once that novelty had worn off, the gameplay was repetitive and boring, as were the locations.

I really think that gamers are being slightly biased with their opinions. The game has been four years in the making, and a lot of hype and excitement has been generated. But the main reason is just because this is id; the original was so legendary, so everyone wants to love it. If this game didn't have the *Doom* label on it, would everyone still think it was so great?

Jon_007

Doom 3 doesn't appear to break any new ground at first glance, but like *Quake 3 Arena* beforehand, I believe it'll be a slow burner and far outlive the competition.

Yes, we've seen flashlights before, but did we ever need them? Sure, there are no new weapon designs, but I know I've never played a game with such a perfect balance before. Most shooters will have you defaulting to the most powerful weapon in your armoury no matter which enemy you're facing, but *Doom 3's* arsenal needs planning ahead for proper use. The same can be said for the set pieces and level design. Visually, the levels do get rather samey after a while, but numerous single- and multi-player mods are assured, which makes *Doom 3* an investment rather than a bit of throw away fun. 90 per cent is too low a score.

Reverend_Joseph

Doom 3 is the perfect example of style over content. Big scares and lots of eye candy, but it ain't gonna change the world. The only thing being changed is your knickers…

I realise that there's very little change from the original's style of gameplay and this was intentional – but that was over ten years ago. We're more intelligent gamers these days and want something more. Don't we?

*HRGiger_*

Having played the original *Doom*s to death and now experiencing *Doom 3*, in my opinion it still feels like I'm playing a *Doom* game. If the franchise was injected with too much depth, I think it'd detract from it immeasurably: it's exactly what a *Doom* sequel should be. Honestly, gamers today! It's all 'variety this' and 'AI that': not in my day! (Mumble, mumble, don't know they're born, grumble, grumble…)

Plump Organ

Will's comment

At a truthful, conservative estimate, I'd say that about 49 per cent of people contacting *ZONE* Towers about *Doom 3* reckon it's the best thing since sliced zombie. Meanwhile, another 49 per cent think it's good at first but ultimately disappointing; and the other 2 per cent is Wandy, who's condemned it as "all technology and no game".

My take? Well, I make no secret that I enjoyed the game immensely, but I can quite understand people's problems with it. In my opinion, if you treat it exactly as it was designed (as a scary, mindless shooter with sparkling technology rather than gameplay innovation), and *not* as a failed FPS revolution, then there's an absolutely stellar game in there, and one that all PC gamers must play.
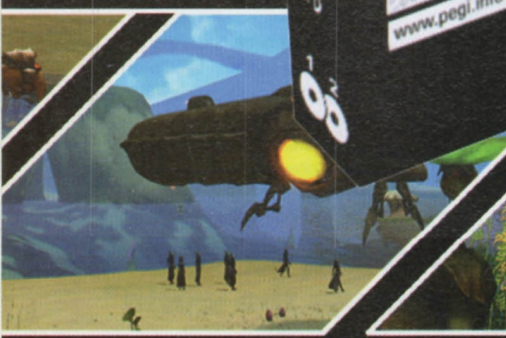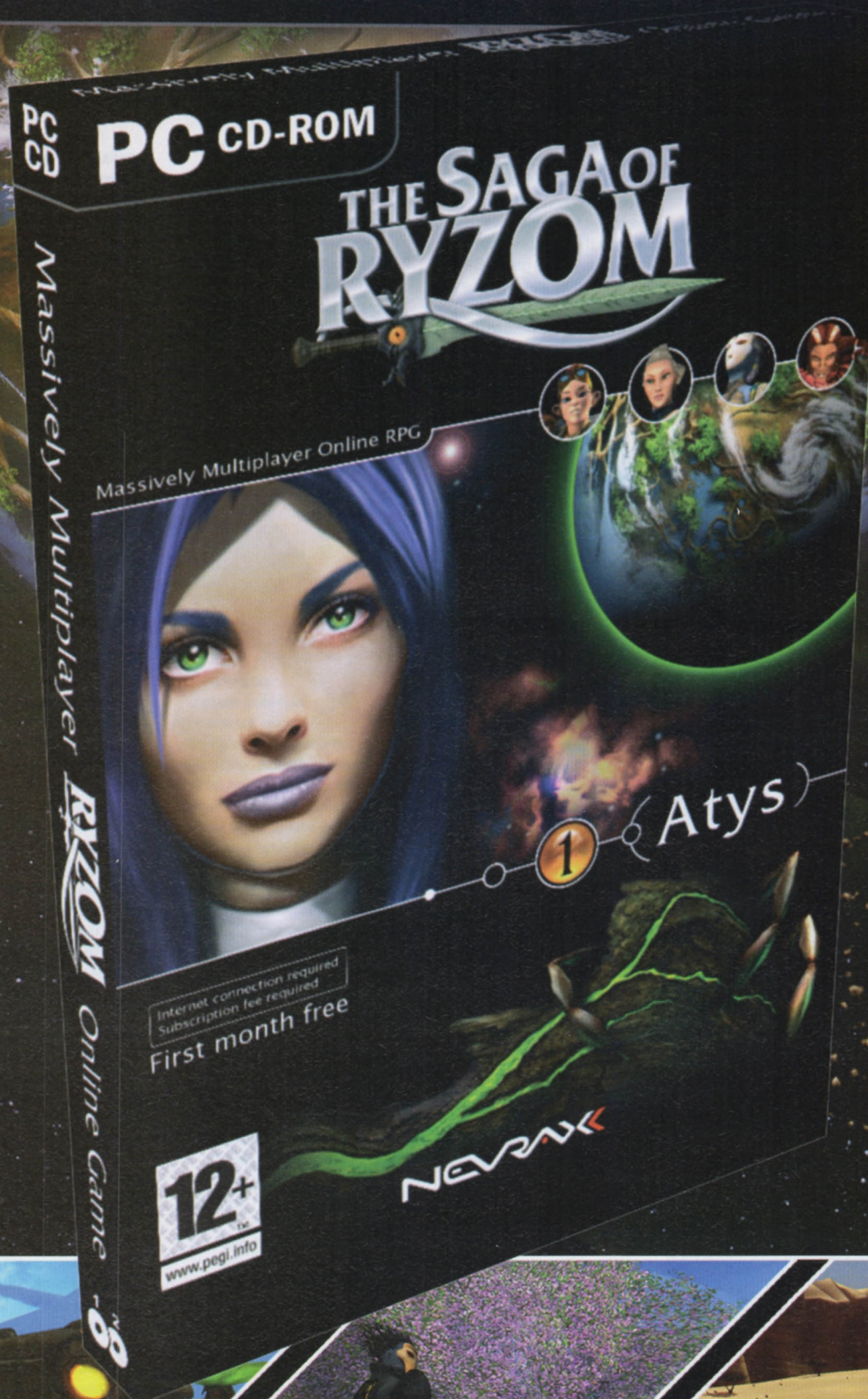
As for the torch argument, I say this: play the game as it was designed and stop moaning. I know it makes no sense that he can't hold both gun and torch at the same time – but neither does having hell unleashed on Mars, now does it? PCZ

"Doom 3 has big scares and a lot of eye candy, but it ain't gonna change the world"*

HRGIGER_ ISN'T IMPRESSED WITH THE GAMING GIANT

ONLINE ZONE

STRUCK OFF

■ **ONLINE EDITOR:** Paul Presley

▲ Gah. Pfft. Pshaw and, indeed, chuh. Like a recurring nightmare or a French exchange student, we just can't get rid of *Counter-Strike* no matter how hard we try. Shunned from Fight Clubs, barely touched by the staff, the damn thing just refuses to die, no matter how many AimBots we point in its direction.

It's back again, this time on the *Half-Life 2* Source engine and, honour bound as we are to stay abreast of all the developments in the world of online gaming, we've plunged back into the world of terrorists, bomb site As and bunny hopping. Sigh. Someone throw us a lifeline before it's too late.

Of course, for some *CS* never went away. The world of professional gaming still marches to the Valve-based drum, as you can see in our exclusive report from the CPL Extreme World Championship. There's good money to be had from knowing how to properly chuck a flashbang into a room of virtual men.

So why does it have this enduring grip on the planet's gaming fraternity? It can't be because it's the most friendly to casual gamers, with a horrible interface and bizarrely counter-intuitive commands. Neither is it suited for effective teamplay, with precious little in the way of squad communication possible or tactical know-how needed. Each map pretty much boils down to one or two bottleneck areas and every round plays out almost identically.

But I suppose those are the very reasons it's so popular. If you're going to play for big money prizes, the last thing you need are newbies getting in the way and stopping your relentless drive towards dominance. I guess we'll just have to keep playing 'lesser' games such as *Joint Ops*, *Battlefield Vietnam* ▼ and *UT2004* instead. Poor us.

PROJECT HULL BREACH

FIRST *HALF-LIFE 2* TOTAL CONVERSION IS UNDERWAY

WHILE THE *Counter-Strike: Source* beta gives people a chance to taste the *Half-Life 2* engine in action, and the main event draws ever closer to arriving, the modding community hasn't wasted any time in showing off its wares. Chief amongst the few to have 'gone public' about their *Half-Life 2* Source code experiments is *Project Hull Breach*, a UK-based offering that is hoping to break new ground in the way mods and total conversions are made.

What sets *Project Hull Breach* apart from most mods (other than it being for *Half-Life 2*) is that initially it was designed hand-in-hand with the input from the gaming community. The design brief was made public and eager gamers could have their say on how they'd like to see things developed over time.

On top of that, the core team has been bolstered by input from professional game designers, musicians, digital artists and

The first community-developed mod?
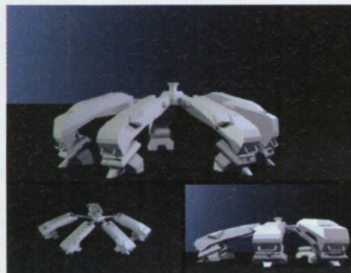
The 3D modelling is handled by professional artists.

Player death means reincarnation as a Covert Recon Bot.

even music label Avionix Records providing sound recording functions.

The TC bases itself around the theme of space marines and boarding actions, with various sets of human colonies battling to control giant spaceships and military installations. The team is making use of Source's variable gravity functions to produce maps that can go seamlessly from the zero-g of space to the artificial gravity of ships and stations.

Alongside the general design blueprint, *PHB* features a number of smaller touches that hope to show off just how much thought and

attention to detail is going into the project. Take player death for instance. Rather than having dead soldiers just watching on from limbo à la *Counter-Strike*, instead you'll respawn as a Covert Recon Bot. These small spidery machines are akin to those in *Minority Report*, and able to send live video feeds to still active players thanks to Source's screen within a screen technology.

Then there's the visor options. When it's closed you'll be presented with all sorts of HUD information, but you'll barely be able to hear anything outside of your spacesuit. Flip the visor up and although you'll lose the visual
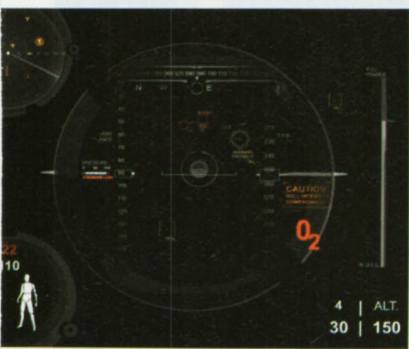
The HUD view is optional.

Most of the artwork is still at the concept stage.

Spacesuits will be varied.

"What sets *PHB* apart is that it was designed hand-in-hand with the input from the community"

cues, you'll get a much greater audio take on your surroundings.

Even better than that, admins have the option to run the game as a 'persistent character' server, meaning you can build up skills, open greater tech trees and build a reputation via the central *PHB* server.

If you want to join the *PHB* community and have a say in the future progress of this promising and ambitious project, check out www.hull-breach.com for all the details.

Looking For Sailors

SEGA ANNOUNCES *SHENMUE* MMOG FOR PC

■ **Publisher:** Sega
■ **Developer:** JC Entertainment
■ **ETA:** Spring 2005
■ **Website:** www.sega.com

All that *Street Fighter* had an effect.

That's quite some static build-up.

The 1980s. When fashion ruled.

TAKING THE award for the most bizarre licence to cross into MMO territory, the Japanese branch of the mighty Sega empire has revealed that popular Dreamcast title *Shenmue* is to be reborn as an online game.

Shenmue was the brainchild of game design guru Yu Suzuki, telling the story of a young martial arts enthusiast in the 1980s searching for the killers of his father by hanging around a lot of docks, driving forklift trucks and occasionally smacking people in the face and shins until they talked.

Fans of the series were left dangling after the ongoing saga ended abruptly, the story yet to reach a conclusion. Although an ending was always promised, it seems that the tale is to branch off in a whole new direction, with thousands of players getting involved in 80s Chinese action, playing as militants with magical powers and highly refined martial arts skills.

Quite how any of this is going to work is still a mystery, and we're unlikely to get any answers before 2005 at the earliest. We await further news with keen interest.

WEBGAME OF THE MONTH

WHY PAY TO PLAY WHEN THE INTERWEB PROVIDES FUN FOR FREE?

PEASANT'S QUEST
(WWW.HOMESTARRUNNER.COM) OK, we've basically been looking for an excuse to get top webtoon Homestar Runner into the mag for a while now, and finally our dreams have been answered like a Strong Bad email. *Peasant's Quest*! I'm pretty much going to turn this one over to the trailer for the game (also on the Homestar Runner website) as it does a far better job of selling it than I ever could…

'A real long time ago, in the peasant kingdom of Peasantry, some people lived… IN FEAR! You are Rather Dashing, a peasant wearing short pants who returns from vacation to find his thatched roof cottage… BURNINATED!!! You swear revenge and embark on an incredible journey to vanquish the Burninator once and for all! From the company that made that game *Trogdor*, and that game *Rabbit Algebra*, comes a graphical text adventure of rather large proportions. Videlectrix programmers have actually been hard at work bringing this epic adventure to life. Make your way through the lush 16-colour landscapes of Peasantry using our text command interface. Featuring 2-bit mono PC internal speaker sound. Can one peasant wearing short pants save the countryside from certain burnination? You decide! Coming soon to a 286 CGA-enabled PC near you!'

Go. Now. Watch the trailer. Play the game. Defeat the Burninator. Then enjoy the rest of Homestar Runner's frankly insane content.

Trogdor is waiting!

From the guys at Videlectrix.

CLAN DIARY

SCEE

SCEE

ANNE ROGERS, aka Jaffy
www.scee-clan.co.uk

Welcome to the world of girl gaming. We are 'Stalk, Confront, Engage, Eliminate' (SCEE), one of the leading European female *Counter-Strike* teams, comprising girls from up and down the UK, and beyond.

The team was formed over 18 months ago, from most of the National UK Girls team, and many of the original members still remain. The past six months, however, have been the most exciting period for the clan by far . Taking on several new recruits, myself included, SCEE Ladies aimed to build on the success they had already created for themselves at the European Cyber Games tournament in Paris last year.

Keeping the ball rolling, our hard training schedule ensured us a place at the E-Sports World Cup 2004 in Poitiers, France. The ladies in attendance were Cathy, Happy-Bunny, Bint, Logic, Starreh (all pictured) and myself, Jaffy. However, a poor performance left us disappointed, with a resolve to do better.

"The financial strain of competing at international level is immense"

Meet the gang.

Looking for a new way to approach training, we recruited Mia, a Danish girl with plenty of experience of international tournaments. It's interesting to note the different style of play that Danish players adopt, and we've managed to integrate this well into our tactics. Also, our recent partnership with Creative Labs will make a huge difference to our in-game performance, with the provision of Sound Blaster Audigy 2 ZS sound cards.

So, what's next for us, from this point? Our aim is to conquer the European female *Counter-Strike* scene, and to raise the profile of girl gamers in the UK. We plan to attend a number of LAN events before the year is out, both national and international tournaments. A team of students and mothers, the financial strain of competing at international level is, quite frankly, immense – this is what stops the progression of many worthy teams in the scene. However, we are currently looking into a female-only LAN event in Sweden held later in the year, as well as competing in mixed tournaments in the UK. We relish the challenge.

"Bloody graffiti."

Looks like rain.

LEGEND OF MIR ARRIVES

RECORD-BREAKING MMOG TO HIT EURO SHORES

IF THERE'S ONE thing the Asian gaming territories know how to do really well, it's produce MMORPGs. *Legend Of Mir 3* is the latest to try its luck with a European distribution and if the figures from Korea are anything to go by, it's going to be a busy launch.

The game of demonic forces, classic fantasy and siege weaponry has attracted so many players in the east that it even warranted an entry in the *Guinness Book Of Records* for the highest number of simultaneous players – over one million.

The European roll-out is due to happen this September through Bradford-based Quality Games Online.

- **Publisher:** QGO
- **Developer:** Wemade Entertainment
- **ETA:** September
- **Website:** www.legendofmir.net

Mmm, fried roadrunner. Delicious.

STATZONE

A LOOK AT THE DATA SHAPING YOUR ONLINE WORLD

ALL DATA SUPPLIED BY:

CSPORTS.net

TOP FIVE *CALL OF DUTY* GAME MODES (WEEK ENDING AUGUST 11, 2004)

AVG. NO. OF PLAYERS PER DAY / NO. OF HOURS PLAYED (Thousands)

- Team DM
- Search And Destroy
- Deathmatch
- Head-Quarters
- Retrieval

KEY ■ AVG NO. PLAYERS PER DAY (Thousands) ■ NO.OF HOURS PLAYED (Thousands)
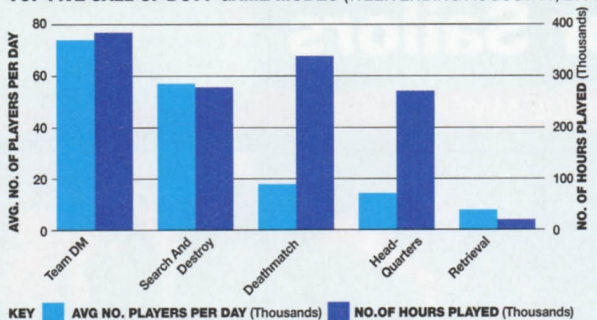
TOP FIVE *UT2004* GAME MODES/MODS (WEEK ENDING AUGUST 11, 2004)

AVG. PLAYERS PER DAY (Thousands) / NO. OF HOURS PLAYED (Thousands)

- Onslaught
- Capture the flag
- Deathmatch
- Team Game
- Invasion

KEY ■ AVG. PLAYERS PER DAY (Thousands) ■ NUMBER OF HOURS PLAYED (Thousands)
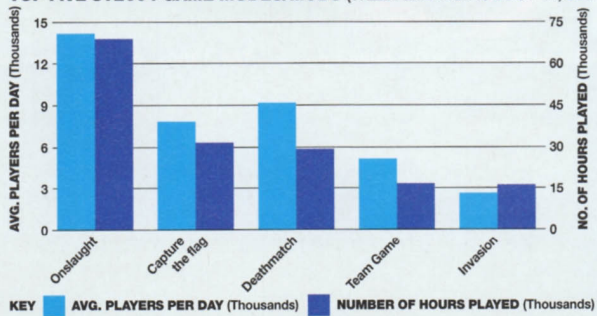
TOP TEN MOST 'ACTIVE' GAMES (WEEK ENDING AUGUST 11, 2004)

NUMBER OF 'ACTIVE' MODS AND GAME MODES

Game	No.
QUAKE III ARENA	104
HALF-LIFE	74
TRIBES	59
QUAKE II	49
TRIBES 2	48
BATTLEFIELD 1942	47
UT2004	43
U.TOURNAMENT	43
S.O.F	21
CALL OF DUTY	20

KEY ■ NO. OF 'ACTIVE' MODS & GAME MODES
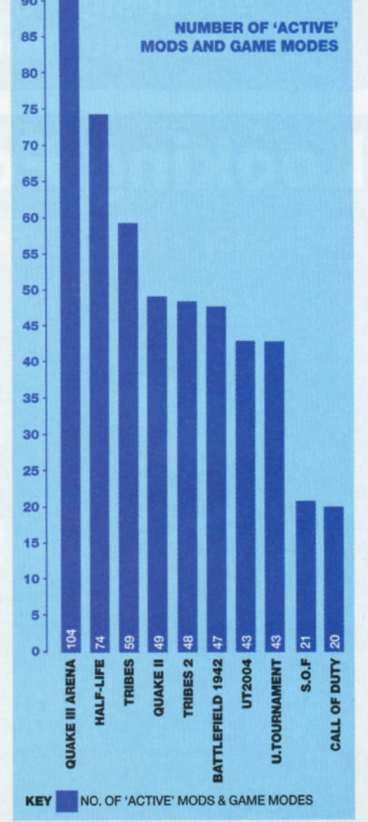
> **"The first tale had a very rural feel to it. This time, players will have both city and rural areas, which makes it a more well-rounded experience"**
>
> **ANDREW TEPPER,** *A TALE IN THE DESERT 2*

WELCOME TO MY WORLD...

Andrew Tepper – A Tale in the Desert 2

WHEN EGENESIS decided to virtually remake Egypt for *A Tale In The Desert*, it didn't do things by halves. Rather, it created a huge, geographically-rich land that took at least 12 hours to cross corner to corner. Now, over a year and a half later, the second chapter of Egypt is opening with the aptly named *A Tale In The Desert: The Second Telling*.

"The first tale had a very rural feel to it," explains CEO of eGenesis, Andrew Tepper. "This time, players have both city and rural areas, which will make it a more well-rounded experience because there's something in many of us, whatever it might be, that needs both environments."

In fact, this time around new players are likely to start in more built-up areas. This is because all crafting equipment needs to be created inside workshop-like compounds which, when grouped together, give the area a more town-like feel.

One thing that eGenesis has done to encourage the formation of these more urban areas is create devices called chariot stops. These work rather like ancient bus stops, where you can instantaneously travel to other areas of Egypt – so long as you're prepared to cool your heels and wait a few minutes for the next chariot.

"Travelling times in the first *Tale* were too long, and we wanted to encourage a faster pace to *The Second Telling*," continues Andrew. "Egypt's size was a double-edged sword. It let us do all sorts of interesting geographically-based content, but new people often didn't know where best to settle because there was so much land. By encouraging the formation of new cities with the new travel system – which includes being able to run twice as fast on roads – and allowing settling much close together, we've got the best of both worlds."

Alongside the new environmental textures and vegetation system that bedecks Egypt, with over 200,000 unique trees and plants, one of the most noticeable things about Egypt mk II are the sound effects. Now, when you start your distaff spinning or light up your kiln, you get satisfying creaks and roars. Altars hum with religious majestic, hidden cicada nests sing in the depths of the desert – in fact, the world comes alive before your eyes and ears. PZ

■ Publisher: eGenesis **■ Developer:** eGenesis
■ ETA: September **■ Website:** www.atitd2.com

Friend: Batsphinx Health: 100%

$ 2570

Will discovers the joys of trying to park in Brixton.

Hide and seek goes extreme.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- *Counter-Strike* returns
- On the *HL2* Source engine
- Which means improved physics
- And vastly better graphics

CV — VALVE

VALVE SOFTWARE

Since you've probably never heard of them before, here's a quick history…

1998 *Half-Life*. Remember that one? Crowbars in space or something

1999 Franchising abounds as *Half-Life: Opposing Force* tells the same story from the other side

2000 *Counter-Strike* pretty much takes over the internet

2004 After much fannying about, *CS: Condition Zero* provides singletons with a chance to join the fun

Roll out the barrels…

COUNTER-STRIKE: SOURCE

It's back and it's running on the *Half-Life 2* engine. *Paul Presley* is recalled to active duty, ducking the bouncing barrels along the way

IT DIDN'T take long. By our estimates, the beta code for *Counter-Strike: Source* had been released for three days before someone discovered a way to cheat. The more things change, the more they stay the same.

The release of an early glimpse of the future of *Counter-Strike* was met with rabid excitement from most quarters (except Hastings, see Cafe Culture, right), not least at *ZONE* where games of the seminal terrorist/counter-terrorist shooter played almost as formative a part of our gaming history as *Quake*.

GO, GO, GO
In order to test the waters, Valve sent out the updated version of the legendary Dust map to invited beta testers and selected cyber cafes around the world. First impressions were impressive, with the old magic flowing back like nostalgic waves in a choppy sea of rose-tinted history.

Elite. Highly trained. And with an average age of about 14.

Not much appears to have changed. The map layout is the same and the weapon loadouts identical (although a handy 'auto-buy' feature and the option to repeat your last shopping spree are

"Dammit man, this is no time to lose a contact lens."

"The old magic flows back like nostalgic waves in a choppy sea of rose-tinted history"

Friend: Batsphinx Health: 61%
: Fire in the hole!
$ 0
0   2:44   35 | 30

The central tunnel still provides most of each round's action.

Counter-Terrorists Win!
"Damn, I just washed this."

Object physics are fun!

Only two character models for now gives a weird 'Close Army' feel.

welcome additions). Indeed, apart from the ability to knock over barrels, send tyres rolling down slopes and vastly improved ragdoll physics hinting at the shape of *Half-Lives* to come, it's pretty much the same old *Counter-Strike* that you probably know and love.

VOX POPULI

Naturally, everyone has their own take and opinions differ wildly. Token office northerner, Jamie Sefton, has been wandering around the building for the better part of two weeks now, proclaiming to anyone within earshot that "t'physics add a whole new dimension to t'game. T'weapons now have a far meatier feel to them and it all feels reet more refined and balanced. Eee, I tells yer, Valve 'as done a reet grand job on this 'un." Which I think means he likes it.

Others aren't so sure. Young Will has been scampering about the place, getting underfoot and whinnying that nothing's changed. "It's all in his mind," he claims of Jamie's deliberations. "It's exactly the same as before but with bouncier barrels. Cup of tea anyone? Need anything from the shop?" He's a good boy really.

Oddly, they're probably both right. For a lot of players, a beefier-sounding weapon discharge and a few ragdoll physics is all it will take to breathe a new lease of life into a game, enough to
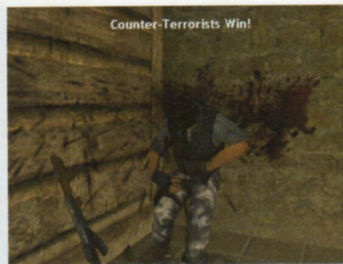
recharge previously flagging batteries and rekindle a dying fire.
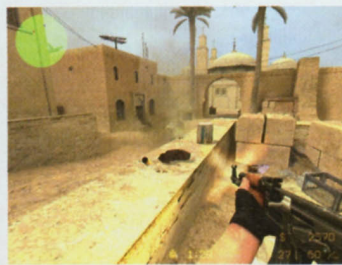
DUSTING OFF

The problem for most of today's gamers is that if that's all that changes, then it won't take long for *Counter-Strike* veterans to hop over to the upgrade and make the game as unfriendly for the casual gamer as the existing *Counter-Strike* is today – and that would be a shame. But without some serious upgrades to the gameplay

mechanics, the whole thing becomes just a technical exercise.

Indeed, the discovery of an errant window ledge providing a way to jump on top of the map and see everything at once, simply highlights that the core problem of the way *C-S* is at the moment has yet to be addressed in any meaningful way. While it's a safe bet that Valve will remove such exploits from the final release, the mere fact that players will happily cheat away and not feel any remorse for ruining every match simply shows how badly things need changing.

WELL DONE ALL

But then nowhere has Valve claimed that *C-S: Source* was supposed to change anything. All along this has been touted as classic *Counter-Strike* with a new engine. So maybe wanting it to be anything else is missing the point. This is Valve's reward to the current *C-S* community for sticking with the game all these years, for taking it to unfathomable heights of popularity and for using it to lead the way in professional gaming's march towards mass acceptance. From that perspective, who's to begrudge them a few bouncing barrels? PCZ

Friend: Batsphinx Health: 100%
190   2:45   90 | 90

A bizarre bug resulted in this odd '60s action TV-style angle.

The Web Frenzy cafe, Hastings. *Counter-Strike* capital of the world.

RICHIE SHOEMAKER HEADS FOR HASTINGS TO TRY OUT THE *COUNTER-STRIKE: SOURCE* BETA

Internet gaming establishments rely on *Counter-Strike* and Valve knows it, which is why the *Half-Life* developer insists that internet cafes pay a subscription (per machine) for them to offer 'the world's number one online game' for customers to play. The initial release of the *Counter-Strike: Source* beta was in many ways then a payback of sorts, that meant if you wanted to be the first to see and play *Counter-Strike* running on the *Half-Life 2* engine, you had to visit an Official Valve Cyber Cafe.

"I'd say *Counter-Strike* makes up 85 per cent of the games played here, so the subscription is worth it. But it's a high price to pay," says Tony Harding, owner of the Web Frenzy gaming cafe in Hastings (www.web frenzy.co.uk). "If more software companies followed the Steam model it would kill us as a business."

Of course, I'd popped by not to talk shop, but to be one of the first to play *Counter-Strike: Source*. Admittedly, I was a day late for the 'launch', but the queue to have a pop with what is essentially a test run for *Counter-Strike 2* was surprisingly thin. In fact, I turned up, handed over £1.50 and was within a minute logged in to Steam and ready to go.

Of course, being beta code, *C-S: Source* is not without some irregularities, but seeing as I'd not played *C-S* in over two years I failed to notice any bugs. Clearly I'd missed something, since those around me were happy playing vanilla *CS* rather than this spanking new version.

"Some people have travelled up to 50 miles to play *C-S: Source* and the release has been well received," says Harding, before adding rather tellingly that "most of the main *Counter-Strike* crew in my centre have gone back to playing the original *Counter-Strike 1.6* and *Condition Zero* until the bugs are fixed, though."

"Dear Mum. Having a lovely time in Vana'diel. The weather is gorgeous, the locals are friendly and the wildlife is spectacular (if a little rough on the armour)."

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Square Enix
PUBLISHER Ubisoft
WEBSITE www.playonline.com/ff11eu/
ETA September

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Over half a million subscribers can't be wrong
- Traditional *Final Fantasy*-style combat in real-time
- Chocobo riding
- Packed with content

CV   SQUARE ENIX

SQUARE ENIX

You may remember them from such games and films as *Final Fantasy VII*, *Final Fantasy X-2* and *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within*...

1991 *Final Fantasy IV* proved the breakthrough hit, setting out themes and styles forever imitated, but never bettered.

1997 The defining moment for the series came with *Final Fantasy VII*, blending cutting-edge animation and storylines like never before.

2001 A sojourn into the world of films with *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within*. Although boasting quality visuals, it suffered from a dull story and no chocobos.

2004 With *Final Fantasy XI Online* already notching up over half a million subscribers in Japan and the US, Europe finally gets a taste.

A walk on the wild side in...

FINAL FANTASY XI ONLINE

Paul Presley discovers a whole new world of adventure (and new, fun things to do with fireworks) in the press trip to end them all...

I HAVE SEEN the future of press trips, my friends, and it's online. I've been to many places, seen many things and performed many 'acts' in the name of professional games journalism during my time. However, combining death sports, Japanese street festivals, a wedding and a massive 30-man ruck with a giant snow wolf in heat probably ranks as one of my more surreal afternoons out of the office.

The idea, from Square Enix's point of view, was to take handfuls of journalists from around the world and grant them access to in-game characters more powerful than you can possibly imagine. Then, the plan was to make them meet up in the virtual world of Vana'diel and show them the sights, encounter a few of the new monsters, see some of the new game

features and then send us back into the real world with a new appreciation of the online iteration of the *Final Fantasy* series – in time for the official European launch this September. The developer hadn't counted on the British contingent though.

The tour began with each of us logging on from Square's London office, inhabiting our initial characters inside an enclosed prison space (taking no chances there). Strutting peacocks all, admiring our shiny armour, our giant weapons of
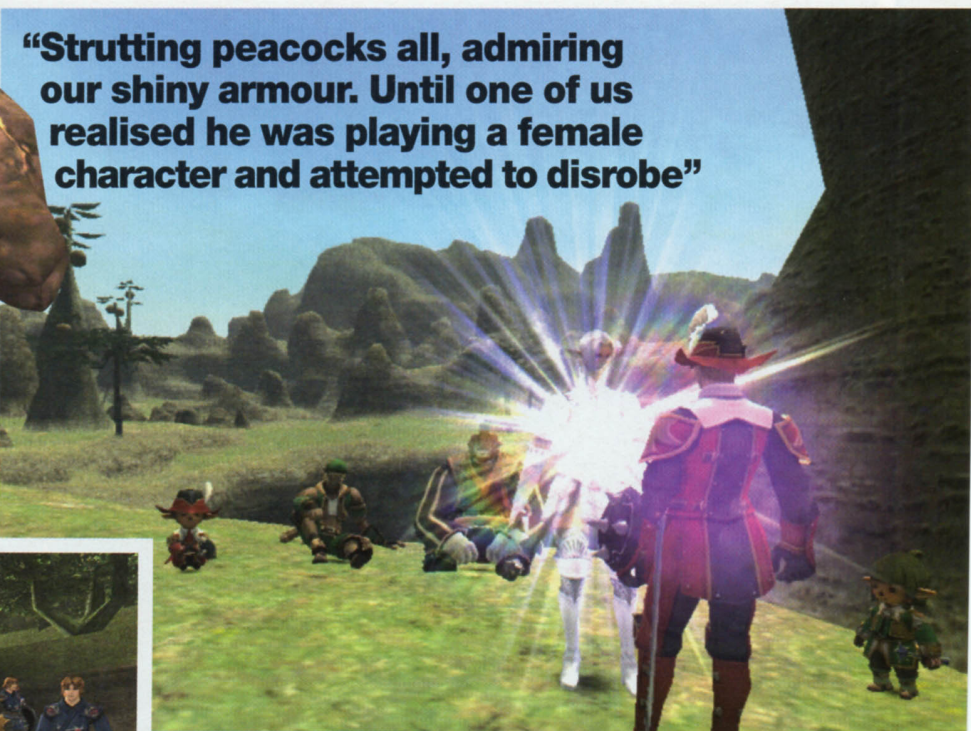
That's a real feather in his cap (ho ho).

"Listen, does my tail look big in this?"

"Darling, the pigtails are so you. But those earrings..."

Weddings are spectacular affairs, especially when the bride's heart explodes.

The Moogles act as guides, telling you when you have pumpkins on your head.

messy destruction and our general impressiveness. Until one of our five-strong number realised he was playing a female character and promptly attempted to disrobe – not the wisest choice a woman can make in a prison setting. Down to his/her skimpies. Just as the rest of the world's press logged in.

FLARING UP
Embarrassment soon gave way to mischief as we discovered the presence of fireworks in our inventory lists. These were put there originally to provide a glittering climax to the wedding service that would mark the end of the tour. However, they were soon to find an altogether less salubrious use as we spied a pair of cutesy midget-like Tarutarus trying not to attract attention at the back.

Maybe it was the prison setting. Maybe it was repressed feelings of nerdish revenge for being bullied at school. Maybe we were just bored waiting for things to get started. But before you could say "pick on someone your own size", the wee fellas had bottle rockets stuck on their heads and were set alight in a shower of colourful explosions. I've never felt so ashamed of myself.

The arrival of the official tour guides soon curtailed any horseplay and after sorting us into groups least likely to cause trouble, we were teleporting off to see some of the sights Vana'diel's new lands

can offer. First stop was a nearby chocobo stable in order to show off the game's mounts. Bad move. "Chocobos!" shouted the over-excited FF lovers in the crowd, before jumping into their saddles and darting off in every possible direction like mad jockeys, leaving the hapless guide standing in a cloud of dust and feathers.

Slowly, the loose cannons were rounded up and a crash course in FFXI's elemental and crystal system followed. Crystals are the lifeblood of the world, forming a basis for the game's crafting system, as well as bestowing rank on your home nation. At heart, FFXI is a game

about world conquest, with the four dominant nations – the Kingdom of San D'oria, the Republic of Bastok, the Federation of Windurst and the Grand Duchy of Jeuno – all fighting for territory. Not fighting each other, mind you. The nation whose adventurers kill the most monsters in a region then gains control of the area, bestowing extra benefits on its citizens. It's no PlanetSide, but it does provide a reason beyond level grinding for random combat.

CASTING ABOUT
The tour moved on in traditional package-holiday style to a boat excursion, giving us a chance to try out the fishing aspect of the game. Mini-games like fishing have always played a big part in Japanese-style RPGs (most notably in the Zelda series on Nintendo's consoles), so the inclusion here is no surprise.

There's not much to it however, other than baiting your hook, finding a spot and waiting for a bite. To compensate for the lack of interaction though, Square has made fishing a unique aspect of the

game's crafting, with items required for construction sometimes only found through a spot of angling. There's even an official fishing guild to join should you want to make a (virtual) career out of it.

NO LAUGHING MATTER
The first of the big monsters, end of dungeon bosses in all but name, was up next, initially causing fits of giggles when a floating eyeball with chicken legs started taunting us. However, our smirks were soon wiped clean off our faces when a giant skeletal dragon wyrm was summoned into view and proceeded to wipe us all off the face of the Earth as though he were picking lint out from between his toes.

All except for one of the little Tarutarus, who'd got lost in the tunnel behind us. This was his big chance to get revenge for our behaviour earlier, to humiliate us all by slaying the dragon and show us that size isn't everything. The Tarutaru charged in. The dragon wyrm raised an eyebrow. The Tarutaru gave a high-pitched war cry and plunged in for the kill. The dragon wyrm

There's never a roman candle about when you need one.
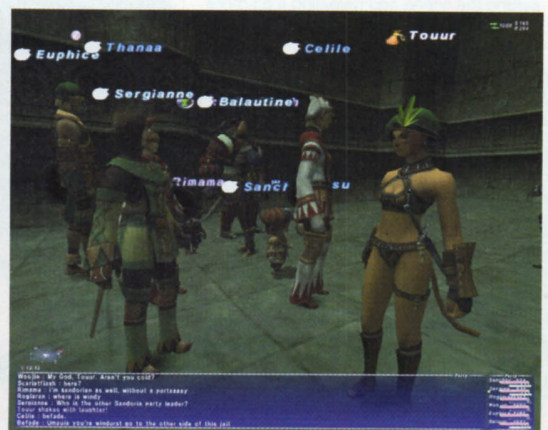
"I think you misunderstood me when I said dress hornily."

Typical. You can't take British tourists anywhere without them causing trouble.

that appears to have a larger and more arcane rulebook to follow than golf.

At the base level, two teams based on players' nation standings face off in a section of the world, wait for the opening ceremony to begin, then belt the living hell out of each other until the closing ceremony. In between pounding anyone not wearing the national flag, you can also try to throw 'petras' (obtained by digging about in the dirt) into randomly appearing 'gates', although you have to kill someone first to be granted 'breach status' to do so. For my part, the experience seemed to involve running away a lot as gangs of fellow tourists turned on us, no doubt incensed by our Tarutaru-baiting earlier. What goes around…

With the match finally over and a score somehow reached, everyone changed into their best bib and tucker to attend the tour finale – a wedding between two gaily-dressed volunteers. I couldn't see it lasting beyond a few weeks. Marriages of convenience you see. Never a good idea.

Still, everyone clapped on cue, said encouraging things and told the bride how lovely she looked in her flowing white, er, armour. A pose for the cameras, fireworks let off by those that hadn't wasted them on comedy opportunities earlier and the press trip came to an end. The future, my friends. Beats getting drunk in some East European strip club I suppose. PCZ

used him to pick a bit of warrior boot that had got stuck between his teeth before snapping him in two. So much for heroes.

LIGHT UP THE SKY
Barely able to believe the group of imbeciles she'd been stuck with, our guide became somewhat less communicative from then on, simply showing us the sights, pointing at things and watching the clock tick ever onwards towards the end.

Another couple of bosses followed, with each of our performances rivalling the next in terms of shambolic displays of tactical awareness. Eventually, we joined forces with the other groups for the aforementioned 30-man face-off with a giant snow wolf. At least here, we had strength in numbers and eventually triumphed – although one suspects we had outside help.

What the boss battles did show was quite how much 'story' is important to the *FFXI Online* experience. Each encounter is bookended by animation sequences, setting the scene and revealing a bit more of Vana'diel's history to boot. These

animations also occur during most of the game's quests, big or small, designed to provide a context for the events beyond mere game devices. Hopefully, this means you should feel more involved in your world as a result.

This is also helped along by the game's live team, running regular in-game events, often mirroring those in the real world. As the tour continued, we stopped off at a nearby town to enjoy a nightly firework show that was designed to celebrate the real-life Japanese Summer Festival. Special quests and items are made available only during these times –

such as the fancy Yukata clothing we were provided with – giving players further reason to stay subscribed to the world and build their characters.

TILL RESPAWN US DO PART
Two fairly recent additions to the game are Ballista and weddings. The former is the official sport of choice in Vana'diel, and one of the few ways players can enter a PvP environment without facing any major penalties for being on the losing end. Usually only open to experienced characters, the tour guides nonetheless gave us a chance to partake in the game

"Aaargh! The sky is exploding! Aaargh!"

Foreign cuisine, you see. Always going to lead to a dodgy tummy.

Playing games for money at the Cyberathlete Professional League. It's like the Olympics, but sitting down.

GAME ON

The world of professional gaming has never been so lucrative. *Philip Wride*, member of the UK-based 4Kings Intel clan, reports from the world tournament organised by the CPL

With seven years of experience, the CPL leads the way.

THIS SUMMER

has been one of the busiest ever seasons for the rapidly expanding world of E-Sports, with several major international competitions having sorted the men from the boys (and the girls from the ladies), with plenty more just over the horizon. Plus, with the announcement from the globally-based Cyberathlete Professional League (CPL) of a million-dollar world tour in 2005, things are only set to continue to look up for this most exciting of industries.

If you're a part of this phenomenon it's an exciting time – and with that kind of money around, if you're just checking out the scene for the first time, you should be starting to see what all the fuss is about. The most recent mainstream competition was the CPL Extreme World Championships

in Texas, with the UK's hopes resting on the shoulders of two teams. I'm a member of one of them – 4Kings Intel – and we're one of the oldest global teams of all, dating back to 1997 and the days of *QuakeWorld*.

LET YOUR COLOURS SHINE

CPL events happen twice a year in the USA, one in summer and one just before Christmas, with the summer event usually being the larger of the two. This year saw a new location for the gathering, the unfortunately named Gaylord Resort in Grapevine, Texas. Expectations for a summer spectacular were

high, especially as this was the first time the prize purse at a CPL event had reached $250,000. The money was to be split between four competitions, though *Counter-Strike* had the biggest portion of the pie with $100,000 in cash up for grabs – and the winning team taking home a cool $30,000.

The CPL is seen by many as *the* competition to play in, and is arguably the most prestigious event in the tournament circuit. It's like the gaming equivalent of the World Cup. 4Kings Intel has been a regular attendee at CPL events and its progress is followed by the whole UK community. This event was no

"Every match played a part in how much money teams could win"

The Swedes show off their phat loot.

The Gaylord resort hosted the teams.

THE CPL

SO JUST WHO IS THE FIFA OF INTERNATIONAL GAMING?

The CPL has been established for over seven years and is generally regarded as the world's top international event organiser. For the past few years it has held major events throughout Europe and the USA, with qualifiers being held across the globe. It recently announced its World Tour for 2005 with a total prize purse of over one million dollars. Tour stops will include the UK, Chile, Brazil, Japan and a number of other locations, with the finals taking place in December 2005 in the USA.

What better way to relax than with more games?

The spectator sport of the future?

---

different, with the team representing Britain in *Counter-Strike* and *Call Of Duty* – the newly introduced CPL tournament game.

INTO THE FIRE

The tournament itself was housed in one of the convention halls of the hotel, with a large BYOC (Bring Your Own Computer) area and specific zones for the tournament games. Not only this, but a huge Intel stage had been erected to showcase the firm's products and to provide a platform for the scheduled entertainment, with a number of other sponsor booths scattered around the hall.

It was an overwhelming feeling walking in for the first time, and not just because of the immense size of the place and the sheer number of PCs under one roof. A constant stream of jubilant screams of success and angry shouts of defeat ricocheted from one end of the hall to the other. With cold hard cash on the line, every match played a part in how much money the teams could walk away with.

For us, it was a tough tournament with some very intense games. The *Counter-Strike* team took the number two seed, NoA, to double-overtime before succumbing to the pressure and losing the match, ending its tournament earlier than expected. The *Call Of Duty* team had a similar problem with very close games, losing to the eventual tournament champions in a thrilling game that ended 11-9 in favour of United 5, an American team that went on to net the not inconsiderable sum of $15,000.

CHIPS AND DIPS

When the games were over for the teams, many took the time to relax before flying home. The hotel facilities were pretty swanky, with the bonus option of a few rounds of golf. But one of the most productive ways to while away the hours was to join in the 4Kings Poker World Series that had been continuing throughout the whole event. In the end the Swedish team Eyeballers won the *Counter-Strike* event by walking over SK-Gaming in the final and taking home the $30,000 prize.

Although neither of the 4Kings Intel teams placed as highly as they would have hoped, the community feedback they received was extremely positive. Our teamwork was especially commended, with some saying it was the best they'd seen from a 4K side in a long time.

Ultimately, the entire clan sees events like these as stepping stones. With every tournament we gain experience, and we're looking forward to greater success at some of the upcoming events on the E-Sports calendar, including the CPL winter event that takes place just before Christmas.

In fact, the only fly in the ointment during the entire week came from something completely unrelated to the tournament. It turns out that some of the team's luggage didn't leave Heathrow with the plane, forcing the players to display the team colours more often than they would have liked. It might not sound much, but I bet things like that never happen to Manchester United. ᴾᶜᶻ

4KINGS DIDN'T THEY DO WELL

EVERYTHING YOUR PARENTS EVER TOLD YOU WAS WRONG. YOU CAN EARN A LIVING PLAYING GAMES

Over the past year, 4Kings Intel has seen a number of successes and the list below lists some of its winnings. This is scientific proof that you can make money from gaming and should be waved in your parents' faces at every opportunity…

ESWC 2003	France	(C-S)	$6,000
CPL Summer 2003	USA	(C-S)	$12,000
Campus Party	Spain	(C-S)	$7000
Quakecon 2003	USA	(RTCW)	$6,000
WorldCyberGames 2003	Korea	(WC3)	$15,000
CPL Winter 2003	USA	(C-S)	$2,000
CyberXGaming	USA	(WC3)	$14,000
CyberXGaming 2004	USA	(C-S)	$10,000
Campus Party 2004	Spain	(WC3)	$6,000
Online Competitions			$3,000
Total Winnings (approximately)			**$81,000**

What they played: *Call Of Duty* and *Counter-Strike*.

FIGHT CLUB

FIRST RULE OF FIGHT CLUB: *PC ZONE* OWNZ JØØ
FIGHT CLUB MODERATORS: METALFACE, REX MUNDI & GOWERLY

Thanks to everyone who joined in our Summer Special last month. Although we had technical problems with our office copies of *Battlefield Vietnam*, there was still plenty of action across the *Call Of Duty*, *UT2004* and *Team Fortress* servers. Plus, we saw a glorious *PCZ* return to the much-maligned *Counter-Strike*. Too many names to thank here, but we'd like to send out a special 'big up' to the boys from 4Kings who stopped by to show us mere mortals how things are done in the world of professional gaming. Cheers fellas.

■ October will see our highly anticipated *Joint Operations* Fight Club. Unlike our other servers, to find our 150-player combat zone, just search for '*PC ZONE*' in the in-game browser and you'll find us. Simple, non? We can't recommend the game highly enough, so let's see if we can't pack the server out on the night.

■ No, you're not seeing things. That does say *Half-Life 2*

in the December Fight Club slot. Naturally, we have no way of knowing yet whether the most awaited game of all time will actually be any good in multiplayer or not (fingers crossed…), but with *C-S: Source* currently wowing select cyber cafes and beta testers, there's no reason to think otherwise. So come December, we'll all be returning to the fold.

■ On top of that, you may have spotted that the *Doom 3* Fight Club in November has been replaced with the *Desert Combat* mod for *BF1942*. Two reasons. First, we've had more requests for a *DC* Fight Club than just about any other game. Second, four-player deathmatches don't exactly make for the best Fight Club experiences.

■ As always, to take part in Fight Club, or to find the connection details for all our public game servers, just aim your Web browsers towards www.zonegames.co.uk for the full scoop. Contenders ready!

COME & 'AVE A GO!
WWW.zonegames.co.uk
for all the info

WHO'S WHO

Paul Presley	Prezzer
Will Porter	Batsphinx
Suzy Wallace	Uzibat
Anthony Holden	Shokupan
Jamie Malcolm	JimLad
Jamie Sefton	NorthernScum
Phil Clark	ShitKicker
Martin Korda	Nameless One
Phil Wand	Wandy
Michael Filby	Parallax

Call Of Duty put on a good showing.

Counter-Strike made a return.

Our *Joint Ops* server is now up.
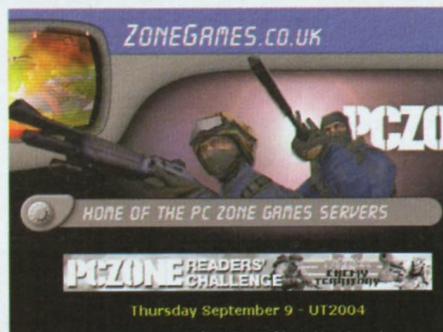
UPCOMING FIGHT CLUB EVENTS

THURSDAY OCTOBER 7
6.30pm – 9.00pm
Joint Operations: Typhoon Rising

THURSDAY NOVEMBER 4
6.30pm – 9.00pm
BF1942: Desert Combat

THURSDAY DECEMBER 2
6.30pm – 9.00pm
Half-Life 2 / Counter-Strike: Source

BF: Vietnam proved problematic on the night.

ZONECHAT

WEARING THEIR TOUCH-TYPING FINGERS TO THE BONE, IT'S...

The Prezzer & Will Show

PIRATES. Scourge of the high seas. Swashes buckled and mainbraces spliced. For reasons that escaped us, there was a nautical theme to the last *ZONE* Chat. A splinter group of regulars had set up a side channel called #pcz-pirates, in which grog was spilt, shanties were sung and every sentence ended with yaarrrr! No, we couldn't work out why either. Nonetheless it was a rip-roaring time, with the usual dynamic duo joined for the night by disc editor Suzy 'Wheels' Wallace and associate editor Jamie 'Angry' Sefton.

Highlights of the night included finding out Chat regular escaped_monkey is Will's doppleganger (thanks to the magic of the Internet and a handy weblink to a nearby jpg). Plus, we enjoyed a pirate-themed competition to find alternative names for

Prezzer, with the top five snagging copies of *Joint Operations: Typhoon Rising* for their troubles. Congratulations guys, and don't forget to join the *Joint Ops* Fight Club in October.

ZONE Chat is back on October 6, at the usual time of 5-7pm in the #pcz channel on Quakenet IRC. We want to hear all about your thoughts on *PC ZONE* – good, bad or indifferent. Your views matter – this is your magazine after all. So why not take this opportunity to give us some direct feedback? Plus, we'll have the usual fun, games and fabulous competition prizes up for grabs.

It's simple enough to join in. Just grab a copy of mIRC from www.mirc.com, log on to irc.uk.quakenet.org and type /join #pcz to enter the *PC ZONE* channel. There you'll find us dispensing our usual wit and wisdom. Let's be 'aving you!

WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 6 5.00PM – 7.00PM

LAN ROVER

STEVE 'SCALPER' RANDALL DOESN'T NEED TO CROSS THE AT-LAN-TIC FOR A GOOD PARTY. HERE'S THE LAN-DOWN ON UK PARTY CENTRAL...

■ As the summer months seem a distant memory, sitting in a room playing the latest releases must be a hot idea. I've found a few rooms for you to consider getting drunk in while gaming till the wee hours.

■ First up is www.zombielan.co.uk which is set to be in full swing come October 2-3. There are 60 spots up for grabs with free food (all for £15). You just need to be near Swaffham, Norfolk.

■ Next in the firing line is the 'Code of Conduct' event, taking place between October 15-17 at the Marton Hotel & Country Club in Middlesbrough. There are spaces for up to 180 players at a cost of £35 each. More details on the website at www.badlanrising.com.

■ My own www.gglan.co.uk has been moved to October, which will have up to 50 spots in Mile End, London. A snip at £20 for three days.

■ www.lanse.co.uk is now up to LAN 24, another three-day event starting Friday October 15. With a 50-player cap and £20 in advance, you may want to pre-book to be sure of your position at the High Wycombe event.

■ A 27-hour event is being held on September 24-25 by those nice people from www.moongames.co.uk. £20 gets you into the Kettering venue and if you book quickly enough, you can take advantage of the online seating plan to ensure you get near the bar.

■ Finally, www.multiplay.co.uk runs from August 27-30 – do I need to say more?

■ That's all for this month folks. If you want your party to feature here drop me a line, with at least two months advance notice, the details of numbers, costs and location at scalper@gglan.co.uk. Scalper out.

GUILDHALL

▲ HOW TO MAKE FRIENDS AND FRAG PEOPLE

Whether you're the highest-ranked *Counter-Strike* clan in the world, or just a handful of mates playing *EverQuest* together, we serve you all. Find new recruits, lasting friendships or just some other like-minded souls to play games with online. If you need somebody, Guildhall is here to help...

CLAN [BBAB] (British Born And Bred)
CONTACT jamesmoorehead@hotmail.com
WEBSITE www.clan-bbab.co.uk
MAIN GAME *Counter-Strike* (v1.6)
DETAILS We've been around since last year and play in the Enemy Down Division 2 *C-S* ladder. We also have our own server provided by www.moongarnes.co.uk. We're friendly and serious about gaming and are currently on the lookout for skilled new recruits who wish to join our ranks. Get in touch if that's you.

CLAN -=[PA]=-
CONTACT victim_of_society_hobo_lifestyle@hotmail.com
WEBSITE www.the-pa-clan.cjb.net
MAIN GAME *Call Of Duty*
DETAILS -=[PA]=- is a new *Call Of Duty* clan on the lookout for new members. Please take a look at the website for more. If you want to join a new clan and have fun with *Call Of Duty* – or challenge us to a scrim – please go to the site or talk to the leader.

CLAN White Tigers Elite (=WTE=)
CONTACT creo@white-tigers-elite.co.uk
WEBSITE www.white-tigers-elite.co.uk
MAIN GAMES *Soldier Of Fortune 2, Rainbow Six 3: Raven Shield*
DETAILS Established in November 2000, we've strived to maintain a wall-structured social clan. We're looking for people ready to take on *Half-Life 2, Battlefield 2* and the new generation of FPSs, as well as join our present teams. We have our own server and operate an over-16s policy.

CLAN Inpulse Gaming {IG}
CONTACT inpulsegaming@hotmail.com
WEBSITE www.inpulsegaming.tk
MAIN GAME *Call Of Duty*
DETAILS We're a new *Call Of Duty* clan and are recruiting right now. If you'd like to come to our clan server, visit it on 213.230.193.4:29030. If you'd like to join, you need to be over 12 and be online a lot. Contact our website or email address. We use Teamspeak 2.

CLAN Saints & Soldiers – SAS
CONTACT jon_coops@hotmail.com (Subject: SAS)
WEBSITE www.freewebs.com/sascodclan
MAIN GAME *Call Of Duty*
DETAILS Large *COD* clan, mainly from Europe, but with a USA division too. Looking for new players to play in Clanbase. We also just play for fun. Age limit is 16+. We use Teamspeak2 and have our own server. Find us in Gamespy. Join today because in war, no-one fights alone.

CLAN Dentists
CONTACT Through our website/forum plz
WEBSITE www.ukd-clan.co.uk
MAIN GAME *Op Flash, BF:V*, No *C-S*!
DETAILS We're a group of UK-based dentists who have a healthy interest in blowing the crap out of each other. We're currently looking for more members to blow the crap out of. You must be a dental technician currently employed in the UK. Laughing gas is a prerequisite. ;0)

To feature in Guildhall, send your details and up to 50 words describing your group to online.zone@pczone.co.uk (subject line: GUILDHALL), orto Guildhall, *PC ZONE*, 9 Dallington Street, London EC1V 0BQ.

PCZONE READERS' CHALLENGE

WIN BIG PRIZES!!

The best games, the best gamers, the best prizes!

ROUND ONE is complete! The past 30 days saw some of the most competitive action this side of the CPL, with clans and gamers from across the nation battling out in *Quake III*, *UT2004* and *Painkiller*. We've listed the winning teams and players on the right, and for a full list of competitors and results, be sure to head over to www.pczone.jolt.co.uk.

The *Quake III* CTF competition concluded with two very different finals, The Quake Lamers beating Soulsclan convincingly to lift the Silver trophy and the Gold Cup going right to the wire with S? needing an overtime map to defeat oMega.

The *UT2004* semi-finals brought some spectacular games, with Ministry Of Defence gaining a narrow 7-5 win from Fear, and The Rebel Soldiers enjoying a 6-3 win over Disciples Of Apocalypse. The tournament culminated with a fantastic final watched by 92 UTV spectators who also had SHOUTcast coverage by ReDeYe. The MOD had the early advantage on both maps and quickly brought home more caps to ensure their victory.

The *Painkiller* 1v1 matches were equally as gripping, with the eventual winner Zhrance defeating Saxonbeast across the Fallen2 and Sacred maps in a nail-biting final.

Many congratulations to all the winners and a special shout-out to ReDeYe for the running commentary. Hear the games yourself over at the *PC ZONE*/Jolt site and we hope to bring you more coverage in future events.

Round two should be gearing up as you read this. This time though, we're pitting teams and players in the killing grounds of *Battlefield Vietnam* and *Doom 3*, so we're expecting some mouth-watering action there. Head over to www.pczone.jolt.co.uk for all the details.

As always, we've got an absolute treasure trove of prizes on offer, from state-of-the-art graphics cards to cutting-edge sound technology, all provided by our lovely sponsors, listed below.

You've really got no excuse. Great prizes just for playing a few games! Sign up for action and we'll see you online…

SIGN UP AT www.pczone.jolt.co.uk TODAY!

Doom 3 should sort the men from the boys.

Both one-on-one duels and two-vs-two matches in *Doom 3*.

It's full team action in *Battlefield Vietnam*, with ten players per side.

READERS' CHALLENGE IS PROUDLY SPONSORED BY THE FOLLOWING COMPANIES

/ISUS®
HEART OF TECHNOLOGY

The V9950 series from leading graphics card manufacturer Asus takes GeForce FX performance to a whole new level. www.asus.com

CORSAIR™

The XMS product line is Corsair's premium desktop product family and the world's most highly awarded memory. www.corsairmemory.com

CREATIVE
WWW.EUROPE.CREATIVE.COM

Creative's Sound Blaster Audigy 2 ZS soundcards and the Inspire T7700 speakers produce superior audio for gamers. www.creative.com

Logitech

Logitech raises the bar in gaming precision and performance with the MX 510 mouse and Internet Navigator SE Keyboard. www.logitech.co.uk

MSI
MICRO-STAR INTERNATIONAL

A worldwide leader in the motherboard industry, MSI's K7N2 supports the latest AthlonXP and Duron processors. www.msicomputer.co.uk

PLANTRONICS®
World Leader in Communications Headsets

Plantronics USB headset with DSP (digital signal processing) and maximum bass response – enhanced for gaming. www.plantronics.com

Western® Digital

The WD Raptor is a new class of hard drive that matches SCSI reliability and performance. www.westerndigital.com

jolt
online gaming

The home of Online Gaming, Jolt provides services from basic *Quake* clan ports to managed corporate game server solutions. www.jolt.co.uk

RESULTS

UT2004 – CTF 5V5

QUARTER-FINALS (MAPS: CTF-TWINTOMBS-CLAWED, CTF-CHROME-LE105 & CTF-CBP2-PISTOLA)

THE REBEL SOLDIERS	2-1	LORDS OF WAR
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE	6-2	BAD CHAOSTROOPERS
DISCIPLES OF APOCALYPSE	7-1	EXOTIC ISLAND
FEAR	14-1	MPX

SEMI-FINALS (MAPS: CTF-CBP2-PISTOLA, CTF-ANFRACTUOUS 2 & CTF-CBP2-DECADENCE)

THE REBEL SOLDIERS	6-3	DISCIPLES OF APOCALYPSE
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE	7-5	FEAR

FINAL (MAPS: CTF-GRENDELKEEP, CTF-ORBITAL2 & CTF-CITADEL)

THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE	8-2	THE REBEL SOLDIERS

WINNER: THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

QUAKE III – CTF 5V5

GOLD CUP FINAL (MAPS: Q3WCP1, Q3CTF2 & Q3WCP9)

S? 1-2 2-1 3-0		OMEGA

SILVER CUP FINAL (MAPS: Q3WCP1 & Q3CTF2

THE QUAKE LAMERS	5-2 3-0	SOULSCLAN

WINNERS: S? (GOLD CUP), THE QUAKE LAMERS (SILVER CUP)

PAINKILLER – 1V1

QUARTER-FINALS (MAP: DM_SACRED)

SYMBOL1K	27-1	MANIAX
SAXONBEAST	1-0	SEV1
WORRE	1-0	GOTOX
ZHRANCE	1-0	SLAYER

SEMI-FINALS (MAP: DM_PSYCHO)

SAXONBEAST	17-11	SYMBOL1K
ZHRANCE	19-2	WORRE

FINAL (MAPS: DM_FALLEN2 & DM_SACRED)

ZHRANCE	42-7 16-4	SAXONBEAST

WINNER: ZHRANCE
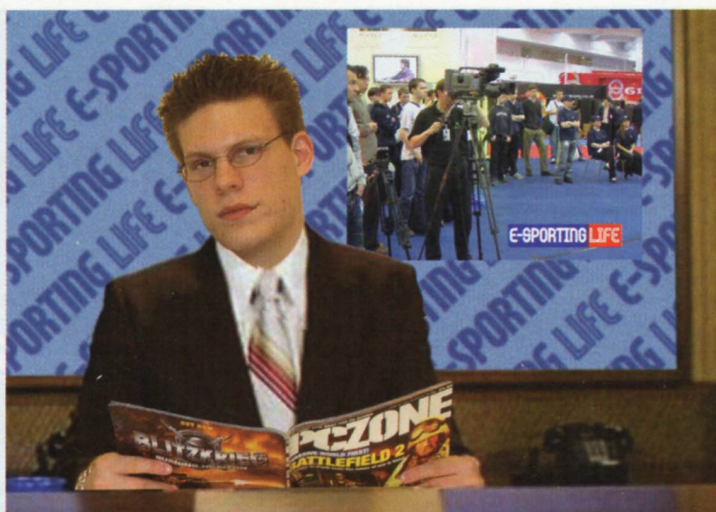
E-SPORTING LIFE

All the latest news from the wide, wide world of professional gaming. Your man at the E-Sports desk – *Philip Wride*

IT'S BEEN another busy month for UK gamers, with two teams in attendance at the CPL Summer event in Texas, playing *Counter-Strike*, *Call Of Duty* and *Unreal Tournament 2004*. (See our report on p110 for more info.) Although neither team placed as highly as they would have liked, both gave an admirable showing and proved that UK gaming isn't dead.

The UKT LAN Finals also took place in Hull, with the final game coming down to a battle between 4Kings Intel and TAG, with £1,750 at stake for the winners. In the end, 4Kings Intel were victorious over two maps and secured the championship title and the prize money. TAG didn't leave empty-handed though, receiving £750 for second place.

August and September also saw another period of UK qualifiers. The Multiplay i21 event in Newbury hosted the pre-qualifiers for the World Cyber Games Finals in San Francisco, while the final qualifiers took place at Earls Court, London during ECTS.

In other WCG news, the leading committee has announced the 2005 Grand Finals will be held in Singapore – so if you want a trip to the Far East, start practising now.

Across London meanwhile, the Game Stars Live event hosted a tournament named EOGC for *Counter-Strike*, *Call Of Duty*, *Warcraft 3* and others, drawing many of the UK and Europe's top teams. Game Stars Live and EOGC were both run as part of the European Gaming Network Conference being held at Excel, so all the latest game previews and news were on offer too.

In other news, there have been a few shake-ups in the UK *Call Of Duty* scene, with the announcement by CPL that it plans to change the game to a 5v5 format. This has left a few players from top teams high and dry, with teams choosing to shrink their squads. Expectations are also high for the *Call Of Duty* expansion pack – will it affect the gameplay and cause any community divides? Watch this space.

That's all from me for this edition of E-Sporting Life – see you next time.

Cyberathletes: lean, keen and mean.

Behold! A (loose) remake of *QII* map The Edge.

Glass shatters. Marine is surprised. Marine dies.

Why couldn't they let us play as imps? That would be great.

DOOM 3

■ £44.99 | Dev: id Software | Pub: Activision |
ETA: Out Now | www.doom3.com | Players: 2-4

REQUIRES P4 1.5 GHz, 384MB RAM, 64MB 3D card and a 56K modem
DESIRES P4 2.8 Ghz, 512MB RAM, 256MB 3D card and a broadband connection

Fresh from the red hot bowels of Hell, *Will Porter* waters down his triumph with something slightly more luke-warm

WHEN I played *Doom 3* I got much what I expected: a shooter that wasn't particularly clever or mould-breaking, but one that was hugely atmospheric, very dark, full of technological whizz-bangs and a hell of a lot of fun.

When I played *Doom 3* multiplayer, however, I didn't. Id Software (the games company who broke my deathmatch virginity with such effusive grace back in the good old days of *Quake*) and its map-designing friends at Splash Damage (who were responsible for the excellent *Wolfenstein: Enemy Territory*) have cooked the books slightly.

FOUR'S A CROWD

Four players, slow pace, five maps, darkened nooks and crannies, a slew of references to

former id glories and one or two interesting features per level – far distant from the Arena frag-fests of recent years and with a focus on compact, quality-controlled blasting rather than a huge number of inconsequential maps and features. At first, as they say, it's all gravy. There's plenty of fun to be had, for example, flicking the switches in the Lights Out map, powering down the generator, pulling the shutters down on the windows and stalking around in the darkness. Indeed, hiding in the shadows and blasting a pursuer as he hurtles past is the greatest pleasure that *Doom 3* deathmatch affords. Elsewhere there's a welcome return to the hub-trap style of map-making

Hmm. Looks like Suzy had pasta for lunch.

with the skin-shredding Frag Chamber, a few well-placed Berserk modes (hideous screaming included) and some nice features you won't notice instantly – like the power-up in the bowels of the Tomiko Reactor.

WE'RE DOOMED

After a while though, you hit a big bloodstained wall. Fun as the map gimmicks are, there's a

finite amount of enjoyment that can be squeezed from them. You discover that you can join servers that are running with eight players, and that ups the ante somewhat, but before long it becomes painfully apparent that this is a hugely limited multiplayer package.

Over a LAN I'd say that this is a great game to stick on for an hour or so and shout abuse at each other, against faceless members of the internet community, but the fun ebbs away the more you play it. The future of *Doom 3* multiplayer, however, does lie in the modding

community. As I type all manner of tweaks are appearing online offering 32 player insta-deathmatches and the like, and (with an engine this nifty) you can bank on some gems turning up one day or another.

For now, though, you play it much as it was developed – and that's as a side thought. It's fun for a while, but there are bigger, brighter and better things out there. It's not a total disaster, but it's still the most underwhelming multiplayer that we've seen attached to an id product. **PCZ**

INPERSPECTIVE

FAR CRY
Reviewed Issue 144, Score 73%
Far Cry is another big league FPS where most of the attention has been lavished on single-player, but it's nowhere near as repetitive as *Doom 3* deathmatch.

PAINKILLER
Reviewed Issue 144, Score 60%
Old-skool shooting in a much truer and more frenetic sense, *Painkiller* is let down by a lack of polish and some boring map design. *Doom 3* is markedly more fun.

It's one of the prettier deathmatches about.

The tendrils of hell even spread online.

PCZONE VERDICT

✔ Small-scale deathmatch fun – for a while
✔ Some nice map gimmicks
✔ Polished front end, class engine
✘ Loses its appeal the longer you play
✘ Very limited package with too few levels
✘ Not up to id standards

SINGLE-PLAYER SCORE	90
MULTIPLAYER SCORE	65

DEGENERATION BETA

ON THE DVD **SIZE** 195MB **REQUIRES** Full version of *Return To Castle Wolfenstein*
www.planetwolfenstein.com/tramdesign

TOTAL CONVERSION

Tony Lamb confronts the beastly Hun

ONE OF the many fiendish ideas researched by the Germans in WWII was the idea of the Death Ray, dreamt up (and some believe successfully designed) by Nikola Tesla. This was the WMD of its day, and built for real, it could have won the war.

This is the background to the class and team-based *DeGeneration* mod for *RTCW*. The WWII-based game drew heavily on the darker side of Nazi research, and *DeGeneration* continues that theme with the Nazi and Allied forces each racing to complete a power generator – all they need to achieve their aim of firing a Death Ray and destroying the enemy.

As each team builds their power source from parts parachuted into the middle of the map, so must the other team fight them for those same parts and attack the enemy generator

to reduce its readiness. If one generator reaches 100 per cent power, or is destroyed by enemy action, the game ends. It's genuinely exciting and great fun to play.

Players get to choose from several familiar classes of combatant, each with its own strengths and weaknesses. The only rule is that each team must have an engineer as only he has the skill to build up the generator. Teamwork is essential to defend your generator, capture parts, build up spawn points and attack the enemy machine.

Classy maps, great atmosphere, enjoyable gameplay and more make this a top-class mod.

PCZONE VERDICT 84
Novel, gripping and fun
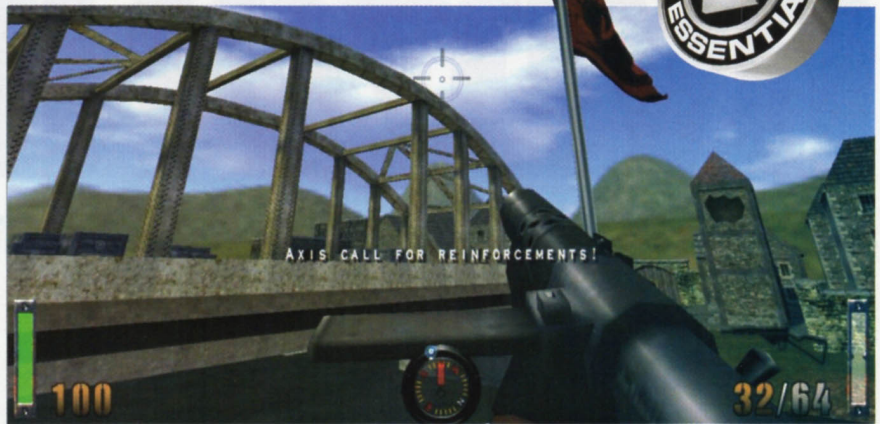
Not so much capture the flag, as blow it up with a bloody great death ray.

Wire cutters. The most useful tool ever.

Damn, where are the zombies?

NAVY SEALS: COVERT OPERATIONS V1.91A

ON THE DVD **SIZE:** 331MB **REQUIRES:** Full version of *Quake III Arena* **TOTAL CONVERSION**
www.ns-co.net

Face paint at dawn as *Tony Lamb* goes clubbing

ONE OF the bonuses in mod reviewing is getting to watch a favourite mod develop and mature over time. *NSCO* is one such example, and although it took a long time to arrive, teasing us with ever more exciting screenshots and gameplay promises, it's proved to be one of the best *Quake III* add-ons around. A realism mod, jam-packed with classy maps, excitement and adrenaline, it

replicates the dangerous world of the US Special Forces in their never-ending battle against the bad guys.

NSCO gives you the chance to fight as either a Navy SEAL or a terrorist. Gameplay scenarios include deathmatch and mission-based varieties, such as assassination, building destruction or stealing secret information. It's wonderfully involved and chock-full of atmosphere.

Weapon selections are easy – no fannying around

counting cash here – and the firepower is suitably effective too. Remember your bandages!

Downsides? Well, id's *Quake III* is now of pensionable age and looking positively wrinkly next to the likes of *UT2004* and, now, *Doom III*. Recognising this, Team Mirage has invested great efforts in helping *NSCO* go out with a bang and succeeded admirably. This is a great mod if you have a copy of the classic game knocking around.

You'll find online servers thin on the ground and bots aren't supported – they're much too stupid – but if you've got friends who are *Quake III* fans they'll love a LAN game.

PCZONE VERDICT 82
You'll want to join up
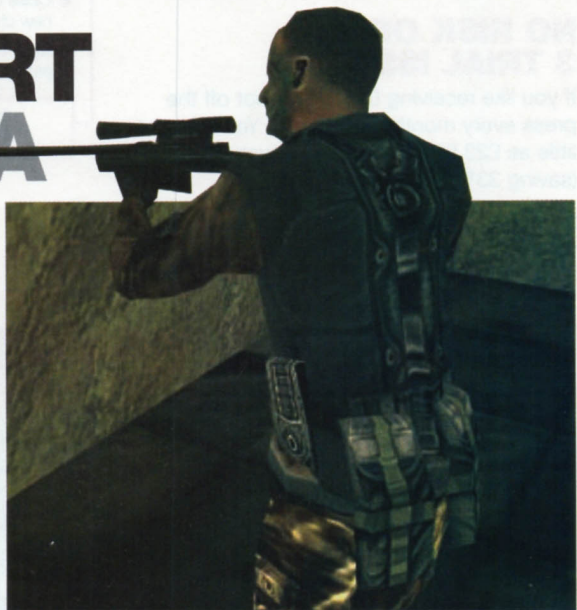
Can't be a SEAL. Where are the flippers?

One less terrorist ball-sack to trouble the world.

The dreaded 'coffee stirrer' attack.

Kicking-out time at the Crown & Feathers.
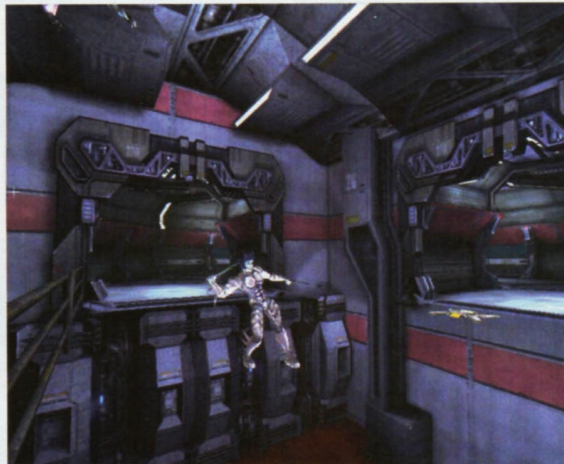
Bruce Lee has nothing on this guy.

MURALIS V1.05

SIZE 43MB **REQUIRES** Full version of *UT2004* **www.ascensiongames.com**

Tony Lamb catches a bunch of fives

TOTAL CONVERSION

ASCENSION Games' *Muralis* for *UT2004* is a very welcome representative of a gameplay type rarely seen in FPS games. Many might feature the opportunity to use fists as a last resort, but how often can you use a kick or proper right hook to disable and beat an opponent? In fact, *Muralis* is described on its website as 'the ultimate in multiplayer hand-to-hand combat', and that's pretty true because you can get all the benefits of a good Saturday night scrap on the Southend seafront – but without the broken nose and 24 hours in a police cell. There are guns and projectile weapons yet to come, and these will add yet more mayhem into what is already promising to be a pretty enjoyable mod.

What this early version of *Muralis* offers so far is hand-to-hand fighting, with a range of punches, kicks, blocks, ducks, air-moves and combinations making for a fluid and hard-hitting battleground. Master the keystrokes and you can deliver a blistering attack to leave your opponent stunned, or launch him into the air for a painful landing. Characters have their own favourite moves and skills, but all lose stamina the more they attack. A neat feature of *Muralis* is of course the opportunity for clearly defined teams to face each other, and complex tactical moves could be created.

Online support is still limited, but bots are available and LAN play could be a scream, if limited in long-term appeal.

PCZONE VERDICT **69**

Beat me up, Scotty

INSURRECTION 1776
ALPHA V001

SIZE 37MB **REQUIRES** Full version of *Battlefield Vietnam*
**www.planetbattlefield.com/insurrection**

TOTAL CONVERSION

Keeping the British end up with *Tony Lamb*

Not the most interesting map, but at least you can see the enemy here.

Take that you evil Brits. Oh, hang on...

Not authentic period costume, but never mind.

THIS historical class-based Conquest mod for *Battlefield Vietnam* pits British troops against colonial rebels and is bound to provoke a strong love/hate response in everyone who plays it. It's ultimately unsatisfying and yet compulsively fun at the same time. The desperately limited maps, agonisingly slow weapon reloads and annoying frequency of death will drive you to the edge of a nervous breakdown, but you might not be able to stop wanting more. Food will go uneaten, children and pets unfed, *EastEnders* unwatched. That, for a mod which had me regularly howling at the screen, is quite an achievement.

The key to *Insurrection* surviving on my PC was the fact that it made me laugh. Sometimes this was in frustration, but often it was amusement – no bad thing for an alpha release. At this early stage *Insurrection* provides re-skinned weapons, new artillery and a couple of new maps for each side. These are very simple and the whole game at this stage revolves around the possession of a couple of capture points and wiping out the opposing team. There are of course many more features to come, and the *Insurrection* team have obviously put in a lot of thought and effort.

This mod could be an absolute belter as a LAN game with friends. As an online contender though, it still has a long way to go.

PCZONE VERDICT **66**

Electronic Marmite

COMMUNITY CHEST

BATTLEFIELD VIETNAM

Face paint, agent orange and the best tunes money can buy. *Daniel Emery* **braves the dry heat...**

There are add-ons galore for *Battlefield 1942*, so it should come as no great shock to find out that *Battlefield Vietnam* (the slightly more modern conflict using an enhanced version of the *BF1942* engine) has been a modding dream. There's a veritable arsenal of stuff for the SE Asian excursion, from the obvious weapon upgrades and vehicle skins to the surreal likes of *Halo*-inspired extras.

We scoured the jungle-based community and targeted eight extras of the highest calibre for you to lock and download – and we promise not to make any more military puns...

FPS CENTRAL
(WEBSITE)
www.bf-v.com

This is a site to rival the mighty Planet network. FPS Central hosts anything and everything *Battlefield Vietnam*-related. There are the usual suspects – maps, levels, missions and modifications – along with some handy tools, utilities and video clips of people either showing off or performing some miracle kill.

PLANET BATTLEFIELD
(WEBSITE)
www.planetbattlefield.com/bfv/

Still the granddaddy of them all, Planet Battlefield has practically every level, map, skin and TC made for *Battlefield Vietnam*. It's great at keeping you up to date with future mods and there's also a very handy guide on how some of the more unorthodox weapons in *BFV* actually work.

BUSH WAR
(TOTAL CONVERSION)
bushwar.uni.cc

If you're tired of slogging it out in the sweaty jungles of South East Asia, then *Bush War* could be just the job. Set in South West Africa during the late '70s and early '80s, this total conversion pits the forces of South Africa against the Communist forces of Cuba during the bloody civil war in Angola.

TOUR OF DUTY
(MOD)
www.tod.firstpersongamer.com

We're not sure if this is a mod in the true sense, or the ultimate third-party patch. The developer has taken almost every legitimate whine, rant and complaint about *Battlefield Vietnam* and fixed the lot: anti-air missiles for US troops, the PPh sub-machine gun for the NVA. It's got everything you need here.

NAPALM DAWN
(TOURNAMENT)
www.napalmdawn.com

Napalm Dawn is, for want of a better description, a cross between an FPS and a strategy game. Rather than frag-fests on random maps, the game drops you into specific scenarios – and the results of each fight determine how the war shapes up. Think *World War II Online* and you're in the right area.

VIETNAM COMBAT
(TOURNAMENT)
www.vietnamcombat.net

Napoleon once said men would do anything for a bit of ribbon. The lust for medals has driven many men to their deaths and now you can join them. Vietnam Combat is a ladder tournament that rewards you with ranking, promotion and some nice shiny stuff to stick on your chest.

HOMEFRONT
(TOTAL CONVERSION)
dynamic6.gamespy.com/~homefront

Homefront is a science fiction-based mod for *Battlefield Vietnam*. Weird but true. Humanity's homefront is being invaded, and it's up to you to either save mankind or conquer it. This is not drastically unlike *Halo*, and the developer makes no secret that it was the source of its inspiration.

INSURRECTION 1776
(TOTAL CONVERSION)
www.planetbattlefield.com/insurrection

For some reason, the Americans are obsessed by the War of Independence. Can't imagine why. Anyroads, you can join their anti-British fun and games with this nifty TC that turns the swamps of Vietnam into the rolling planes of Baltimore.

STEVE HILL'S
NEVERQUEST

Steve Hill **gets shore leave in the whore-infested streets of** *The Red Light World*

BELIEVE it or not, this wasn't my idea. That dubious honour falls to resident *ZONE* go-fer Will, who claims to have read about *The Red Light World* in a magazine (of course you did). Essentially a virtual red light district, I enter this world as the hilariously named PC_Bone, upstanding and ready to take down any particulars.

Invited to 'explore a world of hot adult content', I select a dandy-looking avatar and strut purposefully into town. Balking at the sign to Boys Town, I head for the main street, where a small gathering is lurking outside the XXX Theater.

Offering a cursory "evening all" to the assembled group, only the leggy Ninarika responds. She fixes me with a steely glare and purrs "hi pc",

the glint in her eye matched only by the sheen of her white leather boots.

"Hi Nina," I seductively reply. Seizing the moment, I smoothly inquire: "Is this dude bothering you?" I'm referring to the muscle-bound bomber1051, who (to the untrained eye) is invading her personal space. "No-one's bothering me pc thx," Ninarika curtly responds, and resumes canoodling with the bearded oaf.

NOTHING TO SEE HERE

Undeterred, I head straight for Passion Club, which is generously offering free sex. Barely through the front door, I'm confronted by a seething mass of rutting bodies. Unfortunately, that's as far as I get as the club is VIP-only ($20 a month), and I'm turfed out. To

compound the misery, the bollock-naked Tony001 sashays by, his huge schlong swinging like a pendulum in a grandfather clock.

I again interrupt Ninarika and her chin-gloved partner: "Where do I go for filth?" However, before they can ignore me, my attention is drawn by a shop offering Sybarian: The Ultimate Sex Toy. Sheepishly making my way inside, a young girl is happy to give me a lengthy demo of its merits. She also refers me to a slew of other devices, including The Trespasser, The Twinserter and The Goat Milker, no less, all available in the perfunctorily-named ******* Machines Showrooms. Mildly terrified, I make my excuses and leave, heading for the sanctity of Night Candy Gentleman's Club.

Having sat through a reasonable dance from a frisky ginger called Swan, I sidle up to fellow customer, dub, who's enjoying the performance of a young girl named Chrissy.

"You dirty bugger," I whisper, hoping not to put him off his stroke.

"Huh?" he eventually replies.

"What's she like?" I inquire.

"Who?" says dub, mystifyingly. Who do you think? The barely legal teenager cupping her breasts three inches from your face.

"The lapdancer!" I bark.

"She's hot," confirms dub, as the penny finally drops.

Pausing only to advise him "there's a right mucky one over there", I head for the exit, appalled at my fellow man.

GIRLS GIRLS GIRLS

Rising up, back on the street, I take my time, take my chances. Spotting a sign offering the perennial promise of 'Girls Girls Girls', I make a beeline for it, only to find that it's Amateur Night. Undeterred, I check out bisexual Deena, who claims to "like women even more than men". It's no idle boast, and after a couple of minutes of

"Tony001 sashays by, his gargantuan schlong swinging like a pendulum in a grandfather clock"

watching her romping on a bed with a close friend, I decide to take her word for it.

The promisingly-named XXX Theater remains unexplored, and I stroll in to be confronted by a staggering wall of porn. The ponytailed halifax is taking it all in, and I attempt a friendly: "See anything you like?"

"Yes," replies my hirsute fellow pervert.

"Are you a VIP?" I ask.

"No," replies my taciturn pal (presumably typing with one hand).

"Me neither," I jovially add, "just after a free show."

"Sure thing," says the

rapidly retreating halifax.

While I'm there I might as well have a look, so I focus my attention on Brittani (sic), who announces: "I'm here to give a blow job," before performing an act too disturbing to print in a family mag like this.

"You wanna suck on this?" enquires an unseen voice, and Brittani cheerfully confirms this, as a tattooed behemoth in a wife-beater vest looms into view and proceeds to whip his piece out. Thankfully, the action is truncated seconds before

Britanni puts her money where her mouth is.

BOYS BOYS BOYS

Blinking into the neon light of the outside world, I head for the drugstore, where I'm offered Viagra online. The Adult DVD store is closed, however, and with options running out, I head for the City Bar, which is empty apart from a petite blonde, who's happy to show me her pink bits for the price of a drink.

Numb to it all, I wander into Boys Town (purely for research) and am immediately confronted by a fountain in the shape of a giant phallus. Make it stop. 💥

Put it away Tony. Have you no shame man?

I don't care about the other girls, dub be good to me...

SHARE THE ADVENTURE.
SHARE THE FANTASY.

For the past two years, over 500,000 users in North America and Japan
have witnessed the history of Vana'diel unfold before their eyes.

Starting September 2004, the doors to Vana'diel will be opened to adventurers in Europe and beyond,
beckoning a new generation to join the excitement in one of the world's largest MMORPGs.

ALL THE LATEST NEWS AND REVIEWS FROM THE WORLD OF PC HARDWARE

CAN I BE HELPING YOU?

■ **HARDWARE EDITOR** Phil Wand

▲ I seem to be using this column as a diary of my parents' everyday battles with technology – but with many of their troubles reverberating in letters and emails, it seems appropriate.

This month, their broadband was on the fritz. A couple of telephone calls suggested that I'd get a square meal and my ironing done if I helped out, so off I trudged with the usual backpack of screwdrivers, Ethernet cables, a pile of tumble-dried clothes and a Lan Pirates Buccaneer M. The laptop is not as ballsy as the Dell Inspiron 9100, but it's less expensive, less heavy, and the battery lasts longer, making it a more sensible all-rounder. But anyway. Parents.

Their Tiscali line was clearly down, and the 3Com wireless router which replaced the Belkin abortion was helpfully returning 'disconnected'. My folks adopt pained expressions when faced with a retractable biro, so it was unlikely one of them had gone into the admin screen and reconfigured their DSL settings. I went through the usual routine, which included changing the microfilters, rebooting the router, unplugging the phones and installing the original USB modem, all drawing a blank. The line was shown as being 'up', but I couldn't make anything want to talk down it.

A phone call to Tiscali support reminded me of why I'm still with BT. After a number of clicks and silences, I was en route to a call centre in Bangalore – and I *really* hate that. When you're in need of help, you want someone who understands your problem, not someone who doesn't understand English. I made a total of three calls before being told that the access password had been changed.

And you know, research has shown that call centre staff in Britain resolve 17 per cent more queries first time around. My own research shows that customers are 100 per cent less likely to recommend an organisation with Indian call centres to friends and ▼ relatives. Phone before you buy.

WHEN I'M 64

Intel's new 64-bit server technology is a late arrival, but may point to the future of desktop gaming
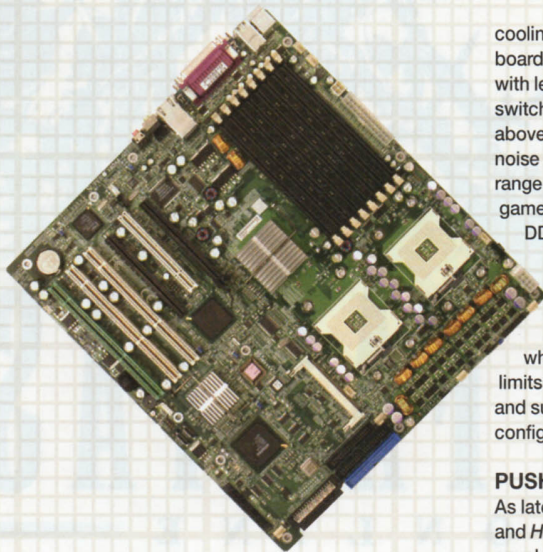
Supermicro's E7525 board has features to please IT managers and home gamers alike.

ORIGINALLY the preserve of £10,000 servers and workstations, features such as multiple CPUs and 64-bit processing are now standard in desktop gaming systems costing less than £800. With the Nocona, Intel's revised Xeon server chip, you have a glimpse of how office technology remains a mould for future gaming systems. Nocona's Extended Memory 64 Technology (EM64T) adds 64-bit extensions to Intel's x86 standard architecture, and although currently available in the business platform only, it's something you should eventually see filtering through to high street products.

Plus, while sources suggest that Intel has no official timetable for EM64T in the home, the runaway success of the Athlon 64 and its continued dominance in benchmarks would suggest otherwise.

ARE YOU BEING SERVED?

The Intel E7525 Tumwater chipset provides the backbone for EM64T. It kicks servers from a previous 533MHz to a 800MHz frontside bus, and with Pulse Width Modulated (PWM) cooling seen on Supermicro boards, provides more speed with less noise. PWM fans are switched at a frequency above 20KHz, pushing the noise of the motor beyond the range of the human ear. Other gamer-friendly features include DDR-II memory, which effectively doubles the bandwidth of existing DDR modules; and support for PCI-Express, which quadruples the data limits of existing AGP 8x and supports NVIDIA SLI configurations.

PUSH IT REAL GOOD

As latest titles such as *Doom 3* and *Half-Life 2* really push the envelope, so SLI configurations are set to rapidly increase in popularity for frame-rate obsessed users wanting the maximum performance and the best possible in-game experience around.

An SLI configuration comprises two PCI-Express graphics controllers joined by an NVIDIA SLI connector – the two individual cards are used as one to deliver some fairly startling leaps in performance. NVIDIA's own testing has revealed improvements of up to 1.87 times over a single card, and with code available to help developers take full advantage of the setup, it shouldn't be too long before games are looking better and running faster than you ever dreamed.

And this isn't just a paper launch. With support for dual EM64T Noconas, a 16GB RAM ceiling and with Ultra320 SCSI onboard, the X6DA8-G2 board is one of 50 Supermicro products available today for businesses wishing to invest in cutting-edge workstation technology.

What's interesting for you is that the X6DA8-G2 also includes 2-port SATA RAID, 5.1 surround audio, 800MHz FSB, DDRII-400 support and a x16 SLI-ready PCI-Express slot – making it look like the basis for the ultimate gaming rig. To prove this, I'll be putting one through its paces next month. (In the meantime, if you want to find out more about Supermicro, contact Boston Ltd on 08707 515950.)

There is one caveat. Nobody knows what effect Intel's extensions will have on a 64-bit version of Windows for the simple reason that neither have been widely available for lengthy and proper public testing. Until Microsoft is done, and until developers have rewritten key drivers to include 64-bit support, you have to rely on figures provided by the manufacturers – performance boosts of between 10 per cent and 50 per cent have been suggested, depending on what you're doing. If we take this as true, and add in the benefits of SLI and of DDR-II, you'll be looking at a machine that's getting on for twice as fast as the one you own today. Super indeed.

NVIDIA Quadro with PCI-Express in SLI mode. The configuration should be widely available by Christmas.
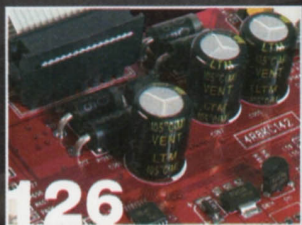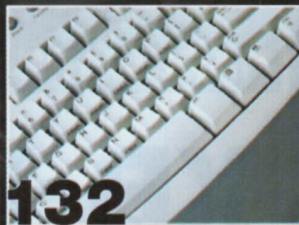
SHUTTLE DROPS A PIN

Top of the line Shuttle PC features nForce3 Ultra and support for 939-pin Athlon 64 processors

SHUTTLE'S NEW barebone XPC SN95G5 is a world-first: it's the first small-form factor PC to support 64-bit Athlon chips through the nForce3 Ultra chipset, as described in detail two issues back. With dynamic overclocking, SATA RAID, 5.1 channel surround sound and an updated design of Shuttle's cooling system all packaged in an aluminium case just 300mm deep, it's an ideal toy for LAN party-goers, media centre fans and anyone wishing to reclaim some space in their home office.

The SN95G5 also features up to 2GB of DDR400 memory and has an AGP 8x slot, meaning you can install modern hardware and play the most modern games. There's even an optional wireless LAN attachment, making it almost as portable as a laptop. The only downside is, as always, the power supply. At a rated 240W, it restricts your choice of graphics card and prohibits hardware such as the GeForce 6800 GT or Radeon X800 Pro, both of which require a minimum of 300W. www.shuttle.com

The fastest, baddest flagship Shuttles support the very latest AMD flavour chips.

SERVICE CACK

XP Service Pack 2 can cause more headaches than it cures

Internet Explorer - Security Warning

Do you want to install this software?

Lotus Domino Applet

International Business Machines Corporation

○ Always install software from "International Business Machines Corporation"

○ Never install software from "International Business Machines Corporation"

◉ Ask me every time

⬆ Less options   [Install]   [Cancel]

⚠ Some software can be harmful to your computer. Only install software from publishers you trust. Learn more
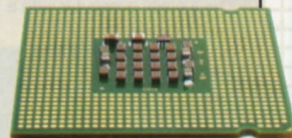
With SP2, Internet Explorer at last gives you the chance to block code from third parties.

MICROSOFT wants over 100 million XP users to install Service Pack 2 (SP2) before October, in a bid to stop the huge proliferation of Trojans, viruses, adware and malware from spreading right across the Windows userbase.

SP2 is the most significant release since XP itself, and aims to plug a number of security holes by battening down hatches and bolting doors the moment you run it – a revamped XP firewall is now active by default. The effect of this is to stop games, instant messengers and any number of Internet-savvy applications from talking with the outside world, so you'll need to 'teach' the firewall which programs are OK and which it should block. There are other changes, such as preventing Outlook from opening file attachments and stopping Internet Explorer from opening pop-ups, but these will be of no concern to gamers.

However, what will cause long-term problems with certain members of the community is the way SP2 treats illegal copies of XP, such as where corporate keys are used. If you're using a pirated copy of Windows, your luck may have just run out. While SP2 will install and you'll have full access to its security features, you won't be able to update it from that point on. Time to go and buy a real copy.

FLAT RATE TAX
Europe about to impose duty on LCD panels

Earlier this year, the European Union decided to reclassify screens with DVI inputs as 'televisions' rather than 'monitors', thus making them liable to a hefty 14 per cent tax.

According to legislators, DVI would allow screens to accept signals from sources other than the PC and thus makes them subject to TV tariffs. The effect of this has been compounded by prices which are already seen as too high by most consumers – sales have been falling as a result. Making a £300 monitor cost £350 is going to hurt the market even more. You know which way I'll be voting at the next European elections.

DRIVER WATCH
Need a patch? Take a look to see if you're behind the times

ON THE CD

MOTHERBOARD

MANUFACTURER	NAME	DESC	RELEASED	SIZE	WEB	
Intel	INF Update Utility	6.0.1.1002	7-May-04	1.5MB	support.intel.com	
NVIDIA	Forceware	4.27	19-Jul-04	20.2MB	www.nvidia.com	
VIA	Hyperion 4in1	4.53	16-Aug-04	1.4MB	www.viaarena.com	NEW
VIA	Hyperion Pro 64-bit	0.99 Beta	06-Aug-04	2.7MB	www.viaarena.com	NEW

GRAPHICS

MANUFACTURER	NAME	DESC	RELEASED	SIZE	WEB	
ATI	Display, Control Panel, WDM	CATALYST 4.8	16-Aug-04	26.0MB	www.ati.com	NEW
NVIDIA	Forceware	61.77	27-Jul-04	12.0MB	www.nvidia.com	NEW

SOUND

MANUFACTURER	NAME	DESC	RELEASED	SIZE	WEB	
Creative	Audigy 2 & ZS Driver Update	1-84-50	29-Jul-04	16.6MB	uk.europe.creative.com	NEW
M-Audio	Revolution	1.0.2.8	13-Feb-04	10.16MB	m-audio.com	

XB-X800

■ £1,399 | Manufacturer: Armari | Phone: 01923 225550 | www.armari.co.uk

Small on the outside, plenty on the inside

MICROATX PC

THE ARMARI XB-X800 is a small computer with a big heart. A 2.2GHz Athlon 64 3400 and Radeon X800 Pro work together in near silence to pump out some impressive benchmark scores, low load times and a 48fps average in *Doom 3*. The machine itself is slightly larger and more heavy-duty than the average Shuttle, but the Antec Cube case is roomy enough for three hard drives, an AGP card, three PCI slots and an integrated 300W PSU with large diameter rear fan.

Initial tests revealed that if you have any small children in your family, the XB-X800's dimensions, shiny aluminium skin and large glowing buttons will have a hypnotic effect on them, and the non-slip rubber top invites them to carry it into the bathroom and stand on it. So beware.

Highlights from the benchmarks include 10,001 marks in 3DMark03, 40fps in *Far Cry* and 97fps in *UT2K4*. The 1GB PC3200 RAM and 7200rpm, 8MB cache Barracuda contributed to some fast loading in *Far Cry* and *Battlefield 1942* – shorter wait times can often make an appreciably better gaming experience than slightly higher frame rates.

The XB-X800 includes an Audigy2 card and Pioneer DVD +/- burner, and ships with Windows XP Home and Logitech's Cordless Desktop MX kit. I'm not a fan of the latter, but you can delete it from the specification and save £70.

The only negative points are Armari's 2 per cent credit card surcharge, amounting to almost £30 for a £1,400 machine, and the standard one-year warranty – most rivals including Demonite and Dell offer three times as long for no charge.

PCZONE VERDICT

✔ A really solid product
✔ Good specification
✔ Small, neat and quiet
✘ Short warranty
✘ Credit card surcharge

86

An appealing all-round package

BENCHMARKS ■ PCZ BENCH MULE X800 PRO ■ DEMONITE OVER X64 (ATHLON 64 3200) ■ HYBRID (ATHLON 64 3400) ■ TINY POWER (ATHLON 64 FX-53) ■ ARMARI XB-X800 (ATHLON 64 3400)
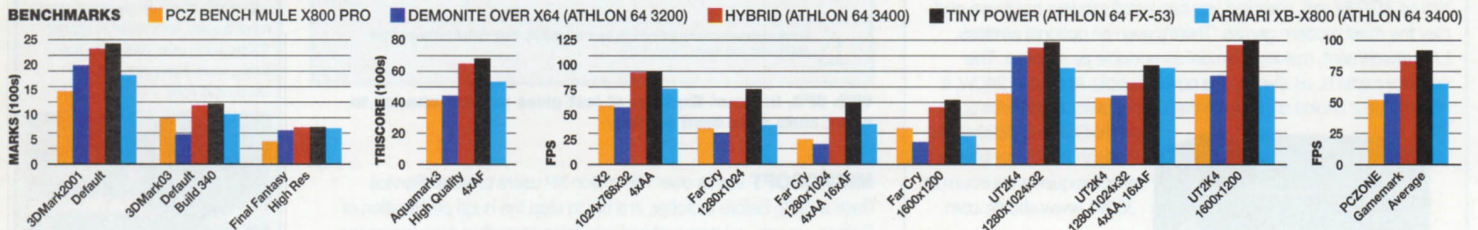
EXCALIBUR 9550 SE

■ £40 | Manufacturer: Hightech | Phone: +852 2796 3788 | www.hisdigital.com

GRAPHICS CARD

Sophisticated real-time visual effects!

WORLD'S fastest and most advanced graphics board! Incredible 3D rendering performance! Sell your 6800 Ultra now! Well that's what the Hightech website says! No really it does! OK, apart from that last bit!

The Excalibur 9550 SE features 128MB RAM, a 64-bit interface, 250MHz core, 400MHz memory and silent cooling technology (ie a heat sink). Despite the Hong Kong manufacturer's heroic marketing, it remains no faster than its specifications suggest – you might just be able to squeeze 1,600 marks from it in 3DMark03 and a Hentai-rivalling 5fps in *Far Cry*.

Which begs the question, why am I bothering to look at it? To answer this, you simply have to look at ATI or NVIDIA sales figures for cut-price video hardware, where the most successful models are always from the lower echelons. You should then read some of the letters I receive each month, where buyers expect way too much from them.

What these cards are good for is undemanding folk on a tight budget. They're for people who want to play *Solitaire*, potter about inside Windows and look at Web pages. They're not designed for anyone wanting to go out and buy the latest titles. They're not going to play *Doom 3*. Yes, the VIVO variant is ideal for video-editing and yes, the higher-powered XT version might add a few extra horsepower, but the 9550 SE is not something any gaming magazine should be recommending to gaming hungry readers. Forget the merchandising; these cards are all price and no performance.

SPECIFICATIONS

HARDWARE 128MB ATI Radeon 9550
ANCILLARIES 1 x VGA to DVI converter, S-video cable
BUNDLE Installation CD
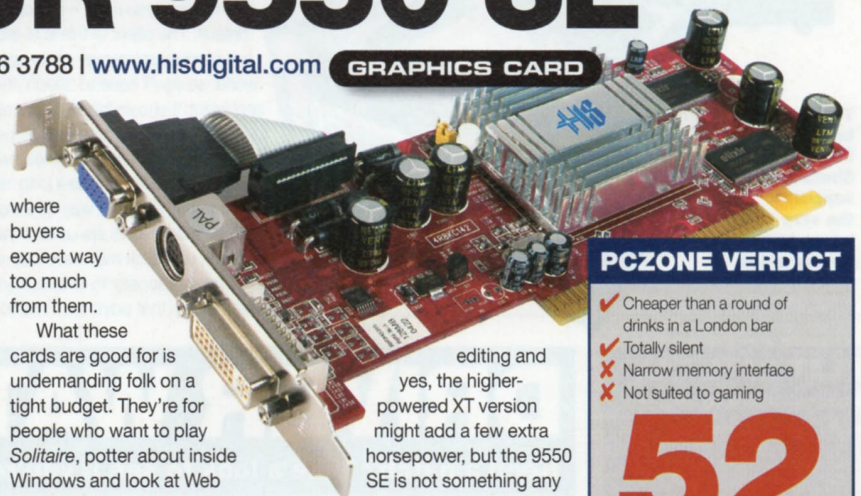
PCZONE VERDICT

✔ Cheaper than a round of drinks in a London bar
✔ Totally silent
✘ Narrow memory interface
✘ Not suited to gaming

52

Minimal expenditure, max embarrassment

BENCHMARKS ■ SPARKLE GEFORCE 6800 ■ MSI FX5950 ULTRA-VTD256 ■ SAPPHIRE RADEON X800 PRO ■ HIS EXCALIBUR 9550
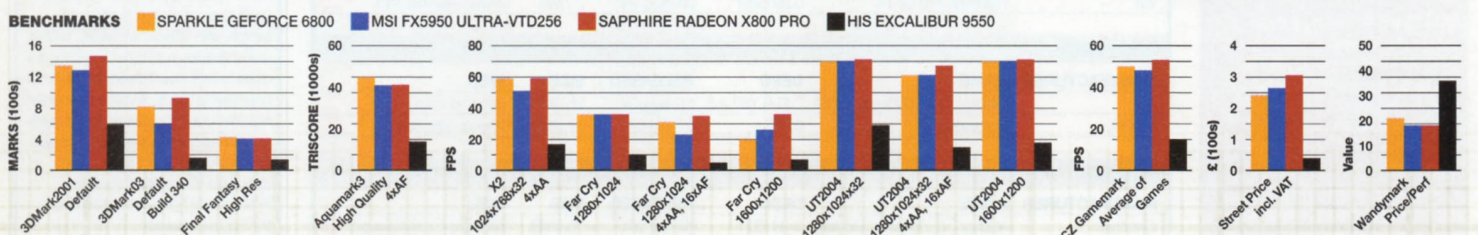
The **COMBINED SCORE** is an average of a number of real-world gaming tests and bespoke benchmarking tools. The **WANDYMARK™** is the combined average score divided by the price.

"If you're going to buy a gaming notebook, buy this one."

- PC Zone

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ASUS® A8V Deluxe - VIA K8T800 Pro Chipset-Based Motherboard[1]
512 MB Dual Channel DDR SDRAM at 400MHz
NEW! NVIDIA® GeForce™ 6800 Ultra 256MB DDR3
Fusion Red AlienIce™ Video Cooling System - Choose your colour
Fusion Red AlienEyes™ - Choose your colour
120GB Seagate Barracuda Serial ATA 7200rpm 8MB Cache
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Black 16x DVD-Rom/52x32x52x CD-RW Combo
Alienware® Cable Management System
Alienware® MultiMedia Keyboard
Microsoft® IntelliMouse Explorer USB 3.0
Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
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Prices excluding shipping

ACCESSID: PCZ1104PR3

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Exclusive Alienware® Chassis
NEW! High-Performance 650-Watt Max PSU
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(3.60 GHz, 1 MB L2 cache, 800 MHz FSB)
NEW! Intel® 925X Express Chipset-Based Motherboard[1]
NEW! 512 MB Dual Channel DDR2 SDRAM at 533MHz
NEW! NVIDIA® GeForce™ 6800 Ultra for PCI-Express 256MB DDR3
Astral Blue AlienIce™ Video Cooling System - Choose your colour
Astral Blue AlienEyes™ - Choose your Colour
120GB Seagate Barracuda Serial ATA 7200rpm 8MB Cache
Creative Sound Blaster® Audigy 2™ ZS 7.1 Advanced 24-bit Audio
Integrated High Performance Intel® Gigabit Ethernet Adapter
Black 16x DVD-Rom/52x32x52x CD-RW Combo
Alienware® Cable Management System
Alienware® MultiMedia Keyboard
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ACCESSID: PCZ1104PM3

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DEAR WANDY

Here at *PC ZONE*, we believe that real men do cry. Particularly when their hard drive fails or their copy of *Doom 3* won't play nicely. But never fear – Dr Wandy's here to soothe your woes...

■ **DR RUTH-ALIKE** Phil Wand

THE LOST ART OF RAID

Q I've been wanting to add a pair of RAID disks to my machine – I've heard it's a much faster and safer way of storing my stuff. I recently had a large Samsung drive die on me and it's been a total pain getting back to where I was.

Thing is, I'm fairly sure I want a RAID array, but don't know much about RAID. I've heard talk of RAID 0 and RAID 1, and of mirror and striping, but I don't know what these terms mean or whether they're what I need for backing up my clobber. What does RAID do? Is it the best back-up solution? Is there another way of saving and restoring my data?

Phil Stephens

A Conceived by IBM back in the '70s as a way of increasing fault tolerance in their servers and workstations, a Redundant Array of Independent Disks is a method for storing data over two or more hard drives. Now OK, many of us already have extra disks where we stash all our MP3s, videos, games and demos, so what's the big deal? Isn't RAID just a cool-sounding name for a bunch of disks?

Well, yes and no. Yes, it's a cool-sounding name; but no, there's a bit more to it than multiple HDDs. Its party trick is that all drives in the array are combined into one by the RAID controller – usually an extra chip on the motherboard, or an add-in card like the Adaptec 1210SA – and treated as one by Windows. There's a a lot of confusion about what the different configurations do and their benefit to gamers though, so you're not alone – let me try to explain...

RAID 0 is better known as striping, where data is split across the array in chunks of a predetermined size. For example, if you have a 64KB bitmap and you've set a 32KB stripe, half the image will be stored on one disk and half to the other. Striping can lead to significant performance gains, and it's often used where rapid I/O is key – for example in capturing, editing and encoding movie files.

On the other hand, RAID 1 is known as mirroring and is something I wouldn't be without. Here, your files are cloned rather than cut up across drives, resulting in the increased integrity of your data – if one unit in the array fails, replace the dead disk with a new one. The easy way to remember which is which is to treat the number as the likelihood of you rescuing data – RAID 0 being the most alarming option for backup-conscious users. That said, don't treat RAID as a backup solution anyway. 'Backing up' means taking data and putting it somewhere safe, away from your PC. Your best bet is to use something like Acronis True Image, which can create a compressed 'snapshot' file of your system from the Windows desktop. Burn the snapshot to a DVD and put it somewhere safe, or upload it to an online service such as BT Datasure – a working HD is just one that hasn't failed yet.
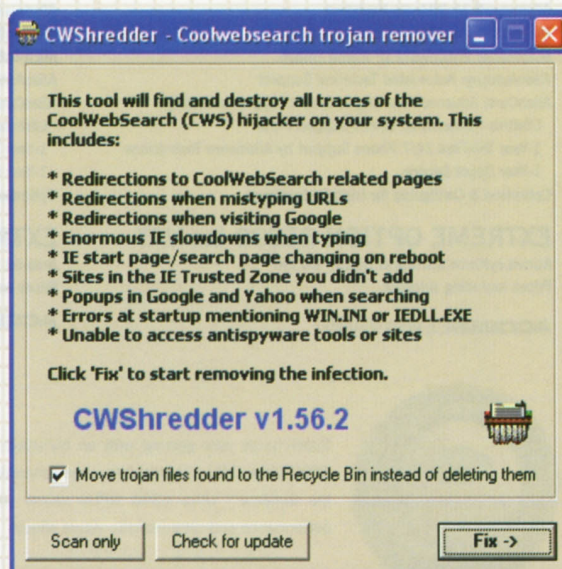
ADWARE

Q I have an annoying Trojan/adware thing on my PC. My homepage keeps getting reset to about:blank, which as we all know is a blank white page. But the thing is, it isn't. It's a search page entitled 'Easy Search', inviting me to search for Viagra and penis pills and what have you.

I have Norton Internet Security 2004, but it doesn't detect it when I run a full system scan. I went into the registry, reset the homepage to www.google.ie and deleted two values known as 'Search Page' and 'Search Toolbar'. Then I entered Internet Explorer and the homepage is Google. When I exited, the next time it's back to about:blank. It's really annoying, and my computer is virus-free otherwise.

Also, I have an NVIDIA GeForce3 Ti500 card and am able to run all my games on high graphics detail without any problems. Why do I need to upgrade? There are people with 9800XTs already upgrading to X800s. It makes no sense! The day my card won't run a game at all is when I plan to upgrade.

Una Hogan

CWShredder - Coolwebsearch trojan remover

This tool will find and destroy all traces of the CoolWebSearch (CWS) hijacker on your system. This includes:

* Redirections to CoolWebSearch related pages
* Redirections when mistyping URLs
* Redirections when visiting Google
* Enormous IE slowdowns when typing
* IE start page/search page changing on reboot
* Sites in the IE Trusted Zone you didn't add
* Popups in Google and Yahoo when searching
* Errors at startup mentioning WIN.INI or IEDLL.EXE
* Unable to access antispyware tools or sites

Click 'Fix' to start removing the infection.

CWShredder v1.56.2

☑ Move trojan files found to the Recycle Bin instead of deleting them

[Scan only]   [Check for update]   [Fix ->]

From the author of HijackThis! comes CWShredder, a way to remove the widespread CoolWebSearch browser hijack.

Costing under £40, the Adaptec 1210SA enables you to use two drives in RAID 0 or 1 configuration.

> **"RAID's party trick is that all drives in the array are put into one by the RAID controller, and treated as one by Windows"**

> ## "For some reason, none of the major anti-virus developers support adware detection and removal in their programs"

What you have there is known as a browser hijack, and that's the reason your anti-virus measures aren't picking up on it. For some reason, none of the major anti-virus developers support adware detection and removal in their programs, so although Norton or McAfee might make you feel secure about the Net, the reality is that your system is wide open.

Norton claims to detect spyware, but it didn't detect any of the programs I tested it with. Which is stupid, because some of the stuff can be more disruptive than many viruses – like porn diallers, so-called because they connect to adult premium rate lines using your modem, run up huge phone bills and can land you in trouble with your provider.

What you have on your PC is known as CWS, or CoolWebSearch, and is tricky to remove. It buries itself in the registry and uses various obfuscation techniques to hide, even shutting down spyware removal tools when you open them. My suggestion would be to research the CoolWebSearch problem at spywareguide.com and then download a copy of CWShredder to delete the code from your system. To prevent future problems you could switch browsers, to Mozilla, which stops all such nonsense (see 'Browser Bother', right, for more).

With regard to your Ti500, it depends on what you're playing. You'll be fine playing older titles such as *Half-Life*, *Unreal Tournament*, *Total Annihilation* and so on. But if you fancy a spot of *Doom 3* at home, your poor old GeForce will melt.

BUY TIME

Q I want to buy a new PC but have been wondering if it's worthwhile waiting. With the advent of PCI-Express and the new-look Pentiums, should I be buying now? I've been looking at a top-of-the-range Alienware system.

Dean Darnell

A Whether you should get your new PC today depends on more than just the technology. What do you currently own? What games do you play? How much money do you have? And will you be satisfied without top-banana hardware?

To answer your question, I think that now is a good time to buy. I'm not sure whether
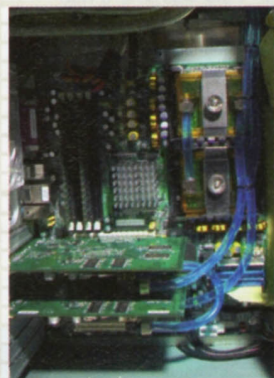
With Alienware's Video Array, you can use either ATI or NVIDIA cards from any manufacturer.

PCI-Express is something that'll be a clincher, unless you have a lot of money to spend and fancy hanging about for Alienware's multiple-card Video Array solution to be made available to UK buyers. As always, when you do jump in, get the fastest machine you can sensibly afford.

DOOM IN THE DUMPS

Q I have *Doom 3* and don't know if it's running OK. How can I make it go faster?

Everyone

A I've had a number of letters this month asking about *Doom 3*. To use the game's in-built benchmark, drop down the console (CTRL+ALT+`) and type 'timedemo demo1'. This runs through a brief test before giving an average frame-rate.

The game won't run higher than 60fps, so if you're close to that, there's little point tweaking. If you're someway off, run the game at a lesser resolution and with less detail. I've tried all the tweaks and none of them make a lot of difference. To run *Doom 3* fast, you need fast hardware.

SYSTEM RETARD

Q In issue 145's Dear Wandy, you stated in the first reply that Windows XP takes snapshots and the programs are copied back from the System Restore file. They're actually copied back from \windows\system32\dllcache – files are only copied from system restore by user intervention.

Guy

A Guy's right, I'm bad. When you delete a key file such as Windows Media Player, a backup is copied over from the dllcache. Do let me repeat though, that if your System Restore file contains a virus, when you revert to a previous restore point the virus comes along with it.

IS THIS OK?

Q I've just built my first PC. I went for the Asrock K7S8XE board with an XP3200+ and 400FSB. I already had a 9800 Pro, and decided on 512MB PC3200 from Crucial. I've run 3DMark2001SE and got 13,260. Is this OK? It's like having kids all over again!

A That's a healthy score. And unlike kids, once you've made your first PC, you never stop. Unless you're catholic... PCZ

Visit Wandy on the Web at www.dearwandy.com

WANT AN ALTERNATIVE TO INTERNET EXPLORER?

I've had a number of letters from distressed spyware victims. If you're one of them, why not switch your browser from Internet Explorer to Firefox, a superb alternative to Microsoft's powerhouse. And did I mention that it's free?

STEP BY STEP

The first thing to do is snag Firefox from the Mozilla website. Once installed, the program offers to copy your existing browser settings, plus cookies and favourites should you elect to retain them. After that, it's time to get acquainted.

The first thing you need to know about Firefox is that it's a tabbed browser. Press CTRL+T to make a new browser tab show up, and you can flick between sites by clicking on them. It automatically stops pop-up ads, ignores ActiveX controls and VBScript (the principal conveyance for malicious code), and never installs anything without your permission.

The second thing you need to know is that Firefox is totally customisable. So if you don't feel quite at home just yet, don't lose heart – from the Tools menu, choose Themes to reskin the whole application, and choose Extensions to add new features, functions and helpers.
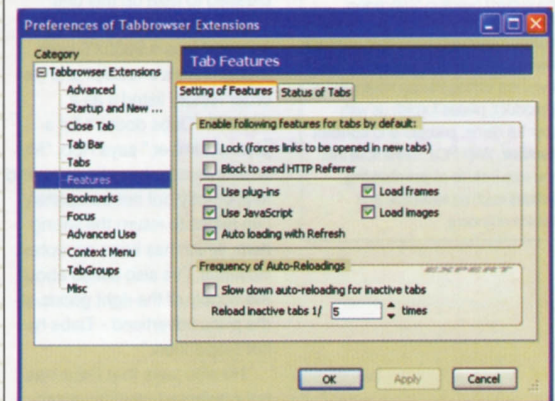
Tabbrowser Extensions extends Firefox's features.

DON'T MOVE, EXTEND

My two favourite add-ons are Tabbrowser Extensions, which enables you to fiddle with every aspect of tabbed browsing; and Adblock, which revolutionises the way you view the Web. Installing Adblock enables you to remove all advertising by blocking its source. Right-click on a banner and choose Adblock Image, or Adblock iFrame, or click the Adblock icon on Flash movies and then save the name of the originating site.

For example, if you've clicked to block Google's text ads, enter 'googlesyndication.' into the box (without the quotes, but with the full stop) and click OK. From now, any page that contains 'googlesyndication.', such as 'pagead.googlesyndication.com' will be cleansed of advertising. It works, and works brilliantly.

DON'T LOOK BACK

Some online banks, The National Lottery and of course Windowsupdate.com require that you use Internet Explorer, so you might have to resort to IE at times. If you do, make sure you download SpywareGuard and SpywareBlaster to partner your anti-virus measures. These are a couple of excellent freeware utilities offering protection to anyone at risk of malware.

Mozilla Firefox
www.mozilla.org/firefox

Lavasoft Ad-aware
Hunt out spyware on your machine.
www.lavasoft.de

Spybot - Search & Destroy
The ideal partner for Ad-aware.
www.spybot.info

Adblock Makes browsing a pleasure once more.
adblock.mozdev.org

Tabbrowser Extensions
A good addition to tabbed browsing.
white.sakura.ne.jp/~piro

SpywareGuard and SpywareBlaster
javacoolsoftware.com

WATCHDOG

Got that sinking feeling? Are companies you've given your hard-earned cash to not playing fairly? Write in, and let Watchdog wipe away your proper sorry frown...

■ **SPREADING THE LOVE** Adam Phillips

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!

Don't worry – we're here to help when you're at the end of your tether. If you've got a consumer issue that needs addressing, then drop us a line.

WRITE TO Watchdog, *PC ZONE*, Dennis Publishing, 9 Dallington Street, London EC1V 0BQ
EMAIL Alternatively, email us at letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk with the subject heading 'Watchdog'

READ ME!

If you are writing into complain about a product, please furnish us with your full name, address and **contact number**. With PCs, make sure that you also include all **purchasing details** such as reference and invoice numbers.

"When I press the accelerator pedal down fully, it sometimes gives as little as 60 per cent"

PETER MANN WANTS TO GO FASTER

THE ACCUSED

dabs.com

Logitech

CHILL-TEK

GUILTY UNTIL PROVEN INNOCENT

MISTAKEN IDENTITY

Talk about how just one single digit can leave you feeling ripped off. Enter reader Rob Morgan-Hetherington, who ordered an Abit 9800XT card from Dabs. "It was advertised at the bargain price of £133.87," explains Rob. "I'd recently missed out on a similar offer of a very cheap card from another company, so I was pleased to take up this one."

However, when the card arrived it was a 9600XT, even though Rob's e-receipt and his order history listed it as a 9800XT: "Dabs doesn't list a phone number," says Rob. "My emails thus far have been replied to promptly but not completely. I've asked to return the wrong item, which has been accepted. However, I've also asked about the supply of the right goods at the price advertised – Dabs has not responded."

He also says that Dabs has not confirmed whether or not he'll receive a refund or get back his carriage charges. "I'd like Dabs to supply me the 9800XT at the advertised price," demands Rob.

Oops, is probably the best way to describe what's happened to you, Rob. Dabs says that the confusion in this case was caused by a typographical error in the product info on its website: "In summary, an Abit 9600XT card was listed as an Abit 9800XT card," says the company. "This was a genuine mistake for which we apologise wholeheartedly."

It goes on to say that the card's maker doesn't make a 9800XT, so it's unable to supply such a product at the advertised price. Instead, it's issued you with a full refund.

Unfortunately, after a bit of digging on our part it appears that Abit *does* make a 9800XT

Introducing the new Rarebit 349284r94XTS graphics card. Available from Dabs. Sort of...

card, although it labels it an R9800XT. Hmmm...

LOGIC BOMB

Products go wrong – and yes, it sucks. But what rubs salt into wounds is when you find out that some customers are getting preferential treatment just because they live somewhere else. Reader Peter Mann has been pulling his hair out over the Logitech Momo steering wheel he bought in August 2003.

"This product has been going faulty on and off for about three months. The problem is with the wheel's accelerator pedal; when you press it down fully, it sometimes gives you 83 per cent power, at other times as little as 60 per cent. Also, when you use its calibration software and press the pedal, the needle wavers. If you remove the USB plug it rectifies itself, maybe for a day or sometimes just ten minutes."

It's similar in nature to a problem that's been plaguing fellow owners over in the US who Peter races in *Nascar2003* online. According to Peter's chums, when they approached Logitech USA, the company said it knew about the problem and was working on a new design. In the meantime, it shipped new pedals to the frustrated US punters. Logitech UK hasn't been quite so forthcoming.

"On ringing Logitech UK, the member of staff agreed that

there was a fault with the product that his boss was aware of." Peter was given a Web address for a patch to help in the short term, and was told he wouldn't get a replacement, unlike his mates in the US.

"Eventually, I asked for my product to be repaired or replaced as they come with a two-year guarantee. The customer support person said Logitech couldn't do either until the pedal ceased working completely," recalls Peter. "I then told him I wasn't happy and would be writing to you." Wasn't the company bothered if it got bad publicity? He replied: "No."

Grrrr. So Logitech, what the hell's going on? Well, Peter, thankfully it's taking your complaint very seriously now. In fact, Logitech in California ended up responding to it: "One important note: the customer who started this case should have his wheel pedals replaced," states Jef Holove, Logitech's director of product marketing in the US.

He goes on to state that: "The patch we offer does compensate for the issue in most cases by replacing the firmware pedal calibration with a software solution. In cases it doesn't solve, our policy is to replace the product for the consumer. This consumer's experience is not typical, nor how Logitech aims to handle such issues."

In the meantime, Logitech UK should have already been in touch with you, Peter, to arrange a replacement. If anyone else has the same problem, let us know and we'll pass them on. [PCZ]

IN THE DOG HOUSE

CHILL-TEK

THERE ARE SOME COMPANIES WHO APPEAR TO BAULK AT THE IDEA OF RESPONDING TO OUR QUERIES. HERE'S WHERE WE PUT THEM...

CHILL-TEK

THE COMPLAINT– Reader Dimitris Xydas is hacked off with Chill-Tek, a company that sells a range of products to the PC modding scene. Dimitris ordered a case fan, window kit and appliqué, along with a cold cathode light in May. However, despite the company having whipped £40 from his account, he still hasn't received anything in the post. He's also sent four query emails and tried to phone Chill-Tek, but all to no avail.

THE PURSUIT – We dispatched an email to the company's enquiries address, but it was bounced back, stating that its mailbox was full. 'OK', we thought, 'we'll try again next week'. Which we did, but with the same response. We then tried to call Chill-Tek's number, but it appears that's not working either...

THE VERDICT– Well, Chill-Tek's site is still up and running, but we wonder if the company has either gone to the ground or if it's experiencing some very serious 'technical difficulties'. Either way, until we hear from Chill-Tek, we recommend you steer clear for the time being...

BUYER'S GUIDE

Out with the old, in with the new. Fancy some new kit? Don't leave home without this handy guide...

Whether you want a new graphics card, motherboard or joystick, this is where to look to find the best on the market. Editor's Choice is the class champ, the product that will satisfy no matter what you play. Our Recommended product wears a silver medal, not quite as triumphant as the outright winner, but a worthy alternative.

Finally, the Also Consider product is one we believe you should look at too before making your final decision. If you feel we've got something wrong, missed out a great product or just want to add your own words of wisdom, mail letters@pczone.co.uk. If we act on your suggestion, we might even send you a gift. We're nice like that.

◀ **EDITOR'S CHOICE** ▶ ◀ **RECOMMENDED** ▶ ◀ **ALSO CONSIDER** ▶

MOTHERBOARDS

IC7
WAS £82.50 NOW £79
STREET PRICE £78.99
MANUFACTURER ABIT Computer
TELEPHONE N/A
WEBSITE www.abit.com.tw
Another solid and modern ABIT board with dual-channel memory configuration, two channel SATA with RAID, USB 2.0, 800FSB, plus 6-channel audio with S/PDIF. All cables included and it's overclocker-friendly, with a host of tweaking options in the BIOS. If you want high-speed networking, the IC7-G variant includes Intel Gigabit LAN onboard. The downside to these boards is they don't support earlier 400FSB Pentiums.

K8N NEO PLATINUM
STREET PRICE £80
MANUFACTURER MSI
TELEPHONE 020 8813 6688
WEBSITE www.msi.com.tw
With AMD's 800MHz HyperTransport bus at its core, the K8N Neo Platinum is ideal for Athlon owners wanting to find a solid home for their 64-bit chips. As with many rivals, the MSI mobo features dynamic overclocking, but on this particular nForce3 250 board it actually seems to work, delivering 10-15 per cent additional thrust without you having to raise a finger. The downside is that it lacks SoundStorm 7.1 support.

875PNEO-FIS2R (INTEL)
WAS £105 NOW £97
STREET PRICE £97
MANUFACTURER MSI
TELEPHONE 020 8813 6688
WEBSITE www.msi.com.tw
A high-end P4 Canterwood board, the Neo has some remarkable features, including dynamic overclocking – the hardware jumps on the throttle the moment you open apps – and automated BIOS updates using MSI's own Live Update software. Other features include IEEE 1394 FireWire, six-channel audio, onboard LAN and support for Dual DDR. Build quality and packaging are excellent.

PROCESSORS

P4 3.2GHZ
STREET PRICE £183
MANUFACTURER Intel
TELEPHONE 01793 403000
WEBSITE www.intel.com
With the price of the 3.0GHz now well below £200, it makes sense to spend a bit extra on the 3.2GHz. Hyper-threading delivers a jaw-pounding, double-whammy power hit that pushes benchmark scores well ahead of the equivalent Athlon, and an 800MHz front-side bus paired with the right memory makes its presence felt. If you've got a P4 motherboard, chances are you're already set for an upgrade to remember.

ATHLON XP 3200+ 400FSB
STREET PRICE £135
MANUFACTURER AMD
TELEPHONE N/A
WEBSITE www.amd.com
No, it's not as punchy as the hyper-threaded Pentium – but it's got a great price tag. Earlier 333FSB chips can be had for around the £100 mark, but with an nForce2 or better chipset and DDR400 memory, you can enjoy the speed boost from more recent XP chips. If you want to build a low-cost, high-power PC, get a cooking video card and the AMD chip will do you proud.

P4 2.6GHZ
STREET PRICE £116
MANUFACTURER Intel
TELEPHONE 01793 403000
WEBSITE www.intel.com
We'd previously recommended Intel's 2.4GHz 800FSB chip, but recent price slicing means the 2.6GHz chip now makes most sense. Coupled with a decent motherboard, some top-class memory and an FX 5700 Ultra or Radeon 9600XT, you'll have a machine that's muscular enough to tackle all the latest games. If you're building a home games network and want big machines for hardly any money, look no further.

HDDS

WD1200JB 120GB
WAS £62 NOW £57
STREET PRICE £57
MANUFACTURER Western Digital
TELEPHONE N/A
WEBSITE www.westerndigital.com
You may well view a 120GB HDD as an extravagance, but with games getting longer and broadband getting wider, a hangar-like hard drive gives you plenty of room for mucking about. You'll also bring that never-ending quest for more room to an abrupt end. The price is just right, and the performance second to none. Like the DiamondMax Plus9, the WD1200JB features an 8MB cache and a speed of 7200RPM.

DIAMONDMAX PLUS9 80GB
WAS £55 NOW £44
STREET PRICE £44
MANUFACTURER Maxtor
TELEPHONE N/A
WEBSITE www.maxtor.com
The mid-sized Maxtor is for everyone: large, fast and not that pricey. 80GB is more than adequate for work, play and downloading requirements, and if you're greedy for more gig you can jump a size up. The Fast ATA, 7200RPM drive includes Maxtor's Shock Protection System and Quiet Drive Technology, but for the Serial ATA version, expect to pay a £20 premium.

RAPTOR 36GB
WAS £78 NOW £73
STREET PRICE £73
MANUFACTURER Western Digital
TELEPHONE N/A
WEBSITE www.westerndigital.com
If you don't need a deep hole for your data, or if you intend keeping your dirt on a separate drive, the 10,000RPM Serial ATA Raptor makes the ideal foundation for your primary partition. It's wickedly fast, perhaps the fastest HDD available yet, and although designed for server environments, provides gaming desktops with the kind of warp-nine, low access times that make any application more nimble.

GRAPHICS CARD

GEFORCE 6800 GT
NEW ENTRY
STREET PRICE £299
MANUFACTURER XFX Graphics
TELEPHONE 01327 315750
WEBSITE www.xfxforce.co.uk
The release of *Doom 3* means that NVIDIA couldn't have timed its return to the top better. The 6800 GT is a slight step down from its über-Ultra card in terms of performance (only by a few frames per second), but at under £300 it gives you much better value for money. If you can afford the not insignificant outlay, this is the card to buy – and your games will love you forever.

GEFORCE FX 5900 XT 128MB
STREET PRICE £140
MANUFACTURER XFX
TELEPHONE N/A
WEBSITE www.xfxforce.co.uk
The 5900 XT offers world-beating value – a top banana card packaged up with a mid-range price tag. In benchmarks, the 5900 XT is so far out front on power, it's snapping at the heels of big boys like the 9800 Pro. If you want the card that offers more frames per second per pound than any other, look no further. AGP is on its way out with a bang.

RADEON 9800XT 256MB
WAS £309 NOW £191
STREET PRICE £191
MANUFACTURER ASUSTeK Computer
WEBSITE www.asus.com
With mainstream cards hogging the front pews, it's only fair we gave some space to the fastest card on the market: the world's best presented prize-fighter, the ASUS Radeon 9800XT. If you're lucky enough to have the requisite 300 quid burning a hole in your pocket, why settle for anything less? You even get a coupon for *Half-Life 2*, redeemable when the game's released.

SOUNDCARDS

REVOLUTION 7.1
STREET PRICE £90
MANUFACTURER M-Audio
TELEPHONE 0871 7177 100
WEBSITE www.maudio.co.uk
Although it lacks a few of its rivals' gamer-friendly features, including hardware DirectSound and a joystick/MIDI port, the Revolution more than makes up for any deficit with a truly astonishing quality of sound. Unique technologies enhance your enjoyment of games, music and movies. The software is straight-talking and boasts a familiar look and feel, making the card a delight to work with.

AUDIGY 2 ZS
WAS £85 NOW £67
STREET PRICE £67
MANUFACTURER Creative Labs
TELEPHONE N/A
WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com
A quantum leap from its predecessor, the Audigy 2 offers a boggling range of pro-gamer and DVD features, including 6.1 surround sound, EAX Advanced HD, Advanced Resolution DVD-Audio and 24-bit/96KHz recording – it was the first card to gain THX certification from LucasFilm. If you appreciate the immersive experience offered by high-fidelity surround sound, the Audigy gives you an experience like no other.

AUDIGY 2 ZS PLATINUM PRO
WAS £167 NOW £159
STREET PRICE £159
MANUFACTURER Creative Labs
TELEPHONE N/A
WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com
With the same core features as its little brother, the Platinum Pro is guaranteed to perform and sound like no other. The external breakout box is a boon for serious listeners, including standard audio connections and volume controls. The big Platinum also offers dual SB1394 firewire ports and optical links, a stereo RCA input, plus MIDI In and MIDI Out mini-DIN sockets.

MSI World's Most Powerful VGA ever...

EDITOR'S CHOICE ▶   ◀ RECOMMENDED ▶   ◀ ALSO CONSIDER ▶

MICE

MX500
STREET PRICE £34
MANUFACTURER Logitech
TELEPHONE 020 7309 0127
WEBSITE www.logitech.com
Although it comes with a tail and doesn't have the same substantive feeling as the battery-reliant MX700, the MX500 remains a solid product and a solid performer in all games. It features Logitech's MX optical engine, mouse wheel (plus two additional buttons either side to aide document navigation), a task-switcher button and two thumb buttons that speed up Web navigation.

OPTICAL MOUSE BLUE
NOW £17 WAS £20
STREET PRICE £17
MANUFACTURER Microsoft
TELEPHONE 0870 6010 100
WEBSITE www.microsoft.com/uk
If you've ever been boggled by the number of buttons on a mouse and have fond memories of a time when three-clickers and a wheel were all you needed, Microsoft's blue rodent is the perfect peripheral. It's nice to look at, nice to hold and, as any veteran FPS gamer will tell you, three buttons is all you need. Plus, the latest optical technology means it works anywhere.

MX700
STREET PRICE £47
MANUFACTURER ACTURER Logitech
TELEPHONE 020 7309 0127
WEBSITE www.logitech.com
Sporting the MX optical engine that made Logitech famous with gamers, the MX700 is essentially an MX500 with its tail lopped off. A cradle keeps your desk tidy and acts as a recharger for the unfettered rodent – making the mouse more attractive to people who don't do batteries. However, it's a touch pricey and we remain unconvinced that going cordless is worth the extra stash.

KEYBOARDS

INTERNET NAVIGATOR
STREET PRICE £21
MANUFACTURER Logitech
TELEPHONE 020 7309 0127
WEBSITE www.logitech.com
The Internet Navigator lies absolutely flat on your desk, a trademark Logitech design that makes it look sleeker and feel nicer. There's a scroll wheel along the left edge and a raft of customisable function keys to make trawling the Web a cinch – you no longer have to swap back and forth to the mouse, and instead can leave your hands over on the keyboard. Once you browse this way, there's no going back.

INTERNET KEYBOARD
STREET PRICE £15
MANUFACTURER Microsoft
TELEPHONE 0870 6010 100
WEBSITE www.microsoft.com/uk
Forget what you've learned about Microsoft software – its hardware is always of a high build quality and, despite problems with early Intellimouse rodents, very durable. Shortcut buttons you think you'll never use soon become second nature, especially when reconfigured to suit your way of working. And once you learn the enhanced layout, you'll never go back to anything else.

PRO KEYBOARD
STREET PRICE £46
MANUFACTURER Apple
TELEPHONE 0800 0391 010
WEBSITE www.apple.com/uk
If you think we're mad for including an Apple keyboard, think again. Anyone looking for a Rolls-Royce keyboard, and who can live without all the additional buttons, scroll wheels and assorted paraphernalia need look no further. The Apple Pro plugs straight into your USB port and, with the help of third-party utilities, disguises the fact that it was designed for computer illiterates with fewer than two mouse buttons.

JOYSTICKS

CYBORG EVO
STREET PRICE £25
MANUFACTURER Saitek
TELEPHONE 01454 451900
WEBSITE www.saitek.com
A welcome new look for Saitek, with the welcome addition of a four-way adjustable head, larger buttons, plus a meaty damped throttle at the back of the base. As with all Cyborgs, the sculpted hand-rests can be repositioned ambidextrously and suit all hand sizes. An eight-way hat switch, five thumb buttons with trigger, four base buttons and a shift key to double the possible combinations make this a winner.

CYBORG 3D GOLD
STREET PRICE £22
MANUFACTURER Saitek
TELEPHONE 01454 451900
WEBSITE www.saitek.com
A former Best Buy, the Saitek stick is renowned for the way it can be taken apart and put back together to fit your hand perfectly, and also for its ambidextrous nature – lefties as well as righties can get to grips with it. It features seven fire buttons and, like the Sidewinder, has eight hat buttons, a lever throttle and a twist grip for controlling the rudder. At this price, you'd be daft not to.

HOTAS COUGAR
STREET PRICE £249
MANUFACTURER Thrustmaster
TELEPHONE 020 8665 1881
WEBSITE www.thrustmaster.co.uk
The John Holmes of joysticks. Based on the flight controls of an F-16, sturdy metal construction makes it feel like no other peripheral. With 28 customisable buttons, 18lbs of resistance built into its springs, programmable hat switches and an adaptive action for the separate throttle arm, it transforms any flight simulation and is the ultimate toy for wannabe pilots. It's ten times the cost of a regular joystick, but is in a class of its own.

SPEAKERS

INSPIRE P580 5.1
STREET PRICE £53
MANUFACTURER Creative Labs
TELEPHONE N/A
WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com
We don't like the idea of blowing a ton on speakers, chiefly because the mid-range Creative products are so good. You could spend a little more on a 7.1 set, but you'd lose out on space – and there's little benefit for games players. Instead, stick to the six speaker P580s, which deliver crisp bass from the subwoofer and a clean, bright sound from the satellites. This latest design includes a headphone jack at last too.

Z-640
NOW £53 WAS £70
STREET PRICE £53
MANUFACTURER Logitech
TELEPHONE 020 7309 0127
WEBSITE www.logitech.com
Logitech has patented the pressure-driver design of its subwoofer and we can hear the difference. For the money, the clout is simply amazing – if you're a basshead, you'll love it. Higher frequencies don't disappoint either, the 5.1 sounding almost as clean and inviting as the Inspire 5300s. Unlike the Creative set, the Z-640 has a headphone socket, but it's not conveniently sited. Shame.

MEGAWORKS THX 5.1 550
STREET PRICE £189
MANUFACTURER Creative Labs
TELEPHONE N/A
WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com
Successor to our Best Performance winner, the Megaworks 550 is a stunning 5.1 setup with five 70W capsule-shielded satellite speakers, a 150W wood subwoofer and a wired remote with a separate headphone socket. Built to THX standards, the sound quality is superb in DVDs and games – Creative's BASH system providing 500W of power that make you leap out of your seat.

SCREENS

FLATRON L1710B
STREET PRICE £290
MANUFACTURER LG Electronics
TELEPHONE 01753 491500
WEBSITE www.lge.co.uk
This 17-inch panel has finally triumphed and knocked our favourite Hitachi from the top spot, largely due to its price tumbling over £50 recently. The LG boasts superb picture quality and is a speedy little number to boot, making it ideal for gaming. If you're currently weighed down with a monster on your desktop and yearn for a new, slimmer model (don't we all?), then this is the way to go. Yet another nail in the CRT coffin.

CML174SXW
STREET PRICE £340
MANUFACTURER Hitachi
TELEPHONE 01628 585000
WEBSITE www.hitachidigitalmedia.com
When it comes to flat panel, fast-paced gaming, response times really count. And the CML174SXW has one of the lowest response times in its sector – a mere 16ms. It also delivers top-notch image quality, weighs in at just 5kg and comes in colours that match your kit. If you're looking to make the move from CRT, and action games are a priority for you, the handsome little Hitachi is a solid choice.

VISIONMASTER PRO 514
NOW £398 WAS £410
STREET PRICE £398
MANUFACTURER Iiyama
TELEPHONE 01438 745482
WEBSITE www.iiyama.co.uk
Boasting a 22in Mitsubishi Electric DIAMONDTRON tube, 0.24mm AG pitch and flicker-free refresh rates at immense resolutions, the Iiyama is a breathtaking sight on your desktop – not least because it gobbles so much of it. The big VM also has a comprehensive on-screen menu, USB hub and audio connectors. At 1600x1200, the display is rock steady at 110Hz and so ideal for gaming.

HEADSETS

EXTREME PC GAMING HEADSET
STREET PRICE £15
MANUFACTURER Logitech
TELEPHONE 020 7309 0127
WEBSITE www.logitech.co.uk
This fits all the criteria for a gaming headset: it's comfortable (so you can spend hours shouting at your team-mates without feeling you've been cuffed round the ear), the boom comes with an easy-to-position ratchet and it sports a noise-cancelling microphone with excellent voice reproduction. The cable's a bit short, but that's the only drawback – and at this price, it's a steal.

HS300
STREET PRICE £11
MANUFACTURER Creative Labs
TELEPHONE N/A
WEBSITE europe.creative.com
Light and comfortable and with impressive audio considering the rock-bottom price, the Creative HS300's are well worth considering. Sound is rounded, with a decent scoop of bass, and while they can't match the Logitech Extreme for voice quality, your message will still come across loud and clear. If you're strapped for cash, consider these.

AUDIO 90
STREET PRICE £23
MANUFACTURER Plantronics
TELEPHONE 0800 410014
WEBSITE www.plantronics.co.uk
If your life is online gaming, you need a headset you can wear without developing earache – and the Audio 90 is the most comfortable set out of all the ones we've tested. The secret lies in the fact that you can pivot the speakers, which means they sit flush on your ear and block out any outside noise. Not the most stylish set on the market, but eminently functional.
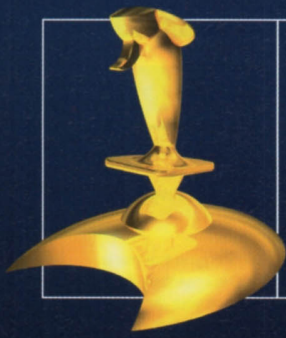
THE GOLDEN JOYSTICK™ AWARDS 2004

WHO WINS—YOU DECIDE

GOLDEN JOYSTICK™ AWARDS 2004

- PS2 Game of the Year
- GameCube Game of the Year
- Handheld Game of the year
- Xbox Game of the Year
- PC Game of the Year   *sonopress* arvato
- Online Game of the Year
- Publisher of the Year   ma©rovision

- Retailer of the year   *EA ELECTRONIC ARTS™*
- Hardware of the Year
- Unsung Hero Game of the Year
- Most Wanted Game for Christmas
- Most Anticipated Game for 2004
- Ultimate Game of the Year

Your votes will decide who will win this year's Golden Joystick™ Awards on 5th November.

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Vote on all or just some of the categories, but make sure you have your say. Vote online now

MAILBOX

Mailbox is here to share, to care, to give. Why not write in and share some more?

■ **FEELING THE LOVE** Dave Woods
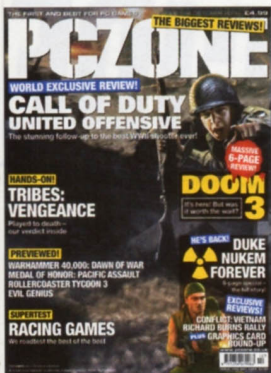
You love it. We love it. PC ZONE rocks: it's official.

PAGE 301

I just read your *Champ Man 5* coverage and am wondering why you say "there were fears of an unnecessary and flashy 3D match engine, but…". Perhaps you should have said something along the lines of, "there were hopes of a realistic and absolutely essential match engine, but…"

How do you lot watch football? On Teletext, or hiding behind the sofa in case you accidentally see some of Sky's flashy live action? Now that there will effectively be two versions of *CM* out, shouldn't one of them try and progress things?

Kerry Flitter

If you're a *CM* fan, you'll know the secret lies in the stats. Every single football management game that sports a flashy engine is relatively empty underneath, and our fear was that *CM* would go down that route. And yes, a few of us have watched games on Teletext before – the suspense is bearable.

16

I read Lewis Forbes' letter in issue 145 and completely agree. I live in Belgium, where, as in most European countries, the age limit for games only actually goes up to 16. I mean, I certainly agree that age restrictions should exist, but the 18 limit should be reduced to a 16.

The average 16-year-old has all the mental capacities of your average 18-year-old, and this is shown by the ELSPA ratings, which go to 16. Even in America, the highest rating is 17. So go on, let us 16-year-olds get *Vice City* before it gets so old that our computers won't run it! One question though: what shop did Lewis go to that actually obeyed these ratings?

Peter Chainey

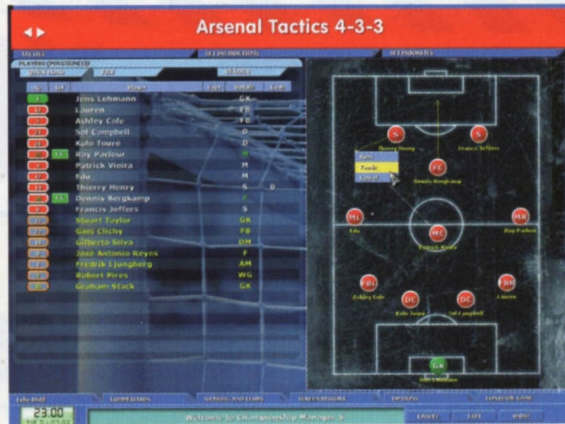**Glad you say that there should be age restrictions, but I'm afraid the 16/18 argument isn't going to happen anytime soon in the light of recent events.**

WITCH-HUNT

I was watching the news the other night when I saw a story in which they stated that the violent content in *Manhunt* had led one teenager to murder. They failed to mention that there was actually a robbery motive, as stated by the police. Anyway, if this is their view, then how can they justify beaming graphic violence, death, suicide bombings, war and genocide into teenagers' homes daily? I think it's about time the news got off its moral high horse.

Lewis Kelly

I'm sick of games getting blamed for idiots killing people. Apparently, Dixons has taken *Manhunt* off its shelves on the back of this story. Does this mean it's telling us that it can't trust its staff to sell games to the right age group? Surely selling a game to someone under the age restriction set out by the BBFC is a criminal offence?

Old-Age (I Hate Evil Bill)

It had to happen didn't it? Some school kid for some reason stabs another kid. My heart goes out to the victim's family, it really does, but using a computer game as a scapegoat, rather than looking into the complexity and reasoning behind the tragedy isn't going to help. Remember kids, life can be pretty good and there is never a reason to go out and hurt somebody else.

Big Dave

Further to an article that I read in the *Daily Express* (dated Friday July 30), I'd like to note my discontent with the negative attitude towards the games industry as a whole. Some games are overly violent and far too graphic for kids, but the blame has to lie with the parents who buy games for their children. Being a parent myself, I don't believe that the decision to supply these games to my child should be taken away from me. I myself will not play such games when my children

Public enemy No.1.

are present, nor do I allow them access to these games.

David Henson

And that (barring further lapses from the Nationals) is the end of the *Manhunt* saga as far as we're concerned. The papers have sold more copies, Rockstar has sold more games and the world keeps on turning.

PONDLIFE

I've been a proud PC gamer for many years, but the same thing has been annoying me ever since I first sat down at a PC and played *Quake*. "PCs are not meant for games." That's what I heard in my local GAME the other day. I hate the criticism that PC games get, just because people mainly associate computers with surfing the Internet or using them to write a letter. I'd like to get *Doom 3* and *Half-Life 2*, just so I can get everybody huddled around the screen watching me play – and most importantly, showing off how great the PC really is.
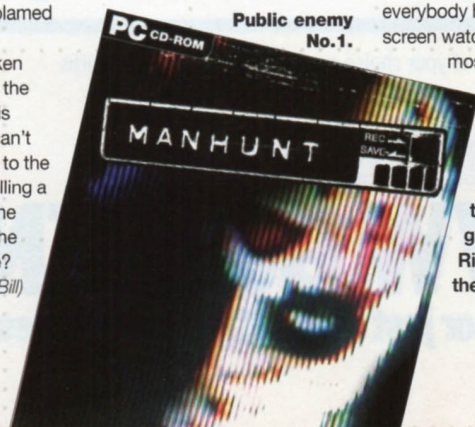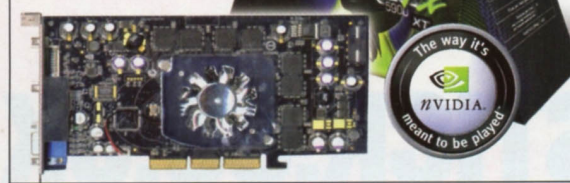
Mark Foley

Anyone who says the PC isn't for games is pondlife. Rise above them – they are not worthy.

"I'd like to get a huddle of people around *Doom 3* just to show off how great the PC really is"

MARK FOLEY LOVES HIS GREY BOX

Doom 3: play it with your headphones on if you dare.

MMORE MMOGS

I'd just like to thank you for giving us the chance to test out MMOGs. As a student, I can't pay the monthly bills, but luckily my dad plays the behemoth (as you call it) *Dark Ages Of Camelot,* and when I go to his house I get to play. I hope I get a job in a few years and then I'll be able to subscribe myself. In the meantime, thanks for the free trials.

Alex Mihail

Check out our huge free trial of *Star Wars: Galaxies* this month for more free playing time.

SOUND ADVICE

I know you guys all work very hard, your trip to LA with all the scantily clad women proves that,

but could you take time out to hear my plea to developers: don't waste your time coding advanced sound-effects for games. Most core players these days are online using voice software, which totally negates the need for kick-ass music and in-game effects. I have to turn down/off all these effects to hear team8 from across the globe shout out with glee: "I got that twat!"

Another gripe is that the latest edition of *PC ZONE* (145) has 129 pages, but only pages 66-78 actually contain new games reviews. I thought the main purpose of a games magazine was to impart its knowledge of new titles to the game-hungry punters of the UK. To my mind, issue 145 seems to

be proving this theory incorrect.

George McRitchie aka Sabre

I'm playing *Doom 3* at the moment and the audio is amazing. Without it, the game would be totally different. Your point might hold for online games, but single-player is far, far from dead. As for the lack of reviews, we can only review what's available at the time, and summer's always quiet. This month starts the big build-up to Christmas though, so go now and gorge on us.

FREE GAMES

It really annoys me when I hear that people are refusing to make point-and-click games. People want humour in games, and that only comes with point-and-clickers. However, there is salvation: a man called Ben Croshaw has made a range of excellent, if short point-and-click games, available at www.fullyramblomatic.com. *5 Days A Stranger* is the scariest and most thrilling game ever drawn in Paint. People, remember the love – it's the only thing that will bring them back.

James O'Malley **PCZ**

LETTER OF THE MONTH

Remember kids, buy British!

THE BRITS

I write with reference to your Britsoft back page (issue 145). How did you manage to overlook such classics as *No One Lives For Everton*, *Deus Exeter*, *Beyond Good & Evesham*, *Tomb Raider: The Angel Of Dartmouth*, *Thief: Dudley Shadows* and the forthcoming *Dov3r*. How?

Paul McCarthy

Brilliant. We'd love to give you more, but you'll have to settle for a graphics card.

5 Days A Stranger: play it if you dare.

BACKCHAT

▲ **IN LOVE WITH LIFE, THE *DAILY MAIL* AND THE UNIVERSE? LOG ON TO WWW.PCZONE.CO.UK AND SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS WITH US…**

You're a journalist on a 'respectable' national paper. It's the summer, it's too hot to go out and find any real news, so you make it up. Games kill, apparently, but this time certain shops decide to take said game off its shelves and **Jack Thompson**, a US lawyer says that he's going to 'destroy' the developer, Rockstar. He also claims that the company is 'dead meat'. What did you make of it all?

"You're right," says **Wassy2k**. "The only reason this got so much coverage is that there was bugger all going on at the time. The media hunts for stories, regardless of how small and distorts them out of all proportion. The shops had to buckle under pressure – you can't really blame them." Unlike the Nationals, who ran with the story until it blew itself out and, predictably, didn't do a follow-up when other facts in the case emerged.

As **Xlins** points out: "It's a shame all the news programmes that started this whole thing didn't do a follow-up story to tell the truth… But then, that would make them look stupid wouldn't it?" Stupid? The *Daily Mail*? Surely some mistake? **Davidmc555** doesn't think so. "The whole thing has been a witch-hunt starring idiotic villagers with pitchforks and torches, chasing a non-existent witch called Meryl. Who was actually a goat. Or something. One paper though, *The Guardian*, did a great article in defence of gaming which even compelled me to write to its author." Three cheers for *The Guardian* then.

Madameye hates the blame culture we live in. "People don't take responsibility for their own actions. I say, thank goodness we have computer gaming to help us escape."

PlumpOrgan is sick of games getting the blame too. "If a 12-year-old gets drunk, how many tabloids would run headlines demonising alcohol? None – they'd all be focusing on the parents and whoever sold it to them. The product would be irrelevant since it's made for adults." But there are two sides to every story. **The Reverend_Joseph** says: "*Manhunt* is a sick game that was designed to be controversial. As for the lawyer's choice of words, I just can't help but laugh. Perhaps I've played too many sick games…"

▼

TXTCHAT

LET YOUR FINGERS DO THE TALKING!

Just send the keyword 'PCZCHAT' to 83125, followed by your name and comments, quips or angry rants. Please be aware that messages sent to TxtChat cost 50p plus your standard operator (text messaging) charge. For full terms and conditions, see page 7.

NEW!

TAZZ: *Doom 3* is the scariest game ever – play it with the lights off!

BOB: Why do people waste their time texting you about *Sam & Max*? Grow up!

P STEER: *PC ZONE* rules!

ANON: Please make the sun go away. I can't see my games.

GREEBER: More pics of Suzy please!

RICH T: Does that hunk Jamie S fancy a pint with me sometime? I love a man with curls…

THE PCZONE A-LIST

◀ SHOOTERS ▶

FAR CRY

A huge leap for PC gaming, *Far Cry* is also an absolute joy to play. With its long-range combat, shimmering shores, impressive enemy AI and seamlessly integrated physics engine, it's the first shooter to show the potential of next-gen PC titles. The narrative may be slightly iffy, but the tension and exhilaration it instils in you makes the battle against the Trigens and their mercenary creators one of the best shooters in years.
PUB Ubisoft **DEV** Crytek
PCZ ISSUE 140

DOOM 3
NEW ENTRY Technologically dazzling, genuinely shock-providing and resolutely back to basics: *Doom 3* may not bring anything new to the FPS table, but it's still a stunning thrill-ride that every PC gamer should sample.
PUB Activision **DEV** id software   **PCZ ISSUE 146**

CALL OF DUTY
With an excellent expansion in the form of *United Offensive*, *Call Of Duty* remains the best war game on the PC – and possibly of all time. Constantly managing to mix up feelings of dread and excitement, it's an absolute must-play.
PUB Activision **DEV** Infinity Ward   **PCZ ISSUE 136**

MAX PAYNE 2
It's Payne! Slicker than slick, breathtaking and quite beautiful, *Max Payne 2* provides the greatest gaming kicks that money can buy. It's extremely short, but so tense and well-designed that you just won't care.
PUB Rockstar Games **DEV** Remedy   **PCZ ISSUE 136**

MEDAL OF HONOR: ALLIED ASSAULT
It may have been toppled by *Call Of Duty*, but *Allied Assault's* set-pieces, period detail and intense action can still beat most recent FPS releases hands-down. Its graphics may be ageing slightly these days, but it's still a hell of a ride.
PUB EA **DEV** 2015   **PCZ ISSUE 112**

NO ONE LIVES FOREVER 2
Style, stealth and magnificent set-pieces are the order of the day in this excellent spy sequel. It looks brilliant, it's well designed and is genuinely funny. What's more, it doesn't treat you like an idiot.
PUB Black Label Games **DEV** Monolith   **PCZ ISSUE 122**

HALF-LIFE: GENERATIONS
Unchallenged for three years, *Half-Life* redefined its genre with a cracking atmosphere and a compelling plot. It now comes bundled with the excellent *Opposing Force* add-on pack and the world's favourite mod, *Counter-Strike*.
PUB Vivendi **DEV** Valve Software   **PCZ ISSUE 71**

UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004
It may be a multiplayer game, but the superb bots of *UT2004* still grab it a place in the *PC ZONE* solo-shooter hall of fame. It's quite simply the greatest deathmatch experience money can buy.
PUB Atari **DEV** Digital Extremes   **PCZ ISSUE 138**

MAFIA
From the makers of *Hidden & Dangerous* and just as compelling, this game borrows from every great gangster film ever made. Tense missions, superb atmosphere and great AI – it's a classic in every respect. Badabing!
PUB Take 2 **DEV** Illusion   **PCZ ISSUE 119**

JEDI KNIGHT: JEDI ACADEMY
The latest saber 'em up from the Lucas stable is an absolute winner; think fights with Boba Fett, double-ended lightsabers, customisable characters and even the opportunity to turn to the Dark Side. Ace.
PUB Activision **DEV** Raven   **PCZ ISSUE 133**

◀ STRATEGY ▶

MEDIEVAL: TOTAL WAR

A sequel to the stunning *Shogun: Total War* (now available on budget), *Medieval* offers everything its predecessor did and a whole lot more. Adding to the massive 3D battles and turn-based *Risk*-style strategy map are a multitude of new options, both diplomatic and military. Breathtaking in every way, strategy games just don't come any better than this.
PUB Activision
DEV The Creative Assembly
PCZ ISSUE 120

RISE OF NATIONS
One of the most addictive and satisfying strategy games to land on our desks in ages. Its unique perspective, great gameplay and, now, its excellent expansion *Thrones And Patriots* make it hugely deserving of our prestigious Classic award.
PUB Microsoft **DEV** Big Huge Games   **PCZ ISSUE 129**

SOLDIERS: HEROES OF WWII
The strategy of *Commandos* meets the fun of *Cannon Fodder* in this top-down game of tactics and warfare. Being the underdog has never been so much fun, and the rumbling of distant tanks never so worrying.
PUB Codemasters **DEV** Best Way   **PCZ ISSUE 144**

AGE OF MYTHOLOGY
The *Age Of* series goes 3D in Ensemble Studios' best strategy outing to date. Great gameplay, superb attention to detail and a strong storyline give this an unparalleled sense of atmosphere. In addition, it boasts a decent map editor.
PUB Microsoft **DEV** Ensemble Studios   **PCZ ISSUE 123**

REPUBLIC: THE REVOLUTION
This highly original take on the machinations of political upheaval in Eastern Europe has split gaming opinion down the middle, but we think it's a fascinating, educating and unique piece of gaming history.
PUB Eidos Interactive **DEV** Elixir Studios   **PCZ ISSUE 132**

WARRIOR KINGS: BATTLES
Warrior Kings was one of the most compelling and diverse RTS games we'd seen. This second chapter, which focuses around skirmish play, offers more units, varied tech trees and challenging AI generals.
PUB Empire Interactive **DEV** Black Cactus   **PCZ ISSUE 128**

GROUND CONTROL II
Despite a few AI glitches and dull objectives, *GCII* is a great game if you prefer tactics to boring old resource management. A superb sci-fi effort with some intense freeform missions – strat-fans should check it out.
PUB VU Games **DEV** Massive Entertainment   **PCZ ISSUE 143**

EMPIRES: DAWN OF THE MODERN WORLD
The latest to fall off the *Age Of Empires* lorry may not innovate, but there's a good variety of nations with accurate historical spins (General Patton, Richard the Lionheart etc), as well as novel unit types and well-written campaigns.
PUB Activision **DEV** Stainless Steel Studios   **PCZ ISSUE 135**

COMMANDOS 2
There have been a few imitators of the squad-based strategy of *Commandos* but none have come close to this sequel. If, like us, you loved the first game, you'll love this massive and preposterously detailed follow-up even more.
PUB Eidos **DEV** Pyro Studio   **PCZ ISSUE 108**

HOMEWORLD 2
The interface to this epic space combat RTS might be a bit intimidating for rookies, but *Homeworld 2* definitely deserves a place in our hall of fame. Staggering visuals and gripping strategic manoeuvring make it addictive.
PUB VU Games **DEV** Relic   **PCZ ISSUE 134**

Want to know which game is the best shooter, which is the top strategy or what to play if you want to blow away your mates online? Lucky you're reading the *PC ZONE* A-List then – home to the greatest games in the land, this is where you can find the titles we rate as the best around. Tuck in...

◀ ROLE-PLAYING GAMES ▶

KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC

The best RPG to appear for five whole years, and the best *Star Wars* game to surface in ten. *Knights Of The Old Republic* manages to develop the franchise more than even Lucas's cinematic efforts ever could. With beautiful graphics, a gripping plot, oodles of Force powers and supreme character development, this is proof, if ever it were needed, that Bioware is one of the best development houses on the planet.
PUB Activision **DEV** Bioware
PCZ ISSUE 137

DEUS EX
Great sci-fi plot, amazing attention to detail and unparalleled player freedom: combining the finer elements of *Half-Life*, *System Shock 2* and *Thief*, *Deus Ex* is an RPG of complex beauty and a true revolution in computer gaming.
PUB Eidos **DEV** Ion Storm
PCZ ISSUE 93

THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND
One of the most impressive RPGs we've seen in years. A massively open-ended world full of beautiful visuals, superb depth of gameplay and innovative character development make this a classic that will keep you totally absorbed.
PUB Ubisoft **DEV** Bethesda Softworks
PCZ ISSUE 117

NEVERWINTER NIGHTS
The maker of the epic *Baldur's Gate* series proves it's still a leading force in the world of RPGs with this glorious hardcore 3D adventure. It features great single and multiplayer options, along with a very accessible toolkit.
PUB Atari **DEV** Bioware
PCZ ISSUE 118

PLANESCAPE: TORMENT
An incredible game from Black Isle, using the *Baldur's Gate* engine. With a compelling story, well-scripted dialogue and the best character development we've seen in any game of its kind, this is a dark, adult scorcher of an RPG.
PUB Interplay **DEV** Black Isle Studio
PCZ ISSUE 87

DUNGEON SIEGE
Graphically brilliant, massively enjoyable and highly immersive, *Dungeon Siege* is one of the best RPGs to date and only misses out on a Classic award because of the shortcomings in the narrative.
PUB Microsoft **DEV** Gas Powered Games
PCZ ISSUE 115

SYSTEM SHOCK 2
Definitely one of the most original and disturbing games to hit the PC, *System Shock 2* manages to successfully mix the genres of role-playing, action and adventure into one. Play it with the lights off if you're hard enough.
PUB EA **DEV** Irrational Games
PCZ ISSUE 80

BALDUR'S GATE II
The original *Baldur's Gate* was hailed as one of the best story-driven role-playing games ever. The sequel isn't vastly different, but it's bigger, better and still extremely addictive. If PC role-playing's your thang, this is essential.
PUB Interplay **DEV** Bioware
PCZ ISSUE 96

DEUS EX: INVISIBLE WAR
It's had most of its role-playing elements sucked out and developed a strong console bias, but the gripping plot and action remain intact. It wasn't the revolution we wanted, but it's still a worthwhile purchase.
PUB Eidos **DEV** Ion Storm
PCZ ISSUE 137

DIVINE DIVINITY
This epic RPG contains the action of *Diablo II* combined with the storyline of the *Baldur's Gate* series, not to mention about 200 hours of gameplay in a huge fantasy world. The name may be a bit silly, but the gameplay is anything but.
PUB CDV **DEV** Larian Studios
PCZ ISSUE 121

◀ ACTION/ADVENTURE ▶

SPLINTER CELL

At long last we've got a new king of the action-adventures with the Tom Clancy-influenced *Splinter Cell*, and a new crown prince of stealth in the form of the über-flexible Sam Fisher. *Splinter Cell* features the perfect blend of action, structure and pace, combined with some of the best visuals and set-pieces around. No self-respecting gamer should miss out on this.
PUB Ubisoft
DEV Ubisoft Montreal
PCZ ISSUE 125

BEYOND GOOD & EVIL
A beautiful game with a myriad of styles that evokes the spirit of *Little Big Adventure*, along with a touch of *Zelda* sparkle. Whether you're fighting government conspiracies or photographing wildlife, it's never dull.
PUB Ubisoft **DEV** Ubisoft
PCZ ISSUE 138

SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW
Two games in one: a set of excellent, if not revolutionary, missions for Sam Fisher coupled with a scintillating spies vs mercs multiplayer mode. Single-player is more of the same, but that's no bad thing is it?
PUB Ubisoft **DEV** Ubisoft
PCZ ISSUE 141

THIEF: DEADLY SHADOWS
Garrett's new adventure is sure to thrill, although you can't help but feel that it's been hampered by console considerations. That said, sublime level design, amazing sound and real scares make it an excellent buy.
PUB Eidos **DEV** Ion Storm
PCZ ISSUE 144

PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME
The fluidity, ingenuity and graphical splendour of *The Sands Of Time* cannot be faulted. Combat may be unsatisfying, but the time-control gimmicks and fast-paced acrobatics put Lara to shame.
PUB Ubisoft **DEV** Ubisoft Montreal
PCZ ISSUE 136

GRIM FANDANGO
If you've followed LucasArts from the early days of *Monkey Island*, *Sam & Max* and *Day Of The Tentacle*, this is a must. The scripting is impeccable, while sublime graphics and brilliant humour ensure it's top of its genre.
PUB Activision **DEV** LucasArts
PCZ ISSUE 71

THE SUFFERING
A survival horror that's refreshingly fast and fluid, *The Suffering* takes place in an Alcatraz-style prison and surprised us with its ingenuity and tension-fused set-pieces. It gets slightly repetitive, but it's worth a ride.
PUB Midway **DEV** Surreal Software
PCZ ISSUE 145

SILENT HILL 2: DIRECTOR'S CUT
Survival horror games have truly come of age with this superbly creepy and atmospheric offering. The (near identical) third game is also out, but for our money this is still the champ. Classy and disturbing.
PUB Konami **DEV** Konami
PCZ ISSUE 126

METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SUBSTANCE
A convincing PC conversion that adds tanker-loads of side-missions, training stages and unlockable characters to the PS2 original. There's too much waffle, but it's still an excellent third-person sneakfest.
PUB Konami **DEV** Konami
PCZ ISSUE 127

SOUL REAVER 2
With narrative and puzzles that *Legacy Of Kain: Defiance* failed to improve on, this instalment of the Raziel saga is well worth a look. Compelling storyline and satisfying combat make it an excellent budget buy, despite the ageing graphics.
PUB Eidos **DEV** Crystal Dynamics
PCZ ISSUE 111

◄ GOD GAMES ►

BLACK & WHITE

Although it had its critics, we still stand by our original verdict. Peter Molyneux's vision is pure and the design of the game breaks boundaries and serves as a blueprint for the future. The add-on *Creature Isle* is also available, which cuts down on micro-management and enables you to guide your creature through a variety of mini-games. Pure genius in a box.
PUB EA **DEV** Lionhead Studios
PCZ ISSUE 100

CIVILIZATION III

Civilization III sticks to the same compulsive gameplay that made the first two games so popular. Die-hard *Civ* fans will relish the improved visuals and animation, while the new user-friendly interface makes the game accessible to the first-timer. Brings to mind the maxim 'if it ain't broke…'
PUB Atari **DEV** Firaxis Games   **PCZ ISSUE 111**

GHOST MASTER

Take your team of ghosts into the town of Gravenville and solve some otherworldly problems, scare a few mortals and bag yourself some new team-mates in this innovative spook 'em up. *Ghost Master* is one of the freshest and funniest games we've seen for a long time.
PUB Empire Interactive **DEV** Sick Puppies   **PCZ ISSUE 130**

THE SIMS

Revolutionary at birth, the concept has since been diluted through numerous add-ons and an unhealthily long stay in the charts. It's now little more than a cash cow for Electronic Arts, although you can't help but admire the strength of community and the fact that it's still selling by the bucket-load.
PUB EA **DEV** Maxis/EA   **PCZ ISSUE 87**

VEGA$: MAKE IT BIG

An in-depth tycoon game with all the 3D graphical glitz and glamour of Vegas itself, *Make It Big* provides hotels, casinos and over-priced magic shows that let you suck the money out of punters' pockets. It can get a little too fiddly, but it looks and plays really well. A *PC ZONE* 'Essential'.
PUB Empire Interactive **DEV** Deep Red   **PCZ ISSUE 135**

SPACE COLONY

Whether you're trying to attract space-tourists or battle neighbouring aliens, taking control of 20 rowdy space colonists and pandering to them makes for a charming and original management jaunt, with plenty of missions to keep you busy for a fair while.
PUB Gathering **DEV** Firefly Studios   **PCZ ISSUE 136**

CAESAR III

Starting from scratch, you've got to build a majestic Roman city and ensure a harmonious life for your citizens by balancing their work, health and entertainment needs. So what? So it's probably one of the most utterly absorbing and addictive god sims in existence. Hail *Caesar*.
PUB VU Games **DEV** Impressions   **PCZ ISSUE 70**

EMPEROR: RISE OF THE MIDDLE KINGDOM

This intricate game comes from the same stable as *Zeus* and *Caesar* – and they know a thing or two about city building. There's a massive amount of gameplay and more than 50 missions spanning seven historic campaigns. As well as the economic considerations, you'll have to follow feng shui and the Chinese zodiac.
PUB VU Games **DEV** Breakaway Games   **PCZ ISSUE 121**

SIM CITY 4

The latest outing of the best-selling city-building sim goes 3D. Unfortunately, there are no huge leaps forwards in gameplay, but there are plenty of features, such as regional cities, imported characters from *The Sims* and a terrain editor to keep you occupied.
PUB EA **DEV** Maxis   **PCZ ISSUE 125**

DUNGEON KEEPER 2

The ultimate 'it's good to be bad' game, *Dungeon Keeper* was a great idea and *DK2* keeps up the good work. It takes the essence and humour of the original, corrects all the mistakes, vastly improves the graphics and adds a myriad of new features that build wisely on the original concept.
PUB EA **DEV** Bullfrog   **PCZ ISSUE 79**

◄ MULTIPLAYER MODS ►

DESERT COMBAT (BF 1942)

What with *Counter-Strike* now available as a full game in the form of *Condition Zero*, *Desert Combat* sits atop the modding tree. A *Battlefield 1942* TC that focuses on the more sandy conflicts of the last decade (scraps like the original Desert Storm or the troubles in Somalia), *Desert Combat* is extraordinarily good, extremely popular and as watertight as the best commercial release. It also provides a great stepping-stone between the original game and the forthcoming Middle-Eastern *Battlefield 2*.
WEB www.desertcombat.com

NATURAL SELECTION (HALF-LIFE)

This superb *Half-Life* mod sees marines squaring off against aliens in various sci-fi environments. With the marines working in teams and the aliens acting like mentalists, the variety in gameplay makes it a sure-fire winner.
WEB www.natural-selection.org

INFILTRATION (UNREAL TOURNAMENT)

A top drawer realism-bound mod for the ageing *Unreal Tournament* warhorse, *Infiltration* takes the familiar terrorist vs counter-terrorist plot and gives it a spin with some amazing weapon loadouts and hugely tense gameplay.
WEB infiltration.sentrystudios.net

THE SPECIALISTS (HALF-LIFE)

Blending *Half-Life* Team Deathmatch with kung-fu, slo-mo gymnastics makes this a must-play mod. With a range of maps and *Matrix*-esque bullet trails, it provides a nice break from the über-realism of *Counter-Strike*.
WEB www.specialistsmod.net

SAS: INTO THE LION'S DEN (UT2003)

A slick and atmospheric good guys vs bad guys mod that oozes class and detail – it's one-shot kills all round, with stamina levels and getting out of puff to add to the realism. He who dares, frags.
WEB www.sas.jolt.co.uk

◄ MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER ►

EVERQUEST

EverQuest keeps going from strength to strength and now has a total of seven expansion packs. One of the best of these, *Planes Of Power*, provides a multitude of simplifications to help newcomers, while adding lots of new worlds for high-level characters to explore. It's a truly beautiful and captivating game that has claimed the souls and social lives of thousands of people the world over.
PUB Ubisoft **DEV** Sony Online Entertainment
PCZ ISSUE 117

EVE ONLINE

Eve Online is as beautiful as it is complex, oozing style from every pixel. Choose from four unique races and explore the *Eve* universe with its unparalleled scope for adventure, interaction and trade.
PUB Crucial **DEV** CCP   **PCZ ISSUE 130**

ANARCHY ONLINE

A beautiful MMOG with detailed environments and a huge selection of armour and weapons, *Anarchy Online* is an immersive title. Many of the bugs have been ironed out and the latest update offers a slick gaming experience.
PUB Funcom **DEV** Funcom   **PCZ ISSUE 114**

STAR WARS GALAXIES: AN EMPIRE DIVIDED

Despite a shaky start, *SWG* is now thriving – partly down to the addition of vehicles, Jedi and player housing, and partly because *Star Wars* fans are loyal as dogs. The *Jump To Lightspeed* expansion should boost things further.
PUB Activision **DEV** Sony Online Entertainment   **PCZ ISSUE 138**

DARK AGE OF CAMELOT

The alternative to *EverQuest* with a loose basis in European mythology and three-way PvP realm combat, this is also a beardy version of *PlanetSide*. Recent graphical updates have breathed new life into it.
PUB Mythic Entertainment **DEV** Mythic Entertainment   **PCZ ISSUE 142**

UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004

A fleshed out, revamped *UT* offering that far exceeds both its predecessors and our expectations. Extra game modes, superb vehicles plus inspired weapons and features make this one of the best multiplayer blasts around. The new Onslaught mode has given a new dimension to the series, adding tactical awareness to the list of skills online shootists need to master. It even plays well offline, making *UT2004* the definitive choice.
PUB Atari **DEV** Digital Extremes
PCZ ISSUE 138

BATTLEFIELD 1942

Not much in single-player, but online this Swedish gem has redefined the way online shooters work. Infantry, jeeps, tanks, planes, bombers, ships – the total WWII experience (minus the searing horror and psychological scarring for life).
PUB EA **DEV** Digital Illusions
PCZ ISSUE 121

JOINT OPERATIONS: TYPHOON RISING

150 players! Count 'em. Some say a world record (although *PlanetSide* begs to disagree), this is modern-day online warfare at its finest. Quality maps, plenty of vehicles and the best helicopters in the business – why, it even has useful mortars.
PUB NovaLogic **DEV** NovaLogic
PCZ ISSUE 145

BATTLEFIELD VIETNAM

Take *BF1942*, drop it into the '60s and bingo – the total Vietnam war experience. More claustrophobic than *BF1942*, which suits the jungle warfare period setting, this has a great '60s mood: all it needs is the late Brando and it'd be perfect.
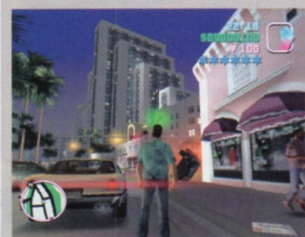**PUB** EA **DEV** DICE Canada
PCZ ISSUE 141

PLANETSIDE

Truly the mother of online battles, *PlanetSide* is a never-ending war among three armies and waged across several continents. Superb squad battles, stunning vehicles and atmospheric visuals make for a remarkably immersive experience.
PUB Ubisoft **DEV** Sony Online Entertainment
PCZ ISSUE 131

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 4: SEASON 03/04

A fresh season is added to the *CM4* canon, along with a variety of nips and tucks to smooth out the gameplay. The top-down match engine that enables you to watch how your players are performing still works like an absolute dream. The ongoing financial crises plaguing football means that playing the transfer market is a struggle, but the game is still as life-sappingly addictive as it ever was.
PUB Eidos **DEV** Sports Interactive
PCZ ISSUE 137

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 3

Our guilty console secret has landed on the PC, and it's as good as we hoped. Better than *FIFA* in every conceivable way (bar the official licence of course), there is no greater footie experience available.
PUB Konami **DEV** Konami
PCZ ISSUE 136

VIRTUA TENNIS

Who would have believed that this console favourite would translate so well to the PC? Its control interface is supremely intuitive, while the AI is massively challenging. Best of all, though, are its truly sublime multiplayer options.
PUB Empire Interactive **DEV** Hitmaker/Strangelite
PCZ ISSUE 114

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3

This third edition of Tony Hawk's classic skateboarding game is an absolute joy to play. It features enormous levels, more interaction than ever before and a totally kick-ass soundtrack.
PUB Activision **DEV** Neversoft Entertainment
PCZ ISSUE 98

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2004

Each *Tiger* game seems to be getting progressively easier, but this latest effort is eminently playable. With superb graphical touches, an immersive career mode and courses that feel 'alive', you'll find it difficult to put down.
PUB EA Sports **DEV** Headgate Studios
PCZ ISSUE 135

GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY

PS2 owners will finally stop gloating when they see *Vice City*'s glorious PC incarnation. *GTA3* was an incredible crim-sim; so incredible that it was hard to see how it could be improved, but the freedom and variety of its follow-up is blinding. Whether it's carrying out its remarkably inventive law-breaking missions or just shooting pedestrians, *Vice City* is about as close to gaming perfection as you can get.
PUB Rockstar Games **DEV** Rockstar North
PCZ ISSUE 131

GRAND THEFT AUTO III

It may have been overshadowed by its younger brother, but *Grand Theft Auto III* remains as awesome as it ever was. It's a great spin on both driving and shooting genres and you'll still love its noisy orgy of violence and speed.
PUB Rockstar Games **DEV** Rockstar North
PCZ ISSUE 117

TOCA RACE DRIVER 2

The most comprehensive driving game on the PC, *TOCA 2* is a must-have if you're into motors. With 15 different motorsports to master, 52 tracks and rival drivers with good AI smarts, it's the best racer on the market.
PUB Codemasters **DEV** Codemasters
PCZ ISSUE 142

COLIN MCRAE RALLY 04

More of a tweak than an overhaul, the fourth *McRae* boasts immaculate handling and oodles of gameplay potential. With an excellent damage model and plentiful motor-fiddling opportunities, it's the best rally game around.
PUB Codemasters **DEV** Codemasters
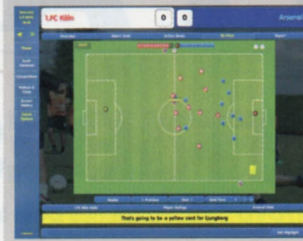**PCZ ISSUE 140**

NEED FOR SPEED: UNDERGROUND

Illegal street racing, jazzed-up supercars and such a strong sense of speed that you yelp when you turn corners. *Underground* is a superbly designed and extraordinarily pretty tonic for testosterone-addled speed freaks.
PUB EA **DEV** Black Box
PCZ ISSUE 137

X2: THE THREAT

Vast, engrossing and utterly compelling. We firmly believe that *X2* is the game that can finally banish the memory of *Elite* to the shadows. The level of detail here is immense, as is the potential. Build your own space empire, form a pirate fleet or just bomb around the universe like an interstellar playboy. The game could go on forever. And did we mention it's also gobsmackingly beautiful? OK, the story isn't all that, but while nothing's perfect in life, *X2* comes very close.
PUB Deep Silver **DEV** Egosoft
PCZ ISSUE 138

FREELANCER

Freelancer combines the epic open-endedness of *Elite* with the combat immediacy of the *Wing Commander* series. It also mixes in a well played out (if short) story and gorgeous graphics to create a totally engaging experience.
PUB Microsoft **DEV** Digital Anvil
PCZ ISSUE 128

X – GOLD

The spirit of *Elite* lives on in this massive trading epic, in which you must buy and fight your way back home to Earth. It rewards patience with variety and months of absorbing gameplay. Deeply hypnotic and beautiful rather than tense and frenetic.
PUB THQ **DEV** Egosoft
PCZ ISSUE 82

TERMINUS

Who says the days of bedroom programming are over? *Terminus* proves you can make a great game on your own if you have the talent and passion – we reckon it just edges out the mighty *FreeSpace 2*.
PUB www.macgames.co.uk **DEV** Vicarious Visions
PCZ ISSUE 93

FREESPACE 2

Following in the footsteps of *Wing Commander* and *X-Wing*, *FreeSpace 2* offers fast-paced dogfighting action all the way. It has an epic story and superb graphics, but does suffer from being a bit short-lived if you don't play online.
PUB Interplay **DEV** Volition Inc
PCZ ISSUE 84

DISC PAGES

DOUBLE-TROUBLE!

The *PC ZONE* DVD is now double-sided, which means you get twice as much content as before. If you can't find what you're looking for on the DVD, close the *PC ZONE* disc browser and turn the disc over.

RALLY CRY

DISCWORLD

■ **WORDS & DISCS** Suzy Wallace

▲ "Ten to two" the voice crackles through my headset. I'm currently strapped into the driving seat of a works-built Peugeot 206 for a *Colin McRae Rally 2005* press trip, and as I realise the implication of what my instructor is saying, I move my hands to the correct steering position. It feels bizarre – after all, the last time I'd used the '1:50' position, I was taking my driving test. Which, incidentally, I failed for speeding. Ah well, at least that should come in handy.

Once onto the track, my instructor shouts at me like some sex-crazed nympho to push the car "Faster! Faster! Faster!". A few dabs of the handbrake and a few near-misses of the cones marking the outside of the course, and my rallying adventure is over. I'm as happy as a pig in mud, but the instructor is still recovering.

While at the Codemasters day, I also managed to have a dabble on the latest *Colin McRae* offering, and we've got the exclusive demo this month, so you can have a go yourself. It's been a great month for the discs all round, with three other exclusives clamouring for your attention: *Tribes: Vengeance*, *Conflict: Vietnam* and *Shade: Wrath Of Angels*. If you've still got time left over, you can try living the Jedi life with a 14-day trial of *Star Wars Galaxies*, tax your brain with *Myst IV: Revelation*, blow some things up with *Worms Forts*, or just kick back and watch the hottest movies from the gaming world. Enjoy!

▼

TRIBES: VENGEANCE

CD1/DVD Pub: VU Games **Dev:** Irrational Games

THE *TRIBES* series is back with *Tribes: Vengeance*, and this exclusive demo will have you whooping with delight over its jetpack-tastic shooting. The Imperial Arena is the setting for the carnage that unfolds as you fight your way to victory through nine waves of Imperial opponents. There are plenty of enemies, so jetpack use is essential – and if you couple it with the ability to ski (hold the space bar), you'll be zipping about in no time at all.

EXCLUSIVE

CHALLENGE SUZY!

Can you make it to the end without firing a shot? You're only allowed to rely on and heal your friends.

1. The main entrance for the nasties. Take up a prime firing position in front of this, but beware – not all enemies come in through here…

2. The place to pick up your repair pack. Press Q to use it to heal yourself, your allies or the gun turrets.

3. The location of the two gun turrets. While your chums are manning them, make sure they're kept in peak health so that you can lure unsuspecting Imperials into their arc of fire.

4. Towers. These provide basic cover and enable you to get a good look around. They're destructible though, so don't stick around too long.

5. Spiked balls. These are dotted around the arena, and can be pushed down hills onto enemies. Ah, how we love physics engines.

KNOW YOUR ENEMY

The nine waves of Imperial forces consist of a nicely mixed combination of enemies: a sprinkle of foot soldiers here, some armoured vehicles there. Here are some that especially tickled our fancy…

1. Members of a rival tribe, the Blood Eagles first show their face in round two. You're unlikely to have much ammo left, so lure them in front of the gun turrets that your comrades have manned. In round five, they're equipped with jetpacks too.

2. Several aerial fighters are the scourge of round six, and they're armed with Rocket Pods. Keep to the air to avoid splash damage from their hits, and use precise shots from your Spinfusor or pelt them with the Chaingun.

3. These beefed up Commandos appear in rounds seven and eight, and have jetpacks but are reasonably easy to take out. In round eight, they have the ability to heal themselves – so keep on them until they drop.

4. The penultimate round sees you up against the full force of the Imperial Armour Core: first up is an Assault Ship manned by Imperial troops, followed by a Jump Tank and its two guards. Just don't get hit by the round fired from the tank!

IMPORTANT!

You can find all of the content here on the DVD, but we can't cram everything onto the two CDs. This is because we can get more than six times the content on our double-sided DVD, including a library of patches and utilities, along with DVD-video (that you can watch on your TV), bigger movies and more playable demos. Demos and movies are getting bigger all the time, and certain games are going to be released on DVD-only. If you still haven't upgraded to DVD, do it now. You can pick up a cheap drive for about £20, so there's no excuse. Unless you're a real pikey.
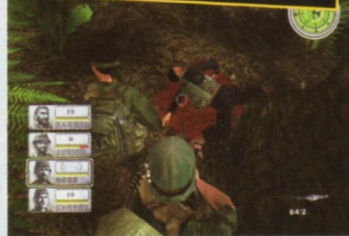
CONFLICT: VIETNAM

CD2/DVD Pub: SCi **Dev:** Pivotal Games **Reviewed:** Issue 146, 75%

WWII HAS been the favoured setting of military shooters for a while now, but the tide of war is changing and Vietnam now finds itself the place to be to dish out some star spangled banner-endorsed violence. So up steps this exclusive demo of *Conflict: Vietnam*, a squad-based shooter where you and your gun-toting buddies are tasked with clearing a local village of VC, and then making your way to (and clearing) the LZ of enemies.

EXCLUSIVE
Nice blades.

CHALLENGE SUZY!

Once in the village, can you knife all of the villagers to death before the VC get them?
Showing again that war isn't fun, kids.

THAT'S AN ORDER SOLDIER!

The jungle's a dangerous place, so you're going to need some help from your companions. Time to show your men who's boss. Right-click for context-sensitive commands and cycle between your motley crew with the scroll wheel…

ADVANCE Great for moving your sniper to prime shooting positions and directing your men to the best covering ground.

HEAL Medic! Apply a few medical field dressings for a health top-up. If a man goes down, you can revive him with these. An essential tool for survival!

SHIELD Got a member of your party with low health and no field dressings to help? Assign one of your men to shield him.

KILL Got sight of a VC before he's spotted you? Pick a member of the team to take him out, sit back and put your feet up!

MYST IV: REVELATION

DVD Pub: Ubisoft
Dev: Ubisoft Montreal

THERE'S SOME high-brow puzzling this month with this *Myst IV: Revelation* demo. It features one level set around Atrus's room, which contains some beautifully rendered scenes, a trademark *Myst* puzzle, and an FMV flashback of Atrus's daughter.

MYST-ING IN ACTION

There are people out there who think the *Myst* series has no action. Rubbish we say! Check out the following hi-octane moments…

FLICK the switch of the lamp. All with the power of your own finger! Ooooh!

OPEN the door of the writing desk. With your own bare hands no less! Aaaaah!

PRESS the strange buttons to light up the sequence. We really wanna see those fingers! Corrrrr!

WORMS FORTS: UNDER SIEGE

CD1/DVD Pub: Sega
Dev: Team 17

PLAY IT FIRST! The worms are back and now they can build forts complete with siege weapons. Check out the two maps in this ace exclusive demo!

SHADE: WRATH OF ANGELS

CD2/DVD Pub: Cenega
Dev: Black Element
Reviewed: Issue 147, 41%

HERE'S YOUR chance to wield your large weapon and raise some hell. *Shade's* hack 'n' slash action, with the option to turn into a vicious half-demon, provides some welcome bloodthirsty action. Get slicing!

EXCLUSIVE
No sun for him – he prefers shade.

COLIN McRAE RALLY 2005

CD2/DVD Pub: Codemasters **Dev:** Codemasters

ANOTHER year, another *Colin*, but at least this year the humble PC is getting a simultaneous release with the console boys. Put yourself in the driving seat again with this exclusive demo featuring three cars and tracks to sling some mud around. You need Windows XP or 2000 to be able to take the wheel though.

MUD WRESTLING
Suzy's Top Track Tips

EXCLUSIVE

UK, STAGE 8
The UK track features several different types of road surface, from gravel to tarmac, and requires several handbrake turns to get round tight hairpins and avoid flattening spectators.

SWEDEN, STAGE 8
Snow, ice and gravel make up the road surface. Make sure you stay right in the middle of the track too, as driving through the snow slows you down to a crawl and pulls you further onto the side of the road.

GERMANY, STAGE 1
This is a very fast stage, with much of it on tarmac. However, don't let that boost your confidence, as the course is full of narrow sections and features brief dashes through a farmyard and forest.

BEAT THE CLOCK!
Can you beat Suzy's times on these tracks?

ENGLAND – STAGE 8	3:21:62
SWEDEN – STAGE 8	2:43:15
GERMANY – STAGE 1	3:23:70

STAR WARS GALAXIES: AN EMPIRE DIVIDED

DVD Pub: Activision **Dev:** Sony Online Entertainment/ LucasArts **Reviewed:** Issue 138, 73%

JUMPING Jedi! High adventure in the *Star Wars* universe. Explore Tatooine, Endor and Naboo with thousands of others rebel fighters, imperial stormtroopers, scurrilous bounty hunters and Jedi in-training. We've got the full client for you this month, with a free two-week trial. Log on to www.playstarwarsgalaxiesfor14days.com and type in the magazine code PCZE0901.

EASY RIDER

LANDSPEEDER
Handy for getting from Anchorhead to Mos Eisley in the blink of an eye.

SPEEDER BIKES
Wide-open deserts or dense forests, these futuristic Harley-Davidsons can handle it all.

Also on the CD – *Gish*, *Skools Out* (this month's Indie Zone game), *Lightning Break* (this month's Free Play game), *Worms* (this month's Game That Changed The World)
Also on the DVD – *Arena Wars* (single and multiplayer), *Adventures Of Sherlock Holmes: The Silver Earring*, *Codename: Panzers* (Multiplayer) and *Monster Garage*

MOVIES

■ PC ZONE ■ ■ PC ZONE ■

OUR FEATURE PRESENTATION...
FLATOUT

Essentially a bumper episode of *Police! Camera! Action!* in the making, the self-proclaimed *Half-Life 2* of racers is truly a beautiful thing...

PHYSICS Timber! Check out how this pile of wood goes flying.

COURSES It's littered with obstacles to smash.

DESTRUCTION The damage model provides max carnage.

DRIVING Check out the stylish sideways action!

ALSO SHOWING...
FAHRENHEIT – With its intricate thriller plot, *Fahrenheit* looks set to be a riveting game. The adventure starts as you find yourself the victim of a mysterious chain of events that results in you being wanted for murder.
DON'T MISS –The giant flea. Now that must have come from a BIG cat.

KOTOR 2: THE SITH LORDS – The Old Republic has nearly been wiped out, so now it's down to you, the last of the Jedi. Will you be a saintly Jedi, or fall foul of the Dark Side? Our A-List Role Playing Game returns in this highly anticipated sequel.
DON'T MISS – The Dark Side powers being demonstrated on some poor soul.

PRINCE OF PERSIA 2 – Jean-Christophe Guyot, the creative director of the game, talks us through the changes made to the sequel of our favourite action-platformer. No longer the goody two-shoes of the previous outing, the Prince is now Baghdad's bad boy, and he's got a few new tricks up his sleeves.
DON'T MISS – The double-sword beheadings.

NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND 2 (DVD ONLY) – EA's street racer is back in town, and it's a much larger one too. There's over 200km of road available for you to race on, along with the ability to drive freely around the environment. Burn rubber baby!
**DON'T MISS** – The pimp daddy SUV complete with bling-bling alloys.

ALSO ON THE CD – *STALKER: SHADOW OF CHERNOBYL* **ALSO ON THE DVD** – *CALL OF CTHULHU: DARK CORNERS OF THE EARTH, STREET RACING SYNDICATE, FALLEN KINGDOMS, WILL OF STEEL, KOHAN II: KINGS OF WAR*

EXTENDED PLAY
jDOOM

BY NOW you should have sampled the dark and atmospheric delights of *Doom 3*. But if the sequel had you pining for the old days, we've got just the thing. *jDoom* uses the Doomsday engine to give a new lease of life to the original classics *Doom* and *Doom 2*. The engine, new models and textures look fantastic, and some essential features have been added, such as mouse look. You still require the original game files to get it working, so check out the readme file (in Extended Play/jDoom/Engine) for details on how to get the files installed, and send the residents of hell back home! Check out these before and after shots...

Before...

After...
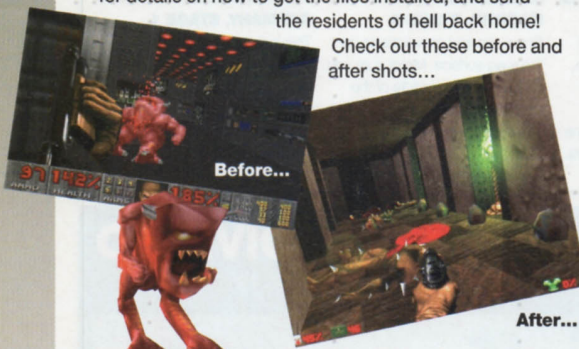
DOOM 3 MODS

SOME EXTRA hellish tweaks for *Doom 3* are available on this month's discs courtesy of Junkguy Productions. The Parallax Mapping mod makes surfaces have more depth, while the Cel Shader mod uses a custom shader algorithm to make *Doom 3's* graphics cel-shaded. Meanwhile, ungibbable stops bodies from gibbing and disappearing, so you can happily inflict further damage on the carcasses that made you jump out of your skin earlier.

THIEF: DEADLY SHADOWS HI-RES TEXTURES

THIEF: DEADLY *Shadows* didn't suffer as badly in the console conversion as its stablemate, *Deus Ex: Invisible War*, but there's still room for improvement. Luckily, John P. has done just that with these hi-res textures for Garrett's face, clothes and miscellaneous objects that make the game look even better.

After...

Before...

CONDITION ZERO MAPS

WE'VE GOT two fantastic maps for *Counter-Strike: Condition Zero* from Kiltron. First up is Runaway Trains, where you have to stop some train-hijacking terrorists bent on causing mischief of the nuclear style. And for a bit of a change, there's the Retaliation map too, in which the role of an IRA terrorist up against the lethal SAS is yours for the taking.

All aboard the train of fun!

HELP!

CD trouble? Don't worry – phone our helpline on **08700 711482**. The line is open weekdays between 9.30am and 5pm, and Saturday from 10am to 2pm, or email **pc_zone@interchange.co.uk**.
BEFORE YOU DIAL...
If you're calling the helpline:
■ If possible, have your PC operating and near the phone when you call.
■ If this is not possible, note down all relevant information – ie system type, soundcard, RAM and so on, along with the nature of the fault.
■ Have a pen and paper to hand so you can jot down the relevant info.

MINIMUM SPECIFICATION
■ To run the software on these discs, you need at least a PIII 1GHz or equivalent, with a GeForce 3 64MB graphics card and 256MB RAM (512MB recommended for Windows XP users).

DISCLAIMER
■ This disc has been thoroughly tested at all stages of its production. However, it's always wise to use a virus checker on any software before running it.
■ Dennis Publishing Limited cannot accept responsibility for any loss, disruption or damage to your data or your computer system (including hardware) that may occur while using either the disc or programs and data on it.

ALSO ON THE CD – *Far Cry* SDK, three *Warcraft: The Frozen Throne* maps, *FlatOut* 3D screenshots
ALSO ON THE DVD – *Spellforce* Editor, *Spellforce* Editor manual, *Halo* 3D screenshots, *Deus Ex: Invisible War* Community Texture Pack
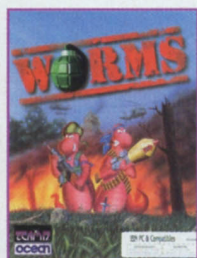
Magazine's aren't for reading...

they're for reloading.

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GAMES THAT CHANGED THE WORLD
WORLD
WORMS

ON THE CD | ON THE DVD

From the warped mind of a bored teenager to a global gaming brand, *Worms* was a final stand for the amateur bedroom programmer. *Steve Hill* revisits the time when everyone was getting worms...

We're all going to hell.

Protective girders. The coward's way.

Step into Christmas.

OF THE countless games that have been spawned over the years, very few can claim to have their genesis in an A-level art class and be inspired by a concrete donkey. But for Bournemouth student Andy Davidson, the tedium of slapping paint on canvas and the horror of what lay beneath the concrete mule in his parents' garden was enough to fire his mind in a different and ultimately more fruitful direction. Eschewing the vagaries of more traditional artistic endeavour, Davidson concentrated his efforts on developing a simple Amiga game, primarily for the entertainment of himself and his friends. That game eventually developed into *Worms*, and more than a decade later the franchise continues apace, evolving through various incarnations into the current 3D version.

Davidson has had no input since the early stages of *Worms 2*, and is currently missing, presumed rich. However, back in early 1996, mere months after the PC release of *Worms*, I visited Davidson at his (parents') home and secured a rare interview with the then 22-year-old. Still coming to terms with his success, the only visible sign of it was the surround sound TV, although there was talk of a VW Beetle once he'd passed his driving test.

An affable if slightly nervy character, he instantly started gibbering about the now infamous concrete donkey that stood proudly in his front garden. To the untrained eye it appeared to be little more than a slightly vulgar – if unique – garden ornament. But to the impressionable young Davidson it held a macabre fascination that would eventually find its way into his creation.

As he explained at the time: "It just greatly disturbed me as a young kid. I couldn't really understand that it was just an ornament. This only surfaced last year when all the nasty memories returned. We were in the pub and suddenly I got memories of chipping away at its tail."

ART SCHOOL
Although the donkey made its debut in *Worms 2*, the seeds of the series were sown some four years previously, during double art, of all places. As Davidson revealed: "It started as something to pass the time in A-level art, and then got progressively sillier as art got more boring. I spent two years writing it – first of all it was little tanks, then little soldiers running around. When I left school it was still really popular. Enough people liked it but soldiers are

PROFILE

Something of a Matthew Smith (of *Manic Miner* fame) for the PlayStation generation, *Worms* creator Andy Davidson's dalliance with the games industry was fleeting but effective, kick-starting a franchise that continues to this day.

Martyn Brown was the man who made it all possible, signing up the primitive game on the spot and overseeing its progress over the last decade. When they met, it was murder (of worms).

NAME: Andy Davidson
ROLE ON WORMS: Concept and design
FIRST GAME WORKED ON: *Worms*
WHERE IS HE NOW?: Unknown

NAME: Martyn Brown
ROLE ON WORMS: Producer
FIRST GAME WORKED ON: *Henry's Hoard* on the Spectrum
WHERE IS HE NOW?: Still at Team 17 in the guise of creative director: "My role is to work with our design team to generate designs, ideas and also develop our current titles' game content and quality. I also manage the studio on a day-to-day basis and do the odd press interview."

What is this – Enid Blyton? Player names were generally more offensive.

GAME: *Worms*
PUBLISHER: Sega
DEVELOPER: Team 17
RELEASED: November 1995
INFLUENCED: While there may have been a few half-hearted clones of *Worms*, the memorable ones can be counted on the finger of one worm. Of course, *Worms* itself was a more elaborate clone of earlier artillery combat games such as *Scorched Earth* and *Scorched Tanks*, but Team 17 took the existing genre and gave it a cute, marketable face – in many ways anticipating future trends. A cynic might say that *Worms* simply got lucky by coinciding with the launch of the PSOne, but it certainly proved that multiplayer gaming didn't have to be about giblets or goblins.

WHAT'S PINK AND HARD? THE FUTURE OF WORMS

WHO'D 'AVE FORT IT?

The enduring *Worms* series shows little sign of slowing down, with the move into 3D soon to be followed by a further outing. *Worms Forts: Under Siege*, promised before the end of the year, has no connection with the similarly named Steven Seagal film, but it will feature a lot of Worms, mainly located in forts.

Boasting attack on a scale never seen before in a *Worms* game, *Forts* will offer some 30 different weapons as well as a mythological time-travelling theme encompassing Egyptian tribes, Greco-Roman sieges, Oriental Samurai and King Arthur's Medieval Knights. The key historical difference to those eras however, is that the main proponents in the combat will be spineless hermaphrodites that eat dirt.

Commanding up to four fort-dwelling worms, garrisons can be ordered to construct defences,

Worms Forts: Under Siege. **Wriggling its way towards the end of the year.**

as well as knock up weapons of mass destruction to annihilate your opponents' forts. Throw in online play and a host of customisations, and it looks like the Worms aren't ready to be fish bait just yet.

"It started as something to pass the time in A-level art"

ANDY DAVIDSON CREATOR, *WORMS*

The holiday snaps were disappointing.

much too boring. Back then no worms had been called Jim and they hadn't featured in a game (a reference to *Earthworm Jim*) so I thought we'll stick with *Worms*, and started a complete rewrite called 'Total Wormage'. So if you want to get a game published, take A-level art – that's the answer to it all. When they're asking 'What's the deep meaning? What do you think he was trying to get at?', you've got to do something. I left before I finished A-level art – it just got too boring."

Quitting school to 'mess about with them computer games' is not a move guaranteed to impress parents, and Davidson predictably had to endure the ensuing grief.

"They didn't understand," he revealed. "We had a lot of arguments about 'throwing your education away' and 'it's a phase you're going through – when you've finished messing about you can get a nice job in a bank.' Then as it all started happening, it began to dawn on them 'Ah, this is quite a big industry'."

It was an industry that Davidson was to break into with relative ease, although not before the occasional pitfall. With the nascent Amiga game in a playable state, Davidson entered it into a magazine competition. As he recalled: "I thought it would be a good way of getting it noticed – and no-one noticed it

at all! The game that won involved clowns jumping on a seesaw popping balloons. That's what won!"

CAN OF WORMS

Unperturbed, Davidson set off for ECTS '94 intent on finding a publisher for his game. Yorkshire-based Team 17 was the first company he approached, and amazingly it was also the last, as "after five minutes they said, 'Do you want it published?', which was quite good."

No small understatement, although it was admittedly a shrewd choice of publisher to approach. "I thought I'd have to shop around," recalled Davidson. "But they were top of the list. They're more on the side of the programmers. They're programmers who started a company as opposed to men in suits, and because they were very connected with the Amiga they were more open to people coming up to them with disk boxes with strange things in them. Also, I've always wanted to go to Ossett for the smell of the sheep-skinning factory."

On the other side of the counter that fateful day at ECTS was Martyn Brown, who is still at Team 17 in the role of creative director. He remembers the meeting well.

"Yeah, Andy approached our stand at the September '94 ECTS with a view to

us publishing his game, since we were successful Amiga title publishers back then. The demo was a little rough – it was written in Blitz Basic – and looked a little dated, but I just got a very good feeling about it and Andy did a very good job of selling the character of the game. I just thought it had a lot of potential for adaptation and signed it on the spot, initially earmarking it for our Amiga budget range, which had enjoyed a lot of success. However, as we developed the game further, it just snowballed and it ended up being our lead release some 14 months later."

WORM UP

And indeed some ten years later, which represents a decent investment for a decision that took all of five minutes.

Brown was immediately convinced of its potential though, and became producer on the first few titles.

"It was a breath of fresh air," he says. "It had a lot of dark Python-style humour and was infinitely easy to expand and develop further. I didn't really get a lot of time to play the game on the first demo, but I didn't need to – I could see how it worked. I think it's fair to say that it successfully mixed ideas from a number of cult games such as *Lemmings*, *Tanks*, *Street Fighter* (honestly!) with some Python-esque humour. I remember hearing how Andy used *Lemmings* graphics in early versions then switched the characters to worms later. The original version he showed was called 'Total Wormage', a parody of *Total Carnage*, but I shortened
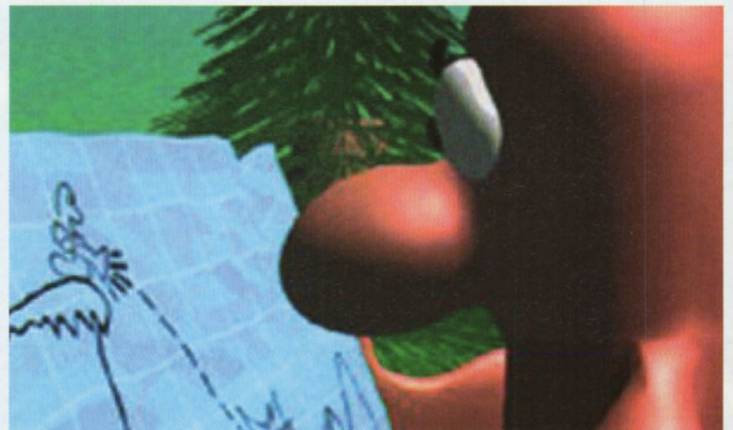
Wacky cut-scenes added to the comedy.

it to just *Worms* to emphasise the characters in the game."

If you've never played the game, those characters made up teams of four worms, who would do battle over a series of randomly generated landscapes. The gameplay, technically defined as multiplayer turn-based strategy, was extremely similar to many existing artillery combat games, but in terms of character the game was leagues ahead. With the worms able to mete out death with such hardware as bazookas, homing missiles, shotguns and Uzis, it combined extreme violence with cutesy graphics and comedy voices, with the worms regularly baiting each other in a high-pitched squeal.

With the ability to name your own worms, it was also a breeding ground for foul and abusive language as well as personal vendettas, with the hate figures of the day supplanted into the game. Ultimately though, it was straightforward good honest fun, and for once made the concept of three or four players hunched round a PC a viable proposition.

PC POWER

Arriving at a fragmented time for PC gaming, the magazine in which I originally reviewed *Worms* saw it going up against such diverse fare as the majestic *Sensible World Of Soccer*, the tedious seven-CD interactive horror movie *Phantasmagoria*, and generic *Doom*-clone *Hexen*.

As Martyn Brown recalls: "I think it bucked the trend and reminded people what games were about. It was such unadulterated fun and very fresh. At the time, there was a clamour for 3D titles and showing what the PlayStation was able to do in technical terms. Our game just went all out to entertain. There's a lot of parody, in-jokes, topical black humour and more. In the end it carved a genre of its own – people talk about 'Worms games' now – and that was just the beauty of the balance of the mix. It was amusing, socially addictive and just a great game to enjoy."

As for his particular favourite points, Brown cites, "the personalisation that's

Waiter, there's a worm in my pie.

possible and the spontaneous humour. It's easy to be spiteful and vindictive in a socially acceptable way – and that's always good."

It was certainly a ploy that registered with the public, and Brown is reasonably happy with the game that was finally released. As he says: "It's difficult to suggest how you'd change things given the original sold a few million copies, went number one in the all-formats chart above *FIFA* and *Tomb Raider* and won a shed-load of industry awards. But in retrospect, we'd have probably spent more time on the single-player game because if you didn't have any mates, it was a bit of a drag."

As with virtually any successful product, a sequel was rapidly pencilled in. Following the stopgap ammo pack, *Worms Reinforcements* (later combined with the original in *Worms United*), Team 17 set about creating *Worms 2* with Davidson on board and contributing a wealth of ideas. One such nugget that was never used was his concept for the intro sequence: "I was going to have a nice little cat sitting there, an arm would come in, lift its tail up, then all the worms would march out."

It's perhaps for the best that this sequence never saw the light of day, and in fact Davidson's input was shortly to be curtailed completely.

As Brown explains: "Andy had a lot of initial input on *Worms 2* but the interest waned, I guess, because he wasn't involved in code generation. After that, Andy went his own way and intended to create some more games, although I'm not sure how that went since I heard nothing more. Unfortunately, we haven't been in touch with him for some time so I have no idea what he's up to or even where he is."

THE WORM THAT TURNED

Wherever Andy Davidson is, he almost certainly won't be short of a few quid, retaining a healthy royalties deal on every *Worms* game released. It's a long time since he visited ECTS clutching a box of disks, but the monster he created continues apace, with numerous sequels and spin-offs.

According to Martyn Brown: "Largely speaking, we've tried to maintain the spirit of the original game, expanding and freshening up where possible. In the main this has worked out very well, particularly in my opinion, for *Worms Armageddon* and the earlier *Worms 2*. I was also very pleased with how *Worms 3D* turned out given the tremendously difficult and not to mention scary job of taking a classic 2D title and putting it into 3D, complete with a totally deformable landscape which had never been achieved before. I'd have liked a bit more time balancing and polishing *Worms 3D*, but we never seem to get that opportunity these days, given the cost of development and key release periods in the year.

Overall though, I was delighted we'd maintained the spirit and feel."

And the future of *Worms*? "Aside from *Worms Forts*, we're likely to return to *Worms 3D* and produce what we would hope to be the ultimate incarnation of *Worms* for today's market. Plans are afoot! Which brings me onto another point – after ten years of *Worms* games, looks like it's safe to say they really do have legs." [PCZ]

"He's an Uzi lover..."

They Fought For Freedom...
They Fought For Each Other.

MEN OF VALOR

"DEATH DEALERS"

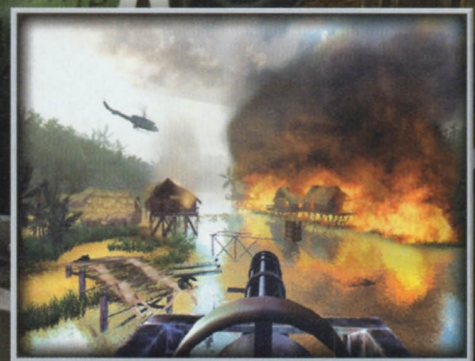Released October

THE LIONHEAD DIARIES

We've been following the development of *Black & White 2* for some months now. This month, lead designer *Ron Millar* sheds some light on how gameplay is perfected...

Add a spot of moisture here.

I LOVE MAKING all kinds of games, but I've got a real passion for fantasy or sci-fi – and of course for real-time strategy games. Today's technologies allow for some astonishing things to happen and the *Black & White 2* team is taking full advantage of that. You can see this in features like pouring lava, walls that crumble realistically and creatures with fur that gets wet or blows in the wind. It's incredible to see how far games have come.

The design of an ambitious project like *B&W2* is grand in scale – so large in fact that this diary would be the size of a book if I were to delve into every detail. What I will do though, is pull back the curtain to give you a glimpse into my favourite part of the process. This is the point where you can play around with the game, mould it, change it on-the-fly and get your hands
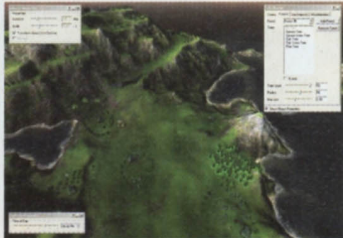
Not enough trees? Click here.

dirty. Fortunately for me, this is where I joined the *Black & White* team and I'm having fun doing just that.

CRAFTING WORLDS

I remember the days when I'd spend entire summers working with a map editor for some old Commodore 64 titles to build an adventure game, or build maps for a war game. It's a dream come true to be sitting with today's technology and sculpting the lands and gameplay for something as cool as *Black & White 2*. Don't like a building, a village or even an entire city? Wipe it out with the sweep of a mouse and key press. Need a forest? It's easy to spray paint one down. What about a giant volcano or a valley of rolling hills? No problem. Grab the height editing tool and pull and push the landscape like a giant blob of clay. It really is a lot of fun.

Game design can be an incredibly difficult job most of the time. There's often a lot of typing and mystical behind-closed-doors meetings where monsters, magic and the craziest of ideas are conjured up and just as quickly dispelled. That can be fun, but it's draining.

It's nice to get back to something more therapeutic, to sit and sculpt the land, position your houses, rocks and people, paint the sky and the water, save it, load it

Decide where you want to place your buildings and away you go.

up in the game engine and watch what you've created spring to life.

There are guys that spend days painting figures and making amazing backgrounds for war-gaming, or spend weeks working on boardgames, collectible card games or role-playing rules and scenarios. I think if computer games didn't exist, I'd probably be doing something like that instead. There's

something very rewarding about computer games. Perhaps it's the fact that you can visually see your creations coming to life.

Have you seen the moment in *Clash Of The Titans*, where the gods place a person somewhere in the world and then watch what happens? The feeling is very similar when you place villagers, creatures and armies in a *B&W2* land and then hit go...

THINGS TO TRY

For the budding game designer, there are a whole host of games out there that include map editors and other programs to create your own modifications. If you want to get into game design, I'd encourage you to play around with these to get a feel for what it's like to craft a world. Keep in mind it not only has to look good, it also has to keep the game mechanics in mind. You don't want it to be too claustrophobic and tough to move around in, or too spread out and boring.

Pacing is also a consideration – you don't want the game to continuously bombard the player with challenges. Give them a break every now and then or a nice reward. Most of this kind of thing comes from dedication and employing a great many variants of your creation in a sort of endless trial-and-error process. Given time and experience, you become better and better at it and who knows, perhaps one day you too will be sitting as I am, staring at the screen in a legendary gaming company at something as cool as *Black & White 2*!
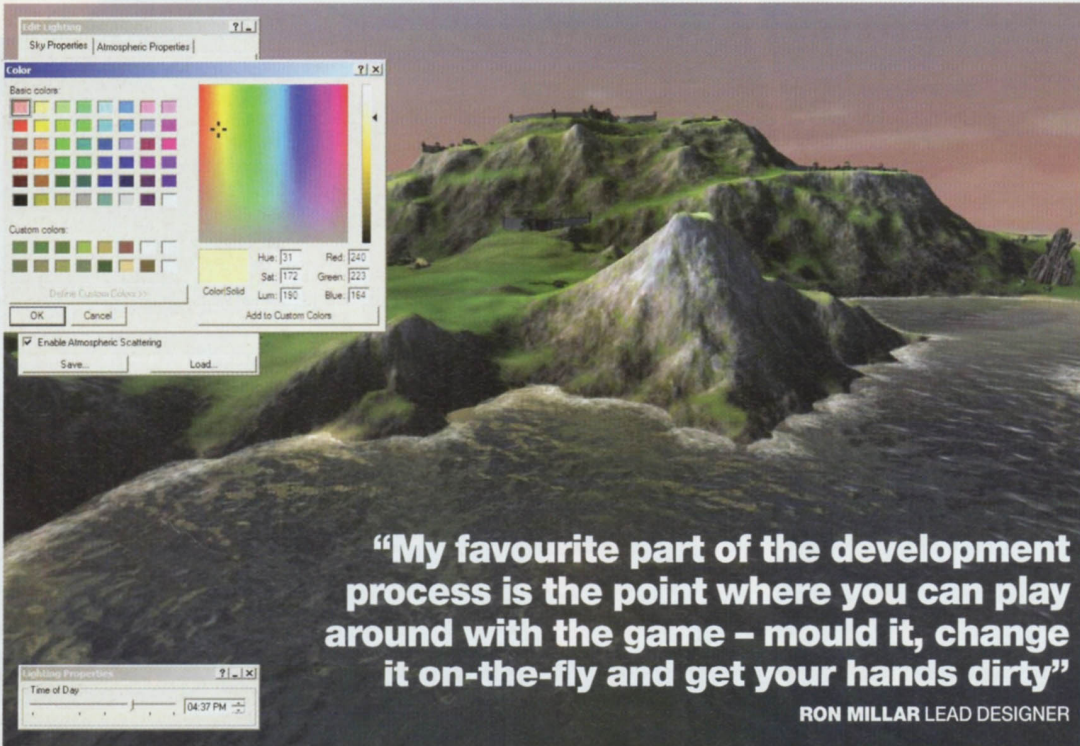
"My favourite part of the development process is the point where you can play around with the game – mould it, change it on-the-fly and get your hands dirty"

RON MILLAR LEAD DESIGNER

We've set up a forum where you can tell us exactly what you want to read in forthcoming Lionhead Diaries. Vent your spleen at boards.bwgame.com

Want the sky to have a purple hue? Change it here.

NEXT MONTH

THE BIGGEST AND BEST ISSUE EVER!*

Featuring...

DEFINITIVE REVIEWS OF...

Medal Of Honor: Pacific Assault **
Rome: Total War
Sid Meier's Pirates!
Star Wars Battlefront
Colin McRae Rally 2005

AND PLAYABLE DEMOS OF...

Doom 3
Medal Of Honor: Pacific Assault
Call Of Duty: United Offensive
Rome: Total War
Sid Meier's Pirates!
Leisure Suit Larry: Magna Cum Laude
Evil Genius

PLUS...

Steve Hill becomes Leisure Suit Larry in a brand new Reality Check...

* Not actually the biggest ever, but damn, damn close.

** Presuming the game doesn't slip. Again.

DON'T MISS THE NEXT ISSUE OF PC ZONE ON SALE OCTOBER 14!

Following our award-winning* round-up of the next generation of first-person shooter titles, this month we take a look at where another popular gaming genre is heading. Welcome to...

THE FUTURE OF THE TEXT ADVENTURE

ZORK ENGINE 3.0

GRAPHICS — GAWP IN AMAZEMENT AT THE STUNNING NEW RENDERING CAPABILITIES

A.I. — COULD THESE BE THE MOST INTELLIGENT AND BELIEVABLE NPCS EVER?

```
>_ Go North
You are in a forest. Shards of sunlight
gleam through the broken canopy above,
illuminating everything around you in an
extremely realistic manner. Lights bounce
off small puddles of gently rippling
rainwater, reflecting back and distorting
in a way never before seen. Shadows flicker
from rocks and branches, distorting
believably as you walk among them,
adapting and changing as light filters through
a plane of differently coloured glass you're
carrying for some reason.

>_ Examine Tree
You peer at the tree's mottled, bumpy
surface, marvelling at how the surrounding
light plays in and out of every crack and
crevice. As you peer closer you can make
out every vein in every leaf, and are
amazed at how the edges are smooth and free
of jagging. This is sooo worth all the
money you spent upgrading!
```

```
>_ Hit orc
The orc moves quickly out of the way. You
miss the orc. The orc retreats behind the bush.
The orc then runs back towards you.

>_ Hit orc
The orc moves quickly out of the way. You
miss the orc. The orc retreats behind the bush.
The orc then runs back towards you.

>_ Hide behind bush
You duck behind the bush. The orc looks
confused. The orc runs around in small
circles on the spot, then runs into a
nearby wall. Several times.
```

PHYSICS — REALISTIC BODY MOVEMENT, GRAVITY AND OBJECT INTERACTION

ONLINE GAMEPLAY — FASTEST FINGER FIRST WITH THOUSANDS OF OTHERS IN THEIR VERBAL QUESTS

```
>_ Kill goblin
You slice the goblin with your sword. The
goblin is dead. Its body slumps against a
wall, knocking a plank of wood that
clatters to the floor, sending a series of
bricks scattering around the room, knocking
over a nearby barrel that rolls down a
passing staircase, casting a realistic
shadow as it goes. The goblin's body is
still slumping.

>_ Push goblin body
The goblin's body curls around itself into
a painful-looking horseshoe shape. This
then topples towards the staircase and
proceeds to slide slowly over each step,
arms flailing as it goes, knocking over a
precariously balanced pyramid of bottles.
It then curls over the barrel at the bottom
of the stairs.
```

```
You enter the marvellous decorated treasure
room. Gold coins, valuable jewels and
precious objects lie everywhere.

>_ Get trea...
JonBoy003 enters the room and takes the
treasure. You must wait 20 seconds for item
respawn.
...
Gold coins, valuable jewels and precious
objects lie everywhere.
>_ Get trea...
StormHammer39 enters the room and takes the
treasure. You must wait 20 seconds for item
respawn.
...
Gold coins, valuable jewels and precious
objects lie everywhere.
>_ Get trea...
Slayer112 enters the room and takes the
treasure. You must wait 20 seconds for item
respawn.
...
Gold coins, valuable jewels and precious
objects lie everywhere.
```
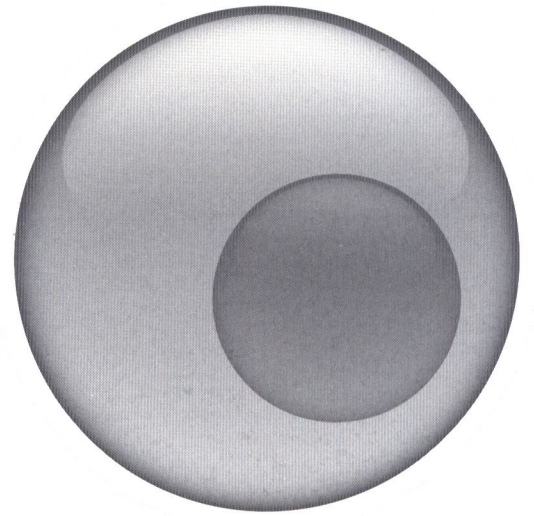
Next Month: The Future of Train Simulations

*Winner of the Best PC ZONE Round-Up Feature 2004 award as voted for by the staff of PC ZONE