

PCZONE

ISSUE 171 SEPTEMBER 2006

DARK MESSIAH

FREE! WOW 14-DAY TRIAL!

The brutal epic that hacks Oblivion to pieces!

FREE!
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INSIDE!

"I miss the Dentons a lot. Hey Eidos, wanna sell the rights?"
Warren Spector wants Deus Ex back!

HUGE FANTASTICAL FEATURE INCLUDING:

**TERRY PRATCHETT
NEVERWINTER NIGHTS 2
Gaming's greatest goblins! Ever!**

PLUS! INSIDE GAMES WORKSHOP

The UK table-top legends speak out on Mark Of Chaos and Warhammer Online!

EXCLUSIVE REVIEWS!
ROME: TOTAL WAR - ALEXANDER
CIVICITY: ROME OUTRUN 2006
MICRO MACHINES V4



ARMED ASSAULT
The war-torn shooter from the developers of Op Flashpoint!

CHAOS THEORY EXPLAINED!
The making of Sam Fisher's Splinter Cell stealth classic

WIN!
TINY COMPO
In which famous fantasy universe is Dark Messiah set?

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Aliens turned Tommy's world upside down.

"It's an awesome, mind-bending experience." Xbox 360 - The Official Xbox Magazine

Living weapons, a faithful sidekick, vehicles, giant weapons, a faithful sidekick, vehicles, memorable moments, a story of redemption and destiny, and a 3-hour epic soundtrack by Jeremy Soule (Oblivion, Guild Wars). The FPS of the year is coming.



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PREY





TOTAL WAR: ERAS



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TOTAL WAR

SHOGUN
TOTAL WAR
MONGOL INVASION

MEDIEVAL
TOTAL WAR

MEDIEVAL
TOTAL WAR
VIKING INVASION

ROME
TOTAL WAR

ROME
TOTAL WAR
BARBARIAN INVASION

ROME
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ALEXANDER

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- A soundtrack CD with remastered tracks from the Total War games, including Medieval II: Total War



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- A glorious Medieval II: Total War poster
- A 52 page art book with images selected from the Total War archive

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GOBLIN AMNESTY

WE'VE MANAGED TO hold out for four years, but the walls of fortress *PC ZONE* have finally been stormed and hordes of elves, orcs and wizards have flooded onto *PC ZONE*'s front cover. *World Of Warcraft* is now the most successful online RPG on the planet (check out the exclusive free 14-day trial on the DVD), and with *The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion* also selling faster than goblin skincare products, fantasy videogames are bigger than ever. To celebrate, we bring you a 20-page Fantasy Special on the essential names in the genre (p36). Included is an interview with *Discworld* guru Terry Pratchett, a catch-up with the *Warhammer* tabletop pioneers Games Workshop (where our own Jon 'Log' Blyth enjoys drinks in a genuine Dwarven Bar) and the latest on classy role-player *Neverwinter Nights 2*.

However, the game that's truly unleashing our inner orc is Ubisoft's *Dark Messiah Of Might & Magic*, a title that has some of the most brutal and bloody swordfighting and physics-based combat we've ever seen in a PC game. If you've always thought the realm of elves and wizards was rather weedy, check out Will Porter's feature on this *Half-Life 2* Source engine-driven first-person action-adventure that has you dropping rocks on enemies, setting them on fire and dispatching their ugly heads in glorious gory slo-mo. Now *that's* what I call fantasy...

Jamie Sefton, editor

COVER STORY

50

DARK MESSIAH OF MIGHT & MAGIC

Get your hands dirty with the most visceral first-person experience yet



NEVERQUEST 119

"You want to meet me when you got some money, big boy?"



ROME: TOTAL WAR - ALEXANDER 58

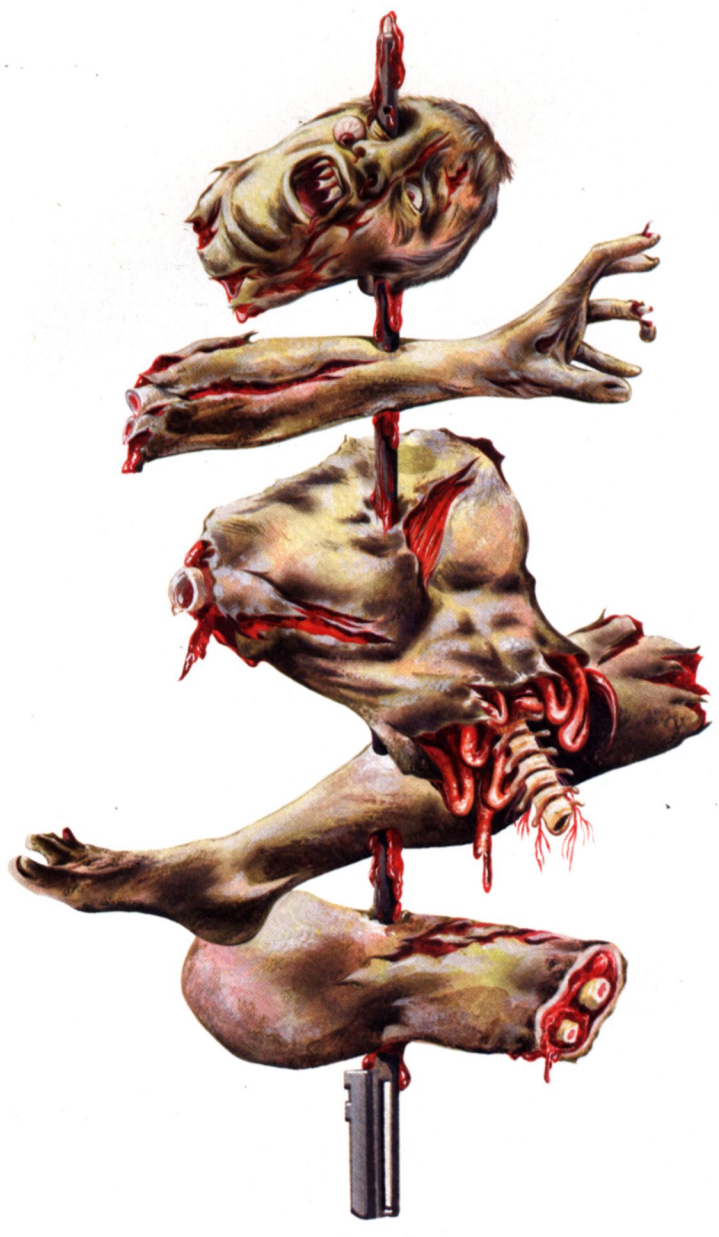
BLESSED RELIEF WITH THE CREATIVE ASSEMBLY'S GORGEOUS STRATEGY GAME

WHAT'S ON THE COVER?



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Too busy? *PC ZONE* in 69 words... Warren Spector sends us pictures of his crazy dog, and we all make little paw gestures with our hands. Log goes home to Nottingham and manages to get both his parents in the mag, ogres and trolls are officially the biznitch, and *Tuesday & Ark* fiddles hauntingly with *Far Cry*. Steve Hill gets some digital back-door, and Will gets his brain, eyes and blood-hungry soul massaged by *Dark Messiah*.



New ways to scare, slash, stab, kill and survive.



Use the stylus as a knife and lash out at the undead as they come on smarter and faster than ever. Test your sanity in a fully 3D world of claustrophobia and tension, then drag your friends in with you for a bout of wireless multiplayer horror. Resident Evil Deadly Silence out on 31.03.06

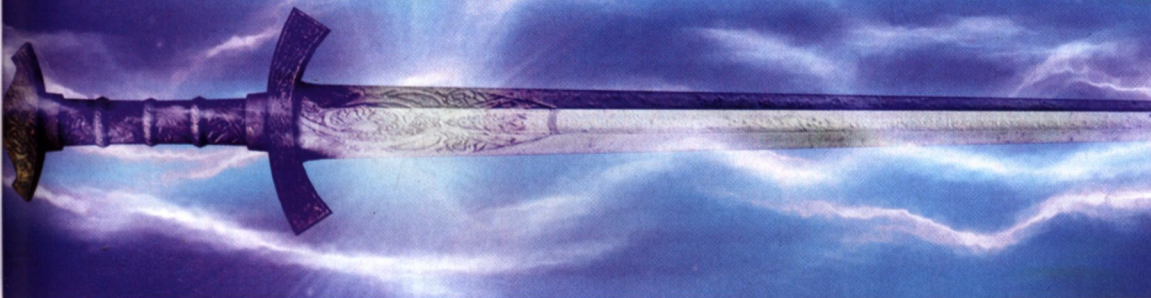


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Yes it's true! Goblins are officially cool again...



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Warren Spector



AMAZING READER OFFER! 97



FREEPLAY DEMOS

Demos
On the DVD - free games galore!

EXCLUSIVE! WORLD OF WARCRAFT
Play the world's biggest online RPG, for free right now!

MICRO MACHINES V4
Stop driving around the kitchen and cut your cereal!

GLORY OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE
What have the Romans ever done for us, or Jon Blyth?

DEAR WANDY
Watchdog

THE BEST OF THE REST

FREE GAMES!

99 **FREEPLAY**
Steve isn't old enough to drive an HGV. And yet here he is, at the wheel of the free games juggernaut...

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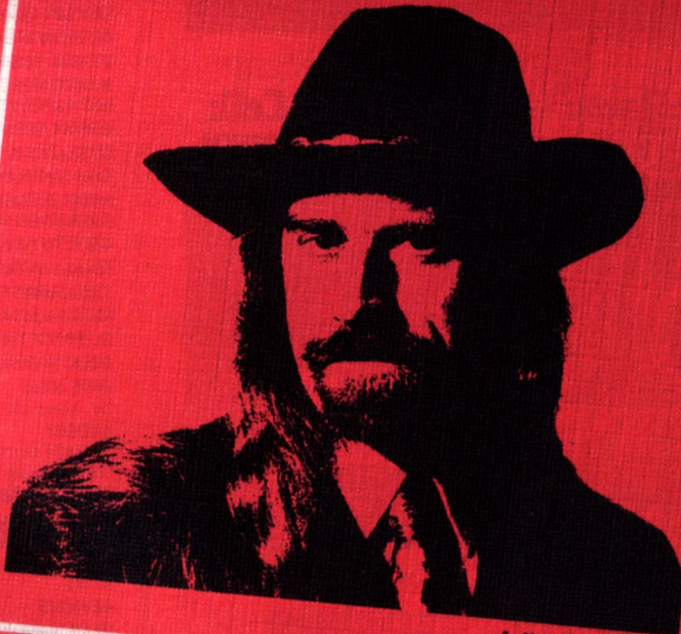
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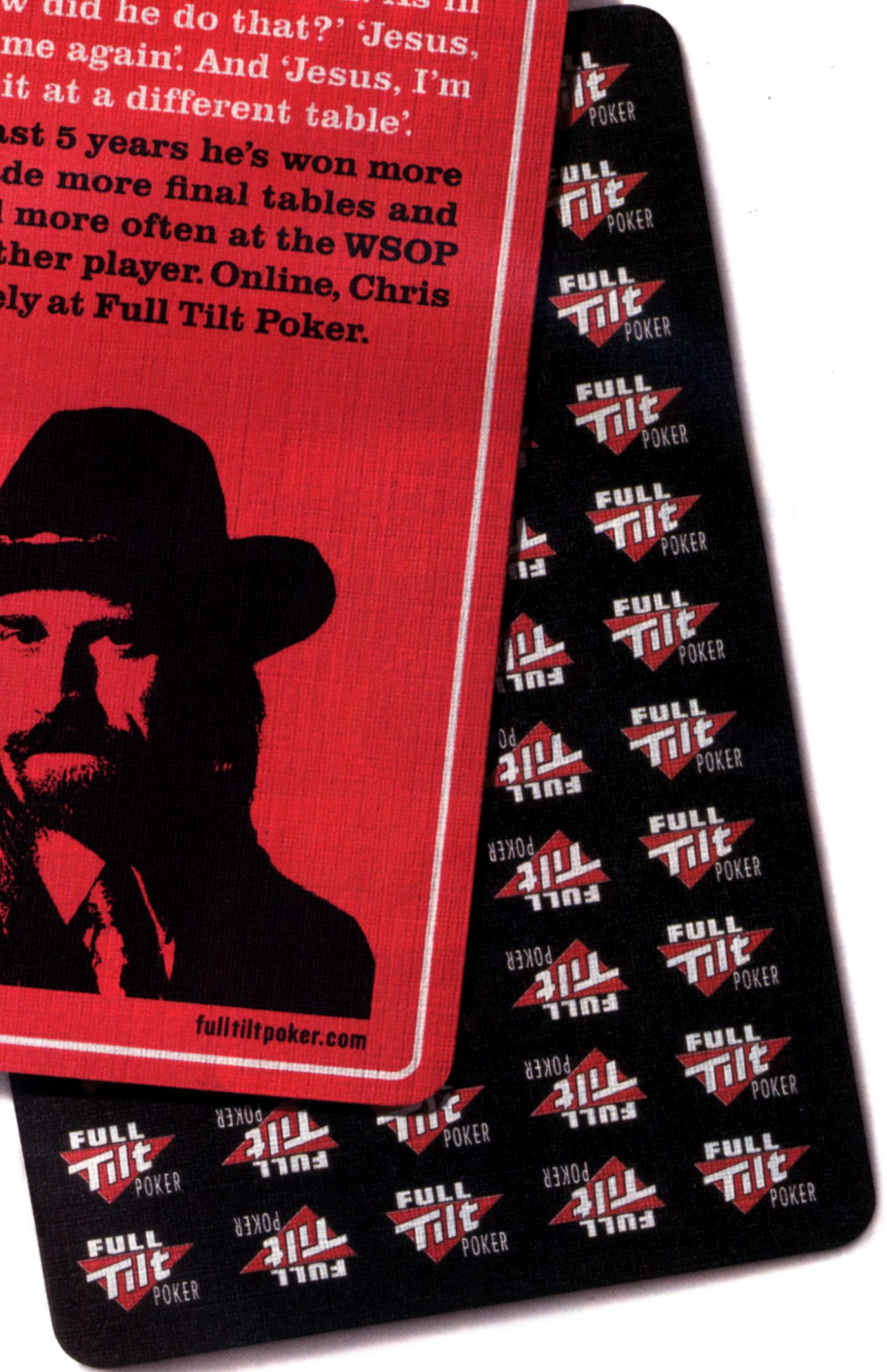
LEARN & CHAT WITH THE PROS

Chris 'Jesus' Ferguson. As in 'Jesus, how did he do that?' 'Jesus, he's done me again'. And 'Jesus, I'm going to sit at a different table'.

Over the last 5 years he's won more events, made more final tables and has cashed more often at the WSOP than any other player. Online, Chris is exclusively at Full Tilt Poker.



fulltiltpoker.com



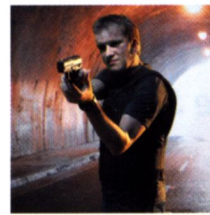


UPFRONT

MEET THE TEAM

Another visitor? Stay a while... Stay forever...

3 ISSUES FOR JUST £1



ANDY ROBINSON

Staff Writer

AGE: 20

LIKES: Jack Bauer

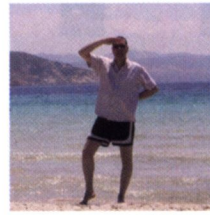
DISLIKES: Useless President Logan

FANCIES: Most Essex girls

FAVOURITE GAME: *Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II*

PLAYING NOW: *Prey*

Andy has been watching season five of 24, which concludes his all-five-seasons-in-two-months marathon. Some people might think that such intense viewing of 120 hours' TV – three working weeks – a little extreme. But Andy pours scorn over words like 'intense' and 'extreme', and howls derisively at pairings like 'extremely intense'. Were Andy and Jack Bauer to go up against each other in zero-gravity, Bauer would soon find himself cartwheeling towards the airlock, with a look on his face that says, 'I am Jack Bauer – but today, I have met my match.'

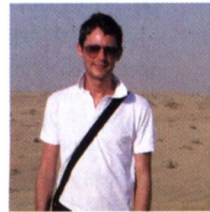


JAMIE SEFTON

Editor

Fresh back from his Sardinian holidays, Jamie so took to the local culture that it's difficult for him to readjust. Even now, he's miming the fall of Phoenician buildings to larger Carthaginian cities.

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING: *Half-Life 2: Episode One*



KEVIN PRUITT

Deputy Art Editor

Kevin came from Atlanta in a bid to murder our art editor, but they got on so well that Kevin now rides Dale around the office, cropping bitmaps like Siamese twins. We call the hybrid creature Ted.

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING: *Finger paints*



WILL PORTER

Deputy Editor

Will's amateur attempts to rid his flat of cockroaches were so accomplished, the man from Rentokil nodded in grave approval. The male bonding resulted in non-stop wrestling for two weeks.

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING: *SIN Episodes: Emergence*



CLARE LYDON

Managing Editor

Clare went to see Take That and flung bagfuls of her frilliest knickers at Howard's face. It was only thanks to Clare's crap aim that the hapless ex-crusty wasn't garrotted by a thong.

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING: *The Ultimate Collection*



SUZY WALLACE

Reviews Editor

Suzy, tomboy extraordinaire, succumbed to the heat this month and wore a skirt. The surprise was so extreme that simply raising our eyebrows seemed inadequate – so we screamed instead.

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING: *Rome: Total War – Alexander*



STEVE HOGARTY

Staff Writer

This month, Steve is bound for Skywalker Ranch. When he finds out Chewy doesn't live there in a treehouse, it'll be last year's Santa Claus debacle all... Over... Again.

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING: *Prey*

STUFF THAT HASN'T HELPED US THIS MONTH... Sardinia-bound editors, Cover DVDs, EA Downloader, French law
MORE STUFF THAT HASN'T HELPED US THIS MONTH... Licensee subscriptions, stupid pissing noisy Gallic MMO developers

STUFF WE'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT...

- WHISTLING VEGETABLES** 100 Mins They whistle in the microwave. Entertainment and nutrition!
- WATER** 12 Mins Is stagnation just water's way of going flat?
- HOT RED CHERRY LIPS** 5 Mins The new snack in the office machine. They look like rosy anuses
- UWE BOLL** 765 Mins He's utterly shit and we want to box him
- ALL-YOU-CAN-EAT BUFFETS** 60 Mins Is there one for fat blokes on a diet?
- HOLIDAYS** 400 Mins Spain, Italy, France – we're just so ruddy European
- HEADCRABS AGAIN** 35 Mins Can they be milked? Is headcrab cheese feasible?
- SKYWALKER RANCH** 40 Mins Steve's impending trip to LucasArts' boywank heaven
- EXCITABLE REFEREES** 15 Mins The dream of seeing 44 yellow cards in one match
- GAMES WORKSHOP** 75 Mins Painting miniatures is cool, and it's time everyone just accepted it

WIN! And what does a small 'Win' herald? It heralds the Tiny Compo! Now that everything that needs heralding has been heralded, send your answer to the minuscule question on the front cover to Tiny Compo (171), PC ZONE, Future Publishing, 2 Balcombe Street, London NW1 6NW. Closing date: Wednesday August 16. If Steve's prematurely-aged hands drag your entry out of the tons of millions of entries we receive, you'll win a suitably dwarfish prize. Tiny Compo 169 was won by Ben Griffiths of Gloucestershire. He knew which tank in C&C was called the Mammoth.

GENERAL COMPETITION TERMS & CONDITIONS: 1. Only completed entries received before the closing date will be entered. 2. Winners will be notified by post. 3. No cash alternative. 4. Prizes not necessarily as shown. 5. No correspondence will be entered into. 6. The editor's decision is final. 7. Responsibility cannot be accepted for lost or undelivered entries. 8. Competitions are not open to readers outside the UK or employees of Future or its affiliated companies, their families, agents or anyone professionally connected with the competition. Phew!

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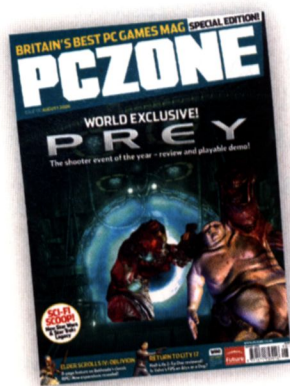
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Closing date: August 31, 2006

LETTERS

Have an issue you want to rant about? Tell **Jamie Sefton**...



VIDEOGAMES VS REALITY

Pavel Barter postulated in his excellent Special Report last issue on Alternate Reality Games (ARGs): 'Do these outdoor jollities leave room for videogames?' Of course they do! There will always be people like me who can't be bothered to go out into the real world, hunting some obscure clues which lead to yet more arcane clues which may possibly lead to a hidden prize. Even a £100,000 one. I will instead cheerfully sit in my underpants at 3am, staring at a flickering monitor, murdering pixel monsters which exist only inside a virtual world until I drop dead at 90 (or, at this rate, 35). Never underestimate the

computer-induced power of: "I can't be bothered to go outside and do stuff."
Gavin Hay

Well let's see. I can leave my house and wander around the streets of east London to witness filthy roads, a dilapidated public transport system and shady figures waiting to jump out of the shadows and take my iPod; or I can ride around Cyrodill's beautiful forests on my horse, while slashing any potential thieves with a big f*ing sword. Hmmm. No question - videogames win.**

NO PAYNE, NO GAYNE

I don't know about everyone else out there, but I'm really pining for *Max Payne*. Fans are still churning out mods for the stylish fall of our hero. I'd love nothing more than to see a beautiful new incarnation to empty my clips at. Max Payne didn't look like he was going anywhere fun after the last game. Well, I say whatever it takes, we want him back. For all I care he can wake up from a cheesy *Dallas*-like dream and start all over again.
Stu

We couldn't agree more Stu - *Max Payne 2: The Fall Of Max Payne* is still one of our favourite PC games. There's a rumour that a developer other than Remedy is working on another *Max Payne* title, but we've no concrete details as yet. We'll keep you posted...

NEXT-GEN, SHMEXT-GEN

Being a bit of a technophobe, I've always been a console man through and through. However, come the middle of May this year, with the blessing of the missus, I've done a deal for a new PC. Initially, the spec for my laptop wasn't going to be for gaming, but after buying *PC ZONE*, I saw what was on offer and upped the ante to include a

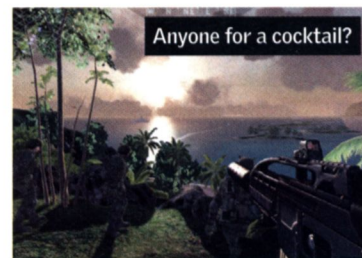


256MB graphics card and at least 1GB of RAM. Now, one month later I have nearly 30 games! And no, I'm not mega-rich - I simply sold my Xbox 360. I'm now drastically trying to improve my *Call Of Duty 2* skills, as I get mullered on a nightly basis. I've been converted, brother!
Paul Creasy

Welcome brother! I've just bought myself a gaming laptop too, and with wireless broadband around the house, there's something quite magnificent about playing *Counter-Strike* while sat in the front room with the telly on. Make sure you also try our exclusive free 14-day *World Of Warcraft* trial on this month's DVD.

OOOH, BIT OF POLITICS...

You read a lot in the papers about politicians calling for games to be banned as they say they're too violent for us, yet turn on any TV in the world and you can see the 'game' they like to play. I'm talking of course of all the wars they organise and all the soldiers and innocent people they use as cannon fodder. Surely they should ban



WIN!

Letter of the month

Wot no rock & roll?

Just seen Will Porter's E3 diary on issue 170's DVD. What a hoot! This man redefines the words 'amateur', 'stilted' and 'embarrassed'. Just to reassure him though: his glasses do not make him look like a geek. It's more the way his teeth stick out as he's thumping the keyboard pretending to submit copy.

His commitment to the *ZONE* readership obviously got in the way of a good time. In the video's thumbnail we got a glimpse of his off-duty activity (holding two pints aloft). I'd have liked to see more of the whole E3 experience - warts and all. So come on, *PC ZONE* - I expect to be morally outraged by your annual visit to E3. For me, going there would be living the dream, so I'll take a second-hand thrill over none at all any day.
Gary Pettecrew

Apologies Gary - due to strict guidelines, we had to edit out all the depraved three-day booze benders and all-night porn party sequences, so there wasn't much left after that. But I promise you, the banned Portergate footage made Paris Hilton's infra-red exploits look like a *Tweenies* DVD. Have a graphics card.

ONE OF THESE!

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

Well, serendipity now! The two needs have collided, right here, right now. Write us a letter today. If it wins Letter of the Month, we'll send you a superb Connect3D X1600 Pro 512MB!

@ letters@pczone.co.uk

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SAY WHAT?

Was the *Prey* demo in issue 170 the shizzle or what? It's been a while since I played such an entertaining demo. Did anyone shoot themselves or play follow the leader on their own?

G_Man_007

I loved it – and for all you old sods decrying the end of the FPS like Chicken Little who's run out of ammo, I thought the *Prey* demo was one of the tastiest, most imaginative shooters I've played in quite a while.

Dogen_D_Derrible

The millionth FPS-scripted-train-ride that I've had to sit through in the past five or six years. Seriously, it was good when *HLI* did it, but isn't it a bit tired now?

Reverend_Joseph

Something new turned up every five minutes in the demo, and if Human Head carry on doing this with the main game I'm gonna love it. And whoever suggested licensing *Don't Fear The Reaper* for the abduction sequence is a genius.

TheTingler

Join in the forum fun at www.pczone.co.uk

"I'll cheerfully sit in my underpants at 3am, murdering pixel monsters until I drop dead at 90"

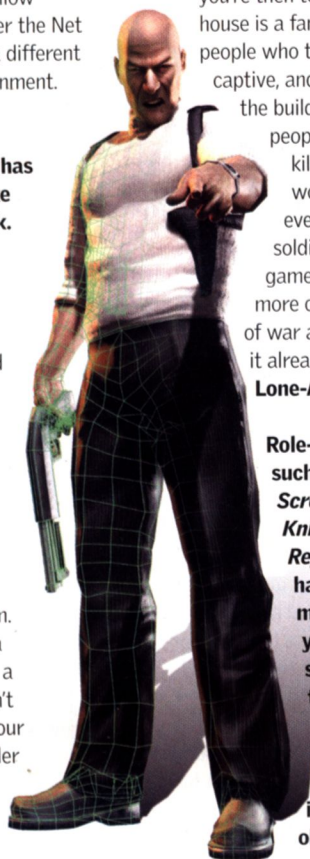
Gavin Hay knows how to live life to the full

themselves, not games that allow people to play multiplayer over the Net and actually meet people of a different race in a more friendly environment.
Nick Fletcher

I think that John Prescott has already adopted your 'make love not war' attitude, Nick.

CHOICE GAMING

In your recent feature about the new *Splinter Cell: Double Agent* game, I was enthralled by the kind of choices you need to make, which would make any number of other games far more interesting. Instead of the simple 'shoot the Nazis' combat in *Call Of Duty 2*, imagine that the many villages had innocent people scattered among them. Say, for example, there was a German machine-gun nest in a building up the road. You don't need to go near it to reach your objective, but your commander advises you to take it out with the help of a few bazooka rounds. However,



you're then told that inside the house is a family of French people who the Nazis have taken captive, and that if you destroy the building these innocent people will surely be killed. Choices like this would surely put you even further into a soldier's boots and make games like *Call Of Duty* more close to the realities of war and far better than it already is.

Lone-Assassin

Role-playing games such as *The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion*, *Knights Of The Old Republic* and *Deus Ex* have enjoyed these moral choices for years, but they're still surprisingly thin on the ground for action shooters. Creating multiple pathways in games is obviously very

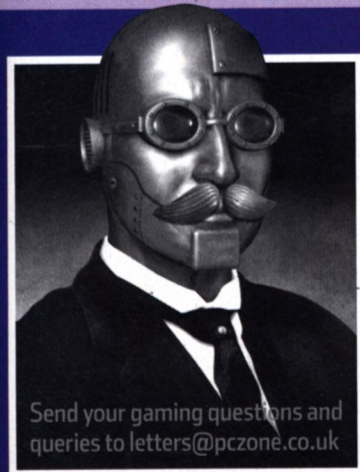
difficult for developers but immensely rewarding for gamers, and I believe (and hope) you'll see a lot more of this approach in upcoming titles such as the new *Splinter Cell* (see p20) and *Medal Of Honor: Frontlines*. Send in your suggestions for games that could be improved with multiple choices to the usual ZONE address.

FEEL THE QUALITY

With summer now upon us, I've taken to reading my favourite PC magazines in the garden of an evening while my wife hogs the PC. Being of a lazy disposition, I left half a dozen issues of various titles on the garden table yesterday and went to bed. To my horror, this morning I found it had rained overnight and my pile of magazines had transformed into a pulpy dripping mass of what can only be described as colourful tissue paper. All except *PC ZONE!* It was the only one that, when pages were gingerly turned, separated quite happily and didn't tear – and therefore I'm able to continue reading. The ink hasn't run, the glue hasn't given up and pages haven't become transparent. So, good work top-quality-paper-using *PC ZONE!*

MY IRON JUNG

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



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

DEAR DR JUNG,

Q Is there ever going to be a *Duke Nukem Forever* game? Or are 3DRealms just going to keep pissing in the wind?
Ed

A My dear Ed. Another issue, another DMF enquiry. There is, however, a smidgen of news available for you. Responding to rumours that 2K Games were offering 3DRealms \$500,000 if they were to release the game prior to the close of this year, *Duke*-keeper George Broussard claimed: "We're certainly not motivated by that amount of money – getting the game right is what matters. I'd never ship a game early for 500K." As for release? "We're making the game. It'll be done when it's done." I predict a reveal within the year. Yet I have been wrong before.

DEAR DR JUNG,

Q I'm one of the few people who really got into *Soldiers: Heroes Of WWII*. I realise that I am alone in my joy, but how can I get more joy? I like joy.
JoyJoy the Circus Boy

A For a start JoyJoy, you could attempt to learn more of a game known as *Faces Of War* – the next title from *Heroes* developer Bestway. It has the same ethic as before in terms of ballistics and destruction, yet with far more friendly troops around you. If, however, you fancy a little more action behind enemy lines, you could investigate the official follow-up to *Heroes* – *Silent Heroes*. Expected to land here in September, the game is designed specifically for pining gamers such as yourself. Watch this space.

LETTERS



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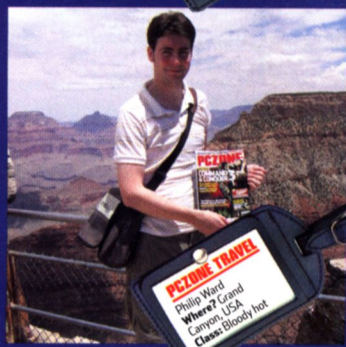
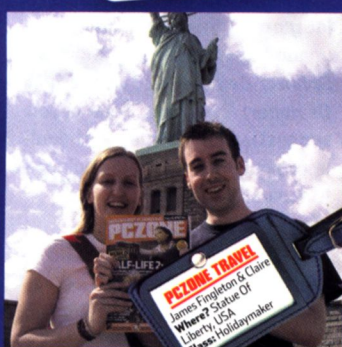
Officially it is now the future. As well as travelling to the moon in shuttles and eating off square plates, we're now able to send messages to each other's handheld communication devices! Just like in *Star Trek!* Except in text form.

Now you can send your gaming rants to *PC ZONE* using your moby – we want your opinions on everything from the impending Windows Vista to how your cat falls asleep on your keyboard in a cute way.

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PC ZONE Around the World **SPECIAL!**



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

sound in games direct from the state-of-the-art recording complex at Skywalker Ranch next issue.

WASTED YOUTH

I was sat in my physics lesson the other day, where we were discussing radiation. There was the usual boredom cloud hanging over the class, then suddenly, the word 'half-life' was uttered by the teacher. As soon as it was uttered, whispers began to stream across the room from table to table, and soon enough, most of the class were chatting about the adventures of Gordon Freeman and headcrab bashing! I never realised there was such a large 'underground' gaming community here – no-one talks about this sort of thing normally! I think you can be assured that the next generation of PC gamers know what a good game is, and aren't going to be swallowed by cheap tat and poor-quality licensed titles.

SuperGenius3000

Well, I'm glad the next generation of gamers is going to be OK. I have my doubts about the next generation of physicists though... **BT**

We're extremely proud of the fact that *ZONE* is the strongest, most absorbent videogames magazine available. It's saved our lives a few times in the office toilet, I can tell you...

HEARING IS BELIEVING

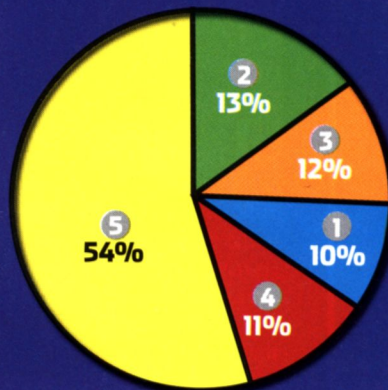
I believe that the soundtrack of a game are as important as the visuals. Game audio represents its own feel and style, so building a memory link to the gameplay as a whole. Nearly every emotion can be evoked in a game, and using natural everyday sounds you're accustomed to hearing, audio directors have the opportunity to twist the sounds to make gaming even more immersive. Modern game

sounds such as ragdolls clumping to the floor, particle-based materials piercing under bullet impacts and devilish atmospheric surround sound are really evolving. Do you think sounds need to be studied more closely, with newer games to get a more involving experience? Dominik Ruby

Sound is hugely important for creating atmosphere and character in games – can you imagine being as tense in *Counter-Strike* without hearing "the bomb has been planted!"? Or getting as frightened in *F.E.A.R.* and *Condemned* without the spooky atmospheric shufflings and muffled effects? We'll have an exclusive feature about the future of

The Big Question

What do goblins get up to in their spare time?

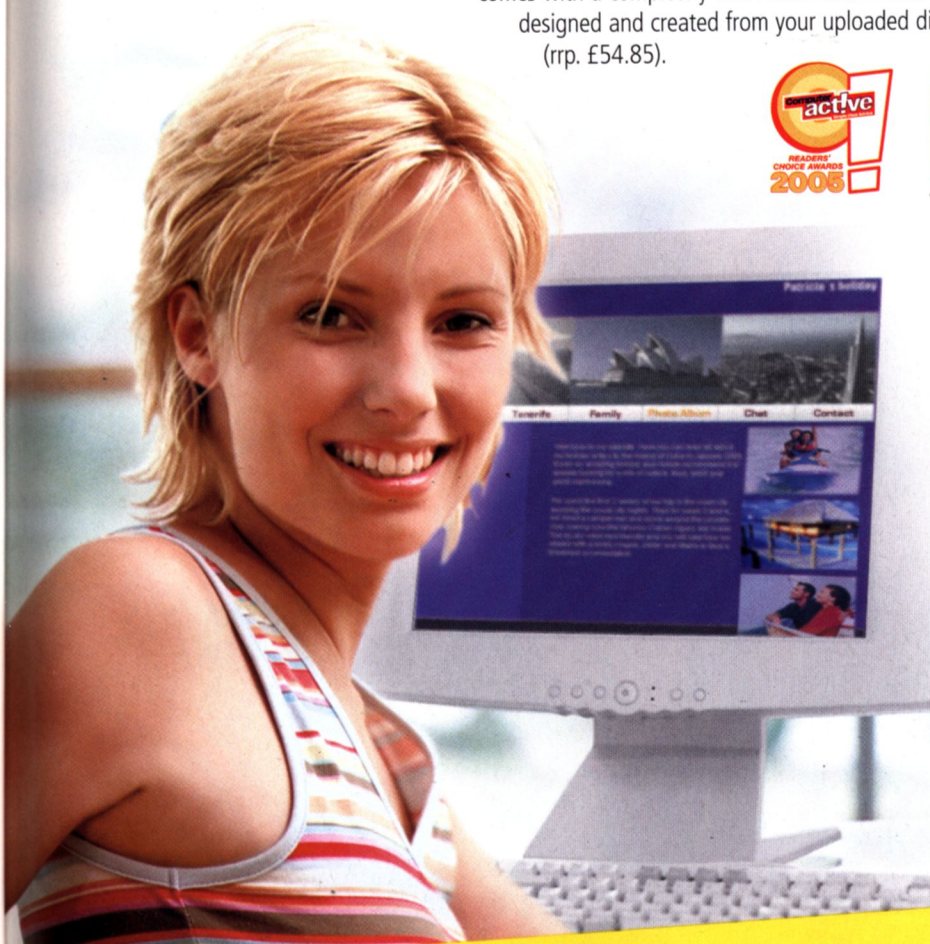


- 1 Eat humans: 10%
- 2 Steal human babies, replacing them with ugly goblin babies: 13%
- 3 Go to the pub: 12%
- 4 Insert nightmares into the ears of the sleeping: 11%
- 5 Make Viagra spam emails: 54%

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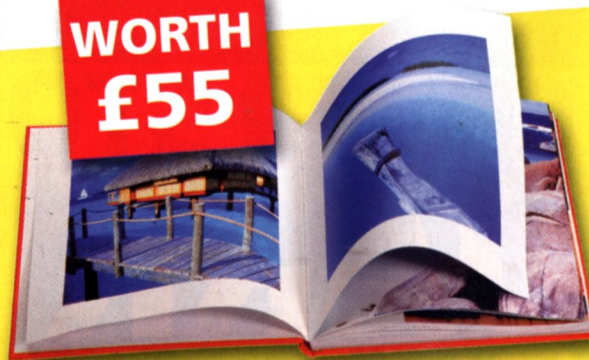
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1&1

A character is engulfed in a large, bright orange and yellow fire. The character is wearing dark, heavy clothing and is holding a sword. The background is a dark, stone-walled room with a wooden crate on the left and a wooden fence in the distance. The overall atmosphere is dark and intense.

COVER STORY

DARK MESSIAH OF MIGHT & MAGIC

Let me be your fantasy or, failing that, smite a few orcs with the action RPG of the decade...



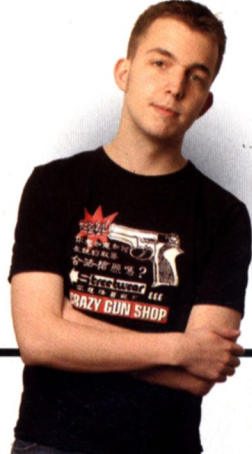
YOU'VE DECAPITATED PEOPLE in games before: you've lost count of the spinal cords you've snipped. It's nothing new. Thing is, it's never felt as good as it does in *Dark Messiah*. It's a majestic orc-battering fantasy rampage – and we've chosen it to spearhead our gigantic fantasy special because it's on course to being the first game to have ever managed to truly cram the thrill and danger of melee combat into the first-person. Fantasy is no longer the domain of dusty books and men with silly names – it's now the domain of flying chunks of bloody flesh. And men with silly names...

PAGE

50

UPFRONT

Everything that matters in the world of PC gaming



DOOR-PLAY IS IMPORTANT

DOORS ARE NOT simple furniture. Doors are useful objects, used by those wishing to vacate one room and move into the next. People have never installed fake doors simply because they look pretty – unless perhaps there was some 18th-century hinge tax that I remain unaware of. Why am I stating the obvious? Well, because door misuse in games irritates me to buggery. I'm currently playing through *SiN Episodes: Emergence* and its first ten minutes, in the sections that you're not expected to stare at boobs in, all follow the same pattern. "Oh a door. Can I go through?" Waggle. Waggle. "Nope, clearly not. This door has no purpose."

I recognise that corridor shooters by necessity need to have doors. Doors are what give a corridor meaning – without doors they would be nowt but dowdy passages – but what's the point of a door that doesn't open? Worst offender, perhaps ever, was the Nazi-occupied chateau in *Call Of Duty*, that not only had a Travelodge's worth of locked-tight French doorways, but was also previously inhabited by a family who, on getting up in the morning, would presumably have had to walk the best part of half a mile to get to the kitchen and roast their rustic Gallic popstarts.

It just makes me so mad. But do you know what brings me joy? The photo on the right of this page was taken by one Walton Simons – a friend of Warren Spector whose name became legend as a *Deus Ex* villain. Doors seem insignificant in the face of this marvellous discovery.

Will Porter

Will Porter, deputy editor

A SPECTOR CALLS

World exclusive! Warren Spector speaks out on Junction Point, JC Denton, cartoon violence and the *System Shock* legacy!

UP UNTIL NOW, *Deus Ex* and *System Shock* creator Warren Spector has been somewhat quiet. The world knew that, having left Ion Storm, he'd set up Junction Point Studios and that a Source-powered and Steam-distributed game would be forthcoming – perhaps, as Net hype would have it, dealing with animated issues such as 'cartoon mice, cats and wabbits'. But now, accompanied here by his crazy dog Maggie, the man himself has spoken out exclusively to *PC ZONE*...



Spector with his dog, Maggie.

Q What was it that spurred you on to start up your own development studio?

A "There are all sorts of reasons to do a start-up – all of them more or less rooted in insanity! Mostly, it was the fact that I'd been working for publishers for so long and wanted to try living and dying by my own mistakes, rather than having to deal with mistakes others imposed on me. I make more than enough of my own mistakes, I assure you! Also, I'd gotten so into publisher-level stuff that I wasn't able to be as involved as I wanted to be in, oh, you know, the games... I wanted to be part of something smaller, tighter, more team- and project-focused, less business-focused. Although, I was clearly smoking something when I thought a start-up would allow me to be less business-focused! I'm still knee-deep in non-game stuff, sadly!"

Where did the name Junction Point come from?

"Back when I was running Looking Glass's Austin office and exec-producing its role-playing stuff overall, I worked with a bunch of guys

on an MMORPG called *Junction Point*. We never got funding for it (more's the pity – it'd still be pretty state-of-the-art), but I always loved the name. Frankly, I like it even better as a company name than a game name – it seems to say so many things that are cool and important. You know, a junction point is a place where a lot of different things come together and from which you can go in a lot of different directions. I like to think the games I've worked on bring together a variety of genres and, I hope, allow players to choose their own paths. So the name kind of fits."

Is getting a new game studio up and running as hard as people say? What are the main challenges you've come across?

"Oh, man, the last year and a half to two years have been a rollercoaster ride! You're constantly on the edge of running out of money. You get a deal, you lose a deal, you bite and scratch and get another deal. Then you have to build up a management and tools infrastructure from scratch, build a culture from nothing – even starting with half a dozen people, you're building a team basically from scratch. Plus, you don't have a tech base, there's no PR department to help get your messages out, no business office or

HR department or anything. It's been the most amazing ride I've been on in years. You go from the highest high to the lowest low... Every day. How cool is that?"

How did the whole Steam release come about? Why are you pursuing digital distribution rather than the more traditional route?

"I'm a big believer in online distribution being a big part of our future. Valve's the leading exponent of that idea right now, so it seemed like a pretty good fit. Plus, Gabe Newell and I have talked for years about finding a way to work together on something. The timing and technology on this was right, so it was an easy call to make – for me, anyway – I won't speak for Valve! I'm just thrilled to be able to test the waters of online distribution."

Can you tell us anything about what you're working on?

"Nope. I've gone down the hype and hyperbole road and didn't much like it! This time, we'll talk about stuff when we actually have stuff to talk about!"

Do you think gaming is in dire need of more cartoon mice, cats and wabbits?

STOP PRESS!

EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

Some of the chaps who made *Advent Rising* have banded together to create *Empire* – an Unreal engine 3-powered FPS set in a second American civil war.

BURNT RUBBER

EA have announced that *Need For Speed: Carbon* will take their yooof racer out of the ghettos every once in a while, and into deep winding canyons. Wack!

OBVIOUS PLUG

News has just come in that Warren Spector's wife Caroline is a talented novelist, and that her book *Scars* is available on Amazon. Just thought we'd mention it.

20 Splinter Cell: Double Agent

Exclusive first dabble with Sam Fisher's now extra-scintillating multiplayer jaunts!



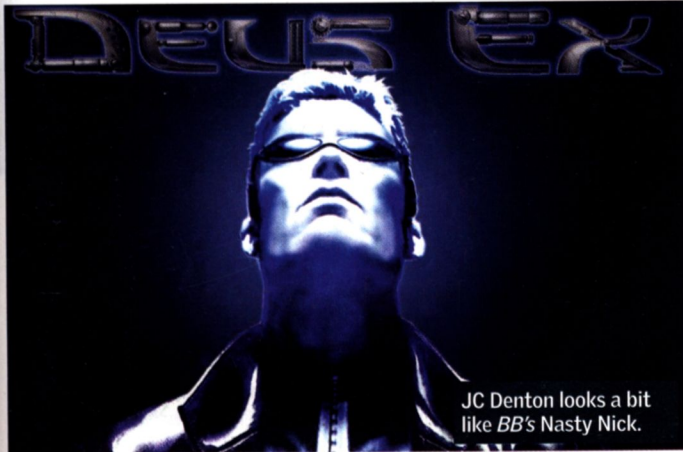
42 Warhammer Online: Age Of Reckoning

We reckon it'll be quite good. What do you reckon?



50 Dark Messiah Of Might & Magic

This issue we've refrained from using a single 'very naughty boy' gag. There's not even one.



JC Denton looks a bit like BB's Nasty Nick.



Warren can't wait to play Bioshock.

"I think *life* is in dire need of more cartoon mice, cats and wabbits. (Having said that, people should be careful not to draw conclusions about what we're working on from minimal data...) Somewhere along the line I guess I got a reputation for making serious games, but I've always been a cartoon fanatic. I wrote my Masters thesis on cartoons, worked on two paper role-playing games that recreated the cartoon experience, and have tried forever to get some publisher to back a cartoony game. Some day..."

What games are you currently excited about? What do you make of what you've seen of Bioshock?

"All I've seen of *Bioshock* is a feature in the June 2006 issue of *PC ZONE* and a bunch of post-E3 coverage. I didn't get to see it, live, at the show. Darn you, Ken Levine! After all we've been through together... What I've seen looks awesome." The art direction is especially nice, and I have a lot

of confidence that Irrational will continue making the kind of games I like to make and play. Other stuff I'm excited about? Well, damn, *Assassin's Creed* looks awesome. Definitely a must-play for me. Valve's episodic stuff is clearly going in a great direction. *Mass Effect* and *Mercenaries 2* from BioWare/Pandemic look sweet, and each in its own way is up my alley, design-wise. If I could jam those two games together into one 'you got chocolate in my peanut butter' experience it might be my ultimate game! And there's a new *Zelda* game coming for the DS - doesn't get much better than that."

With the situation currently as it is, do



you think that the *Deus Ex* universe will ever be revisited?

"I wish I knew, but you'd have to ask someone at Eidos about that. I'd love to go back there, myself. There are plenty more games to set and stories to tell in that universe. I miss the Dentons a lot... Hey, Eidos, wanna sell the IP?"



Interesting fact: Spector also produced the first game in the long-lost *Wing Commander* series.

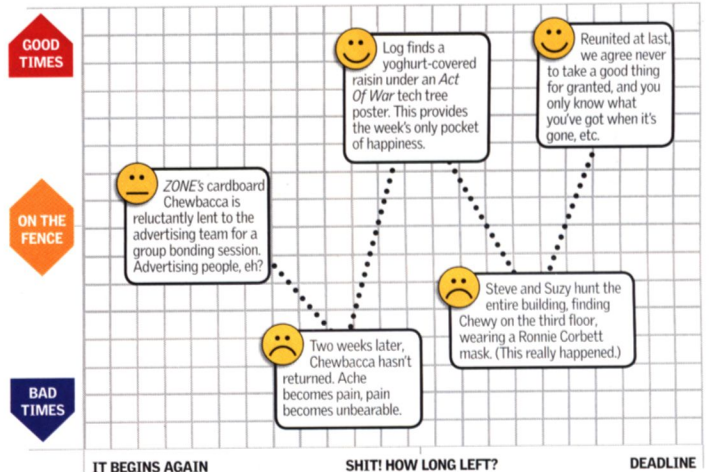


Oh *System Shock*, how we miss you...

STUFF

Ten years of *Tomb Raider*, who'd have thunk it? Great at the start, wobbly in the middle with more than a smidge of light at the end of the tunnel provided by *Legend* - but all due to be celebrated in the *Tomb Raider 10th Anniversary Edition*. Quite how Eidos and Crystal Dynamics are celebrating is as yet unrevealed - but some sort of playable retrospective of Lara's antics (and sexy body) through the years is likely.

LIFE IS A ROLLERCOASTER



TRICK OR CHEAT

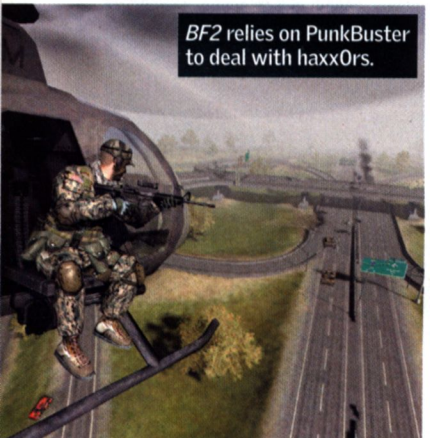
Trickery, fraud and corruption in PC gaming – who says **PC ZONE** doesn't know how to have a good time?



Sometimes online hoodlums are banned. Sometimes they're crucified.



We'll be reviewing *Roma Victor* next issue.



BF2 relies on PunkBuster to deal with haxx0rs.



Reporter
Pavel Barter

CHEATS NEVER PROSPER, although they do have all the fun. Whether you've got hoes in different area codes, scribble stuff

on your elbow before college finals or on unsuspecting pensioners out of millions via dodgy timeshare deals, all excursions from the moral path are sinful, but they can be forgiven. At least, they can be forgiven after a lengthy spell in prison or a fierce back-alley hiding.

Mind you, when it comes to cheating in PC games, miscreants might as well be branded with '666', placed in stocks and fed Pedigree Chum. Online cheaters are evil incarnate, and people like Phil DeLuca, executive producer of *America's Army*, have gone as far as drawing parallels between cheating and Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, before threatening to phone the FBI.

What's the big deal? If you create fake accounts in order to rank up on *Battlefield 2*'s global leader board, or disconnect from *Command & Conquer: Generals* at the last minute to avoid a shit score, or use a wallhack in *Counter-Strike*, it's not exactly Stock Exchange fraud. "For any player who's been

defeated by someone cheating, there's no question that this is serious," retorts Adrian Pedley, of anti-cheat honchos DMW. "E-sports has developed to a point where a player can win large amounts of cash if they're good enough. With incentives like that, it's not surprising that some players use any method of gaining an advantage."

Tony Ray of PunkBuster – protective software behind *F.E.A.R.*, *Far Cry* and *Doom 3* – continues: "Once cheating becomes widespread, a game's online community dies. Players move on out of frustration. Others stay, but start cheating because 'everybody else is doing it'. Many great online multiplayer game communities have been decimated in this way."

DIRTY SCOUNDRELS

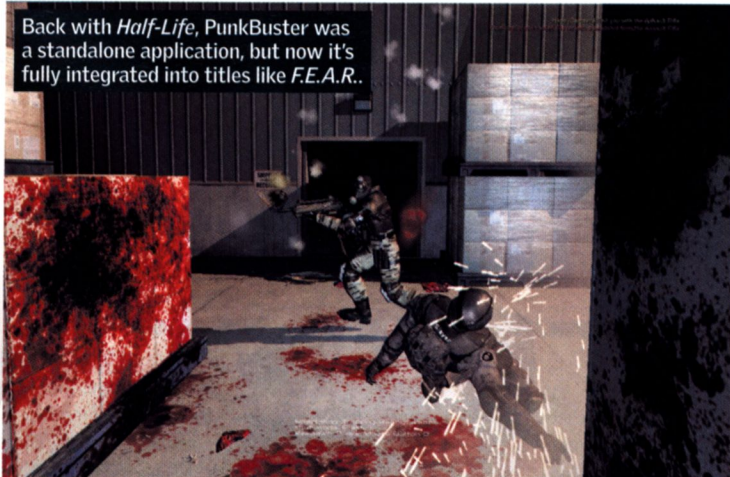
But surely cheating and games go hand-in-hand, like Ant and Dec? From developer's cheat codes to entire magazines on the subject, aren't most of us wicked at heart? Nope, argues Tony Ray: there's a line between single-player and multiplayer deception.

"For a real-world analogy, consider sports. No-one cares if you take a mulligan when playing a round of golf by yourself, but try fudging your score

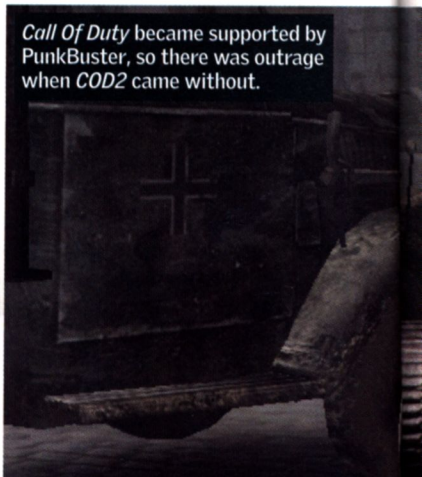
during a tournament with prizes and see what happens when you get caught."

Online players take this issue as seriously as death and taxes, so arguing is futile. Before Activision's release of *Call of Duty 2*, the game's fan community "began to compile a wishlist of additions and improvements that they would like to see included. At the top of the list was an effective multiplayer anti-cheat system," says curiously monikered faux-WWII trooper Butch Cassidy. "What transpired was that Infinity Ward got caught up in a race to release *COD2* as an Xbox 360 launch title, and the PC version didn't have anti-cheat included." Pissed off, Butch instigated a full-blown server strike, rousing the masses like Winston Churchill fighting 'em on the beaches. The online community were up in arms, mostly because cheaters in the first *COD* had behaved like the Manson family at a garden party.

Always use protection, then, although anti-cheat tech can still be a pain in the hole – like Blizzard's Warden device for *World Of Warcraft*, which detected cheats but also allegedly read quite deeply into the inner workings of your PC. Thankfully, DMW and PunkBuster have universal approval from (honest) gamers and developers alike. "The release of *Medal Of Honor: Allied*



Back with *Half-Life*, PunkBuster was a standalone application, but now it's fully integrated into titles like *F.E.A.R.*



Call Of Duty became supported by PunkBuster, so there was outrage when *COD2* came without.

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

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



Fun-loving criminals

How to piss off everyone in four easy steps...

Exploit

Manipulate bugs in maps, levels or characters. Turn invulnerable, load up on unlimited ammo, murder everyone. Bunny-hopping in *Quake* is technically an exploit but, like shop-lifting garlic, nobody really minds that.



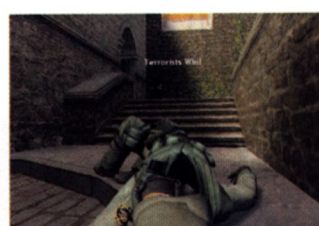
Farming

Program your bot to stock up on experience points by harvesting materials or killing loads of lame-ass enemies. Then bugger off to the pub, safe in the knowledge that you can't be trusted.



Aimbot

"These are programs that automatically aim weapons at enemies so that cheaters never or rarely miss a shot," explains Tony Ray from PunkBuster. Cock-eyed conmen, take note.



Alt-F4 scam

Coerce a rookie MMOG gamer to press Alt and F4 by claiming it does something amazing. Their subsequent exit from the game will make them hate you forever. Mwahahaha.



"Many of the cheat writers are nasty people - our staff members have been threatened, our servers attacked"

Tony Ray, PunkBuster

Assault was the main impetus for the development of DMW," says Pedley.

WHO YOU GONNA CALL?

PunkBuster, launched after a request by id Software, "is similar to a virus scanner", explains Tony Ray. "While you're playing the game, it walks through the computer's memory and looks for patterns of known cheats. Our research team is constantly watching cheat sites and chatrooms so that PunkBuster can be updated."

However, PunkBuster is also on the frontline of attack. Ray grimaces: "Many of the cheat writers are very nasty people. I guess they just don't like to lose and will do practically anything to avoid it. Our staff members are threatened, our servers are attacked and many of the advanced hacks try to disable PunkBuster's capabilities."

Like Charles Bronson in *Death Wish*, fans have formed their own powerful vigilante death squads. Counter-hack.net - laying down the law since the late 1990s - watches out for suspicious gameplay and adds Steam ID's to a master

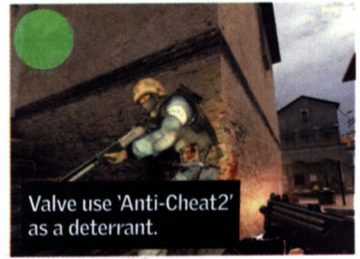
ban list. Even Butch Cassidy's server strike forced *COD2*'s developers to introduce anti-cheat tech. A Counter Hack spokesperson says that despite the strength of Valve's Anti-Cheat 2 tech, cheaters have discovered less complex and less detectable ways to be shifty. "These include altered game models, textures, sounds, manipulation of memory or code. For example, you can replace your normal map file with an altered map that includes transparent walls and entities - without the risk of detection."

KEEP IT SAFE

As MMOGs become increasingly social, so the field opens up to confidence tricksters and dodgy dealers, transforming the definition of cheating. Recently, a *WOW* funeral for the death of a real-life player was crashed by a guild who annihilated all the mourners. Bad taste trickery or dark agit-humour? You decide.

Punishment is also changing to suit the crime. In *Roma Victor*, for example, wrong-doers are crucified. Lovely. "The character Cynewulf - an electrical

engineer from Flint, Michigan - found it a painful experience," brags developer Nick Witcher. "The punished remain attached to a cross for long periods, unable to move or communicate, but they can see the world carrying on around them. For a seasoned barbarian warrior like Cynewulf, it was difficult to watch the Romans pass beneath his feet."



UNLUCKY FOR SOME

Jesus Christ! What did this sparky do to warrant being nailed to a cross? "He was waiting near a spawn point killing any and all Romans that came along," Witcher retorts. *Second Life* (see *NeverQuest*, p119) offers a less painful punishment in the form of banishment to a cornfield, where there's sod all to do beside ride a 5mph tractor.

Which leaves one final question: who are the miscreants causing all this bother? Cheat communities gather at sites such as www.mpcforum.com and www.cs-hacked.com, while the 'AC'

community hangs out at www.sharedbans.com and www.unitedadmins.com. But as Counter Hack's spokesperson points out, it's not all black and white.

"Both communities have our own agendas, but the battle line is far from drawn. The Counter Hack staff are largely comprised of ex-cheaters and cheat-coders. I myself frequent and am active in several cheat communities. As you progress up the ranks, you find that the lines blur a good deal, and the leaders of both the anti-cheat world and the cheat-world are not so far apart." Who are the cheats? They're us... **PCZ**



**COMING
SOON...**



"Oh yeah, just there... You big, butch thing."

SPLINTER CELL: DOUBLE AGENT

Steve Hogarty steals a first look at Fisher's multiplayer contingent...

DEVELOPER Ubisoft PUBLISHER Ubisoft WEBSITE splintercell.uk.ubi.com/doubleagent PREVIOUSLY IN... 169



THE LOWDOWN

- Easier to play for newbies ✓
- Two teams are perfectly balanced ✓
- Bots included this time ✓
- Killcam works fantastically ✓
- Wi-fi hacking deepens gameplay ✓
- Spies look really freaky ✗

**ETA
Q4**



WHAT A GREAT day. Besides waking up at 4am just to get there, my trip to Annecy in the foothills of the French Alps was a happy time. The reason is printed lovingly across the page just a few inches away: *Splinter Cell: Double Agent's* multiplayer mode. Having been developed from the ground up in a heavily modified Unreal 2 engine by an entirely different team, it's essentially a separate game from the single-player component.

The premise, if you're not familiar with the multiplayer modes of *Pandora Tomorrow* and *Chaos Theory*, is one of spies versus mercenaries. Three spies must hack three security terminals, controlling from a standard *Splinter Cell* third-person viewpoint and using many of the main game's acrobatic tricks. Three mercs must prevent the spies from doing this, from a first-person viewpoint, using a gun and a flashlight. Sound familiar? Well it should, because it's based on the much-played ancient Egyptian sport of hide-and-seek, albeit on a far more deadly and technological level.

This time around, the team are intent on making it more accessible to newcomers, offering visual instructions as to where you can go and what you can do

as a spy for the first hour of play. Gone are the confusing and almost unworkable server interfaces, and arriving on the console train is an Xbox Live-style interface with optimatch and buddy list options.

I SPY

Other changes intensify the experience hugely, such as the spy's new-found ability to hack from a distance. Consider this situation I found myself in, sitting in complete darkness on some rafters, metres above a terminal I was hacking. The hacked terminal alerts a merc, who enters the room – his *Aliens*-style proximity detector blipping away, letting him know I'm within ten metres of him.

I watch, he's standing next to the terminal and looking in every direction, shining his torch, searching for me – all I need is another ten seconds and I'm done. In previous games, I'd have to stand right next to the terminal as I hacked, and he would have found and killed me by now. Instead though, we're playing a game of cat and mouse; an online test of faith.

Around about that point the merc stares straight at me, and for a moment I'm unsure if I've been spotted. Just like when you can't tell if the old man with sunglasses on the bus is staring at your

croch, your flee or flee-harder instinct kicks in. As a spy, your only defence is hiding in the shadows or running away. In this situation, the merc shot me right between the goggle-eyes, the game's newly developed killcam explaining why it happened – my electromagnetic hacking tools had shown up on his appropriate visor. Clever, clever, clever.

At the end of the day, Martin Korda and I won wine and cheese for being the best spies there. Korda later called to explain it was meat, and not cheese. He sounded happy. I was too. The multiplayer side of *Double Agent* will be the cheese (or meat) to the single-player's wine, and it shall make a glorious feast. **PC7**

WHY YOU SHOULD BE EXCITED...

YOU ARE HERE
This map tells you where your team-mates are, along with the terminals and when they're being attacked. It's map-alicious.

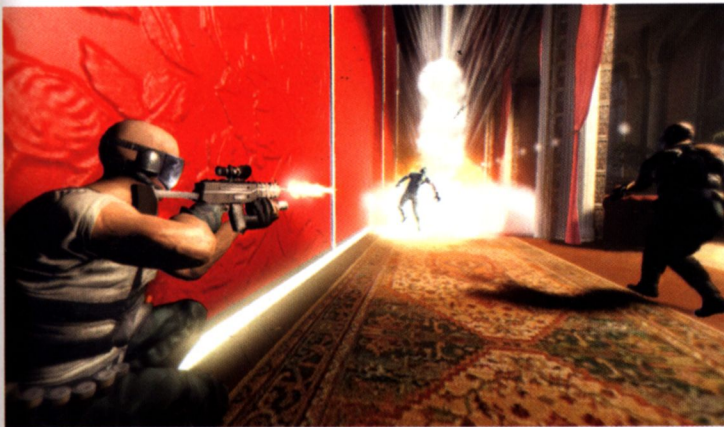
INFO IS AMMO
The three spies must download data from the terminals and bring it back to base. They don't have to download it all in one go though - these bars show how much they've got.

HAVE HIM
Once a spy has a file downloaded, it's a gauntlet run back to base. As a merc, you have to try to catch out the spy. Ready?

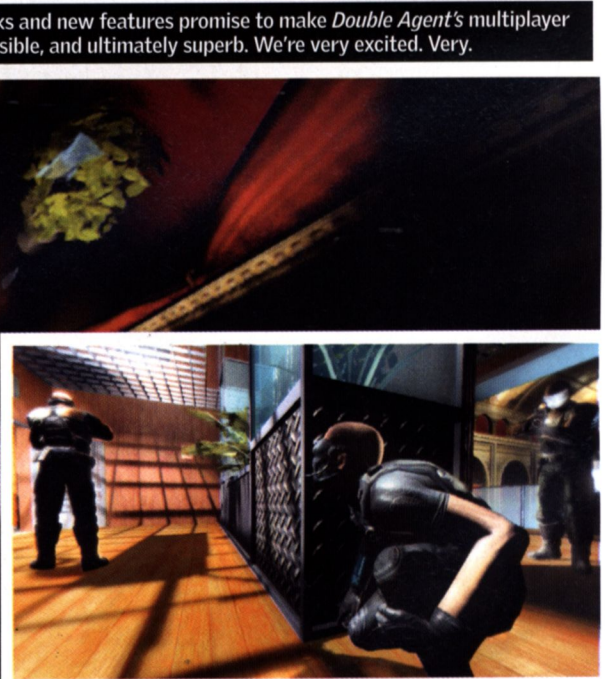
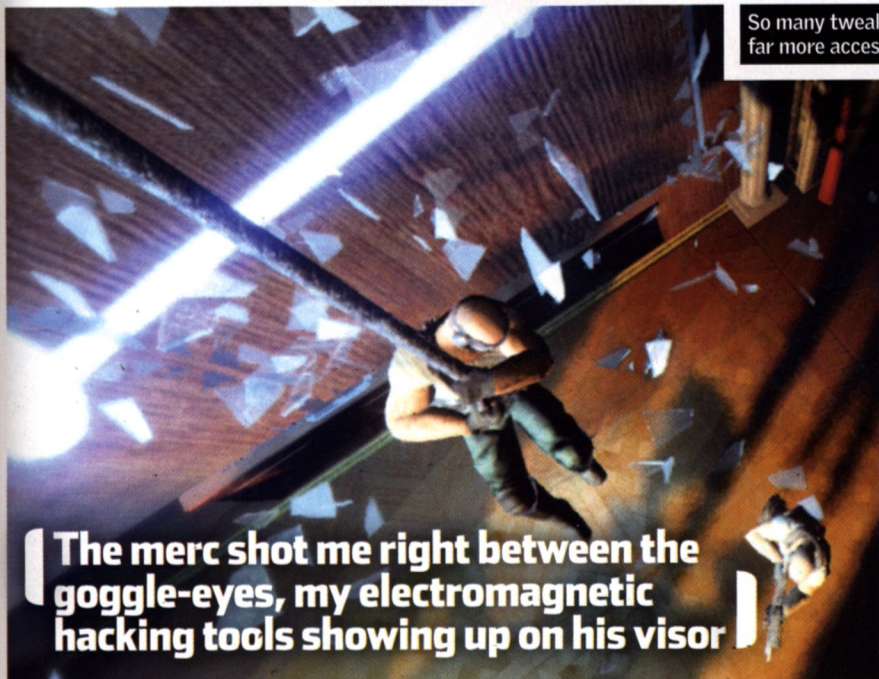
OUT OF THE WALLS
This is the merc's proximity detector - spies within ten metres cause it to blip. Yes, they ripped it off *Aliens*, but it's worth it.

OUTLINE IT
Mercs have motion detectors which outline spies who move too quickly: if this guy had stuck to the shadows and moved slowly, he'd have the advantage. As it is, he's doomed.

A-lane has stolen a file ! Stop him !



So many tweaks and new features promise to make *Double Agent's* multiplayer far more accessible, and ultimately superb. We're very excited. Very.



The merc shot me right between the goggle-eyes, my electromagnetic hacking tools showing up on his visor



THE PROFESSIONALS

Uncovering the lies and slander perpetuated by PC gaming

WHAT WITH WILL'S dad having been catapulted to fame in issue 164, casting his farmer's eye over the animals in games, Log decided it was time to get his dad involved. Having spent over 30 years in the pub trade, including building and running two of the most highly regarded freehouses in Nottingham,

Mr Blyth Snr (pictured above with his wife Judith in 1976) seemed perfectly equipped to pass judgment on the state of licensed premises in games. Would the pub in *Duke Nukem 3D* pass a Health and Safety inspection? What kind of crazy establishment serves oranges with beer? Over to Jeff...

THIS MONTH: PUBLIC HOUSES

Expert: Jeffrey Blyth
Job: Pub landlord
Expert pedantry: Pubs and bars in PC gaming



OBLIVION

"I've seen a few pubs like this. Couple of old farts at the bar and a funny bloke sitting on his own. But what are they sat on at the bar? No-one would sit on low stools like that at the bar. They look like

schoolkids in the dinner queue. As for oranges on the table, you wouldn't get that. Oranges would stop people being thirsty - you want nuts and crisps, get them drinking. Do those stairs go to the toilets? (It's explained that it's a private area.) There aren't any toilets? You'd never get a licence. They'd be passing everywhere."

PCZONE



Snacks too uncynical



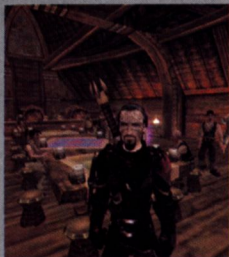
MAX PAYNE

"Well, this place isn't finished, so it's a bit unfair to comment. When I did up an old bank, the place looked shocking to begin with - I got about four skips full of rubble before I could even start building the bar. I'd have said the TV's pointing in the wrong direction - it's not meant to be for the benefit of the bar staff. Quite nice stools, although the thing with four-legged stools is they can wobble if the floor's not level. Three-legged stools never wobble."

PCZONE



Shame about the stools



FABLE

"That's a nice big space - plenty of standing and sitting room. With that high ceiling, it'd be a bastard to heat, but it'd be a shame to cover it up, as it's a good feature. I'd put a balcony around there. He's a funny-looking sod, that bloke in the front, but it's nice to have a mix of people in, as long as they're not trouble. I like the nice low lighting, too - much cheaper with the electric. These days, it'd be a Walkabout with a massive TV screen behind the bar."

PCZONE



Nice mix of clientele



PREY

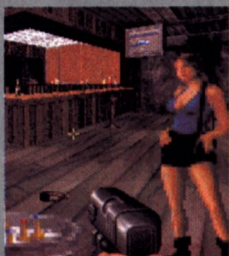
"There's plenty of space behind the bar, there. Too much, really. No-one needs that much space for pulling pints. With a 150-capacity bar you're never going to need much more than three or

four bar staff on, and you could fit a football team behind there. That said, it's a pretty good pub, this. It's even got a sink, and they look like dishwashers, so that's a nice touch. None of the others had those. The drinks specials are a bit cheap, though. If I tried selling drinks for under £1, I'd get a visit from the licensing police for encouraging irresponsible drinking. But on the whole, this is a pretty good bar. Not enough seating in it, though."

PCZONE



Barmaid is pretty too



DUKE NUKEM 3D

"There's no-one behind the bar, for starters. Is that the barmaid? (It's explained that she's a hooker.) It's against the terms of your licence to serve prostitutes if they're on duty. And even if you haven't served her, you hardly want her there, taking your customers away. You get a reputation; there's a pub around here used to have topless barmaids - some people still call it Titarama. I quite like the bar layout and lighting, but the rest of the bar is just dingy. There's not enough fire exits, and that bottle on the floor needs picking up. You don't want to get sued for someone catching fire or tripping over a bottle."

PCZONE



Potential deathtrap

WINNER: Prey

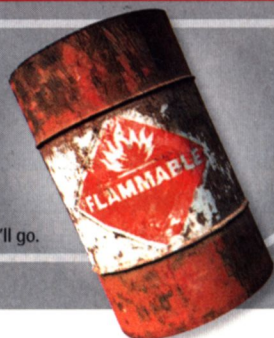
Human Head have got that run-down-but-functional design down to a tee. Toilets, fire escapes and a well-placed TV. Not many seats, though.

ARE YOU A PROFESSIONAL?

PC ZONE is in search of readers with professional knowledge or anally-retentive knowledge in the following fields, and many more:

- *Spacial Anomalies
- *Portable Light Sources
- *Crates
- *Locksmithery
- *Burglary
- *Psychological Manias

If you want to cast your eye over these or any other PC gaming areas, then email us at TheProfessionals@pczone.co.uk and stick your oar in as far as it'll go.



SPACE, TRADING, PIRATES, FIGHTING

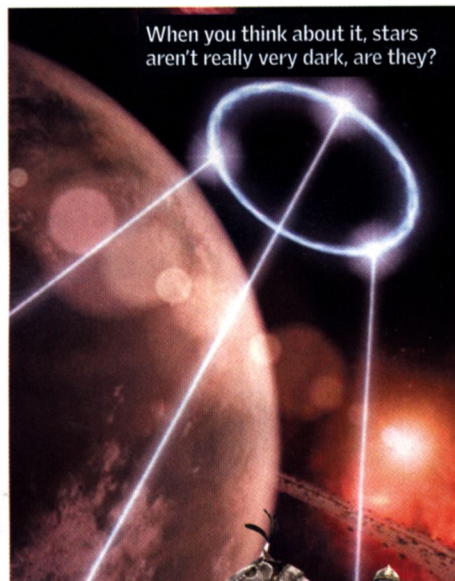
Darkstar One hyper-jumps into familiar territory

darkstarone.ascaron.com | ETA: August

THE BEST THING about playing games without translated dialogue is the English words that occasionally grab your attention, through the difficult syllable sludge. For example, we now know that we can go to Germany and demand an "upgrade" or a "training mission", and the garage attendant will understand exactly what we mean. Who knows what crazy adventures we'll have?

Darkstar One is a space-lasers game very much in the ilk of *X3* and its siblings, with space combat handling similarly and trading taking a role in the forefront. It all seems well accomplished, to the point of having an opening sequence that didn't make us cringe, and we're hoping that Ascaron will pull something new out of the bag to dazzle our gigantic faces.

There's only one way to find out. Wait for our forthcoming review, forthcoming soon.



When you think about it, stars aren't really very dark, are they?

CAMPAIGN FOR CHANGE

First shots of Medieval 2: Total War's campaign map raise arms

www.totalwar.com | ETA: Q4

ANY TOTAL WAR veteran will tell you that battles aren't necessarily won in the beautiful clash of armies, but instead on the campaign map – the latest rendition of which can be seen here.

Taking you from 1080 all the way through to 1580, with the potential for

dalliance in the Americas, the *Medieval 2* map has six levels of settlement, featuring tiny collections of hovels, teeming cities, cold stone keeps and wooden forts. Through this map you'll deal with coquettish princesses, papal-pleasing priests, greedy merchants, assassins, mercenaries and all-out religious war. If you're not excited by the prospect of riding a steel-plated horse into a crowd of bishops, then there's something fundamentally wrong with you.



Dear Jon 'Log' Blyth,

If I had a time machine, I would go back to 1678 or whatever and visit JRR Tolkien during his university years. I'd take him out of his darkened dorm room, away from his nonsensical scribbles and introduce him to sex, parties and illicit substances. Maybe then the world of PC gaming wouldn't be plagued with goblins and fairies – it's so nerdy it makes me cringe. Tolkien needs to get dem bizzays all up in his hizzay. Steve Hogarty

Dear Steve,

And if I had a time machine, I'd go back in time to just before your time machine arrived, and pelt you with frisbees. It's all very well knocking fantasy as nerdist escapism, but if we didn't have an epic fantasy environment to host wars, what would there be instead? More WWII games? Another space-guns game? Perhaps a game with a foam Jessica Fletcher suit, that you climb into and stare at a footprint? Would you wipe out sci-fi too? Where would this end?

Log

Dear Jon,

I would build two time machines, one arriving ten minutes before the other with a robot who makes sure you're not there. Then once I'd rid the world of goblins, I would revel in the font of originality that would ensue. I don't think we'd be overrun by other clichéd genres; I think that fresh, new saplings of genius would sprout, much like ferns in the glade of a fallen oak. Tolkien strangles innovation.

SH

Dear Steve,

'Ferns in the glade of a fallen oak?' Watch out, Steve, you've gone all fantasy. As for stifling originality? Piffle! The idea that some frustrated genius is thinking, "I was going to invent a wonderful universe, but then I thought of a goblin," is absurd. Fantasy is a well-established genre built on popular folklore within which several excellent and original universes exist. *Warcraft*, *Warhammer*, even Middle-Earth, they're all hugely different, and if you're goblin-blind to that, then it's your loss. You dong.

JB

Dear Jon

Those Games Workshop boys have got to you, haven't they? What did you let them do to you? Next you'll be wearing shirts with dragons on them.

SH

Dear Steve

If you're implying I've succumbed to some magnificent and glorious cult, then I shall have you extinguished, you marauding flap.

JB



Armed Assault's quiet towns are in danger of communistification. Time for violence.



"Quick, a camera - look heroic!"

ARMED AND DANGEROUS...

ARMED ASSAULT

Martin Korda gets his arse in the grass in an attempt to hold back the red tide

DEVELOPER Bohemia Interactive PUBLISHER Idea Games WEBSITE www.armedassault.com PREVIOUSLY IN... N/A

THE LOWDOWN

- Even more epic and realistic than *Operation Flashpoint* ✓
- Scores of land, air and sea vehicles to pilot and drive ✓
- Dynamic campaign influenced by your decisions ✓
- Co-op single-player campaign and massive multiplayer battles ✓
- Graphically, it's looking a bit weak ✗

THOSE PESKY PINKS are at it once more. Having sent the Ruskiies packing after they'd carpet-bombed a set of fictional islands with communist manifestos in *Operation Flashpoint*, the boys of the US forces are once again called upon to hold back the red tide in *Armed Assault*, a squad-based shooter which is already appearing so realistic, it'll have you picking shrapnel out of your backside.

Once again, the action takes place on a collection of neutral islands threatened by a communist invader. Stationed there to help train the locals, you're suddenly thrown into an unexpected conflict as enemy forces invade. "To begin with you'll just have a few soldiers and tanks, but as you move through the game you'll get reinforcements," explains Jiri Rydl, from the game's publisher Idea Games, acting as mouthpiece for Bohemia Interactive. "Early missions will be very defensive. After this, you'll move north in an attempt to push the enemy army back."

Although the similarities to *Operation Flashpoint* are striking, *Armed Assault* is looking like it could be an even more epic and realistic experience than its illustrious predecessor.

RURAL SPRAWL

For starters, each island will be considerably larger than before and will team with forests, mountains, fields and hills, each replete with its very own tactical advantages. "You can either walk through a forest and use it as cover or bulldoze through it in a tank," explains Rydl, as he leads a squad of troops through densely packed trees and shrubs.

As he and his men stalk through the foliage, the dynamic weather engine kicks in. The sunlight wanes and flecks of rain begin snaking through the forest canopy. "If you play for hours, it'll even get dark," he beams. But while the effects themselves are a welcome addition,

it's hard to ignore the fact that the game's engine is starting to show its age, despite a myriad of updates.

With visuals taking a back seat, Bohemia Interactive's primary motivation appears to be utter realism and epic scope - and they seem to be succeeding on both fronts.

The game's arsenal of vehicles is staggering, with land, air and sea all admirably represented. "You can drive any vehicles, including civilian ones," says Rydl. "You can also pilot and drive Hummers, armoured vehicles, tanks, boats, jet fighters and choppers. You can even drive enemy vehicles if you can capture them."

ARMOUR ASSAULT

Bohemia are also keen to ensure the single-player campaign is as dynamic as the in-mission gameplay. By dividing the campaign into key and side missions, you'll be able to play an integral role in shaping the direction of the war.



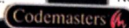
THE STORY SO FAR...
BOHEMIA INTERACTIVE

BOHEMIA INTERACTIVE STUDIO

STATUS QUO
Work begins on *Flashpoint 1985: Status Quo*, later renamed *Op Flash: Cold War Crisis*.



MASTERS OF CODE
With early demos of *Operation Flashpoint* impressing, Codemasters signs up the game.



RELEASE
Op Flash is released to massive critical acclaim and sells loads, hitting No.1 around the world.



YOU CAN'T RESIST
Op Flashpoint: Resistance is released, hugely improving the game's multiplayer.



1999

2000

2001

2002



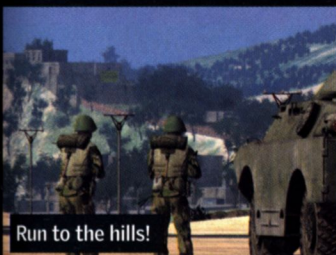
Do the manly shuffle.



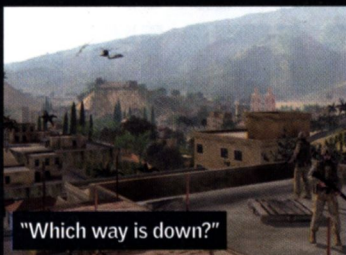
Cheer up love, it might never happen.



Despite the engine's revamp, it's still lagging well behind the big boys.



Run to the hills!



"Which way is down?"

With countless AI tweaks, *Armed Assault's* single-player campaign is looking like one über-realistic hombre

"There'll be around 20 missions, about 12 of which will be key missions. Then there'll be smaller, optional ones," explains Rydl. "These will be ten to 30-minute levels that could involve destroying a convoy of enemy tanks. If you succeed in these side missions, it'll help you in the main story-driven missions."

With countless AI tweaks being added daily to ensure that your troops respond both quickly and intelligently to your orders (issued via a menu system akin to *Operation Flashpoint's*), *Armed Assault's* single-player campaign is looking like one über-realistic hombre.

ALL FOR ONE

But wait, there's more, because Bohemia isn't shirking its multiplayer responsibilities either, with co-op and massive multiplayer battles set to further bolster the game's already gargantuan scale. "There's no real

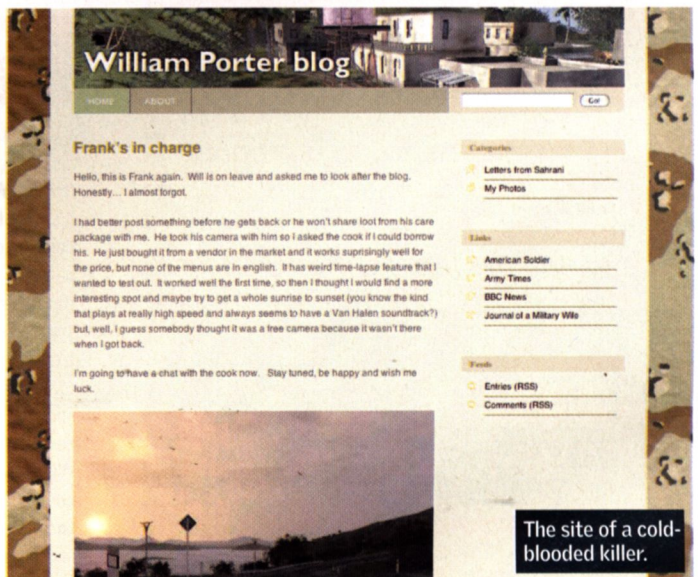
limit for how many people can take part in multiplayer games," boasts Rydl. "It all depends on the server. You can have 80 players and if one person drops out, their place is instantly taken by a computer-controlled player."

Throw in a Capture The Island mode – where all of an island's cities must be captured and held for a team to win, a task that could literally take days – and you're left with one package that could be more mouthwatering than reconstituted food rations after a hard day's yomp.

I won't lie to you: *Armed Assault* won't blow you away in the graphics department, but when it comes to realism and freeform gameplay, it could just blast you out of your seat if it delivers on its potential. And when you've got a commie commander in your sights as a column of enemy tanks advances towards your position, that's all that's really going to matter. **PCZ**

The other side of Will

Our deputy editor's dark secret revealed!



The site of a cold-blooded killer.

To many, he's known as the mild-mannered deputy editor of *PC ZONE*. But according to Bohemia Interactive, it wasn't always so, because it seems our very own Will Porter has carried a dark and sinister secret for many years now, one that has finally been revealed to the world.

You see, a blog has appeared on the internet that to all intents and purposes seems to have stolen Will's name. It is a nice name after all. But unfortunately, in reality it's all true. After the Cold War, you see, Will was stationed on a little known island called Sahrani. During his brief spell there, he kept a detailed journal, one that Bohemia Interactive are now publishing on the Internet at www.armedassault.com/william/.

After a communist attack on Sahrani left him in a coma that miraculously halted the ageing process, Will awoke 20 years later to find a world dominated not by communism, but by videogames. Suffering from amnesia and now 44 years old, Will was still driven by an inexplicable urge to kill and found solace in first-person shooters, which eventually led him to apply for a job at *PC ZONE*. However, simmering under that calm exterior is the cold heart of a trained killer, waiting to be unleashed. So just be warned, don't ever make Will angry. You wouldn't like him when he's angry, because you'd probably be dead.

PCZONE CHARTS



- 1 **NEW** HALF-LIFE 2: EPISODE ONE
Issue 170 91%
- 2 **NEW** RISE & FALL: CIVILIZATIONS AT WAR
Issue 170 80%
- 3 ↑ FOOTBALL MANAGER 2006
Issue 162 90%
- 4 ↓ CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 2006
Issue 167 69%
- 5 ↓ THE SIMS 2: OPEN FOR BUSINESS
Issue 166 72%
- 6 ↑ WORLD OF WARCRAFT
Issue 152 95%
- 7 ↓ THE SIMS 2
Issue 147 82%
- 8 **NEW** HITMAN: BLOOD MONEY
Issue 170 84%
- 9 **NEW** THE MOVIES: STUNTS & EFFECTS
Issue 170 84%
- 10 **NEW** RISE OF NATIONS: RISE OF LEGENDS
Issue 168 91%
- 11 ↓ GUILD WARS: FACTIONS
Issue 169 78%
- 12 ↓ THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION
Issue 168 95%
- 13 ↓ AGE OF EMPIRES III
Issue 162 84%
- 14 — GUILD WARS
Issue 156 94%
- 15 **NEW** INTERNATIONAL CRICKET CAPTAIN 2006
Issue 165 68%
- 16 ↓ 2006 FIFA WORLD CUP
Issue 169 78%
- 17 **NEW** SENSIBLE SOCCER 2006
Issue 170 79%
- 18 ↓ LOTR: THE BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH II
Issue 167 71%
- 19 ↓ BATTLEFIELD 2
Issue 157 94%
- 20 — MS FLIGHT SIM 2004: A CENTURY OF FLIGHT
Issue 133 89%



1 HALF-LIFE 2: EPISODE ONE

Oh, Alyx, Alyx, Alyx, Alyx, Alyx? ALYX! Oh, it's just a picture. She can't hear me. Why do I always chase the unobtainable ones?



9 THE MOVIES: STUNTS AND EFFECTS

The whole gamut of stunts, from slapping a cobbler to blowing up a cobbler's house. Pesky cobblers.



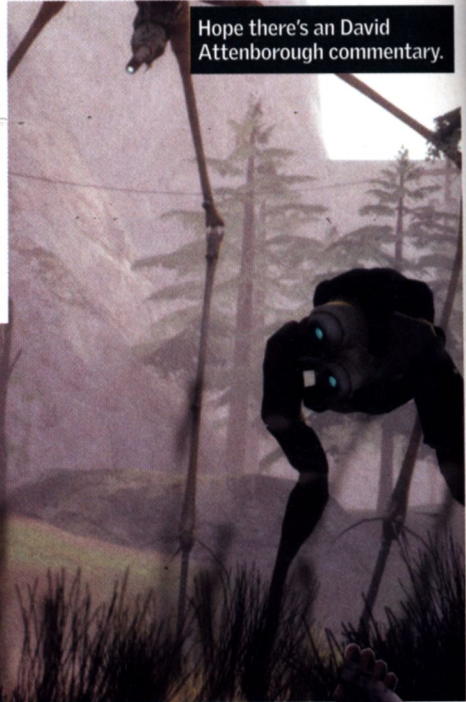
17 SENSIBLE SOCCER 2006

Such big heads, such tiny, brittle necks. It's a wonder their little spines don't crinkle. Jon Hare is a footballing Frankenstein.



20 MS FLIGHT SIM 2004

Mildly surprising re-entry for Microsoft's excellent *Flight Simulation*. Perhaps we should care more about dull games.



NOT JUST SEVENTEEN

So much for the city - it's *Half-Life 2: Episode Two*



www.half-life2.com | ETA: Q4

OH, HALF LIFE! With your blowy-uppy endings, it's tempting to think that Valve introduced episodic delivery as an excuse to hurl climactic bangs at us twice a year. *Episode One* ended with the siziest explosion yet, with psychic blasts, sheared metal screaming past willy-nilly and a troubling fade to white.

We know it's good storytelling style to hold information back, but we're very impatient. What's next? What's with the Vortigaunts and G-Man? Will you and Alyx get in trouble for fare-dodging on the City 17 express? Well, here's what we know. Wave goodbye to the East European neoclassicism of City 17, turn around and wink a cheery what-ho to the forests and landscapes of, well, the East European countryside. Estonia was a particular reference point, with real-life mines and missile silos being incorporated in the design. *Half-Life 2* wasn't without variety, but this is a whole new terrain.

Episode Two looks set to recreate the kind of expansive feel of the Highway 17 level in *HL2*, but with the organisation of human forces, it'll feel more like a battleground than the lonely clifftops of Highway 17's coastal path. Valve claims you'll cover as much physical distance in *Episode Two* as in the entirety of *HL2*, even with the reduced episodic play-time of six hours-ish. There's a brand new

vehicle - though it was built by a couple of old men and it looks like something out of *Mad Max* - and you can also look forward to a new weapon, designed to bring down the leggy tripod sods that speared you in the Follow Freeman chapter. Strider Busters (working name) are sticky mines that - once attached to a Strider - will drain their energy, making them easier to destroy with other weapons.

But Valve gives with one hand, and takes away with the other. They're also wheeling in a new enemy, the Hunter. Beefier-looking mini-striders that walk in formation with their big brothers, and wipe out your Strider Busters, Hunters stand at around 8ft tall. Valve are bigging up the emotional expression of the Hunters - which don't really have faces, as much as cameras. These emotions - presumably include 'ouch', 'anger' and 'where'd he go?', but if Valve can make us care about a robotic dog with a steel daisy for a head, we'll give them the benefit of the doubt for now.

Strategy and puzzles are also at the forefront, with more and larger physics puzzles, and less rigidly linear routes to a goal. So, *Episode Two*. A new environment, bigger, more strategic and puzzly with new things to sling breeze blocks at. And can we expect a bunch of trees to blow up at the end? We should damn well hope so.

CRUISING FOR A BRUISING

Women, children and *Jon Blyth* first as he dabbles with murder on *The Ship*

www.theshiponline.com | ETA: July

I LOVE PG WODEHOUSE books. I haven't read any – I just love the idea of an idyllic, fantasy version of those-a-times, where no problem couldn't be solved by a trusted butler and tyrannical aunts ran amok in country manors. Where an innocent-looking candlestick might be used to bludgeon a pretty maid's brains out...

The Ship, out on Steam at the close of July and in shops come September, looks straight out of this era, set on lovely cruise ships with art deco trims that make you want to swish your hands around like ten demented Flapper girls. But the concept isn't so idyllic; there are other people playing as guests on the cruise. You have to kill one of them, and one of them has to kill you. Killing anyone else – well, go ahead, but you won't get any money for it. And he might have been trying to murder your murderer.

The Source-powered game's rationale behind this – that Mr X has put you on the boat, and will kill your family if you don't do as you're told – is as brittle as my nan's shins, but fortunately it's nothing more than an awkward cover for a great game concept. Also, it's a perfect reference to Agatha Christie's 'Murder On A Form Of Transport' books.

So how do you kill your quarry? First, you have to find out who they are. You find out other passengers' names by getting close enough to click on them. But if it's not your victim, it might be your murderer. You'll find out, if they whip out a saucepan and iron your name-checking face with it. Preventing immediate and easy carnage, there's CCTV and security guards on board, all of which

lead to seconds of imprisonment and a fine if you're caught trespassing in the private areas, running around with a cast-iron saucepan, or – of course – stabbing someone in the face.

Finding a weapon yourself isn't as simple as it seems, either. Some, like the axe, are obvious and lying around. The cooking pot is, unstartingly, in the kitchen. They'll all do the job, be it by bludgeon, poke or slash. But there's a 'Money For Kill' chart, rewarding successful kills with lesser-used weapons, so it pays to look around for the more obscure weapons – while keeping an eye on everyone around you, of course.

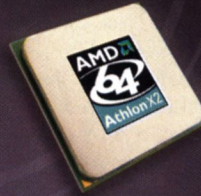
Your character's 'needs' prevent a tedious camping approach to the game. You need to eat, wash and have a slash, but also shower, dance and talk to people. In short, if you don't dance, you die, and dying costs \$1,000. As we've established, it's not terribly realistic. It's fun. My favourite moment – apart from a crazed moment of glory when I managed to take out my murderer and my victim with a letter-opener – was getting imprisoned for 22 seconds for pissing in a bedpan. Thought that was a bit harsh.

The boxed version will have a single-player mode and two extra maps over the Steam release's six – cosy up alongside current classics such as eight-player maps like *Atalanta*, to much larger 32-player maps like *Cyclops*. Whether this unique multiplayer FPS will provide lasting appeal has yet to be seen, but we loved the old *Half-Life* mod and we've yet to hear more realistic toilet plops in a game, so it gets our vote.



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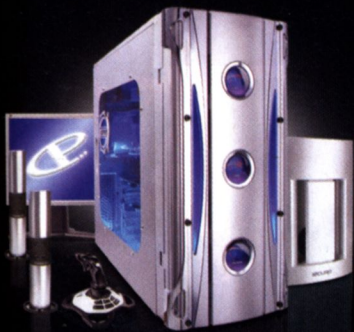
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THE MAN WHO KNOWS

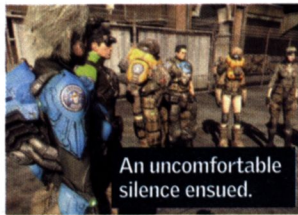
The **noxious taint** of videogaming has once more infiltrated the courtrooms of the **United States**. This time, however, it wasn't **Grand Theft Auto** pleading for clemency in the dock, nor was it **Pac-Man** filling the courtroom with shuddering sobs after a **drug-fuelled gobbling spree** among the undead. No, this time videogaming was in the vile clutches of she who clutches the gavel: **Manhattan Federal Court Judge Shira Scheindlin**. Or, at least, so it has been claimed by Curtis Silwa – famed **US radio host** and creator of vigilante outfit the **Guardian Angels**. Silwa, as a witness in the trial of **Mafia Don** (and close friend of the Fun Lovin' Criminals) **John 'Junior' Gotti**, has gone on record to decry Judge Scheindlin for **playing Solitaire** while he took the stand. Judge Scheindlin is **yet to refute this claim**, but it's widely thought that she will **counter the accusation** by pointing out that at least she wasn't checking her emails for the fifth time that half-hour, playing the game where the **yeti hits the penguin** or spinning around on her chair, looking at her watch and wondering what to **have for tea**.

In other news, gurning spitwad of negligible talent **Uwe Boll**, director of such acclaimed film titles as **Alone In The Dark** and **BloodRayne**, has challenged his detractors to a bout of fisticuffs. Destined to be a part of cinematic history as a scene in his yet-to-be-filmed **Postal** epic (based on the trousers-down, piss everywhere, behead-athon game series), Boll has invited five of his **most outspoken critics** outside for a **kicking**. "Each critic will have the opportunity to bring down Uwe in a **10-bout match**," state Boll's elite team of press-evaders. "Certain scenes from these boxing matches will become part of the **Postal** movie. All five fights will be **televised on the Internet** and will be covered by the **international press**." Despite its constant battery of Boll and his many works, a representative of famed gaming almanac **PC ZONE** will not be attending the **duff-up**. What's more, if he calls them '**chicken**', then at that point they shall tell on him to a teacher and get him in **big trouble**.

"Gurning spitwad of negligible talent Uwe Boll has challenged his critics to a bout of fisticuffs"



The Phantom class are sniper specialists.



An uncomfortable silence ensued.



Webzen favours fast-paced battlezones rather than a vast, open *PlanetSide* approach.



360 and PC players together at last. A brave new world of togetherness?



HUX OF THE MATTER

Huxley's unique take on multiplayer tomfoolery continues to impress

www.webzengames.com | ETA: 2007

"EXPERIENCE IS NOT what happens to a man; it's what a man does with what happens to him." So penned Aldous Leonard Huxley in his 1932 essay collection *Text And Pretext*. For all his intellect, he clearly didn't realise that one day he would have his very own MMOFPS – a game that would see 'experience' happen to a vast number of online men and big-boobed ladies points-wise, while happening to let them use lots of big guns and shoot each other dead.

Apart from dead author grave-turning though, *Huxley* is looking a mighty fine proposition. Two persistent online cities packed with PC bods and 360 scum (with separate fighting arenas if you were wondering, surrounded by battlefield upon battlefield of twitch deathmatch violence. Say you're in the city of Nostalomia – in one part of this you'll find a residential

area that has room for 5,000 players to bunk and store equipment in. Elsewhere, you'll find marketplaces where you'll be able to barter between yourself and your brethren. In other places still, you'll find opportunities to join the fray beyond your city's walls.

The two primary factions in *Huxley* are the Sapiens and the somewhat radiation-added Alternatives – and they meet in battlezones of up to 200 players and fight to the death, with a sprinkling of objectives that'll add tactics to the melee. Class-wise, meanwhile, your race will be split between Enforcers, Avengers and Phantoms – which can be roughly translated from 'cool speak' as being close-range shootists, medium-range shootists and sneaky sniper shootists. Can it replace that nagging longing for days of *PlanetSide* yore? Well, it's pretty enough, plus it's an interesting way of delivering *UT*-style action to the masses. So why the hell not?

IN THE SPOTLIGHT:



The man who put the questing into Oblivion

BRUCE NESMITH - SENIOR DESIGNER ON THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION

Last month, we ran a humongous feature on the wonders of *The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion*, but the gnashing teeth of vicious sub-editors scissor-bit many of the beautiful words of Bruce Nesmith, a senior designer on the game, and spat them into this issue instead. Marvel then, at the inner workings of Bethesda...

So how do you go about creating miscellaneous quests for *Oblivion* and its inevitable expansions?

"We have a staff of designers and they all submit a collection of ideas. They're all then thrown together and reviewed - depending on the project they're sometimes reviewed by committee, sometimes by the entire group. In the case of *Oblivion*, it was the entire group and we picked the ones we thought would be the best ideas to implement. Then those ideas get handed out to the various designers to implement and they start creating them. It's very much a group process and we try to involve everybody - it's a chance for the whole team to be creative. One of the great things about the miscellaneous quests is they go in so many different directions because they have so many different types of mind putting together the basic ideas for them."

Does everyone get a say on whether they stay in?

"Everyone gets a chance to put their opinion forward and the final decision is usually made by the lead designer or executive producer of the project. But everybody has a very strong voice; if the group by and large

really likes a particular idea, then the lead designer or executive producer will realise that they're probably wrong if they don't and that they should keep that idea."

How do the guild quests work then?

"Guild quests are a little bit different; they're usually given to a particular designer to oversee the entire quest storyline. That designer then puts forward an idea or over-arching story that he or she would like to implement. That's then put forward to the group, then the group looks at it and makes comments. Frequently in the early stages, the decision process can be very brutal; ideas can undergo dramatic metamorphoses. The group finds big flaws, little flaws, comes up with extra ideas to put in, but it's much more in the hands of the individual who's going to be managing that quest line from birth to death. So the group has an awful lot of input, but the original idea comes from one person."

So that one person is responsible for all those quests?

"Exactly. For example, I did the Thieves guild and I came into the project when it was already going, so it was already an idea on

the table. I presented a new idea and the group looked at it and made wholesale changes and told me where I was being really stupid and where I was being brilliant. Then we got past that stage and I implemented the entire quest line."

Did you write all the quest dialogue yourself?

"Yes, that's one of the principle jobs of the designers of Bethesda - we write all the quest dialogue - so the design staff wrote 100% of the dialogue in the game. In the case of the guild quests, the particular designer in charge of that guild wrote all of the dialogue."

It just boggles the mind just how much stuff is in *Oblivion* doesn't it? There's a hell of a lot there...

"Yes. We've provided the consumer a tremendous amount of content to play with; more than I think in any game in history probably. That's a bold statement, but I'd be willing to stand behind it as the content is staggering. I keep turning around and looking at something else that I'd forgotten went into the game, and I'm constantly amazed."



Sneaking's not for everyone.



So games are art then?



Goblin-things FTW.

LIVING IN A MATERIAL WORLD

Allowing good causes to swim through huge piles of money in the manner of Scrooge McDuck...

Well, the gigantic *Blue Peter*-inspired PC ZONE totaliser is flashing. This can only mean one thing: either Sefton has again become concerned about the leccy bill and is trying to rip its plug out, or the amount of cash we've accumulated for the ESC charity has become so huge that the metallic LED-ridden pole cannot contain its joy. But before we write a big fat cheque, let's dance once more in the charitable glare of eBay, under the now familiar tag of PCZoners. Bring out your tat!

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



THIS MONTH'S TAT



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Green, large, smells of sulphur.



MEDIEVAL 2: TOTAL WAR MACE KEYRING
Allows you to tolchok tiny knights.



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THE TURDS GIANT POSTER
It's some Codemasters thing. Or something.

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UPFRONT **OI!WHAT'SYOURGAME?**



OI! 
CAM!

WHAT'S YOUR GAME?

The *Scarface* supremo says hello to his little friend *Andy Robinson*. "Hi!" says Andy back, attempting a high-five

Who are ya?



NAME Cam Weber
DEVELOPER Radical Entertainment
POSITION

Senior producer

AGE 32

GAMES WORKED ON BEFORE

The Simpsons: Hit & Run,
The Simpsons: Road Rage

FAVOURITE GAME

Baseball Stars on the SNES

FIRST GAME WORKED ON An ESPN

NFL game that was cruelly unreleased



Q How did you end up working on the Scarface game?

A "Myself and my team had actually been working on an original property for about a year. We were shopping the game around and Vivendi took a look at the playable demo we had – it was kind of an open-world format with driving and shooting gameplay. They really liked what they saw and they kind of said 'rather than working on this original property we actually have Scarface available', and I jumped all over it because I'm a huge fan of the movie. I brought it to the team and when we had to actually cancel the original property and move onto Scarface, the whole team cheered."

This is becoming an increasingly crowded genre. What makes Scarface unique from the likes of GTA and Godfather?

"First and foremost, in this genre I think there are a lot of characters who are basically generic thugs. What we've done is taken this character of Tony Montana who is like a cultural icon, and we let you be Tony. We put Tony in a lot of situations – drug deals, intimidations, fast-talking cops. During development, we wrote on the wall all over the place 'Be Tony f***ing Montana' – and that's what this game is all about."

How exactly did Tony's character shape the gameplay?

"In being Tony 'f***ing' Montana we designed a combat system that brought his personality in – Blind Rage, for example, was inspired from when Tony loses his temper in the movie. Taunting is a major part of the combat gameplay as well; you're constantly firing and hitting your taunt button so that Tony belts out

his lines. Enemies will cower from Tony's taunts and you can draw them out from cover."

How are you going about recreating Miami for Scarface?

"A lot of games in this genre have grid-like city environments, so we wanted to give you more than that. We built up this area with four turfs in Miami that you can take over, then there's the harbour so there's a lot of boating too. We've also got smuggling gameplay in this chain of islands loosely based on the Bahamas. It's funny because The Legend Of Zelda: The Wind Waker was a game that came out very early in our project, and that was a bit of an inspiration for the kind of open-world, island-to-island environment."

The game has an impressive list of voice talent. Which are your favourite voices in the game?

"We've got a ton of celebrity voice actors – over 50. It was actually quite easy to get a lot of these guys – they were all quite excited and really wanted to be a part of the Scarface project. Some of my favourites are just some of the cool, funny characters in our world. Jay Mohr did a great job of a few of our funny characters: Al Israel, – who was the Columbian drug dealer in the chainsaw scene in the movie – we brought him back and he was great. All of those guys brought rich, entertaining and humorous performances to their characters."

What about Tony? How did you find a voice for him?

"We went through 78 different professional voice actors who all thought they were amazing Tony Montana impersonators and we really narrowed it down to the top three – but one guy was by far and away the best.



Scarface is inspired by Zelda. You read it here first.

"Al Pacino wanted to make sure that this product was true to the Scarface licence, and true to the character of Tony Montana"

We sent the top three to Al Pacino and he hand-picked the one. It turns out that he's actually done some work with this guy in the past, so he was quite happy with that."

Did Al Pacino have any other influence on the game?

"He really wanted to make sure that this product was going to be true to the Scarface licence, and especially

true to the character of Tony Montana. He was adamant that we follow a set of rules with this character, and one of them was from the line in the movie: "Tony never f***ed over anyone who didn't have it coming to 'em..." You can't shoot innocent civilians walking down the street or do anything to harm someone who isn't going against you. That's one way he really influenced the gameplay." **PC7**



Like Boiling Point, only finished?



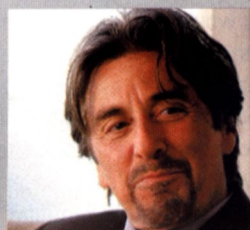
He wasn't dead, just resting in that bloody fountain...

CAM WEBER

Where he turns for inspiration...



GTA: "GTA has inspired me loads. We're big fans and have learned a lot from what they've done."



AL PACINO: The man behind Tony 'f***ing' Montana helped shape the game in many ways.



VIVENDI FORUMS: "We get tons of posts. People are passionate about what they like and dislike."

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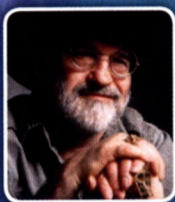
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FIGHTS OF FANTASY

World Of Warcraft now has 6.5 million active users. *Oblivion* has besieged the planet. Put simply: the goblin has never been so goddam sexy. So join *Will Porter* and *PC ZONE* as we embrace our inner orc and study the fantastical horizon...



PRATCHETT ON GAMING...

TO HERALD OUR burgeoning fantasy special what better excuse, we thought, to get in touch with bestselling, award-winning, all-round fantasy hero Terry Pratchett. As well as being prolific, funny and insightful, he of beard, hat and redoubtable imagination is an avid PC gamer. So read on, and rejoice. And if any of our other personal heroes happen to like gaming, then please get in touch...

Q As a fantasy writer, do you find yourself preferring fantasy games, or does spending time in an imaginary land feel like another day at the office?

A "Ho ho. No, I'll pretty much play anything that's intelligent and has some depth. That means *Half-Life 2* and not *Doom 3*, for example".

What do you make of *The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion*? What have been your favourite moments?

"I'm a thief and an assassin, and treat the game as a continuation of the *Thief* universe. I'm in it for the sneaking, but I like the freeform nature of the game, the fact that you can ignore the quests and set off into this big, complex world. You really can explore. All the best moments have been in the shadows. Pick pockets, open locks, creep away."

We're really excited about *Warhammer Online* - a *World Of Warcraft*-style affair that shows its British roots with a real underlying sense of humour. Can you take po-faced fantasy seriously? Or do you prefer stuff that's slightly more tongue-in-cheek?

"If it offers good gameplay, I don't mind. You should be able to immerse yourself in a game - in other words,

take it seriously in context. Taking it seriously is part of the fun."

What have been your favourite games of the past few years?

"*Far Cry*, *Call Of Duty*, *Half-Life 2* and a great many fan missions for *Thief*! A good fan mission is a joy, because the author reads your mind."

Do you think *Discworld* would ever work as either an *Oblivion*-style solo adventure or as a gargantuan MMO?

"No. I think games like that have to be slightly vanilla, so the player does some of the work. I don't think a *Discworld* game could be freeform enough."

Even though they were fiendishly difficult, the *Discworld* point-and-clicks are *PC ZONE* favourites. How heavy was your involvement with them? Do you remember them as fondly as we do?

"My involvement was very high with the first, and when I realised the guys knew what they were doing, I let them get on with it. They were fun, and of their time."

Did you get the number of that donkey cart?

"I think it was '1!'"



PAST MASTERS

THEY SHALL GROW not old, as other games grow old. Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. The beauty of fantasy gaming is that they're not time-sensitive – in this, more than any other genre, graphics may age but the writing and imagination put into them means that in many ways they're forever young. If you weren't around to appreciate them back in the day though, what have you missed – and how can you catch up on your fantasy heritage? *Dan Grillopoulos* reports...

ULTIMA VII

DEVELOPER: Looking Glass

STORY: The game that sparked the MMO genre, with its free-roaming, endlessly rich world. The Avatar is called back to Britannia to deal with a series of murders, while a deceptively nice freemason-style cult that worships a figure called The Guardian is rapidly gaining followers...

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? It still has one of the best, least morally simplistic, plots around; the first part is about a deceptively nice cult, the second

part/expansion (*Serpent Isle*) leaves you responsible for the genocide of a continent – for the second (and not the last) time. It also sparked the wonderful *Ultima Underworld* that led to *System Shock*, *Morrowind* and *Arx Fatalis*.

HOW CAN YOU PLAY IT TODAY? By downloading a fan-made programme called Exult from exult.sourceforge.net and buying/acquiring a copy of *Ultima VII*. Exult acclimatises *Ultima* to modern-day PCs, thus saving the adventure for future generations.



Yes thou does.



Eat your heart out Oblivion.



'Baldur's Fence' was never released.



"I preferred it when we were fighting rats..."

THE BALDUR'S GATE SERIES

DEVELOPER: BioWare

STORY: As with many BioWare games, the story is up to you. But what you're working with in the first game, is that several gods have died and there's a vacancy for the position of god of murder – and one of the candidates seems set on killing you, an innocent raised by a master wizard. *Baldur's Gate II* takes up just after the first left off, with you being tortured by another evil wizard. But how is he connected to the first game? Ah, mystery!

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? The first games to get a real, workable good-evil split and force you to cope with it throughout the plot. Both had enormous game worlds, labyrinthine quests and fabulously animated characters, whose plots unlock as the game is played – including the famous Minsc and his miniature space hamster, Boo.

HOW CAN YOU PLAY IT TODAY? For £14.99 you can get both games and both expansion packs in an Atari *Collector's Edition*. Buy it now!



"Yarr! I be a hammerhead shark!"



"Yarr! It be experience points."

NEVERWINTER NIGHTS & PIRATES OF THE SWORD COAST

DEVELOPER: BioWare

STORY: In the original *NWN*, you had to root out a traitor in the city of Neverwinter through an overly drawn-out plot. In the much-superior *Pirates* premium module (download only), you're a pirate abandoned on a desert island. First you've got to avoid freezing or starving, a struggle in itself. Then you have to gather a crew, get together a ship and take revenge on those who deserted you in the first place...

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? *NWN* has produced an amazing community of modders and gamers (BioWare's fansite has three million registered users). *Pirates* is one of the finer examples of what can be done with the engine and is a rollicking good play.

HOW CAN YOU PLAY IT TODAY? Pick up *Neverwinter Nights* for a fiver, download the updates and go along to the BioWare online store and buy *Pirates* for \$9.99. Yarr!

PLANESCAPE: TORMENT

DEVELOPER: Black Isle Studios

STORY: The immortal Nameless One wakes up in the mortuary of the city of Sigil, atop an infinitely high spire in the ethereal planes. Aided by a talking skull, an eternally-burning mass murderer, a suit of armour motivated by hatred and many other characters, he must seek to regain his mortality and put an end to the endless cycle of death that follows him.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? Feats of imagination like the city of Sigil are rarely attempted in games. *Torment*

contains over a million words of witty, tight dialogue, yet has been translated just by its fans into Korean, Spanish, Italian and Hungarian (with the latter taking four years) and turned into two separate novels (<http://tinyurl.com/kq9qw>).

HOW CAN YOU PLAY IT TODAY? Buy it second-hand (it's much cheaper from abroad), and run it in Compatibility mode for Windows 98.

The start of a breathtaking game.



Must. Play. This. Again.





LET'S HUNT SOME ORC!

Jon Blyth is despatched to Games Workshop's Nottingham HQ to talk to the people who make Tolkien look like a dusty old fart...



"We have two guys who spend all day here, painting figures. Then they go home and paint more. It's what they do..."

Erik Mogensen confirms Games Workshop love what they do



Using this guy on a tabletop battle is considered unsportsmanlike.

GAMES WORKSHOP HAVE been involved with computer games since Spectrum text-only adventures. Their names aren't exactly legend: *HeroQuest*, *Talisman*, a BASIC-crafted racing game called *Battlecars* that got 66% in *Crash* magazine. Step forward in time and the *Warhammer* world has been used in enjoyable RTS games like *Dawn Of War*, but so-so FPS affair *Fire Warrior* and one aborted attempt at placing the *Warhammer* world online have made sad misuse of a license that could provide the gaming equivalent of catapulting off Barbara Windsor's bra. Soon, though, they'll be moving centre-stage with their whopping new *Warhammer* MMO, *Age Of Reckoning*, and tasty RTS affair *Mark Of Chaos*.

What with *PC ZONE*'s fantasy special, it was judged the time was ripe to visit their HQ, concealed behind Nottingham's Castle Marina. But, if *Warhammer* means little more to you than what the less sporty kids used to talk about in school, perhaps background knowledge is required.

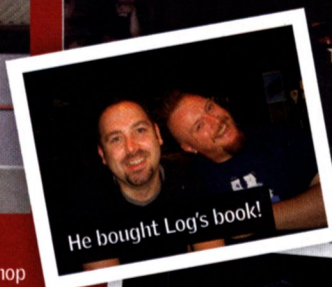
I have a history with Games Workshop – from the days when my imagination was strong enough to sustain incredible worlds away from what my eyes insisted on seeing. You only had to say "Skill 10, Stamina 18", and I'd already conjured a fearsome demon with 12 multi-elbowed arms and a top hat hovering six-inches above its head. I loved the mix of madness and order; the fact that these people hadn't thrown the rulebook out of the window – they'd just written another one, more complicated than the original and using many more dice.

TEENAGE KICKS

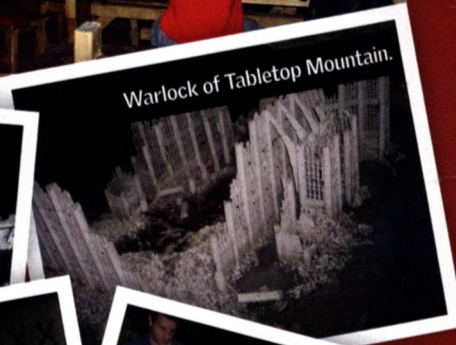
From general fantasy, *Blood Bowl* was my introduction to the world of *Warhammer*. A grid-based sports boardgame, its position in the *Warhammer* universe is inexact – as are most things in the *Warhammer* universe. But reading the manual, with all its 'fluff' designed to entertain and encourage you to give in to its conceit, I realised that these people took their fantasy extremely seriously, but still managed to be pretty damn funny. The effort, love and sheer craft that went into the game made my teenage brain ache with envy, as it presumably did for Cyanide, the guys who ripped *Blood Bowl* off with *Chaos League* and have now been granted the official *BB* licence. I resolved that I'd create my own world, with its own intricate rules. Sadly, I discovered alcohol, and spent the next three years of teenage spare time singing in a park.

Walking into the Games Workshop HQ in Nottingham showed me the world that might have been, had I stuck at it. The child has grown up (in a strange, obsessive way), earned money and gained power, but still keeps enough of itself to say: "I want a 12ft space marine outside and the reception has to look like a dwarf's made it". You're

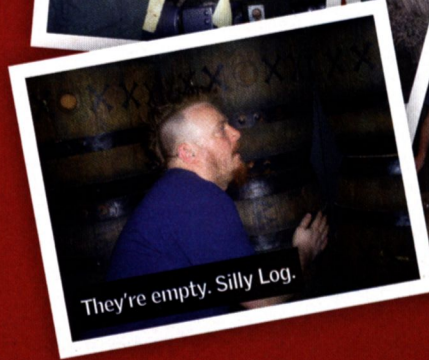
An authentic Dwarven bar – Diet Coke, £1.69 a pint.



He bought Log's book!



Warlock of Tabletop Mountain.



They're empty. Silly Log.



in the boy from the *Twilight Zone*'s house now, so play by his rules.

A cheerful man approaches me and gestures at the themed reception: "It's a public company, so expenses like this have to be justified to shareholders. You have to convince people that this stuff's important for the business. I mean, we know it's important, but they have to know it too." And if a bar completely decked out in the manner of a Dwarven tavern is deemed important for business, then so be it.

STEP BACK IN TIME

Rewind 30 years to a time before shareholders. Games Workshop has the same bedroom roots as England's other pride, *Viz*. In 1975, Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone realised how rubbish traditional boardgames were, and home-produced a magazine called *Owl And Weasel*. This got into D&D creator Gary Gygax's hairy hands, and from that, Games Workshop landed the break of becoming sole distributors of D&D in Europe. Success forced them out of the

mail order business and into their first retail outlet in Hammersmith in 1978. *Owl And Weasel* was revamped into *White Dwarf*, and now you're almost up-to-date with today's Games Workshop.

Only today, there's 3,000 employees, and they no longer sell external products – just the novels, miniatures, magazines and artefacts they conceive and produce themselves. The profit margins are better, for one, but on a more idealistic level, it's the stuff they love. It's why they're here, and it's why they never leave. In the museum, which contains every available miniature, licensing manager Erik Mogensen tells me: "We have two guys who spend all day here, painting figures. Then they go home and paint more. It's what they do."

My eyes widen, and I quickly adapt my instinctive response of 'what the f***?' to look like I'm saying 'wow!' "Well, it's not like you go home and don't play computer games, is it?" Before you read on about *Warhammer*'s gaming future, complete this sentence convincingly, and I'll go back to Nottingham and give my delayed retort. "But that's different, because..."



For an elite crowd of people, this is heaven.



1



WARHAMMER: MARK OF CHAOS

DEVELOPER Black Hole **PUBLISHER** Namco
WEBSITE www.markofchaos.com **ETA** Autumn

THE SUCCESS OF *Warhammer 40,000: Dawn Of War* has shown the money men that the RTS doesn't have to be about dead civilizations or World War II. But while the *40K* universe is manhandled by the boys at THQ, plucky Namco hold the reins on the hacking and slashing of orc-age past. Think *Total War* but with goblins instead of Roman centurions. Think four playable armies – empire, chaos, skaven and high elves. Think customisable and paintable units. Think a supporting cast of orcs, dwarfs, vampires and goblins. Think playing *Warhammer* without a single roll of a dice! That's tantamount to witchcraft, isn't it?

8

The Bigger Picture

1 I'M HORNY, HORNY, HORNY, HORNY

As your armies fight their way from battle to battle, your heroes and champions learn new abilities, unlock new tactics, command larger units and challenge other champions in crucial fights to the death. We reckon we could take on these horny red blokes easily.

2 FIERY CATAPULTS

Siege gameplay takes a major role in *Mark Of Chaos*. Each of the turrets in the pictured stronghold can be upgraded with catapults, which will deliver a fiery payload to anyone foolish enough to march within their projectory.

3 MASSIVE BIG

As you can see here, developer Black Hole has gone for an epic sense of both scale and detail. Most battle scenes have thousands of characters sprawled across the battlefield, with huge demons and intricately rendered battalions dominating the field. With Glastonbury on hold, it's the most action you'll see in a field this year.

4 YOU'RE TERMINATED, GOBLIN

The rendered cinematics in *Mark Of Chaos* are being worked on by Hungarian animation studio Digic Pictures, whose previous work includes *Terminator 3: Rise Of The Machines*. Those featured in these cinematics are, however, far less likely to be robots in disguise.

5 FLYING RED MUSCLE

Clearly, it won't all be on-ground hack-and-slash, what with these chaps providing aerial attacks. Civilization-conquering jaunts like that pictured are probably rare though, since the chaps at the back would get sick of looking at hundreds of demonic arses.

6 GET OFF MY LAND

A variety of the buildable structures and environments in *Mark Of Chaos* can be damaged or destroyed. For example, forests, swamps, plains and tundra can all be blown lengthways and sideways to help or hinder your battleplans. We can't wait to build a small fort out of pine trees.

7 COCKS ON BANNERS

Customisation has a role in *Mark Of Chaos*; body-part swaps, along with weapon and armour enhancements are all possible. In addition, you can use the game's built-in controls to paint your army of orcs and create your own custom banners. We can see the phallic flags already.

8 BARMY ARMY

As the name suggests, war plays a very big role in *Warhammer. Mark Of Chaos* emphasises battles over topics such as base-building and resource collecting, so the element of war really will take centre stage. And who needs diplomacy when you've got a bloody sword and a head on a spike?





Unveiled – the hoodie that stops you from seeing other peoples' faces!



HERE COME THE HAMMER...

WARHAMMER ONLINE: AGE OF RECKONING

Jon Blyth talks to Mythic and Games Workshop about their Epic! Heroic! Struggle!

DEVELOPER Mythic Entertainment (soon to be EA Mythic) PUBLISHER GOA WEBSITE www.warhammeronline.com PREVIOUSLY IN... 170

THE LOWDOWN

- True to 'that Warhammer concept'
- Good potential for PvP and PvE
- Built on fine humour and brutality
- Wargh!
- But will it worry the WOW dreadnought?

STOOD IN A LARGE hall, surrounded by empty tables where hundreds of undersized battles have been decided with hundreds of handfuls of dice, I ask Games Workshop's licensing manager Erik Mogensen a question that I know is a stupid one, but I feel I should ask. Is the *Warhammer Online* game in any way an attempt to be a translation of the table-top war game?

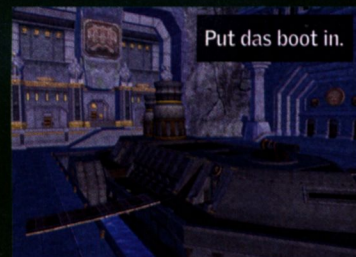
"Not at all. It's not about the table-top game, it's about the IP". Such easy use of legal abbreviations for 'intellectual property' could seem off-putting, but Mogensen isn't being evil and lawyerly. The 'IP' at Games Workshop isn't something as scabby as the Coca-Cola's Dynamic Ribbon Device, or the words 'I'm Lovin' It'. It's *Warhammer*, in all its fluid, high-concept glory. This IP isn't just a jealously-maintained business asset – although it obviously is that, as copyright infringers will discover – it's the reason there's such a low turnover of staff, and why so many employees have been there close to 20 years. Paul Barnett, Mythic's lead designer and cheerful gushing man from the lobby, gives an insight. "There was a job application from a guy and he gave a web address on his CV. There were space marines all over his site, so that was a good start."

There's already been one attempt at a *Warhammer* MMO, a combined effort between Games Workshop and Climax. GW decided, after some time in development, that they didn't like the way the game was going, or this whole joint-venture style of making computer games, and pulled out. Far better to license it out, and do what they do best – communicate 'the IP' to someone more equipped to forge it into an MMO.

MAKING HIS MARK

So the once bitten, twice shy rule of – well, getting bitten and then being shy as a result – was avoided, thanks to Mythic Entertainment's CEO, Mark Jacobs. A game-making veteran from the MUD days, Jacobs knew the Games Workshop people long before getting the *Warhammer* licence. Having enlisted Paul Barnett into his multiple role as Mythic's lead designer, *Warhammer* enthusiast and video-diary-keeping evangelist, Jacobs had little trouble convincing Games Workshop of his ability to faithfully recreate the *Warhammer* world in an MMO environment.

So what makes this *Warhammer* universe, this IP, distinct from the



Tolkien world it uses as a springboard? Barnett steps in. "On the face of it, it's goblins, dwarves, the same as everything else. But that's like saying Shakespeare's just words and books. It's different, it's joyous." Goblins and chain mail are just the tools and a part of the result, not the essence. How you use them is important.

In *Warhammer*, dwarves are dour Yorkshiremen, while the isolationist and superior dark elves have a fairly solid whiff of Americana. And orcs? Well, they're English football hooligans. There may be fun to be wrung from their stupidity, but they're savage bastards. Tolkien's taped-down world feels like weedy escapism in comparison; *Warhammer* has more of a fun sense of brutal allegory.



THE STORY SO FAR...

MYTHIC ENTERTAINMENT

Aradath
From the days when MMOs were MUDs, Mark Jacobs was there, with *Aradath*.



Mythic born
Jacobs' Interworld Productions changes to Mythic, and decides to keep it like that.

Dark Age Of Camelot
Mythic's first MMORPG features knightly knights, but not in naughty nighties.



Age Of Reckoning
Jacobs' has the Games Workshop licence tucked firmly under his arm. He's quite pleased.

1985

1997

2001

2007



"OK. Who knocked? This isn't funny..."



Peach sky at night, dwarves have a fight.



Fantasy genre = cool hats.



Just look at the maps. No meticulous cartography here, giving readers the chance to put their finger where Frodo is at the moment. *Warhammer's* maps are made by people with priorities. Orc maps feature useless gloats, like "we killd dis dragon", or they may note a "gud smell here". An elven map will be more idealistic, showing the world how it should be - under their control, obviously. "People sometimes ask us why this tower is further north than it used to be - and it isn't," points out Mogensen. "We don't know where the tower is." It's obviously an excellent excuse to be forgetful, too.

BIG BOOK

Communicating the essence of *Warhammer* within Mythic has its own stories. Barnett recounts a story about the tome of knowledge, a repository of information within the game. When it was first decided to include what sounds a bit like an encyclopedia, the developers went and wrote just that - an encyclopedia. Without realising that such a thing is anathema to a world that's perpetually at war, where no-one cares about objective truths. So it

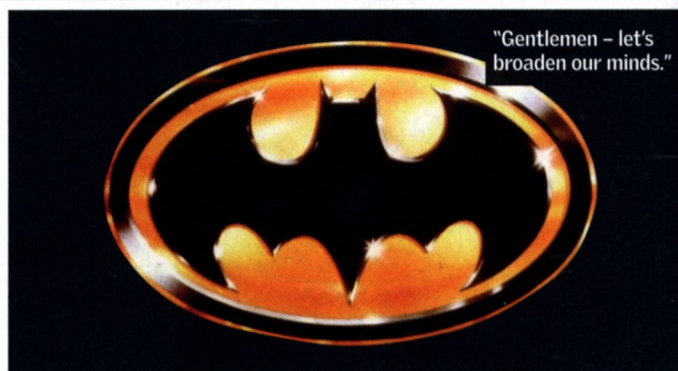


Moustache armour as standard.



Warhammer is Batman

Tell all your friends! Tell all your friends!



"Gentlemen – let's broaden our minds."

When a grown man in a professional capacity claims *Warhammer* is Batman, you think: "Is he just using Batman as a generic term for brilliant? Isn't that a bit childish? Like saying sausage and chips is totally BA Baracus?" Here's Mythic's lead designer Paul Barnett's explanation...

"Batman has the core concept of a bloke in a cape, with a butler, crime-fighting in Gotham. From that, they've got a TV series, different flavours of film, toys, cartoons, comics, lego and pyjamas. The batmobile looks different every time you see it. Batman's drawn differently in many comics. Sometimes it's funny, sometimes it's dark, or darkly funny. When you ask when a Batman film is set, there's no answer – it's just in Batman time."

But there are limits. You can't just say Batman's an alien. That's doing a *Highlander 2*. And no-one wants to do a *Highlander 2*. "*Warhammer* is chaos, magic, monsters, empire, battle, war, conflict, humour. Table-top wargames aren't *Warhammer* – that's just one incarnation of it. From that you've got fantasy, *40K*, table-top, MMO – they're all *Warhammer*. That's why you can have the futuristic *40K*. It's all epic, heroic, struggle. And it never stops." Later on, the subject of *Blood Bowl* comes up. Barnett jumps in, from 30ft away. "*Blood Bowl*? Now that's Batfink". And off we go again...

was decided to feature six chroniclers, who document the world from their viewpoint, their personalities and paranoia coming through. Drawings of creatures might be limited by the artist's talent. They might just lie. That's the *Warhammer* way.

"Mark (Jacobs) has gone out of his way to recruit people who can do *Warhammer* justice, and drill into them respect for the IP," says Barnett. Again, the IP. "It's not good enough to draw something that looks like an orc – you have to understand its orcishness. In the trailer, you see an orc being catapulted into a wall, and that's a gag – but they're not doing that just for fun. Now they know they need to set the catapult higher. The next orc's going over that wall, and he's going to kill you."

PLAY THE GAME

So we've established that the *Warhammer* fantasy world will be lovingly recreated here, both by the persuasive flush of cheeky demagogue Barnett, and by the easy, friendly liaison between Games Workshop and Mythic. But what will playing the game be like?

You'll play as one of the major races, with others appearing as NPCs. Orcs and goblins (collectively, greenskins), dwarves, high elves, dark elves, empire and chaos. The other characters – the skaven, giants, squigs, everything else – will be AI-driven.

Barnett waxes hypnotically passionate about the scenes that he envisions unfurling: "Armies laying siege to a castle, wizards hurling magic at the walls, people taking underground passages to get inside, blood, explosions..." Won't that be difficult to organise for someone controlling a single player, a regimented assault like that? "People already organise," Erik Mogensen interjects. "They set up forums and organise themselves. We're just encouraging it."

MIX 'N' MATCH

Exploring will bring up lots of smaller battles too, if you don't fancy being fodder at a siege. And there's a cunning balance mechanic in the way the game matches you off when you're walking into the fray. So a powerful orc will be matched against a number of weaker opponents, and your battle won't ever be swamped by a passing mob. Dogs of war (*Warhammer's* non-specific fighty buggers) also appear as NPCs to lend some balance to fights.

You can stumble across smaller scenarios, too. In typical *Warhammer* style, one mission requires you to get a

An introspective moment for Ted.





The tenth annual Dwarven WI meeting.

Burn down the building, use the door as a shield.



giant drunk, so he'll get up and do some business for you. Whoever's there can work as a team to get the big fella pissed, people passing through can help you out for a bit, then go and do something else.

Given the nature of the beast, you can expect a lot of PvP, but there are also PvE missions that tie into the greater war effort. Sneak through the sewers to get into that castle, and if you kill the Captain of the Guard, it all goes towards making your PvP brethren's jobs easier in the outside siege. If you don't like the idea of killing another player and making someone in the real world sad, there's your mission.

FIGHT TO THE DEATH

Then there's Realm vs Realm, as trademarked in Mythic's *Dark Age Of Camelot*. There are two realms – the dwarves, empire and high elves keep an uneasy alliance, as do the greenskins, dark elves and chaos hordes. You'll start off fighting your direct racial enemies (dwarves are the natural foes of greenskins, for example), but soon enough the war opens up and you're free to stick your weapons into whoever you like. What's good for your race is good for your realm.




He nicked that off Skeletor.

"I envisage armies laying siege to a castle, wizards hurling magic at walls, people taking underground passages to get inside, blood and explosions..."

Mythic's Paul Barnett on *Warhammer: Age Of Reckoning*

Barnett concludes: "It's like a real war. The dwarves may well win, but individual dwarves will be taking part. Some will be cannon fodder, others will do pivotal things. The war effort can even extend to creating a distraction somewhere else, to draw enemy forces away from your real objective."

To round it all off, I'd like to use a quote from Mythic's website. It sums it all up in a way that exemplifies that spirit of the game. "This will not be a cheerful world where unicorns shoot rainbows at grumpy bears." This game smell gud. 

Lands of hope and glory

So who's the opposition to *Warhammer: Age Of Reckoning*?



LOTR ONLINE: SHADOWS OF ANGMAR

Tolkien's world, recently made acceptable to people who've never even heard of a falchion – the idiots – is currently being turned into an MMO by Turbine. They're a dedicated bunch with *D&D Online* under their belts, and *Lord Of The Rings* is a strong licence. How will the timeline of the books' Third Age work in a persistent world, though?

★★★★★



VANGUARD: SAGA OF HEROES

Vanguard was going to make a name for itself with severe penalties for death, including levelling down and real people coming to your house and thumping you in your stupid shins. They're toning it down now though – it'll be a friendlier affair, but with only its own reputation to go on, will it be able to attract new players to the fold?

★★★★★



WORLD OF WARCRAFT: THE BURNING CRUSADE

Ah, the world of the warcraft. The expansion to the game that kick-started this whole mental MMO frenzy in the first place. Let's face it – no game can truly challenge this behemoth. Especially not when the land beyond the Dark Portal looks so damn exciting. Just play the damn client, free on our DVD...

★★★★★



CONAN: HYBORIAN ADVENTURES

Your first 20 levels of *Conan* will be single-player, giving you solid practice at swinging your sword about like a bad kind of fellow before sending you out into the world. Featuring motion-captured horses, over 200 nags were dressed up in blue pyjamas with ping-pong balls sewn on in the making of this game. Looks good.

★★★★★



"Er, yes, I think I'm on the guestlist..."

OF DARK HORSES AND DARK ELVES...

Behold! The fantasy games that may not hog the limelight, but still demand that you hold at least a +3 candle of great longing...

PROJECT OFFSET

Martin Korda takes a sneak peak at this hugely promising independent project

DEVELOPER Offset Software PUBLISHER TBA WEBSITE www.projectoffset.com ETA TBA

HAVING RECENTLY HOOKED up with Offset Software – the ex-Savage development team behind *Project Offset* (working title) – we're clammy with excitement about their stunning-looking RPG/FPS hybrid.

Set in a fantasy world and powered by an in-house engine that, despite still being in the early stages of development, displays more than a passing resemblance to Epic's awesome Unreal Engine 3, *Project Offset* will see you choosing a character from an exhaustive collection of classes and embarking on an adventure of discovery, intrigue and above all, combat – against hordes of stunningly rendered nasties.

Also promised is an objective-based multiplayer mode, in which two teams will battle it out against each other to complete objectives over sprawling maps. Mission

goals will include heroics such as scaling the walls of enemy strongholds, escorting siege weapons and diving into battle on the backs of gargantuan dragons. With the mission complete, it'll be back to the tavern to spend your hard-earned experience points on boosting your attributes and skills.

Currently without a publisher, it's hard to believe that one of the big guns won't swoop soon to snap up this genre-bending potential mega-hit. Watch this space.



A face only a mother could love.



Terrifying. Huge. Stunning. And you'll be able to ride on his back. Brilliant!



STRONGHOLD LEGENDS

A legend in his own dinner hour, **Andy Robinson** reports from the fantastical front

DEVELOPER Firefly Studios PUBLISHER 2K Games WEBSITE www.fireflyworlds.com ETA Autumn

NOW WE'VE ALWAYS had a soft spot for the lovely lads at Firefly, so have high hopes for this follow-up to last year's charming *Stronghold 2*. *Stronghold Legends* does away with most of the sim-style management elements from the last game and goes for a more straightforward RTS experience.

While still keeping the series' unmistakable charm, *Legends* adds a whole new fantasy element across three campaigns; King Arthur, the German Siegfried legends and Vlad the Impaler (aka Dracula). Each legendary side's units are far more specialised this time around, giving *Stronghold Legends* much more of a 'rock, paper, scissors'-style RTS formula. Vlad – that big, demonic Christopher Lee – for example, will have an army of unique beasts, like a giant kamikaze bat for taking out archers and a 'vampire creeper'



If there's one thing a dragon hates, it's a medieval settlement...

who can scale castle walls and make enemy units attack each other.

Legends is also shuffling things up in how the campaigns are structured; a new mode involves you and the AI moving pieces around a strategic 'territory board' – a bit like *Risk* but with more undead. The

...but they do love smelling the hair of sexy ice queens.



graphics are starting to age, that cannot be denied, but stacked with twice as much siege equipment and violent paraphernalia than previously seen in the series, the quirky charm of Firefly that we've come to know over the years shines out like a shiny beacon. Nice stuff.



THE WITCHER

Martin Korda shoves a wicked old woman into a gingerbread stove

DEVELOPER CD Projekt PUBLISHER CD Projekt WEBSITE www.thewitcher.com ETA Christmas

WHILE IT MAY not be the prettiest, *The Witcher* – based on the novels of Polish fantasy author Andrzej Sapkowski – has more than enough impressive features in its arsenal to inspire confidence.

As Geralt, a highly powerful warrior and sorcerer with the usual severe case of amnesia, you must traverse evil-ravaged lands in an attempt to piece together your past – and save the world in the process. Rather than saddling you with a predictable, linear storyline, *The Witcher* is promising to deliver a massively branching plot that'll allow you to become good, evil or anything in between. And with every action and choice you make causing a reaction further down the line, there'll be innumerable routes for you to take through the game.

Developers CD Projekt have also promised us that there'll be over 250 skills for you to master, including an

Uncover your past and save the world in the process.

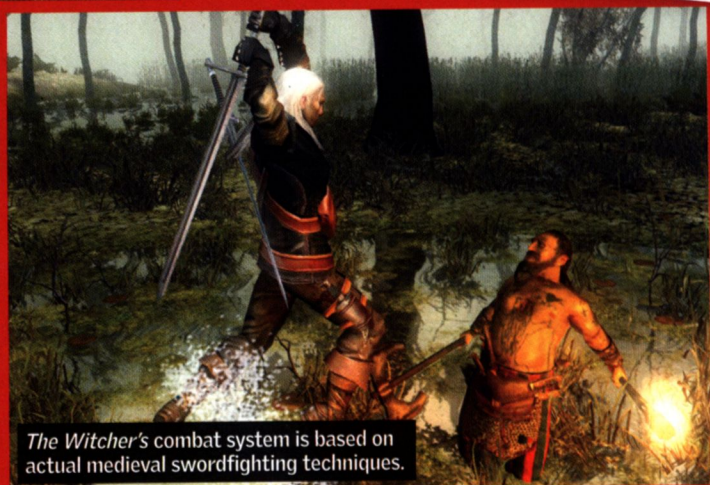


ability to slow down time. Real-time combat will play an integral role in the proceedings and will rely on both your character's stats and your own personal proficiency with a blade. With its bold approach to storytelling, dynamic alignment configuration and solid combat mechanics, *The Witcher* could prove far more worthy of your attention than its somewhat average visuals may suggest.

The Witcher can combine melee combat and magic to vanquish his foes.



The Witcher's combat system is based on actual medieval swordfighting techniques.



AGE OF CONAN: HYBORIAN ADVENTURES

Jon Blyth strips to the waist and bellows something manly

DEVELOPER Funcom PUBLISHER Funcom WEBSITE www.ageofconan.com ETA TBA

MMOGS CAN BE a daunting and lonely affair, if you're a bit rubbish or shy. With nothing more than a 'Can you break that crate with a hammer please?' mission to teach you the combat system, it feels like you're learning to wipe your arse with the whole world watching.

In *Hyborian Adventures*, the dark universe of Robert E Howard's *Conan* gets the MMO treatment, but for your first 20 levels – about ten hours of gameplay – you'll be playing through a story-driven, single-player game. And if you don't know what you're doing after that, you probably shouldn't be trusted with a sword anyway – or you've got no arms.

With online games straining to make the combat more engaging than buying a better sword, Funcom claim that the combat promises to be even more skill-based, as watching your movements and learning what hacks and slashes

go well together will be rewarded with increasingly deadly combos. There's also 'formation combat', allowing you to directly control NPCs and, most exciting of all, more than a splash of horse-mounted sword-slashing.

Set in the time when Conan has become king, and with the occasional appearance of the legend himself on the parapet of his castle, *Hyborian Adventures* is another considerable gauntlet being thrown into the online gaming ring. If the single-player prelude is up to scratch (whetting your appetite rather than putting you off), this MMO could one day grow up to be, um, a Californian governor.

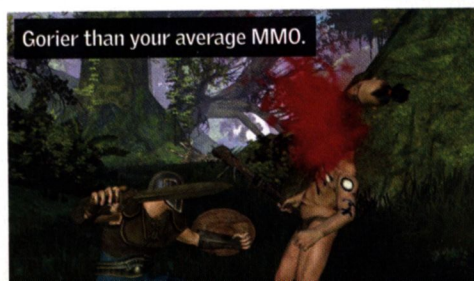
Horseback combat is much like jousting.



With a *Conan* movie in the works, barbarians are officially cool again.



Gorier than your average MMO.





Imagine the table you could make out of him.

COLD, WINTER...

NEVERWINTER NIGHTS 2

Martin Korda hides in the boot of Obsidian Entertainment's car, before leaping out with a dictaphone when they least expect it...

DEVELOPER Obsidian Entertainment PUBLISHER Atari WEBSITE www.nwn2.com PREVIOUSLY IN... 168

THE LOWDOWN

- Epic, responsive and branching storyline
- New Forgotten Realms character classes, races and enemy types
- Superbly integrated Stronghold system
- Improved combat and Henchmen control
- Visuals are nice, but fairly lo-fi

I'D RATHER BE a one-legged leper with dandruff and a chronic bout of flatulence than an RPG developer right now. Everywhere you turn it's *Oblivion* this, *Oblivion* that: "How is your game going to respond to the way *Oblivion* did such and such?" It's enough to make even the most talented fantasy game development team slouch into their ergonomic chairs with a hefty sigh and think about throwing in the towel.

But behind the smug smog of euphoria that surrounds Bethesda's recent offering, there stirs a sleeping giant, one that's preparing to rise from the ashes of conquest that *Oblivion's* left in its wake and challenge it for the role-playing crown. That game is *Neverwinter Nights 2*.

PHOENIX RISING

"*Neverwinter Nights 2* and *Oblivion* are really two very different games," explains Obsidian CEO Feargus Urquhart when asked how his game can compete with the genre's top dog. "*Oblivion* is about exploring a wide open world and getting back to the main story of the game from time to time. We want to have a large and responsive story that flows around the player and eventually puts the control of its outcome in their hands. After playing *Oblivion*, I remember the little things that I was doing like getting my alchemy up. In *Neverwinter Nights 2*, players are going to remember the big choices they had to make, the companions that travelled with them and the key turning points in the story."

Before you embark on your apocalypse-thwarting quest – one that sees you travelling to the city of Neverwinter and becoming embroiled in a millennia-old conflict that takes you through the Sword Coast, ancient Illefarn ruins, deadly wizard sanctuaries and into battle with creatures from beyond the land of Faerun – you'll first have to customise your character traits.

"You decide who you are and what your childhood was like by choosing your own background traits at the start of the game – such as Bully, Flirt or Troublemaker," explains Chris Avellone, Obsidian Entertainment's creative director. "Not only do these traits give bonuses to your character, but people in your home village will react to them as well – sometimes favourably, sometimes not."

Your choices and actions will also influence your ever-growing retinue, over which you'll have far greater control this time around (for more on this see 'Having A Hench', right). "Your choices will often influence your companions, who may enthusiastically agree with them or have violent objections to them," reveals Avellone. Sounds intriguing... And possibly bloody.

ROCK AND BONE

So far, so impressive, but what's really moistening our lips is the game's all-new Stronghold System. Starting off with just a smallholding, you'll soon find



ETA
SEPT

THE STORY SO FAR...

OBSIDIAN ENTERTAINMENT

OBSIDIAN

A NEW DAWN

Founded by five developers including Feargus Urquhart and Chris Avellone.

A NEW KNIGHT

Debut game *SW: KOTOR II - The Sith Lords* ships and shifts a stack of copies.



A NEW NIGHT

Obsidian announce that it's developing another high-profile RPG sequel, *Neverwinter Nights 2*.



A NEW RELEASE

A release date of September 2006 is announced for *NWN2*. RPG fans rejoice.



2003

2004

2005

2006

Don't play with lighter fluid, kids...



"Run in zig-zags!"



"What's that? Trixie? Trapped down the well?"



Having a hench

With friends like these, bring on the enemies

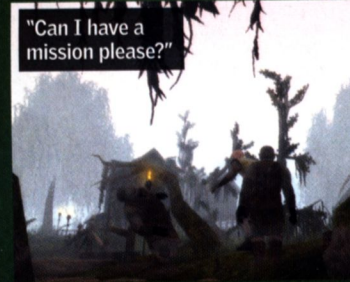


As with most things in *Neverwinter Nights 2*, the game's combat system is receiving a major revamp. The most significant change will be the level of control you have over your companions and henchmen. Whereas you had virtually no say over their actions in combat situations in the original game, you'll now have the option of either letting them get stuck in of their own accord, or pausing the action and issuing each companion with a combat command.

However, this new level of control will be offset by some seriously powerful enemy units, including fearsome black dragons, which will apparently be the size of houses (better start saving for that 10,000-inch flatscreen now). When you see these babies come swooping down, you'd better be ready - they have the ability to single-handedly annihilate an ill-prepared band of adventurers. Nasty.



"First to the tree and back wins!"



"Can I have a mission please?"

yourself presiding over a burgeoning fortress that can be upgraded in a variety of aesthetic and military ways. You'll also be able to bolster its defensive capabilities by recruiting new warriors to your cause, which is just as well given that your stronghold will become *Neverwinter's* last line of defence against the tide of darkness that threatens the city's very existence. "Who you meet, how you treat them and how you solve their problems determines what recruits you can gather to help defend your stronghold," remarks Avellone. "You can also have miners, farmers and architects join your ranks to improve your home base."

NEW REALMS

Also new to the *Neverwinter* fold will be several new races and classes from the *Forgotten Realms*, including the Drow sub-race and the spell-spewing Warlock character class. "The Warlock is

different to other spellcasters in that he uses his magic as abilities rather than spells," comments Urquhart. "While he has fewer magical things he can do, he can do them over and over without having to rest or learn things from spellbooks." Well lucky him, the damn bearded show-off.

With over 100 different locations to explore and around 40 hours of playing time, *Neverwinter Nights 2* is looking like it might just, but only just, be able to stack up to *Oblivion* in the epic scope stakes. However, throw in a powerful, branching plot, a revamped henchman system, revised combat and the mouth-watering prospect of building up your own fortress and suddenly - dare we say it? - the idea of a viable competitor to *Oblivion* doesn't seem like such a ludicrous proposition. One thing's for sure: when these two giants clash, sparks are gonna fly. Bring it on - let battle commence. **PC7**

One brutal slo-mo decapitation coming right up...

ASCENSION DAY...

DARK MESSIAH OF MIGHT & MAGIC

"That's another fine mess-iah you've got me into," quips *Will Porter*. Effortlessly

DEVELOPER Arkane Studios PUBLISHER Ubisoft WEBSITE www.mightandmagic.com PREVIOUSLY IN... 168

THE LOWDOWN

- The first truly great first-person melee combat
- Brilliantly dynamic fighting
- Trap-laden, physics-rich environments
- Shrink spell stolen from *Duke Nukem 3D*
- Characters have silly names

TO BE HONEST, I don't really know what Errol Flynn looked like. Although I'm pretty sure he had a twirly moustache. Perhaps a jaunty green triangular hat as well. What I'm certain of however, and I'll check with my gran if any objections are raised, is that he spent a large proportion of his time waving a sword on spiral staircases, slashing ropes connected to precarious chandeliers and shouting "Aha!" after every deft manoeuvre. I mention this because, however he looked, *Dark Messiah* makes you feel just like Errol Flynn: it buckles swash like nobody's business.

To my knowledge however, and again grandparental advice can be gained on the matter, Flynn was never picked up by the neck by an orc, thrown into a rack of barrels and made to stare up through his prostrate legs at three screaming fantasy beasts. Nor did he pick himself up, fire an arrow at a nearby rope to release a huge weight that swung from the ceiling to knock one orc flying into a bottomless chasm, then duck underneath the weight on its return swing (just before it

slammed the second orc into a brick wall), pull out a sword, turn on his internal adrenaline mode, and neatly cleave the third greenskin's head from his shoulders in a cascade of dark red blood. They just didn't have the special effects budget back then.

SWASH AND BUCKLE

I namecheck Errol since *Dark Messiah* is about to nail, fundamentally nail, the thrill and excitement of first-person, blade-to-blade combat. Ingeniously crowbarring a vast array of ingenious weapon-specific moves into the traditional confines of the WASD set-up, blending spike- and chasm-packed environments seamlessly with combat and making full body awareness an integral feature rather than a gimmick – *Dark Messiah* has taken traditional hack-and-slash, poked it in a myriad of different ways and mustered up a revolution in fantasy gaming.

Up until now, you'd be forgiven for a coma-level of interest in *Dark Messiah*. It's

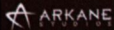
set in the *Might & Magic* universe for a start, from which the likelihood of a game ever stirring the loins of this particular correspondent is on about the same level as Teddy Ruxpin or, on a hot day, the collected works of Danielle Steele. But this Source-powered physics-fest just feels so damn good I'm practically ordering you to share my new-found enthusiasm.

To convey this though, we should discuss the combat more deeply – the bit where the Errol Flynn "Ahas!" and "Take it you swines!" fit into the template. At its base level, fighting works as it does in *Oblivion* (left-click to swipe, right-click to block) whether you're brandishing an oaken staff, a rogue's dual dagger, a warrior's blade or any other weapon. To add tactics to the mix, meanwhile, a brief tap of WAS or D combined with a left-click will quickly move you into different stances – a lunge perhaps, or a swiping horizontal slice across the neck. Every weapon links to a different fighting style – and the more you batter an enemy, the

ETA
SEPT

THE STORY SO FAR...

ARKANE STUDIOS



GENESIS

Arkane Studios are set up in Lyon by a band of men fresh from EA and Atari.

1999

EXODUS

Arx Fatalis, Arkane's celebrated first-person RPG is unleashed on the world.

2002



KINGS

A chance meeting with fabled Valve boys magics up the use of the Source engine.

2003



CHRONICLES

What could have been *Arx Fatalis 2* is diverted into the *Might & Magic* brand.

2004

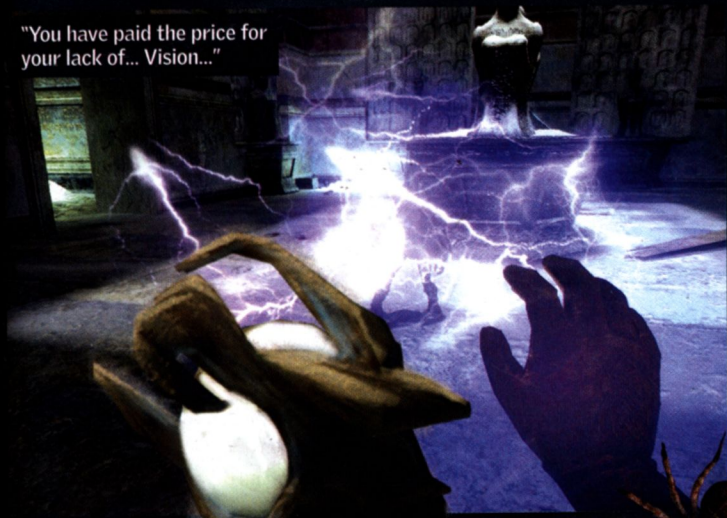


When first kisses go wrong.



Are *DM's* goblins the best 'crap' villains since *Halo's* grunts?

"You have paid the price for your lack of... Vision..."



more tired they get and the more different combat strokes will open up to you. Enemies will get noticeably more and more fatigued, slowly dragging themselves up from the floor you've kicked them down onto for the sixth time, until they're forlornly waving their swords at you as they lay beaten on the dungeon's paving slabs - before you offer them a quick, painful smiting.

It's simple, yet ingenious stuff; given weight and grit by a bodily awareness system that truly works. When a Cyclops picks you up by the neck you might as well be rendered by the Source engine yourself - "You just feel like there's no screen between you and the



Dark Messiah is about to fundamentally nail the thrill and excitement of first-person, blade-to-blade combat



A swipe to make something more than a flesh wound...

Valve 4 Arkane (IDST)

"We're your biggest fans!" "We love you too!" "Let's have babies quick!"



Eat Source engine barrel physics you bastards!

Before Ubisoft turned up waving around the *Might & Magic* licence as if they'd just struck up a peace accord with a thundery-tempered Germanic dictator, *Dark Messiah* started off life as *Arx Fatalis 2*. It was around then that they bumped into Valve and history was made. "We were using our own engine," explains Raphael Colantonio. "We were considering taking on another, and by accident we met with one of the Valve guys at a trade show. Of course, I knew of Valve but I was assuming that they wouldn't know who we were. The guy said that he really liked *Arx Fatalis* and some other guys at Valve liked it too, and that they were doing this great engine and they'd love us to use it for the next game if we were willing. It was really an accident." Ah... Strangers in the night exchanging proprietary engines. The sign of true love.



Enemies can pick you up, pull you close and chuck you away...

character" explains Arkane CEO and creative director Raphael Colantonio, in words better than I could paraphrase when I doorstep him. "It just feels like it's you." And as soon as you've built up enough battle frenzy to plunge your blade through the chest of a foe, kick him off the end in slow motion and watched the blood fly, or had a zombie guzzle greedily on your neck, I feel sure that you'll agree. And I haven't even started on the spells or the bows and arrows yet. They're good too.

DARK DEVELOPMENT

For developers Arkane, this approach to combat has provided even more blood, sweat and tears than they've had to render for the game itself. "It's been a very long and pressing research and development period," claims Colantonio. "It started with just one idea: wouldn't it be cool if we could really come up with first-person melee combat that actually works." Internally it was hard to convince even the team themselves that first-person was the way to go – they even had famed developers (that Colantonio refuses to name) crying out 'Don't do it! Just go third-person!' – but Arkane persevered.

"We started to have these very visceral moments where you nail your sword into some part of the body, and then go on to kill the bad guy in a cool way. It was great, and we wanted to put more and more emphasis on it – making it intuitive, but at the same time ensuring variety," says the Arkane main man. But as the moves, swipes and dodges piled up came trouble.

"At one point we just broke it," explains Colantonio, ruefully shaking his head. "It was really a mess." Thankfully, however, freelance game development ronin for hire Randy Smith – he of *Thief* fame – was on hand to help out. On board to help put Arkane's abstract concepts and unique vision into a workable FPS framework, the project was soon put back on track. "He helped us build up a vocabulary for all of our concepts," Colantonio picks up again. "Parrying, dodging – all of those things. Together we nailed down more and more and he helped us shape our ideas into something far more analytical. We really learned a lot."

SOURCEY HOST(CARD)

But the joy of *Dark Messiah* isn't just in the way that blades clash in a battle of wills as



"Young fool... Only now, at the end, do you understand..."



Swipe if you want more than a flesh wound. Have at you foul fiend!



"I give you... Fire!"



The more blood you let, the redder your sword becomes.

you stare into the deep-set red eyeballs of your foe, or the way that you can grab an enemy from behind and satisfyingly snap their spinal column with your weighty staff. The Source-powered environment you fight in has been toolled up to provide many and varied ultra-violent climaxes to your bouts of swordcuffs. Knock out a strut from a nearby shelf and barrels can tumble on your foes; slash a rope and a lump of metal will swing down in a parabolic dive of certain death; shove a rampaging orc into a fire and he'll gambol through the dungeon like the very beacons of Gondor. What's more, the simple addition of a kick feature brings all manner of fun into the bargain – providing 'kicking Bishop Brennan up the arse'-style moments all over the shop, as well as the ability to boot goblins into conveniently placed beds of spikes.

But, of course, you might not necessarily be playing in this 'tank' fashion. You could be sneaking through the shadows, firing off arrows hither and thither – creeping up behind sentries with dual daggers positioned at dangerous angles. You might also, if you were very close to your mother as a child, have chosen the magical route – that of

fireballs, freezing, telekinesis and shrinking spells. Whichever route you choose, however, there's always a distinct whiff of the old ultra-violence attached. For every flesh hit you make, a friendly power bar increases in the bottom-left-hand corner of your screen: when this reaches its zenith then your adrenalin-fuelled battle frenzy is unleashed and, depending on which weapon or spell you're using at the time, your enemy can be beheaded, amputated, run through, pierced and flung into a wall, ignited or simply hung in the air until tossed liberally into the stratosphere. Yes it's a simple, over-used system – but my god, *Dark Messiah* makes it satisfying.

MADE-UP NAMES

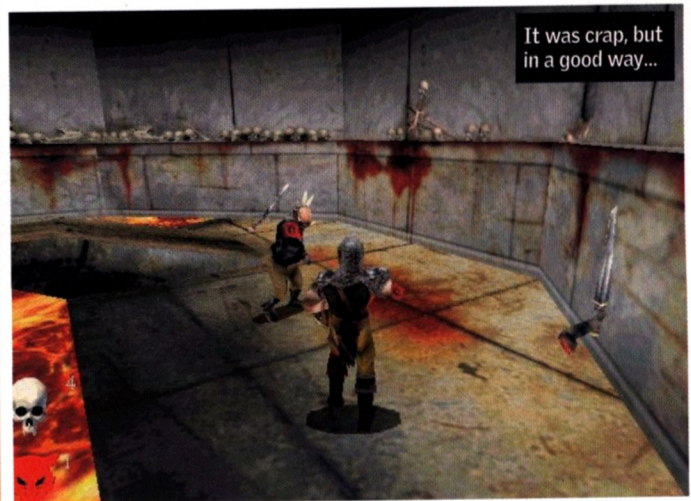
After all this fight froth we come to the storyline which, despite presumably being fine when played out through the game, contains a variety of silly fantasy names that makes it faintly embarrassing when put into cold, hard print. In the interest of thorough journalistic endeavour, however, I'll provide a précis.

It happens in this magical place called Ashan; and there's all these demons and they're all



Forgotten PC gem #237

Finally! A chance to write about *Die By The Sword*...



It was crap, but in a good way...

It was with great joy that, when discussing new and interesting ways to implement swordplay into games, both your correspondent and the man from Arkane had the same game in mind: *Die By The Sword*. Now, *Die By The Sword* wasn't great but had this brilliant 'wave your mouse means wave your sword' mechanic that didn't really work in the slightest, but was brilliant fun. Eventually you could be hanging upside down in a trap, swinging from side to side with one arm cut off and still waving your long sword around and decapitating skeletons. This was back in 1998, yet was the last time that anyone tried to do something genuinely new with melee fighting in fantasy gaming. Until now perhaps.



Put a spell on you

Some of the spells in *Dark Messiah* are veritable humdingers. Today is a bad day to be an orc...



BURN: Burn! Burn! There's plenty that can be ignited in *Dark Messiah*, but the flesh of monsters comes in for most of that red hot flamey action.



FREEZE: Endless fun can be had by freezing a patch of the ground and watching a charging enemy being forced into an impromptu arse-slide.



LEVITATE: If you're in adrenalin mode then you'll be able to pick up flailing bodies and put them in painful places. I like putting them in fires.



SHRINK: This is a *Duke 3D* rip-off, right? "Absolutely. Let's not lie!" laughs Arkane's Raphael Colantonio. Stamp on his stupid tiny head!



The Cyclops can destroy structures you're standing on.



What a weight off his shoulders.

The hoodoo Kuju people

Dark Messiah multiplayer is knocked into shape in Brighton...



There'll be sneakage opportunities even in multiplayer.

Brit outfit Kjuu have been tasked with making *Dark Messiah's* multiplayer sing, and we'll have a tête-à-tête with them on their progress next issue. Essentially what they're up to, though, is two modes. A Warfare battle mode with a set-up much akin to a *Battlefield* Conquest mode, and a Crusade mode in which every map your human or undead team wins, you move one map closer to the enemy stronghold – and every one you lose pushes you back towards your own HQ. It won't all be rampant sword-swinging either – classes and team-play will be integral to multiplayer, and you'll get to choose between playing as an assassin, a priest, a warrior, a mage, an archer, a tinker, a tailor or a spy. Although those last three have been invented by us.

kicking off everywhere. Through his own death a magic man called Sar-Elam works out a way of banishing them – but the place the demons are sent isn't pretty so they're rather narked. Flames, seared flesh, eternal fire, limbo, unhygienic toilet facilities; you know the picture. It's like Dudley with more lighter fluid and less comical accents.

Sixty-seven years on and a few cracks have appeared in this demon cage, however, and the skull of Sar-Elam (now monikered as the Skull Of Shadows) is due to play a prominent role in the early release of these otherworldly foreign nationals. What's more, someone improbably named Sar-Shazar has written a prophecy about a half-demon, half-human child being born (the eponymous *Dark Messiah*), with mischief on his infant mind. What's more, what's more; said prophecy is written as a crap poem that attempts to rhyme 'history' with 'enemies', but even this hasn't put some people off taking the whole predicament very, very seriously indeed.


You then, are Sareth, a man of blank-slate everyman RPG status – and apprentice to the powerful wizard Phenrig. You're about to journey through forgotten temples, crypts, cliffside

strongholds, underground cities and a particularly unpleasant necropolis – but more importantly, you're going to be able to levitate orcs into fires and watch their corpses burn.


JAM ROLE(PLAY)

Let's not forget though – this remains an RPG. You won't earn experience and skill points through the number of beasts you slay, but rather through the objectives you complete, and you'll be able to pump your stats at whim – unlocking spells, improving your stealth and engorging your strength into either a jack-of-all-trades or a play-style-specific expert. The story too will show how common role-play tenets such as the ability to shift the goalposts of the story at key moments – giving you the option to ally yourself with the good or the ill without actually changing the trajectory of the story arc.


It won't all be fighting either – don't expect there to be *Deus Ex*-style hubs since they're not the game's focus, but there will be city levels in which you'll be able to explore, chat with NPCs and perhaps show your *Thief* roots (as Arkane clearly have, what with the gentle pilfering of both Randy Smith and the rope arrow from Garrett's adventures), by sneaking



Ship environments! Pray to god there are pirates too...



Spells: always very hot or very cold. Never tepid.



Occasional city levels punctuate the violence.

past guards into areas that you're not really supposed to be in. Indeed, the game's opening takes place in the free city of Stonehelm – home of the wizard Menelag and his conveniently sexy niece and assistant Leanna. The latter becomes your very own sexy assistant too, as you voyage to the orc-ridden island where the Skull Of Shadows abides – although whether or not she'll be there in an Alyx-style capacity is yet to be seen.

CLEVER TREVOR

Of course, the closer you get to denizens of the undead or grizzled orcs warriors, the more obvious their smarts, or lack thereof, become. Minions of evil shouldn't necessarily be smart enough to watch *Newsnight*, but they should be able to sit through an episode of early-'90s drama *Doogie Howser MD*. "The cleverer enemies are able to use the same traps as the ones you can use," explains Colantonio. "If there's a monster, there's a good chance that if you're in a position where you would be hit by a trap, then he'll try to use it."

The same goes for enemies choosing to throw dungeon furniture at you, while

weaker opposition like goblins will tend to work in groups – fleeing when endangered and liable to hide and ambush you. Combine these traits with the wide range of moves open to NPCs – and their different states of strength and awareness the more you batter them – and you have some melee combat that's a step above a bash on the head with a crowbar.

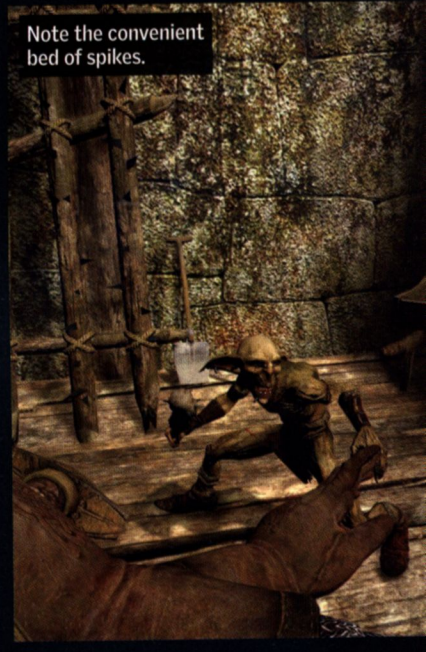
Then again, a focus on physics, gorgeous HDR and a buddy-engine aren't the only similarities that *Dark Messiah* shares with our friend Dr Freeman, what with another member of its menagerie being called a Facehugger – a tentacled beast that flies, hunts in packs and sucks out their prey's innards after coupling with their delicate noggings. Add to this menagerie a one-eyed Cyclops that shifts gigantic rocks around in his bid to search you out – then hurls them at you when he finds you – and a dragon whose head looks a little like a penis and you've got something that approaches what I might consider a good night in.

The essential reason that I'm stoking the old hype machine on this one though,

Flames, seared flesh, eternal fire, limbo – it's like Dudley with more lighter fluid and less comical accents

is that when you're fighting a bad man in *Dark Messiah*, or even a bad orc or a bad necromancer, you always have options. It's never just a case of pulling a trigger or 'unsheathe sword, slash, slash dead'. There's dodging, blocking and parrying. There's being aware that you saw a suspiciously taut rope a few seconds ago that could come in useful. There's manoeuvring your prey into a position just near that deep pit with the spikes. There's your own developed skills, spells and abilities to boost yourself with, and there's the beautifully dynamic and violent ways that the opposition can fight back.

Dark Messiah just conjures up the illusion of a wholly liberating cornucopia of fantasy fighting freedom – pitting you directly as star of the show – then drowns it in blood. Ladies and gentlemen: slow-motion, violent death has finally come to the fantasy genre. Distribute your skill points wisely. **PC7**



Note the convenient bed of spikes.

gr.

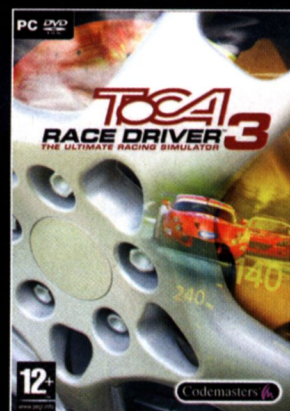
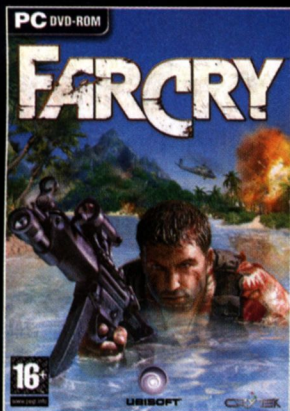
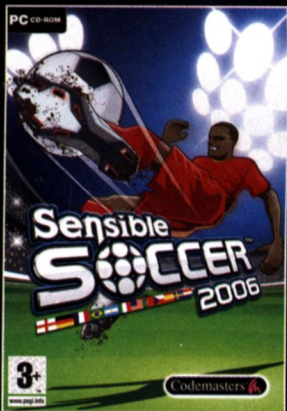
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PCZONE

REVIEWS

Our verdict on the latest PC games

Love thy neighbour

I'M NOT SURE what my neighbours think of me after this weekend. You see, the walls in my flat aren't thick enough to block out loud noise, and I've spent most of this weekend playing *Tomb Raider: Legend*. But most of the racket has come straight from my own mouth.

Comments like "Get up you big-boobed bint!" and "Please get the camera out of your arse" may have inadvertently led my neighbours to believe that I've been partaking in some debauched sexual affair, but I've simply been venting my frustration at Ms Croft and her ample assets.

Back to the world of reviews though, and despite the standard summer drought, we've still got some great titles for you. Strategy buffs will love *Rome: Total War - Alexander* and *CivCity: Rome*, and driving fans are more than catered for with *FlatOut 2*, *OutRun 2006* and *Micro Machines v4*. I'll just have to refrain from playing any driving games at home or my neighbours may just faint when they hear me hollering, "Faster, faster!"

Suzy Wallace

Suzy Wallace, reviews editor

Must Buys!

PC ZONE Classics are our highest award, with only the best games deemed worthy of honour. These are our personal top tips for sheer gaming excellence...



GAME OF THE MONTH

58

ROME: TOTAL WAR - ALEXANDER

The Creative Assembly's strategy epic takes on the might of the Persian empire

The PC ZONE Awards



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



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



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

AND THE REST



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



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



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

The PC Class System

Not all games are created equal, so how do you know if your PC's up to the job? Using real science, we've graded your system from 1-5. Match it with the icon on each review to see if your PC will play the game. We review all games on a variety of systems, including our top-spec, very desirable Xworks X6a-64.

	1	2	3	4	5
CPU	1.2GHz	1.8GHz	2.4GHz	3.0GHz	3.8GHz
RAM	64MB	256MB	512MB	1GB	2GB
Video	32MB	64MB	128MB	256MB	512MB

ALSO REVIEWED

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PCZONE SWEARS...

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- To tell you if a company refuses to send a game to us before it's on sale. There's always a reason
- To hang up on companies who say that 79% isn't a good score. What do they know?
- To listen to you if you think we've got something wrong. Email us at yourshout@pczone.co.uk



Now that's what I call bling.



How many Macedonians does it take to tile a roof?



Can you conquer as much territory as Alexander in just 100 turns?

ROME: TOTAL WAR - ALEXANDER



Martin Korda rides into battle as Rome gets a second expansion...

DEVELOPER The Creative Assembly
PUBLISHER Sega
WEBSITE www.totalwar.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £8.50 (downloadable from www.totalwar.com)



AT A GLANCE...

An expansion pack for *Rome: Total War*, which enables you to emulate the conquering feats of Alexander The Great. Or at least try to.

System requirements



HOW IT STACKS



SON OF ZEUS. VISIONARY. King. Warlord. Tyrant. A man whose empire stretched from Hungary to India, a warrior who stood 10ft tall (OK, more like 5ft) and fired lightning bolts out of his arse. All of these titles and legends have at one time or another been attributed to the mighty conqueror Alexander The Great – admittedly some by me in this very review.

There is, however, one accolade Alexander held that cannot be disputed: military genius. In his short yet glorious life, this young Macedonian king swept across two-thirds of the known world and united it under one banner, often leading his armies to victory against overwhelming odds.

Of course, if he was alive today, any one of us could trounce him at a head-to-head in *Rome: Total War*, right? No problem. Especially if we hid his mouse, cut off all his fingers and unplugged his monitor, before distracting him with a hoax call from the office while we laid waste to his leaderless armies. Mwaaahahahaha.

Seriously though, could we, sons of bank managers and shop assistants emulate this man's incredible feats of conquest? Would you like to find out? Well, here's your chance.

Alexander – a downloadable expansion pack to the PC's greatest ever RTS game *Rome: Total War* – places you firmly in the sandals of the great leader himself and charges you with matching Alexander's incredible feats.

In just 100 turns, you must sweep across the land like a typhoon and capture 30 provinces, including ten key enemy cities, which you must then hold on to and protect from rebel armies and hordes of Persian and Barbarian forces intent on reclaiming their conquered lands. Easy right? Yeah, as if.

OFF WITH THEIR HEADS

From the moment the luscious 3D turn-based strategic map swells onto your monitor, you're hit by the sheer enormity of your task. With just two small provinces under your control on the far western corner of the world, you must sally out on a bold, unwavering campaign of conquest.

Mercy and hesitation are not an option. With the clock ticking, every move becomes critical to completing your objective. Forget fortifying, consolidating or pausing; *Alexander* is a relentless drive towards victory, a blood-spattered surge through

hordes of enemies and overwhelming odds in order to reach one seemingly impossible goal.

You can also forget about auto-resolving anything but the most one-sided of battles. With no time to stop off and replenish your forces, you must drive your commanders on through the world, massacring populations to quell uprisings and to raise the instant funds needed to amass a mercenary army as you travel.

Unlike *Rome*, there's no room or need for politics and diplomacy here. This is a pure, unadulterated cauldron of all-out war and conquest. With fortune favouring the bold, you immediately find yourself launching daring attacks on forces you know are vastly superior to your own, spurred on by past-thick jets of adrenalin as you first sweep aside Barbarian hordes, then march towards the bristling spears of the massed Persian armies, whose cities teem with gold.

UNCOMMON PEOPLE

During the course of *Alexander*, you'll encounter ever more exotic and deadly foes including Indian War elephants – ivory-tusked juggernauts which turn your men into mush as they butt and bulldoze their



"Now, before we start - is everyone wearing their special protective goggles?"

Alexander is a relentless drive towards victory, a blood-spattered surge through hordes of enemies



An attempted enemy cavalry charge ends in disaster.



Finding archers for hire is a rarity.

Phalanx for the memory

Poke them in the eye with a pointed stick



The Phalanx was the cornerstone of Alexander's army.

The success and effectiveness of Alexander's armies was centred on a formation called the Phalanx, a tightly-knit grouping of men carrying 6-12ft spears. By marching slowly towards the enemy with spears extended, a Phalanx would prove almost impenetrable to a frontal assault, either by foot soldiers or by cavalry.

However, the Phalanx also had two weaknesses. First, it was very slow and could be easily outflanked. Second, it was susceptible to missile attacks. That's where the second key component of Alexander's armies came in - cavalry.

By combining the pace and manoeuvrability of his horsemen with the solid platform of the Phalanx, Alexander often overcame unbelievable odds. And if you're going to emulate him, you're going to have to master this art, too. Well, that and mincing up the entrails of anyone who opposes you of course.

way through your ranks. There are also Indian naked female archers that'll have your men furiously polishing their spears instead of pointing them, and barbarian chariot archers which break up even your most well-organised defensive lines, while peppering them with a hail of missiles.

Before long you find yourself fighting on four or five fronts, pushing towards your goal with unrelenting determination as you watch the turn-counter plummet. As your holdings swell, you'll become ever more thinly stretched, with handfuls of defenders trying to hold back tides of enemy attacks against your cities as you venture ever further from your capital.

RED MIST

Without doubt, *Alexander* is one of the most taxing *Total War* experiences to date, forcing you to bloody your hands on the battlefield as you try to outmanoeuvre Persian and Barbarian armies that often dwarf your own.

Odds of three to one are normal, four or five to one are common, while six to one are rare, but possible. You're going to need to call upon every battle and victory you've ever had if you're to stand any chance of matching Alexander's legacy. So





This is what happens when you wear the wrong colour camouflage.

For just over eight measly quid, you get one of the most challenging *Total War* campaigns to date

Totally real tournament

Best of two out of three?

Will you go on a killing spree in the *Total War* Tournament?



Once you've completed several of the new historical battles, you can then play these levels in a new multiplayer mode called Tournament mode, either against the AI or against your mates (or faceless Germans) online.

Rather than pitting yourself against each other in one-off confrontations, you're given the chance to prove your superiority – or complete inability – over several encounters. The player who wins the highest number of battles is declared champion of the universe, while the loser is humiliatingly denigrated for being a wet-panted pansy.

steel yourself and prepare for one hell of a ride – well, at least till you're two-thirds of the way through the game...

Sadly, after around 60 or 70 turns (if you're on course to achieving your goal), you suddenly realise the hardest part is behind you. No longer are you the underdog, eking out a campaign with threadbare armies while the might of Persia faces you, cackling at your paltry forces before being silenced by a strategic masterstroke. Unlike *Rome*, there's no alliance of factions that rises to oppose you. Instead, you find yourself simply sweeping aside the remnants of a once formidable foe.

With the end in sight, the last few strongholds begin to crumble more easily than a paper dam, meaning the final few hours of the campaign become a predictable, somewhat uninspired waltz past the finishing post.

BUGGING ME

Also irksome is the absence of night-time battles. After the visual feast of *Barbarian Invasion*, where the night sky would be lit up by a pyrotechnic extravaganza of fire – especially during siege battles – *Alexander's* constant daylight conflicts feel overwhelmingly uniform.

Bugs are also fairly commonplace, especially during siege battles where entire squads suddenly freeze on siege towers or

walls, drastically stretching your already frayed forces. What's more, cavalry sometimes do the exact opposite of what you tell them to – including Alexander's elite guard – and can wade straight into a row of spears you've just ordered them to run in the opposite direction of.

But these problems are only minor irritations, like flies tickling the back of a majestic war elephant. The relative simplicity of the final third of *Alexander's* campaign is offset by the sheer difficulty of getting there, while the bugs and glitches never prove so crippling that they destroy the immersion and brutality of the real-time skirmishes.

Add to that the paltry price and copious hours of enjoyment, and it's hard to find too much to severely criticise here, especially as *Alexander* possesses much more than just a solitary new campaign. Oh yes my friends, there's plenty more for us to cover before we're done. So sit tight and stay with me...

HISTORY REPEATING

Having retraced the legendary commander's footsteps in a freeform way, you're also given the opportunity to relive the key battles of his campaign via six brain-bleedingly challenging historical battles.

Starting off with a bit-part role helping your father Philip crush the Greeks, you soon find yourself in increasingly more challenging situations as you seek to push



Hard bunch, these Macedonians.



Barbarian armies often hugely outnumber your own.



"20 horse kebabas coming right up!"



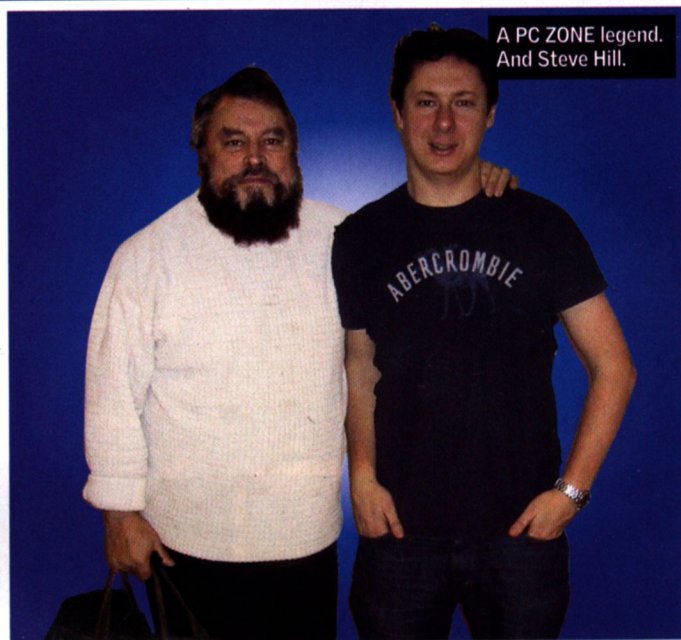
"Has anyone seen my contact lens?"

back the Persian masses, including battles in which the odds are stacked so highly against you, that you start to wonder whether it's even possible to prevail.

Rivers must be traversed by your plodding Phalanxes (see 'Phalanx For The Memory', p59), while Persian defenders unleash swarms of arrows at your slow-moving forces. Towering city walls have to be scaled and gateways smashed, while burning oil pours on your already threadbare armies, further diminishing

The talented Mr Blessed

Booming Brit actor in non-shouting shocker



A PC ZONE legend. And Steve Hill.

As you may well already know, British acting legend Brian Blessed provides some of the voiceovers in *Alexander*. My expectations were high of bellowing war cries reminiscent of Blessed's humorous and much-loved outbursts in *Flash Gordon*.

Imagine my surprise then when, on firing up the main campaign, I was treated to a litting historical recital about Alexander's past by none other than the foghorn-voiced one. It's testament to Blessed's acting talent and versatility that he's pulled it off with incredible aplomb. What's more, his performance places into stark contrast the painful attempts at a Macedonian accent in the pre-battle speeches (not voiced by Blessed), which sound more like one of the French knights from *Monty Python And The Holy Grail* than the most fearsome military commander in history.

your resources and raising the challenge to even greater heights.

As if that wasn't hard enough, you must also ensure that Alexander survives, a mechanic that doesn't quite work as well as it could due to *Total War's* squad-based battle template, but does add an extra level of challenge and excitement to each encounter.

DIRT CHEAP

As with so many things in life, *Alexander's* ultimate value comes down to money. For just over eight measly quid, you're getting one of the most challenging *Total War* campaigns to date, six superbly crafted historical battles, a new multiplayer mode, four new factions (Macedonia, Persia, India and the Barbarians) and endless hours of replayability. By the time you've reached the end of the campaign, you'll have started to appreciate just what a gargantuan feat Alexander achieved. And he didn't even have the luxury of sitting at home in his pants while masterminding his strategic strokes of genius.

Sure, it's got its faults, oversights and weaknesses, but if you love *Rome: Total War*, then you simply can't afford to miss out on this. After all, you can't call yourself the best until you've emulated the best – and they don't get any better than Alexander The Great. **PCZ**

PCZONE

Graphics As impressive as ever
 Sound Eclectic mix of haunting tunes and pounding war anthems
 Multiplayer New Tournament mode, extra maps and factions

- ✓ Massively challenging campaign
- ✓ Great historical battles
- ✓ Countless hours of entertainment
- ✓ Cheap
- ✗ Several annoying bugs and glitches
- ✗ No night-time battles

85

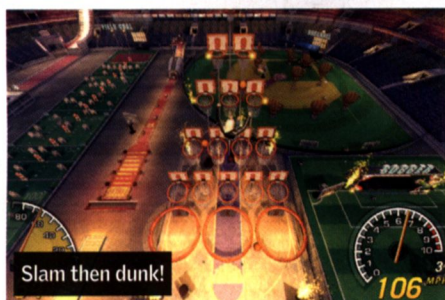
Alexander The Highly Recommended



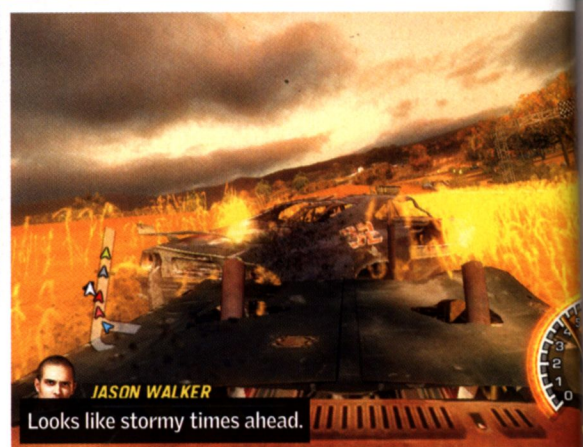
But who's going the wrong way?



That's got to be a home run.



Slam then dunk!



Looks like stormy times ahead.

FLATOUT 2

Suzy Wallace discovers that there's no seatbelts in Bugbear's racer...

DEVELOPER Bugbear Entertainment
PUBLISHER Empire Interactive
WEBSITE www.flatoutgame.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £29.99



AT A GLANCE...

Physics-laden arcade-style racer featuring plenty of debris to crash through and a selection of morally dubious mini-games.

System requirements	3
HOW IT STACKS	■■■■■
NEED FOR SPEED: MOST WANTED	88%
FLATOUT	79%
FLATOUT 2	76%

THERE ARE A FEW jobs in this world that really plumb the depths of humanity: being David Hasselhoff's stylist, overseeing the live coverage from the *Big Brother* house and being a crash test dummy. The last is normally only carried out by humanoid dummies packed full of highly advanced technology and bits of pigs' guts, but *FlatOut 2* mixes things up a bit by putting you into the role instead. Featuring a selection of impossibly beautiful opposition drivers for you to test your skills against, the creators have tried their best to improve upon an already successful formula by upping the ante with more tracks, more cars and plenty more roadside decoration to demolish.

CRASH AND BURN

Set off round the track and you instantly notice that the skittish, rally-style handling of the original is still very much in effect, encouraging you to slide around corners and occasionally causing wild spin-offs and a frantic scrabble at the controls to get your car back under control.

This time though, you're not just restricted to muscle cars, with trucks,

compacts and sports cars also providing welcome additions to your garage.

Nitro is gained during races from jumping, shunting your opponents and smashing your way through any destructible scenery that litters the track. In addition, the physics on show are impressive (although they verge more on humour than realism) – fences fly, bridges tumble, walls collapse and barrels and debris are thrown across the screen. However, as the quantity of destructible debris decreases, you have to rely more on physical contact to get those last essential bits of boost. Here, you need to strike a balance between not sending your car to the scrapyard, gaining more nitro and staying as close to the front as possible in order to get that first place and the cash.

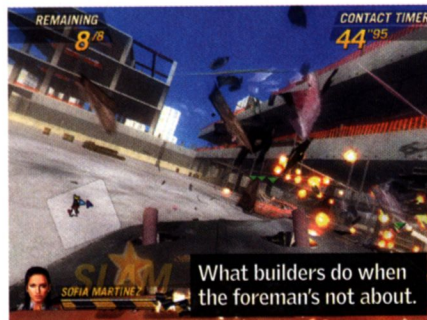
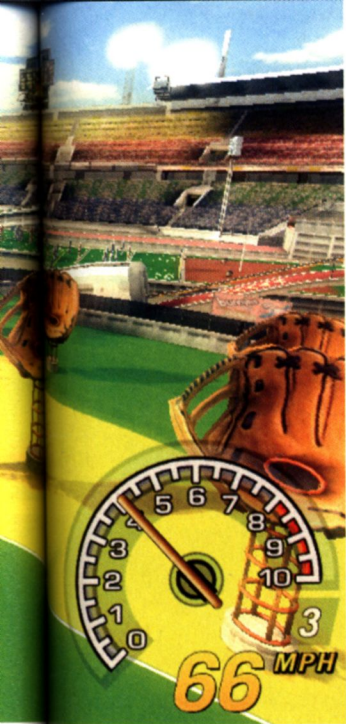
Shunting the other cars around mid-race is also hugely satisfying, although sometimes you find yourself having nudged a rival, only to get them stuck sideways on your front bumper, killing your own speed and making it extremely hard to shake them off.

Thankfully, this time round your driver is a lot harder to eject through your own windscreen than before, with this only really happening at high-speed impacts with solid walls – quite understandable really.

To start off with, the levels are pretty varied and will see you racing your way through urban streets, along dry canals, over farmland and through desert, all complete with plenty of short-cuts and alternative routes. However, you soon notice that the tracks on offer are just variations along several themes, and once you've completed the derby level, you may start to find the level design repetitive, although you do get rewarded with extra levels depending on which tier you're driving in. By far the most fun of these are the derby events, in which the aim is to keep your vehicle in one piece while taking out rivals with the vehicular equivalent of wrestling moves, with the later introduction of special stages and oval racing feeling rather staid and boring in comparison.

TWIST AND SHOUT

Besides the racing, *FlatOut* displays the same sick humour as the original in its mini-games. This time around, the twisted minds at Bugbear have come up with an impressive total of 12 mini-games, in which you compete by making your driver exit the car through the windscreen. The games on offer vary from high jump through curling to baseball, and although everyone's bound to



Crash round my place

Challenge your mates with *FlatOut 2*'s party mode



By far the most enjoyable aspect of the game is getting a bunch of friends over, drawing up some chairs to your monitor and checking out the party mode. In this, you can enter up to eight players into a tournament of mini-games and after picking from six easy games, six difficult ones or the full monty with all 12, you each take it in turns to send your driver flying and rack up the highest score. With only your mates to beat and plenty of company to rib should they get it wrong, this is by far the most enjoyable way to play the game.



have their own favourites, stone skipping's a particularly ingenious example of just what fun can be had when you combine a body and some ragdoll physics.

It's all a bit trickier than last time on this front though, meaning that it'll take some practice before you even have a clue what you're doing, let alone nail down the technique. Although this is no doubt intended to add longevity, not everyone's going to have the patience to get through the initial learning curve.

SMASH AND GRAB

In short then, despite the inherent fun of the game, the racing starts to lose its appeal after a while; the main reason you'll still be playing this in six months time will be to challenge a group of mates to a driver-flinging competition in the excellent party mode. The larger number of tracks, cars and mini-games feel like only relatively minor improvements over the original and the whole thing ends up feeling like more of an expansion than the next evolution. Hardly a bad thing considering the original's success, but maybe not quite the smash hit that we'd hoped for. **PCZ**

PCZONE

Graphics Vivid environments and great collisions
 Sound Plenty of licensed rock tracks
 Multiplayer Fantastic party mode and full online play

- ✓ Excellent destructive mayhem
- ✓ Hilarious use of ragdolls
- ✓ Party mode extends life
- ✗ Not enough variation in levels
- ✗ Steep learning curve for mini-games
- ✗ Not much new content

76

Smashing

The twisted minds at Bugbear have come up with 12 mini-games, in which you compete by making your driver exit the car through the windscreen



Horse trainer + chariot makers + charioteer schools = the future of entertainment.



This isn't *Civ*. No arming your Romans with nukes later on.



Without wells, your plebs will watch while Rome burns.



Combat is alright, but it's not *Total War*.



Click on a house and see the lives of the little people inside.

CIVCITY:ROME

Richie Shoemaker sieves through the Roman detritus...

DEVELOPER Firefly Studios
 PUBLISHER 2K Games
 WEBSITE www.2kgames.com/civcityrome
 ETA July 28
 PRICE £34.99



AT A GLANCE...

SimCity meets *Civilization*. In *Rome* – hence the name. Not much *Civ*, but that's modern marketing for you.

System requirements **3**

HOW IT STACKS



THERE IS THIS great word, 'synergy', which, although it has been hijacked by marketing people who gesticulate unnecessarily and drink too much double espresso, describes perfectly the events and decisions that very probably led to the release of *CivCity: Rome*.

Fittingly, the concept probably arose out of some brainstorming meeting by marketing executives looking to capitalise on established brands, in light of the fact that 'the Rome dollar is real big right now.' The name first pops into the head of one of them and, bingo, a perfect example of brand extension is born. "Hey, don't we own Sid Meier now?" asks 2K Games' hip marketing dude in the peach turtleneck and sandals. "And those Firefly boys aren't doing much, are they?"

So Firefly get an email to dust off the *Stronghold 2* engine, Sid gets a diplomatic envoy telling him, 'The console changeover necessitates we resource brand harvesting in light of the technology flux,' or something, and the design document is written: 'Put together a city-building

resource-management game, stick a *Civ*-style Civopedia in there and get Sid to talk about it in press interviews.' Job done.

"Dude, that name is so cool," salivates Hip Dude's minion. "*Civ*... Between *SimCity* and *CivCity*. It's perfect. Where d'you get 'em from?" "They just flow, man. Let's lunch."

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

OK, so that may not be an accurate history of *CivCity*'s conception and development, but what I have here on my hard drive is a city-building resource-management game set during the Roman period, with a trademark *Civ*-style Civopedia neatly tacked on. It's one of a veritable legion of similar games asking you to do the same thing: build a shack on the banks of the Tiber and finish up 20 hours later (or 200 – depending on how difficult you find such things), with a sprawling network of farms, houses, shops and various places where animals and humans are slaughtered in the name of entertainment.

Initially, the appeal is the association with the great *Civilization*, but really you'd have to be pretty gullible to be suckered into

thinking this is anything but a Rome-flavoured sequel to Firefly's own *Stronghold*. That in itself is no bad thing (and let's not forget Firefly had a hand in the venerable *Caesar* series), because if there was one aspect *Stronghold* excelled in, it was building cities. *CivCity* does too, and it goes a step further by letting you in on the daily lives of your citizens. This voyeuristic approach is nothing new, and while you wouldn't really want to watch Gaius Pompus hacking up sheep and buying bread for too long, it's a calming facet of the game that helps foster a degree of care for your CivSims. (Hang on a minute, there's another game right there. I'm in the wrong job.)

HAIRCUT 100AD

All the erection options one expects in such games are present and correct and I'm not going to maul through all the things you must do to win (since placing a well so that it services a maximum number of houses is pretty much universal). Suffice to say that while the process might appear rather mundane and the interaction



Stronghold
excelled in city-
building, and
CivCity: Rome
does the same

between buildings and people pretty much standard, it's to the credit of the developers that getting on with business is a piece of piss. The 3D camera zooms and rotates as 3D cameras should, icons are well placed and perfectly sized, and information is easy to dig out to help you gauge whether people are happy. Moreover, where other games force you to build extravagant cities on less than solid foundations, so as to have the whole lot come crashing down when one toilet cleaner decides to downsize, here you can insist Romans change jobs and therefore make sure the olives get picked – even if it means there's one less barber in town.

SCENE IT BEFORE

Of course, being part of an empire means there are other towns and cities about the place, and trading with them is a necessary part of the game. A trading centre will allow you to set up routes with nearby towns, while a port is required to swap goods with those on other shores. You don't get to see much, but you at least feel part of a growing empire rather than an



"Was it something I said?"



Order your granaries to
only accept certain goods.

A day in the life of a CivCity sim

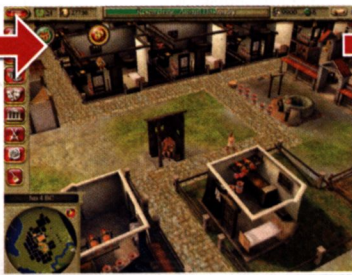
Romans doing their business in the streets? Then call Aquila Chensis - he'll take care of it...



Here is young Aquila in bed (in the middle there, look), recuperating after a long day of toil...



Luckily, his place of work is just next-door to his home. He lives alone, if you hadn't guessed.



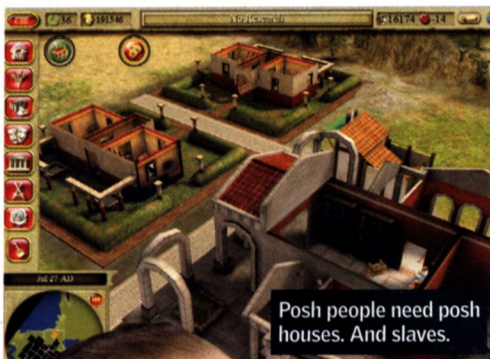
When he isn't scooping poop, he's at his shed wondering why no-one will marry him. Why indeed.



When the whistle goes at the end of the shift, it's time to kick back with some blood sports (edited, of course).



If there's no work, vagrants will sit by the town centre. And moan.



Posh people need posh houses. And slaves.



It's the trading screen. Next.

isolated governor sitting in a bedsit playing a computer game.

The same 2D map is required when sending troops out of town to defend against barbarian incursions. Again, there's not much to gawp at, but should the unwashed, ill-tempered ranks of your enemy ever reach the city gates, you can at least call out your legions and deal with them. Combat isn't on a par with *Total War*, or even *Stronghold 2* for that matter, more akin to the process of putting out fires, but then if you were into blood and guts, I doubt you'd have read this far.

TO THE LIONS

Talking of blood and guts, *CivCity* is rather sterile and having built a Colosseum in which to stage gladiator duels, it's disappointing not to have claret flowing through the streets, as was often the case

back in the day - at least that's what it says in the Civopedia. Perhaps for the typical Roman, the arenas were just places to watch a bit of reality programming - but in more modern times we expect them to be the epicentre of heroism and romance-fuelled action. Damn that Ridley Scott.

Synergy aside, *CivCity: Rome* is a wonderfully engaging game; striking in its ease of use and rewarding in terms of depth. *Stronghold* offered a wider menu of gameplay styles, but all too often fell apart in trying to pull so much together. By comparison, *CivCity* is quite lightweight. Rarely should you have to read the manual, yet rarely will you feel detached. Away from the Easy difficulty setting there's always some matter that needs attention, and in that regard maybe Caesar Sid had more of a hand in the game than we might have given him credit for. **PCZ**

PCZONE

Graphics **Busy and bold**
Sound **Fine - nothing to write home about**
Multiplayer **Solo fun only**

- ✓ Involving and interesting
- ✓ Good interface and easy to get into
- ✓ It's got a Civopedia
- ✗ It's not very *Civ*
- ✗ All glory and no glory

81

Rome, sweet Rome

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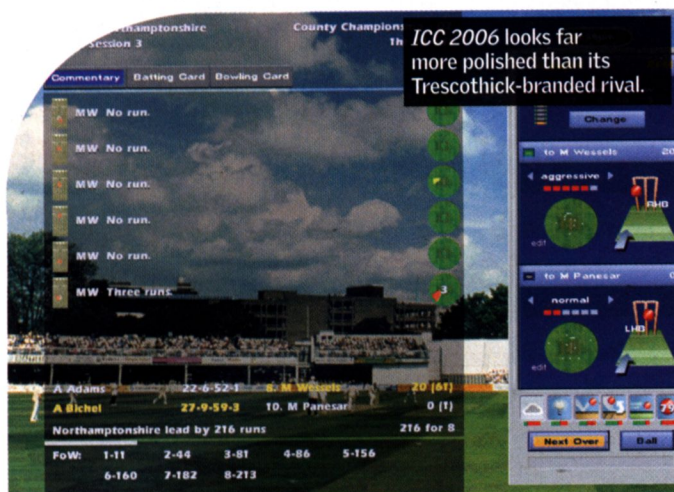
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FREE DELIVERY

FREE DELIVERY

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INTERNATIONAL CRICKET CAPTAIN 2006

Something wicket this way comes

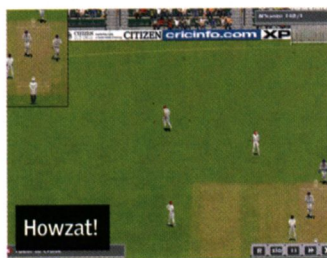
DEVELOPER Empire Interactive
PUBLISHER Xplosiv
WEBSITE www.xplosiv.net
ETA Out now
PRICE £19.99

System requirements 1

WOULD YOU ADAM and Eve it... You wait all year for a cricket management sim to land on your desk – no really, you do – and then two of them land on said surface during the same issue. Anyone would think it's an Ashes year or something.

International Cricket Captain has now become a permanent part of the PC calendar, and this year's edition looks like it hasn't changed much since it first appeared back in 1998. Your involvement in the action mainly revolves around setting the aggression of your otherwise civil batters and bowlers, and then watching the game play itself out – that's about as exciting as it gets.

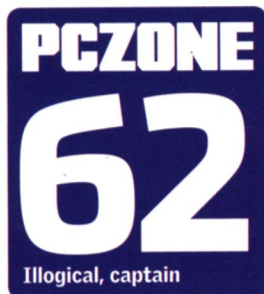
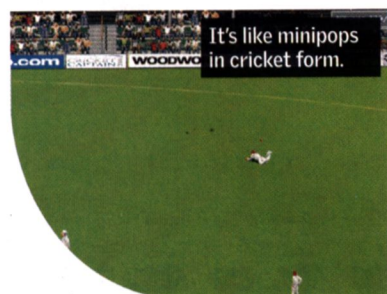
Highlights can also be viewed in a showcase of 2006's finest sprites



(take a look at the screenshots), and how often you gawp at them is up to you. You'll feel tempted to watch every ball at first, but once the game starts to drag you'll turn the highlights off, and the game will quickly descend into blind Enter key-jabbing, and then probably hitting yourself with the keyboard as well.

Simply because of the slower nature of the sport, *International Cricket Captain* is no way near as entertaining or fast-paced as your average footy sim, but while it lasts, it admittedly makes for an absorbing cricket game. It hasn't changed much, but this title should do more than enough to keep wicket fans entertained until we take on the Aussies again at the end of the year.

Andy Robinson



MARCUS TRESCOTHICK'S CRICKET COACH

It won't bowl you over

DEVELOPER Rockingham Software
PUBLISHER Focus Multimedia
WEBSITE www.focusmm.co.uk
ETA Out now
PRICE £9.99

System requirements 1



LET'S BE HONEST – the only reason most people pretend to like cricket is so they can go to The Oval and get drunk in a tent. But if you fall into the category who enjoy watching the chaps in white edge, stroke and slice through the day, there's not very much in the way of variety when it comes to cricket games. Enter *Marcus Trescorthick's Cricket Coach*, a £10 title that promises to be 'the most comprehensive cricket simulation ever'. You can even put it on a laptop and play while you're drunk in a tent.

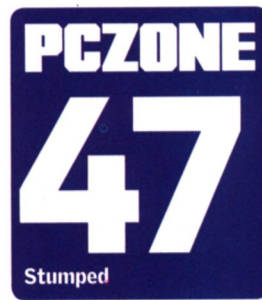
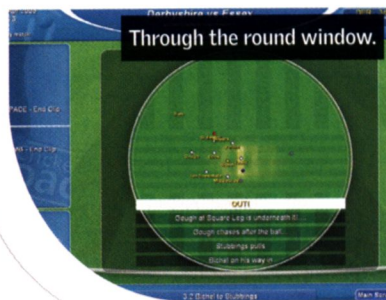
As far as management games go though, *International Cricket Captain* (see left) is the *Football Manager* of the cricket world, which unfortunately leaves Mr Trescorthick's offering as the lacking and inferior

Champ Man. For a start, we have no idea exactly how this is Marcus Trescorthick's cricket sim, as the only place he crops up is in a rather dramatic photo on the splash screen.

In addition, as expected from the bargain-bin asking price, the interface is cheap and simple, while commentary and audio is for the most part non-existent. *Marcus Trescorthick's Cricket Coach* instead opts for raw stats over fancy cursor animations, but still doesn't manage to offer the depth and addictiveness found in the title opposite.

Sure, it's only a tenner, but unless money is, as Mick Hucknall once trilled in his chirpy red-headed way, too tight to mention, we recommend buying the pricier but superior *International Cricket Captain*.

Andy Robinson



EMPIRES RISE AND FALL BUT HEROES LIVE FOREVER



RISE & FALL

CIVILIZATIONS AT WAR™

WWW.RISEANDFALLGAME.COM

"PURE 24-CARAT GAMING GOLD!"

PCGAMER 91%



ENTER THE FRAY IN
HERO COMMAND MODE



DEFEAT RIVAL FLEETS IN
DRAMATIC NAVAL BATTLES



CONQUER IN MULTI-OR
SINGLE-PLAYER MODES





OUTRUN 2006: COAST 2 COAST

Steve Hogarty is in a Ferrari with a pretty lady for the first and last time...

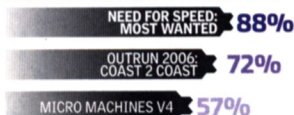
DEVELOPER Sumo Digital
PUBLISHER Sega
WEBSITE
www.outrun2006.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £34.99

AT A GLANCE...

An updated version of the Xbox-exclusive *OutRun2* comes to PC via a sterling conversion. Prepare to rev your Ferrari hard.

System requirements 2

HOW IT STACKS



RIGHT, I'VE JUST paused *OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast* halfway around the final corner of the Casino Town track because I've come to a decision. The PC needs more arcade games. Simple, fun, pick-up-and-play games. Consoles can't mimic PCs, but by god, the PC market should revel in the fact that it can do console games and it can do them better than the consoles can. *OutRun 2006* is a proof of concept.

I say proof of concept because it rarely occurs that you'd actually rather play a game like *OutRun 2006* on your PC. It's fundamentally damned to be the incorrect medium for such a game unless you've got a decent pad and the necessary bits to connect your PC to a high-def TV or projector (and a nice big couch).

Think about it though: if you've got that magical set-up as described, you'll be playing *OutRun 2006* at 720p and a solid 60fps, far better than anything you'd get with the console version of the game – and that will impress people, making you more popular and better-looking. Toning down the crazed fantasies of multimedia social PC hubs in the living room though, console games can be

done well on PC without needing to re-mortgage your house for an epic TV.

ZOOM ZOOM ZOOM

However, despite being an excellent conversion, *OutRun 2006* is not an overly spectacular game in itself, being the delayed PC version of the expanded version of the original *OutRun2* on Xbox. It can be summarised in a few sentences – drive your Ferrari as fast as possible along a big, one-way road winding left and right and rolling up and down, avoiding traffic, rarely taking your foot off the accelerator and basically trying to keep your speed as high as possible for as long as possible. Tight corners must be conquered by drifting, which gradually lowers your speed but allows you to take corners swiftly, tightly, efficiently and with a pervading sense of coolness. Once you reach the end of a stage, you must choose to race an easier stage or a harder stage by turning left or right. This happens four times, and creates the characteristic 15-stage pyramid layout fans of the series know so well.

The branching track design is a trait of the seamless and effortless kind of racing Sega have always advocated, and it's a trait that's apparent in every aspect of *OutRun*

2006. You could argue that the game hides behind its arcade fundamentals and purist ideals, and you could point out that it feels like you're actually controlling the camera and that the car just happens to be stuck to it, and you'd be right. It's as good an argument as scoffing at the way crashing into a wall at 300kmph results in your car flipping through the air and landing back on its wheels to continue on unscathed though – because that's just the kind of game this is.

OutRun 2006's fantastic arcade style is above criticism because it does what the series has always done and it does it extremely well. You go fast and you skid around corners to impress your girlfriend, the challenge is doing it faster and faster.

SET ME FREE

The game's shortcomings are there though: the fact that this is, at its heart, a console game. Plus the fact that the developers haven't written any code to deal with the eventuality that your car will hit something, instead allowing it to get stuck on the backs of trucks and vibrate rapidly, threatening the laws of physics until you break free of your vehicular prison. We also have to mention the nasty new versions of

GOAL

1st Stage Ranking 8 Rank AAA

Freakishly long arms included.



You can almost smell the exhaust fumes can't you?

Turbo OutRun2 SP, MP on XP?

So many different versions, so what are you getting here?



There's no greater skill to have.

To be honest, I'm not sure if I understand the hierarchy of the *OutRun* series anymore, but there have been a whole bunch of different versions. *OutRun 2006* combines all of the tracks from *OutRun2* and *OutRun2 SP*, which means there are 30 tracks (not including reversed tracks). There are 15 cars (the most ever in an *OutRun* game) and several different modes. The most notable is the one in which you have to impress your girlfriend by performing typical arcade tasks such as dribbling a beach ball or weaving between a convoy of trucks. Real women aren't impressed by these skills however, pushing *OutRun 2006* ever further into the realms of fantasy.

The PC market should revel in the fact that it can do console games, and do them better than the consoles can



"We're racing for pinks, punk."

Get in!

What a long and winding road.

Oops-a-daisy!



"Follow that cab!"

the original songs which seem to have been performed by some hysterical woman Sega found dancing outside a petrol station at 2am. These are just cracks on the surface though – at its core, *OutRun 2006* is as pure an arcade racing experience as it was back in the '80s.

YOU'VE GOT A FRIEND

Online modes have had a healthy passage from the console versions too, with online bouts being accessible in a matter of minutes. Buddy lists let you know when your friends are playing, and all of the single-player content is available to race across. Speaking of which, the game contains an impressive amount of unlockable content – stages, songs, cars and goals, all of which are unlockable by trading in the number of miles you've driven in any mode in the game.

It's about time the PC had some arcade fun, and *OutRun 2006* is offering it in droves. Just make sure you've got your joystick ready. **PCZ**

PCZONE

Graphics Stages and cars are gorgeous and slick
 Sound Classic retro tunes from the 1986 version
 Multiplayer Buddy lists, head-to-head, multiplayer is well catered for

- ✓ Loads of content
- ✓ Loads more content to unlock
- ✓ Delightfully retro
- ✓ Just really fun to play
- ✗ Collisions are awkward
- ✗ Physics sometimes feel inconsistent

72

Pure retro arcade joy



ETROM: THE ASTRAL ESSENCE

A crazy nightmare laughing at you

DEVELOPER PM Studios
PUBLISHER PM Studios
WEBSITE www.etrom.net
ETA Out now
PRICE €30 (£21)

System requirements 2



THIS GAME IS serious. Not outstandingly good, but deadly serious. A futuristic fantasy sci-fi sword-world with a paper-RPG and comic attached, in a world where there's a perpetual curfew. Citizens congregate outside (in contravention of the curfew I might add) to stare at propaganda boards that read 'War Brings Peace' and 'This Kind Of Ham-fisted Propaganda Is A Threadbare Sci-fi Cliché'.

Your first mission is to stealth your way from your home to the sewers. However, with the game's control method, stealth is such slow, difficult and unfair progress that it's far more interesting (and worthwhile) to just kill the guards as they appear, dying and trying again until you make it.

In addition, the mouse-orientated controls are possibly intended to be

innovative, but they're more than a little bothersome. You do get used to it, but you never feel as in control as you should be. Your potential reaction time to new threats is slower, and your many deaths are that much quicker. Combat is easily manageable with a couple of enemies, but with the frequent mobs, the multiple clicks required to attack each foe is just frantic and a bit cumbersome.

Without the drawbacks, this game would have been hackneyed fun just for the bizarre dialogue. You can't deny the charm of lines like: "My old life is a ripped curtain, a dance macabre that we must watch, discover, listen to and destroy". In that order, right? It's still ploddingly adequate in an unsurprising way, but the faults are just too many.

Jon Blyth



PCZONE
46
 Could do better, see me

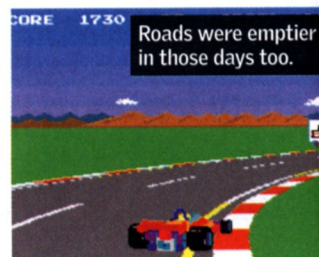


NAMCO MUSEUM: 50TH ANNIVERSARY

Not all museums are boring

DEVELOPER Digital Eclipse/Namco
PUBLISHER Namco
WEBSITE www.namco.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £19.99

System requirements 1



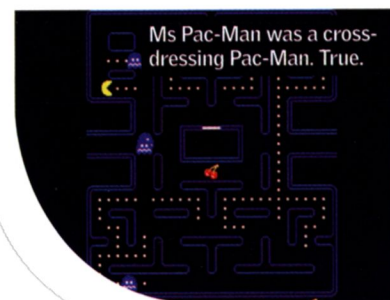
50TH ANNIVERSARY? You know, I never realised Namco's videogame heritage stretched back to the 1950s – the graphics back then must have been *really* shit. *Namco Museum* is a collection of 14 retro arcade games including *Galaxian*, *Galaga*, *Dig-Dug* and *Pac-Man*, and with the exception of one or two, all are genuine classics that you should play if you have any interest in our videogame history.

However, the problem is that Namco are charging you 20 quid for a very lacklustre package that has a 'retro-cool interface' featuring the coin-op cabinets – and bummer-all else. No interviews with the creators, no facts and figures, no promo sheets or adverts from the time – nada.

In their place is a piss-poor soundtrack consisting of a handful of obscure 1980s tracks, with the only recognisable tune being *Come On Eileen* by Dexy's Midnight Runners, which incidentally, brought back painful memories of a party I went to in my teens when the girl I fancied got off with someone else. Probably because I was too busy playing *Pac-Man* down the local fish and chip shop to chat her up.

But I digress. We love retro games such as *Galaxian*, *Xevious* et al – check out our redesigned Retro Zone on page 116 – but would we pay money *again* for these ageing titles when there's *Prey* to fire up? I'll say nowt else except direct the uninitiated towards the website www.mame.net.

Jamie Sefton



PCZONE
37
 Old

RAISE AN ARMY.
RULE THE WORLD.



COFFEE BREAK

Choco Milk,
number 55 please

DEVELOPER

Indie Games Productions

PUBLISHER Nobilis

WEBSITE www.nobilis-france.com

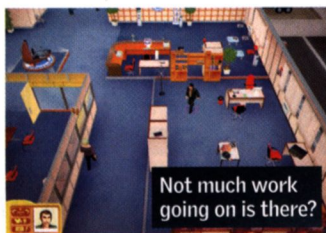
ETA Out now

PRICE £1999

System requirements 1

ON PAPER, THIS is probably the most boring game ever made. Just when I thought my days of admin hell were over, I have to make untold photocopies of the 'stapleton report' and phone every customer to let them know about the problems in our accounts department. *Coffee Break* truly is a game that takes sadistic pleasure in reminding me of my dark and sordid history with the photocopier.

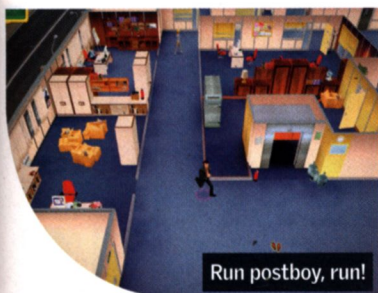
But I'm being all melodramatic; *Coffee Break*, when it works, is actually quite good. Playing in a top-down point-and-click set-up, you go about your duties as one of two characters. You're given tasks to do each day, such as photocopying and making phone calls, but you're also given objectives to complete, such as arranging someone's birthday party or stealing money from the company.



You can chat to your co-workers by choosing pre-determined 'chat' topics, and if you tickle their fancy you'll eventually become friends. As new buddies, you can ask your colleagues to do your work for you, or if you're 'extra-special' friends, you can pop to the storage cupboard for an office quickie.

It's fun while it lasts, but *Coffee Break* is still far from stellar. The set-up is very linear, it lacks depth and the theme tune feels like industrial solvent in my ears. But it's still better than the stuff from our coffee machine.

Andy Robinson



ARCHLORD

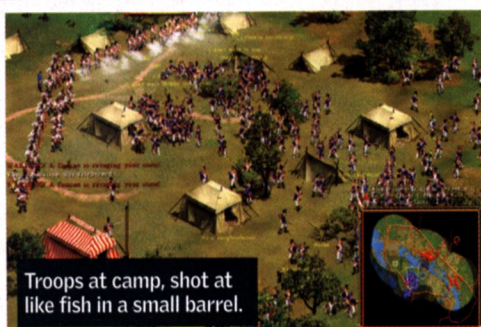
WWW.ARCHLORDGAME.COM



That's right reader, it's the Battle Of Austerlitz.



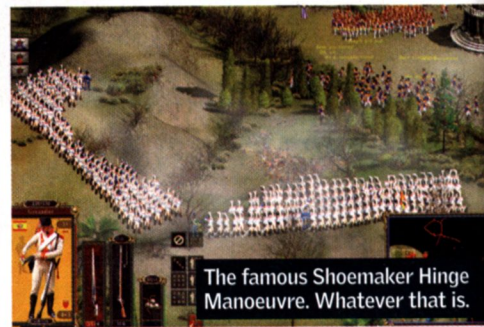
"Hold fire lads, until they walk into the yellow bit."



Troops at camp, shot at like fish in a small barrel.



Reload, dammit! Reload!



The famous Shoemaker Hinge Manoeuvre. Whatever that is.

COSSACKS II: BATTLE FOR EUROPE

Richie Shoemaker offers the standalone expansion to his review of the original sequel

DEVELOPER GSC Game World
 PUBLISHER CDV
 WEBSITE www.cossacks2.de
 ETA Out now
 PRICE £19.99

AT A GLANCE...

Take some *Age Of Empires*, some *Total War*, add charm, a pinch of 'seen it all before' and bake in pre-camouflage era. Et voilà!

System requirements

3

HOW IT STACKS

ROME: TOTAL WAR 93%

IMPERIAL GLORY 85%

COSSACKS II: BATTLE FOR EUROPE 73%

WITHOUT REGURGITATING WHAT'S been said before, *Cossacks II* is an increasingly charming 2D RTS set in the Napoleonic era, where ranks of troops shoot their load and spend an excruciatingly tense minute trying to ram their balls back into their barrel. This here *Battle For Europe* then, is what some publishers would call a 'Game Of The Year' edition – but, of course, seeing as *Cossacks II* failed to garner any such awards, it becomes by necessity a 'standalone expansion'. Standalone because it's the original game, expansion because it's got some added bits.

The original game had one-off battles, a skirmish option, a linear single-player campaign that played more like *Age Of Empires*, and also a *Battle For Europe* mode. This slipped in one of those increasingly popular *Risk*-like maps so you could move armies about the various provinces before controlling them on the field of battle.

Apart from some naming confusion, what *Battle For Europe* adds specifically

are three new nations, a smattering of new unit types, a couple of single-player campaigns and some standalone historical missions. Such clichéd features require a clichéd critique, prompting me to say this is largely a by-the-numbers add-on offering more of the same. The *Battle For Europe* mode, despite being the name taken for this release, is hardly enriched by the new units, and the linear campaigns go over the same old ground. More intriguing are the historical battles such as Borodino and Waterloo, but they simply highlight that historical accuracy is not the game's strongest aspect.

BATTLE-READY

The appeal of *Cossacks II* lies in the battles. Wheeling your troops around to get as many rifles in range as possible and ordering them to open up at the exact right time is key. It's a puzzle game in that respect, one of timing and placement, exacerbated by factors like morale and fatigue. As nothing has changed here, *Cossacks II* remains an enjoyable re-enactment of wholesale

slaughter as any you could hope for. If you missed the game before, then this is a great introduction to one of gaming's great mid-table franchises. Fans who laid out the full whack for the original release should be more wary, however. **PCZ**

PCZONE

Graphics Ageing, but kinda cute
 Sound Satisfactory, but it's the same as before
 Multiplayer Six-player skirmishes, online or LAN

- ✓ Unique style of combat
- ✓ Lots of senseless killing
- ✓ Wide variety of game modes
- ✓ Good value
- ✗ More meat on same bones

73

Cossacks 2006



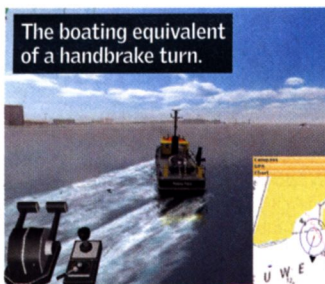
Just one of many ships you can steer into a cliff.

SHIP SIMULATOR 2006

The new face of terror

DEVELOPER VStep
PUBLISHER Lighthouse
WEBSITE www.shipsim.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £19.99

System requirements 3



The boating equivalent of a handbrake turn.

TEN YEARS AGO, *Resident Evil* was thrilling dozens of PlayStation owners. The slow but inexorable approach of your undead foes. The claustrophobia as the in-built lag in the control method prevented you from turning around as fast as you liked.

Transform Jill Valentine into the Titanic, flip the zombies into yachts and swap that creepy mansion for the Phi Phi Islands, and you have *Ship Simulator 2006*. It's by no means the best game in the world, but guiding an unresponsive cargo ship around an oncoming freighter had my head cocked in empathy. As the port sides of the two ships sheared against each other just enough as to not cause damage, the tension was so much that my legs were wrapped around the monitor.

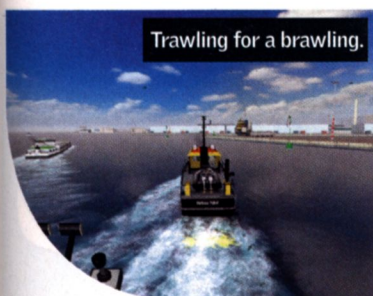
Anecdote time! After 25 minutes of delicately nudging the Titanic through shallow waters to reach its

final destination, some bastard appeared from behind and nudged his anachronistic fibreglass schooner (or something) along my starboard side, causing me to fail the mission. No quick-save. No backtrack. Start again, gently as she goes. This is survival at its most savage.

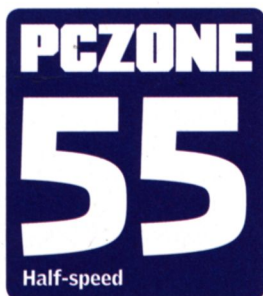
The other ships aren't technically enemies, but their utter lack of AI and tendency to be where you need to go makes them far more hateful than Sephiroth, Pyramid Head and a dozen Dr Breens put together.

I'm being distracting; this is a proper ship simulator. And within that bracket, it faithfully reproduces long, combatless floating sessions. Even with its isolated moments of zombie-esque terror and hamstring tension, I'll admit I probably won't be playing this one in my dreams.

Jon Blyth



Trawling for a brawl.



RAISE AN ARMY. RULE THE WORLD.



ARCHLORD

WWW.ARCHLORDGAME.COM



REBEL RAIDERS: OPERATION NIGHTHAWK

Plane and simple

DEVELOPER Kando Games
PUBLISHER Nobilis
WEBSITE www.rebelraiders.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £19.99

System requirements 2



THERE'S A SCHOOL of thought that believes people are only happy when they have more controls to fiddle with than fingers, graphics so realistic that you're tempted to reach into the screen, AI sharper than Einstein and physics that would have Newton throwing his apple around the room with joy. Not us though – we're still firm believers that simple can still mean fun.

Take *Rebel Raiders*, for example. Yes, the lo-res textures and unvaried locations may, upon first impressions, make you discard the title out of hand. After putting five minutes into the game, you might be disappointed that enemy ships follow pre-determined courses and that enemy fighters only fire missiles that require one button press to dodge. You might also chuckle at the unlockable aircraft

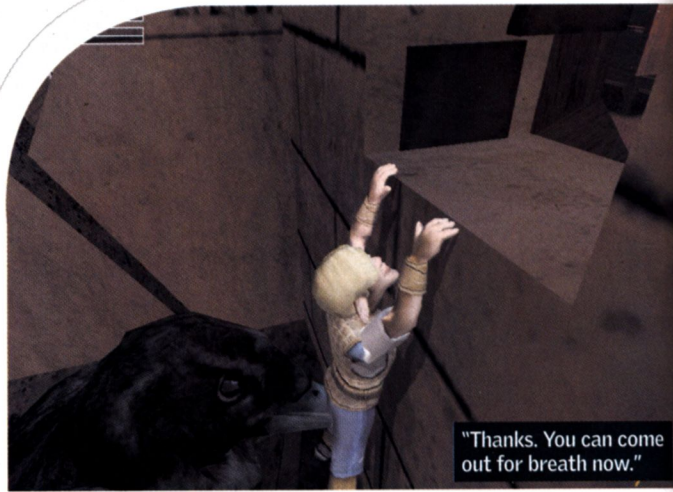
when you discover that one has a shotgun for a main weapon, or roll your eyes when your aircraft bounces off the ground, taking only negligible damage along the way. And if you're hoping for an amazing story to make up for things, then you're not going to be in luck either.

But, despite all of these things, *Rebel Raiders* can still be good fun to play, in much the same way as kids amuse themselves by kicking a football up against a wall. While its full-on aerial battles won't have you fearing for your life or remarking on the amazingly realistic qualities, they still provide a whirlwind of action that caters for arcade fighter fans. It'd be too easy to shoot this title down in flames, but despite its flaws, *Rebel Raiders* serves up some simple but enjoyable entertainment.

Suzy Wallace



PCZONE
59
Rebel with some flaws

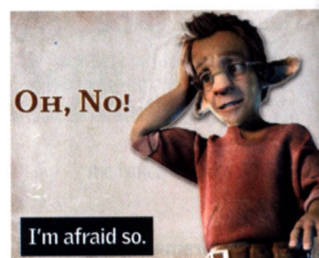


BACK TO GAYA

No obvious jokes here, move along

DEVELOPER 4Head Studios
PUBLISHER Nobilis
WEBSITE www.4head.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £19.99

System requirements 2



YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND what I went through playing this game for you. My stomach is strong; I love zombie films. I stare at roadkill. But I have a gut-wrenching weak spot; European children's animation. The dubbed voices. The brainless, naive dialogue: "Let's be a team and do this for Grandpa!" All scrawled in a queasy mismatched lip-sync. It makes me wimper like a child.

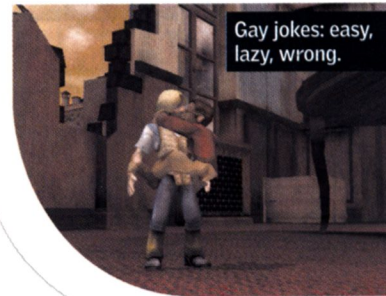
Back To Gaya is based on the eponymous European film. It was retitled *Boo, Zino And The Snurks* in Britain as soon as someone said the original name out loud. It's that very European kind of animation, but 3D. It features Zino, the sporty Gayan hero, and his nerdish best friend inventor, Boo. After playing for five seconds, you'll realise why David Beckham is rarely seen out and about with Rick Moranis.

It's just no fun for anyone.

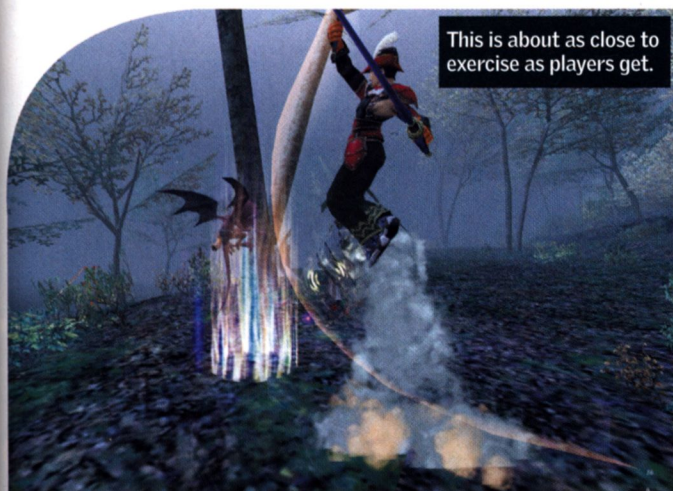
Your training mission – look for parts of your hot rod which are strewn around your back yard. Then you play a racing game with controls where anything more than a butterfly-tickling application of the steering wheel crashes your car. Then something bad happens, you're shrunk and it's a prolonged series of very simple searching puzzles, made more difficult by the occasional smallness of the objects. Some running, some looking around, lots of keys to look for, it's like you've played it already.

OK. It's a game for children, and I can imagine children getting pleasure out of it. They might not balk at the dialogue or characters. Some very young children might even translate the game's progress into a form of thrilling success. They're stupid like that, kids.

Jon Blyth



PCZONE
35
Gaya Hata



This is about as close to exercise as players get.

FINAL FANTASY XI: TREASURES OF AHT URHGAN



Goblins galore...

DEVELOPER Square Enix
PUBLISHER Square Enix
WEBSITE www.playonline.com/f11us/ahturhgan/index.html
ETA Out now
PRICE £19.99

System requirements 3



See the world, endanger a species.

AS THE UNPOPULAR cousin of *World Of Warcraft*, *Final Fantasy XI* neglects the casual gamer and forces you to group and grind goblins (and their sort) to reach most of the content. It's no surprise then that *Treasures Of Aht Urhgan* is very much focused on the level 50 and higher crowd – the only ones who can access a great deal of the expansion. Not that all of it is in yet (at the time of writing) – the July patch will add Chocobo breeding (among other things) to the mix. You only paid 20 quid – why expect it all to be done?

The new Puppetmaster (a class that equips and fights alongside a puppet), Blue Mage (a jack-of-all-trades that learns skills from enemies) and Corsair (a gun-toting, dice-rolling pirate) jobs are somewhat unbalanced

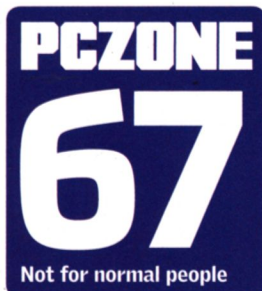
and in desperate need of a once-over in the case of the Puppetmaster, but do inject some much needed variety into the world of Vana'diel. Assaults let players romp through new dungeon instances and gain assault points to (you guessed it) buy more gear, and besieged lets you defend the city of Aht Zahbi from invaders. It's deep, if you like repetitively killing things.

Treasures Of Aht Urhgan is hard to recommend to new players, as it'll take months to even reach level 30 to enter assaults. For the established, high-level player, this expansion is just what the doctor ordered; a pretty, lengthy, time-intensive addition to your favourite marathon grind-fest. For everyone else, well, there's always a social life.

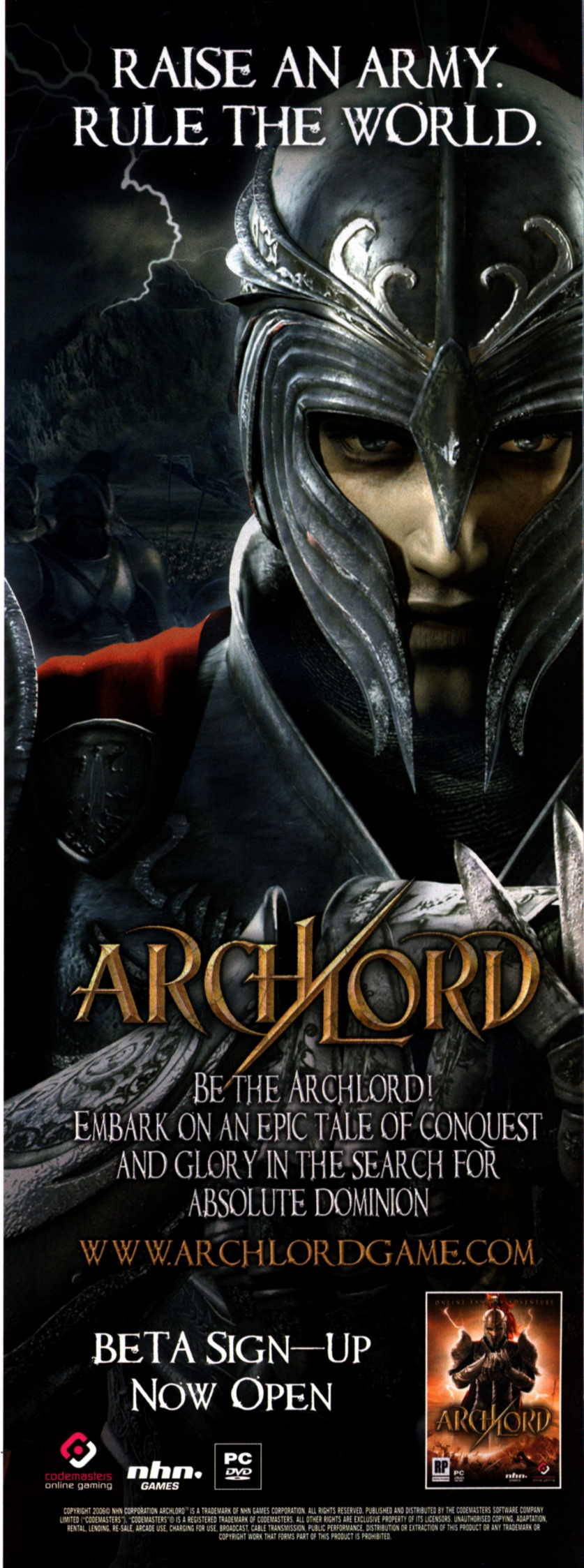
Ed Zitron



Good luck levelling on your own.



RAISE AN ARMY. RULE THE WORLD.

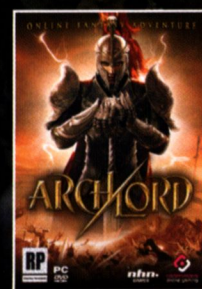


ARCHLORD

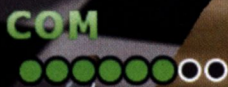
BE THE ARCHLORD!
EMBARK ON AN EPIC TALE OF CONQUEST
AND GLORY IN THE SEARCH FOR
ABSOLUTE DOMINION

WWW.ARCHLORDGAME.COM

BETA SIGN-UP
NOW OPEN



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Despite its looks, this is not as much fun as it should be.



Soon to become extinct...



The worst day at the beach we've ever had.



Do you want fries with that?

MICRO MACHINES V4

Suzy Wallace is feeling a little exhausted...

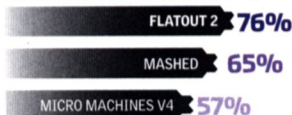
DEVELOPER Supersonic
PUBLISHER Codemasters
WEBSITE www.codemasters.com/micromachines
ETA Out now
PRICE £19.99

AT A GLANCE...

Disappointing arcade racer in which mini cars compete for position using some imaginative weaponry among micro-sized levels.

System requirements 

HOW IT STACKS



BACK IN 1991, millions of Britons sang along to Bryan Adams' warbly ballad *Everything I Do*, clapped eyes upon Mr Blobby for the first time, walked around in what we then thought to be fashionable puffa jackets – and if you were lucky, tried out Codemasters' new top-down racer *Micro Machines*, based on the toy cars of the same name. Eventually appearing on 15 different platforms in seven different versions, the series was a huge success with its frantic racing, brilliantly conceived micro-environments and excellent multiplayer.

Now, 15 years on from the original's release, Codemasters have released v4 of the series. Packed with the same top-down racing, they may have thought that they'd stumbled across an old-school title ripe for updating, but as we've seen before, revisiting an old classic isn't always a clear-cut formula for success.

If you're a fan of the series, you'll instantly notice that the first thing to go missing is the cartoon-style character selection screen, replaced with, well nothing actually, as developers Supersonic have just done away with this entirely.

And so begins the long list of problems with the diminutive racer's latest outing.

IT'S SO WEEEEE!

The wildly inventive, small-scale tracks have always been a strong point of the series, with tracks offering the chance to race round kitchen surfaces and pool tables while avoiding obstacles that only a 4cm toy car would find problematic – salt spills, glue drops and pool balls. Although *Micro Machines v4* does offer a varied selection of tracks complete with their own tiny obstacles, most simply don't feel anywhere near as inventive and colourful as you'd expect from the series. Old favourites like the pool table make a welcome return, but some levels such as the sewers and the museum feel especially lacking in terms of content and polish.

Graphically, things aren't exactly up to scratch either. Despite using the engine from Supersonic's previous title *Mashed*, things somehow don't look as good as they did in that two-year-old title. Cars are crudely modelled with little to no detail, the lo-res textures show a lack of care in the conversion and the water texture looks so bad that we at first mistook it for a

graphical glitch. Winning levels rewards you with cars, of which there are 750 to collect, but you can't choose any to use in races and they serve no real purpose other than to offend your eyes with their blocky design.

TEENY TINY!

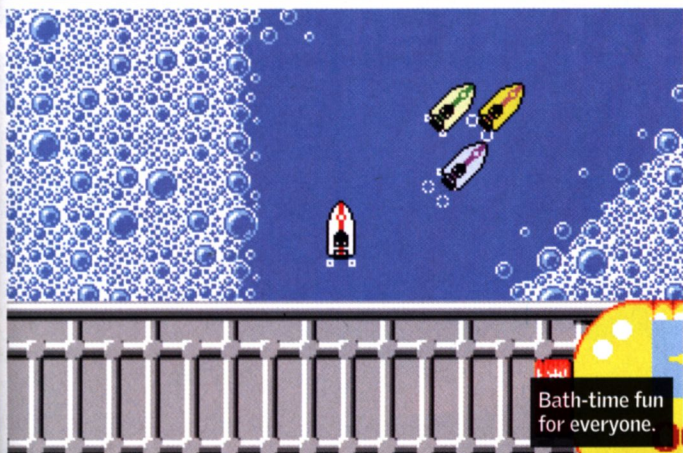
The game consists of a variation of three basic modes; races, timed challenges and battles (who can get to eight points first by destroying or beating their rivals). Imaginative power-ups are liberally sprinkled around the level too – from our favourite, the car-mounted hammers, to health boosts.

However, while three different difficulties are on offer, even on the easiest settings, the single-player isn't as simple as you'd expect. Pushing and shoving matches should be avoided as you always seem to come off worse, and winning can sometimes feel a bit random, like when a pool ball shoots out of the bottom of the screen, inadvertently propelling someone onto victory.

More worrying is when your AI opponents just appear to give up completely, their engine note lowering in your ears until they disappear off the bottom of the screen for no apparent reason. Supersonic don't appear to have done much to sort out the

Tanks for the memories

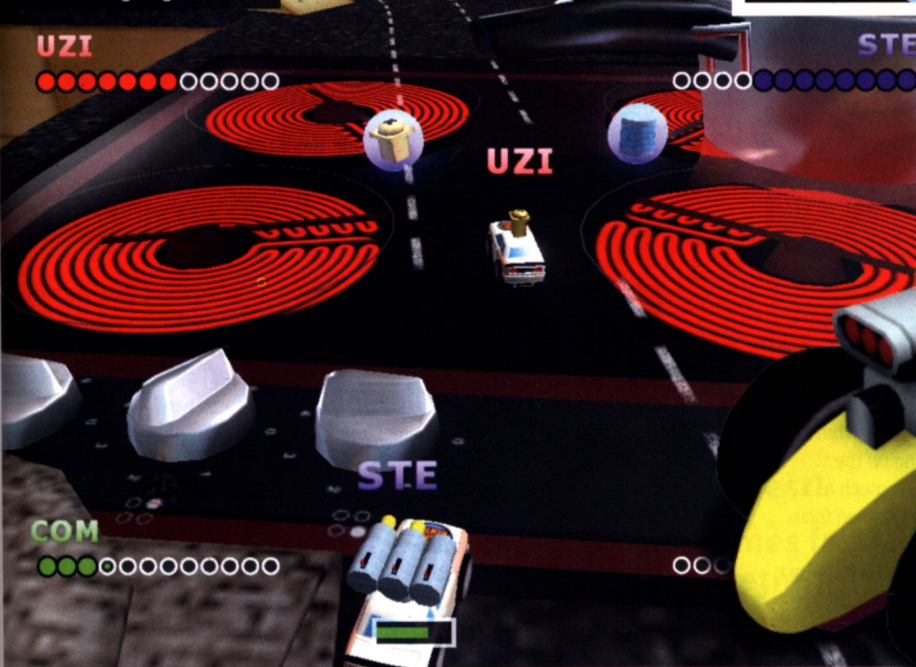
We wonder where all the tanks have gone...



Bath-time fun for everyone.

Historically, *Micro Machines* games haven't just limited you to cars but have included boats, hovercrafts, helicopters and our personal favourites, tanks. Unfortunately, this latest iteration only features different variations of cars – presumably because that's all Hasbro's latest *Micro Machines* range covers. This has inadvertently affected the game – the boat missions used to provide some of the most mindless fun of all the levels on offer, with you ducking and diving between soap suds and, well, rubber ducks. While the tank missions may have been made redundant by the weapons, we still can't help but feel cheated. Give us our toy boats back!

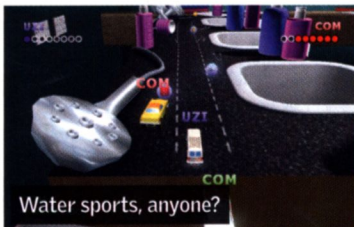
Whatever you do, don't fall in to the burning rings of fire...



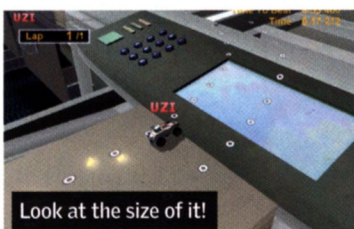
camera issues from *Mashed* either, with your view of the road ahead becoming practically non-existent once you're in the lead, putting you at a massive disadvantage for being good.

ITSY BITSY!

Of course, these sort of titles are designed with multiplayer in mind, and things start to look up once you've managed to convince some mates to join you, with the friendly competition egging things along and improving the whole experience. And if you haven't got enough joypads (or mates), *MMv4* offers both LAN and online play, thankfully enabling you to play against someone else at all times.



Water sports, anyone?



Look at the size of it!

Amazingly, *MMv4* manages to be less fun to play *and* look at than the developer's other title, *Mashed*



Unfortunately, the enjoyment to be had playing against others doesn't even begin to compensate for the other low points, which is hugely disappointing when you consider the pedigree of the series (the last two PC versions both garnered 90%+ review scores). Amazingly enough, *MMv4* manages to accomplish the feat of being less fun to play *and* look at than the developer's other title, *Mashed* (which is two years old). If it's multiplayer automotive giggles you're after, *FlatOut 2*'s party mode (see p62) is far superior. Like Mr Blobby and Bryan Adams, this series is best consigned to the history vaults. **PCZ**

PCZONE

Graphics Lo-res textures, crude car models
Sound Monotonous sound effects
Multiplayer LAN and online play

- ✓ Good multiplayer support
- ✓ Some levels are great
- ✗ Most levels still feel bland
- ✗ Sub-console graphics
- ✗ Only cars available
- ✗ Some AI glitches

57
Micro amounts of fun



GLORY OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE



Build Rome in a day

DEVELOPER Haemimont Games
PUBLISHER CDV
WEBSITE www.glory-of-rome.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £29.99

System requirements 3



THE ROMAN EMPIRE was built on conquest, but don't let the trivial matter of the absence of any significant blood-letting put you off this ancient twist on the old *SimCity* concept, because it really is quite a challenging and rewarding game.

The aim, of course, is to keep your citizens happy, be they in need of food, clothing or spiritual guidance, and by building houses, farms and various other constructs in the right place, you can eventually command quite a sprawling settlement in *Glory Of The Roman Empire*.

On the plus side, the graphics are fairly detailed, the game rarely feels overly complex and doesn't take itself too seriously. It's no lightweight either, with quite a fine degree of tuning required to balance the growth

of each of your settlements. It's perhaps not quite in the same league as *Children Of The Nile* in terms of depth and complexity, but it certainly has its own sedate charm. What's more, by concentrating on the people as individuals as much as a population, the game's human focus adds a nice touch.

Total War this ain't, and it doesn't quite match up to Firefly's *CivCity: Rome* either (p64). With the long-awaited *Caesar IV* also due later this year, which puts city-management at the top of the agenda, it might be worth holding off for that too before landing a purchase. And by that time, *Glory Of The Roman Empire* is sure to be available at a knock-down price.

Richie Shoemaker



PCZONE
65
A contender

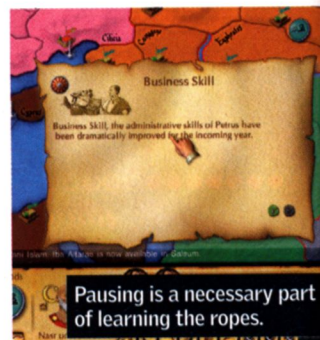


GREAT INVASIONS

Europa's come a long way, or maybe it hasn't

DEVELOPER Indie Games Productions
PUBLISHER Nobilis
WEBSITE www.great-invasions.fr
ETA Out now
PRICE £19.99

System requirements 2



FROM THE CREATOR of the massively under-rated *Europa Universalis* comes *Great Invasions*. It's a kind of spiritual predecessor, set between the fall of the Roman Empire and the beginning of the medieval ages, a time when civilisation went tits-up and people went back to weeing on passers-by from their bedroom windows.

Not that you see as much in the game, as is evident by the boardgame-inspired graphics, but it's a curious setting, not least because this was a time when ancient empires were in turmoil and tribalism in the ascendency. The aim of the game isn't so much to conquer as to survive, which in itself is no mean feat.

This is a kind of hyper-elevated real-time version of the boardgame

Risk, with provinces that need to be managed in order to progress. The game clearly owes much to the EU lineage, but is set during a time when nation states barely existed and religion was pretty much a driving force everywhere, both politically and socially. That the developers have endeavoured – and succeeded – in modelling the social turmoil of the period makes this a unique, rewarding and dense experience that demands dedication and will reward players with weeks, if not months, of unique historical wargaming.

Unless of course you're one of those people who'd rather be waving a shotgun at a roomful of zombies, in which case please join the queue forming orderly on the right...

Richie Shoemaker

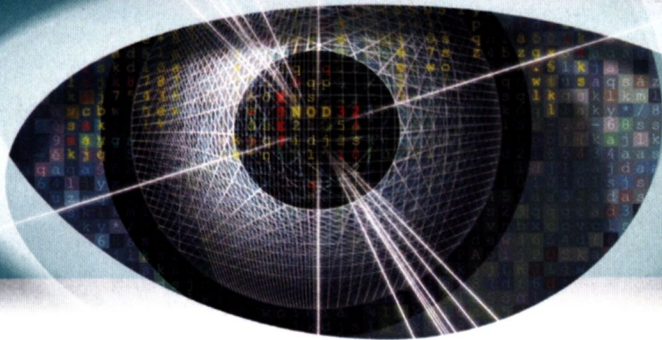


PCZONE
74
An acquired taste



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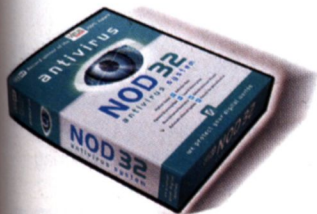
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You won't find any of these indie games in the shops, but you can download them or get trial versions on our DVD.

indiezone



Martin Korda digs up two original gems and some fool's gold from the indie gaming mine. Just call him Indiana Jones...

ARMADILLO RUN

DEVELOPER Peter Stock WEBSITE www.armadillorun.com PRICE £9.99

LOVE NEWTON, JIGSAWS and puzzles? Then you're going to adore *Armadillo Run*. Primarily, it's a physics-based puzzle game in which you must set up a collection of ramps, pulleys, catapults, rockets and springboards with which to navigate an armadillo (which looks suspiciously like a ball) to a specific end location. Sounds easy, right? Wrong...

Thanks to an intuitive interface, creating your contraptions is fairly simple, though making them actually work is anything but. What's more, a hugely restrictive Undo function (you can only undo your last

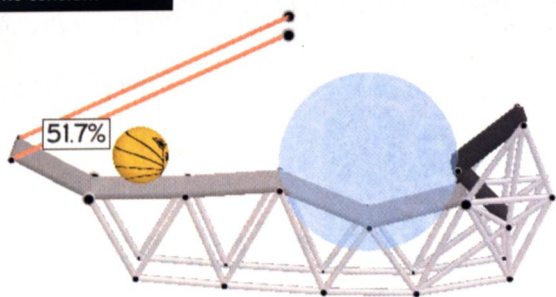
move) does hamstring the building process somewhat. Make more than one mistake and you're left with no option but to start from scratch.

An excellent tutorial leads you lovingly by the hand through the basics, after which you're unleashed on a series of increasingly mind-bending puzzles that'll have you bleary-eyed and blissfully vexed till the early hours. And with multiple solutions to most puzzles, you'll also find plenty of replayability value here.

Fun, taxing and hugely addictive, once *Armadillo Run* takes hold of you, it'll suck your spare time dry like a rapacious leech. Great stuff.

PCZONE
68

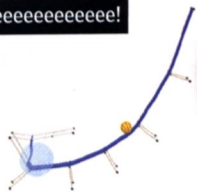
Who said puzzle games have no tension?



No, it really is an armadillo.



Weeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!



INDIEZONE
GAME OF THE MONTH

AMERICAN HISTORY LUX

DEVELOPER Sillysoft WEBSITE sillysoft.net PRICE \$20 (£11)

IF YOU'RE A regular Indie Zone loiterer, you may remember we reviewed Risk clone *Lux* last year. We quite liked it, giving it 58%, which in these parts is pretty respectable.

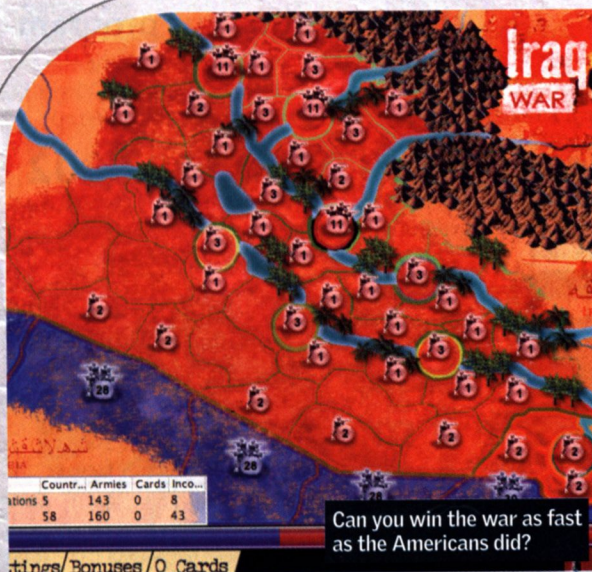
Now we have *American History Lux*, another Risk clone, based on all of America's conflicts throughout its brief yet violent history, including a WWII scenario, the Iraq war and the American Civil War. There's also oodles of info about each conflict to wade through, which is great if you piss away all of your spare time watching UKTV History, but not quite so appealing if your skin has any kind of familiarity with sunlight.

To be honest, it's a pretty watered down affair, with only one unit type at your disposal,



no multiplayer options (baffling considering that one of *Lux's* best features were its online skirmishes) and a few niggling oversights that hamper an otherwise fairly enjoyable and accessible Risk-style war gaming experience.

PCZONE
49



THE ODYSSEY: WINDS OF ATHENA

DEVELOPER Liquid Dragon Studios WEBSITE www.liquiddragon.com PRICE £14

AH, ORIGINALITY, THAT'S what we like to see. Here's a game that's clearly been developed by someone who sat down and thought about an innovative gaming idea, worked out how to make it fun and then put it into practice. And you know what? They've done a damn fine job.

Based on *The Odyssey*, you must steer Ulysses and his fleet of ships through countless levels packed with a multitude of dangers including sandbanks, whirlwinds and boulder-

hurling Cyclopes, while battling against the ocean's natural tides.

By controlling the strength of the wind and by dragging your mouse across the water to create tides, you can manipulate the direction of your ships as you attempt to guide them to safety. Sure, it's simplistic and not worth 14 quid, but *WOA* is a novel gaming experience. If it's ever reduced to a fiver, snap it up in a heartbeat.

PCZONE
60



Let's see you get out of there.



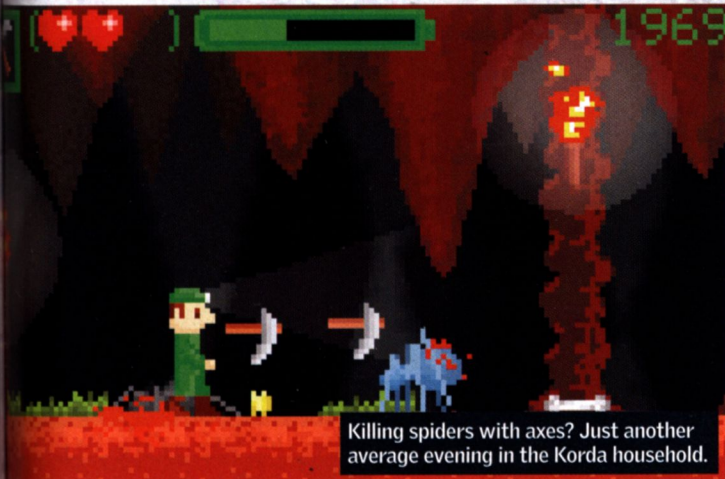
Steer Ulysses and his fleet back home.



All together now: "Ulysses, Ulysee-ees, soaring through all the galax-ie-ees..."

CAVE JUMPER

DEVELOPER Addictive 247 Games WEB www.addictive247.co.uk PRICE \$1795 (£10)



Killing spiders with axes? Just another average evening in the Korda household.

REMEMBER THOSE PLATFORM

games that the computer nerd used to knock out for fun in Computer Science classes while you struggled to program a static equilateral triangle? Well *Cave Jumper* is a bit like those games – a by-the-numbers, graphically challenged platformer that's both totally inoffensive and unspectacular.

Had *Cave Jumper* been a free download, then it'd be hard to find too much to criticise. It's fun in a mindless sort of way, possesses a few nice touches – you can control the height of your axe throws, which makes combat fairly varied – and it's aptly designed.

The problem arises when money comes into the equation. In no way, shape or form is this worth ten notes, especially when you could simply dust off the old ZX Spectrum that's been amassing mould in your attic for the



Run away!



The '80s are back!

past two decades and have a virtually identical gaming experience for free. Nice try, but no cigar.

PCZONE
32

Developer Q&A

PEDESTRIAN ENTERTAINMENT INC

Name: Ryan Thom
Job Title: CEO
Company: Pedestrian Entertainment Inc
Website: www.pedestrianentertainment.com
Games: *Steam Brigade*



PCZ Tell us a bit about your company?

RT I met a guy called Colin Fletcher at Digipen back in '98 and we became friends. After that, we got jobs as programmers in the games industry, and designed our own games together in our spare time. Our hectic schedules didn't afford us much of that, so during the summer of 2003 we agreed to start our own company.

PCZ Tell us about *Steam Brigade*...

RT We wanted to make a strategy game that had a lot of depth, but was easy to understand conceptually. Also, we were fed up with games where if someone starts to win, it becomes easier for them to win outright. They accelerate towards

victory, and are essentially unstoppable, meaning only the first few minutes of the game are important. Colin had talked a lot about *Rescue Raiders* before, and we agreed that it solved many of those problems.

PCZ What advice would you give other budding indie game developers now?

RT I can't stress enough how important it is to think small at first, and get feedback. Make a small game, ask for feedback, refine it and then repeat this process. The point is to have a nifty little idea that's polished up to a nice shine. This is much better than a large idea that's only half-realised.



BUDGET

We do our bit for the poor with our selection of cheap budget games

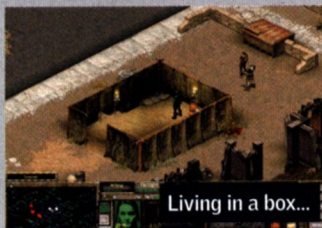
FALLOUT COLLECTION

PUBLISHER GSP White Label WEBSITE www.gsonline.co.uk PRICE £9.99

A **POST-APOCALYPTIC** wasteland, fallout shelters known as vaults, mutants deformed by radiation and a '50s comic-style tone. No, it's not some film with Mel Gibson wearing dodgy one-armed leather jackets (although that is referenced in the game), but rather the *Fallout* series, hardly your average RPG. This collection brings together *Fallout*, *Fallout 2* and *Fallout: Tactics*.

Set around the 22nd century after nuclear weapons have blitzed civilisation (Hans Blix's descendants obviously didn't spot that one coming), the first two titles feature turn-based combat and a mix of desert outposts filled with seedy characters, retro-style technology and a non-linear plot that was way ahead of its time, the only major upheaval being when *Tactics* decided to ditch turn-based combat.

If you haven't played the iconic series already (shame on you!), then this triple-pack is an ideal way to catch up on



Interplay's *Mad Max*-style world before Bethesda release the eagerly anticipated next outing of the series.

Suzy Wallace

PCZONE
80



THIS MONTH PCZONE SAVED MONEY BY...

Will's landlord paying for his cockroach traps:
Saving: £2.89 per pack



Log getting pissed on lots of cheap Spanish vodka:
Saving: £5 per bottle



Log getting a lift to Games Workshop from his mum:
Saving: £6



XIII PUBLISHER Sold Out WEBSITE www.sold-out.co.uk PRICE £4.99

WAKE UP ON a beach with no recollection of who you are and how you got there and you'll assume one of three things: irresponsible beach party, irresponsible boat party or massive political conspiracy. In *XIII*'s case it's the massive political conspiracy box which has been ticked, paving the way for a thrilling and massively stylised first-person shooter.

From an era when cel-shading in games was thought to be innovative and clever (as in, before everybody started doing it), *XIII*'s comic graphical footprint is as distinct as they come. Death throes are splashed across the screen in still panels, cries of pain from guards manifested as arcing 'ARRRRGH!!'s and explosions accompanied by visual 'BAOMMM!'s. Go past the comic-book styling and the action's pretty intense, alongside a twisting and

clever plotline which will keep you somewhat towards the front two-thirds of your seat for most of the game. Multiplayer is remarkably fun too, and for a mere fiver, *XIII*'s ageing graphical style is more than forgiven.

Steve Hogarty

PCZONE
78

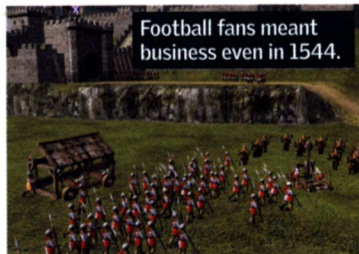


STRONGHOLD 2

PUBLISHER Mastertronic WEBSITE www.mastertronic.com PRICE £9.99

THE FAST-MOVING strategy genre which *Stronghold 2* halfway fits into is a tricky beast to ride. Due to the sheer number of contenders trying to achieve greatness, like some metaphorical *Gladiators* episode, it's easy to become another housewife from Durham being strangled by Jet's imposing thighs. *Stronghold 2* fares slightly better though, being the 3D version of its predecessor, adding many layers of management options and in a sense becoming that bloke who beat Wolf on the climbing wall.

Indeed, for every ounce of strategy there's a pound of god game-esque management; from economic affairs right down to sanitation control, *Stronghold 2* is never shy about micro-management and juggles your responsibilities



Football fans meant business even in 1544.

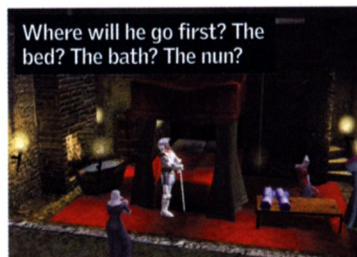


"Don't be an ass!"

admirably. One year on, the game has held up well and offers experiences which, while having each been done better elsewhere, haven't been successfully melded in the way *Stronghold 2* has managed. Well worth a look for RTS fans who didn't catch it first time.

Steve Hogarty

PCZONE
73



Where will he go first? The bed? The bath? The nun?

JOINT OPERATIONS: TYPHOON RISING

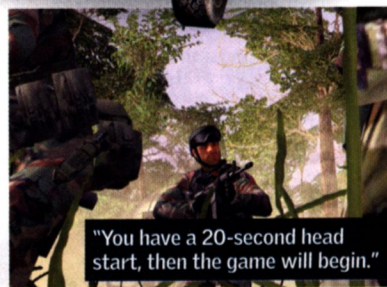
PUBLISHER GSP White Label WEBSITE www.gsonline.co.uk PRICE £9.99

IF YOU THOUGHT you needed a bullet-proof vest for the *Battlefield* series, then you'll need to remember the bug spray for *Joint Ops* (as it's affectionately become known). Set in a near-future Indonesia, the game plays much like its distant EA cousin, but will see you crawling on your belly through lush jungle and rice paddies instead, with maps that are larger than *Battlefield's* and cater for up to a massive 150 players at any one time.

The game leans heavily towards those who preferred to view the throes of battle through the sights of their sniper rifle, but with the *Escalation* expansion also available for the same money, you can sort that out and add some brilliant dirt bikes and tanks to the jungle mix too. A decent alternative to *Battlefield 2* on a shoe-string budget.

Suzy Wallace

PCZONE
79



"You have a 20-second head start, then the game will begin."



He felt the wind in his hair, and he felt great.



When paintball goes wrong.

And the rest...

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



PROJECT SNOWBLIND

£9.99, MASTERTRONIC

Set in the *Deus Ex*-y universe, this enjoyable shooter might not win any awards, but it provides some solid shooting action set among imaginative level design. That's if the sheer quantity of weapons/abilities doesn't burn your brain out first.

PCZONE
75



COLIN MCRAE RALLY 4

£4.99, SOLD OUT SOFTWARE

Rumours abound that the grumpy Scot gets paid a pound for every copy of *Colin McRae* sold. That said, we're unsure as to why he's never seen smiling, but if you spend a fiver on this excellent rally title, that should at least put a smile on *your* face.

PCZONE
76



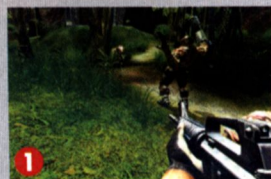
THE SETTLERS IV: HERITAGE OF KINGS

£4.99, FOCUS MULTIMEDIA

It may be a sound RTS if you're not bored of the harvest, build, attack formula, but *HOK* brings nothing new to the table. Having lost even its distinctive graphical style, it ends up merging with every other average European RTS. Bland and boring.

PCZONE
56

PCZONE TOP 5 BUDGET BUYS



1

FAR CRY

£9.99, MASTERTRONIC

Better than *HL2*? So some say. The best non-gravity gun shooter of recent years anyway. An island paradise with extra explosions and terrific enemy AI.



2

BEYOND GOOD & EVIL

£9.99, FOCUS MULTIMEDIA

Glorious story-telling, engaging gameplay and the greenest lips in gaming-dom make *BG&E* a must-buy. Deep, imaginative, brilliant.



3

THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK: ESCAPE FROM BUTCHER BAY

£9.99, BESTSELLER

Great melee, sneaky stealth and oodles of lawless violence – not all console conversions are a pile of old poo.



4

MEDIEVAL: TOTAL WAR - GOLD EDITION

£9.99, MASTERTRONIC

A true classic, *Medieval* lets troops do battle in real-time and lets you get tactical in this warfare masterpiece.



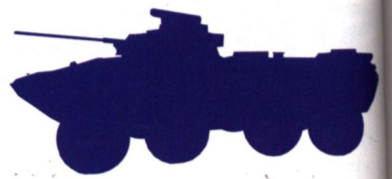
5

WARHAMMER 40K: DOW

£9.99, FOCUS MULTIMEDIA

Even if you've never heard of the Games Workshop franchise, this *Command & Conquer*-style RTS is great-looking and explosive fun.

BUYER'S GUIDE



The bestest games your money can buy...

PCZONE TOP 5 GAMES BEGINNING WITH 'C'

- 1 CARMAGEDDON**
PCZ ISSUE: 50
- 2 CARMAGEDDON II CARPOCALYPSE NOW**
PCZ ISSUE: 69
- 3 COMMAND & CONQUER**
PCZ ISSUE: 28
- 4 CALL OF DUTY**
PCZ ISSUE: 136
- 5 CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 2: 96/97**
PCZ ISSUE: 63

PCZONE TOP 5 WOMEN IN GAMES

- 1 ALYX VANCE (HALF-LIFE 2)**
PCZ ISSUE: 148
- 2 CATE ARCHER (NOLF2)**
PCZ ISSUE: 122
- 3 MONA SAX (MAX PAYNE 2)**
PCZ ISSUE: 136
- 4 LARA CROFT (TOMB RAIDER: LEGEND)**
PCZ ISSUE: 168
- 5 JADE (BEYOND GOOD & EVIL)**
PCZ ISSUE: 138

PCZONE TOP 5 BIZARRE METHODS OF TRANSPORTATION IN GAMES

- 1 SILT STRIDERS (MORROWING)**
PCZ ISSUE: 117
- 2 GIANT BAT (WORLD OF WARCRRAFT)**
PCZ ISSUE: 152
- 3 WALL WALKING (PREY)**
PCZ ISSUE: 170
- 4 SLIDE-Y THINGS (PLANESIDE: CORE COMBAT)**
PCZ ISSUE: 139
- 5 SKIING (TRIBES: VENGEANCE)**
PCZ ISSUE: 147

Shooters

Must buy!



HALF-LIFE 2
PCZ Issue: 148 - 97%

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



BATTLEFIELD 2
PCZ Issue: 157 - 94%

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



FAR CRY
PCZ Issue: 140 - 93%

In many eyes, Crytek's shooter outshines even the mighty *Half-Life 2* in its tension, tactics and expansive level design. It's a mighty achievement with seemingly freemove action and the best sniping money can buy.



HL2: EPISODE ONE
PCZ Issue: 170 - 91%

Suffering slightly from thematic overlap with *HL2*, *Ep One* nevertheless contains the greatest moments from the entire *HL* series. Warm, funny and thrilling, it may be short, but the first five minutes are worth the entry fee alone.



CALL OF DUTY 2
PCZ Issue: 162 - 91%

Brutal, relentless and totally gripping, the WWII shooter sequel packs more action into a single level than most pack into an entire game. Epic scale battles and intense drama. World War II at its unforgiving best.



F.E.A.R.
PCZ Issue: 160 - 90%

With more shocks and scares than an episode of *Rentaghost* (and a much higher body count), *F.E.A.R.* pushes the shooter part of FPS to the limit. It might not be the scariest game ever, but it will make you jump.



PREY
PCZ Issue: 170 - 86%

Prey hits the PC after an 11-year wait and proves to be a filthy-gorgeous organic sci-fi shooter with fantastic weapons, scenery and monsters. Not the best combat, but stuffed full of original ideas.

Strategy

Must buy!



ROME: TOTAL WAR
PCZ Issue: 148 - 93%

Once upon a time, all strategy games were visual abortions and strictly for the hardcore (OK, a bit of a sweeping statement). But *Rome: Total War* changed all that, mixing breathtaking 3D with troop numbers reminiscent of a Hollywood epic, as well as staggering historical accuracy. The result is a masterpiece and a game just about anyone can enjoy. Hell, how many other titles are made into TV shows?



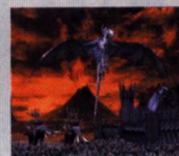
CIVILIZATION IV
PCZ Issue: 162 - 92%

A Buyer's Guide without a *Civ* game would be a sorry, sorry place, and luckily the latest version does the business with aplomb. Violent Buddhist Romans take over the world.



RISE OF NATIONS: RISE OF LEGENDS
PCZ Issue: 168 - 91%

Takes the great gameplay of *RON*, improves on it with elements from *Civ IV* and *Total War* and wraps the whole lot in a gorgeous sci-fi setting. An RTS bursting with innovation and imagination.



LOTR: THE BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH
PCZ Issue: 149 - 91%

Although the *LOTR* RTS doesn't hold a candle to the *Total War* franchise, there's nothing quite like ordering a Balrog around for guaranteed strategy fun.



SOLDIERS: HEROES OF WORLD WAR II
PCZ Issue: 144 - 90%

The strategy of *Commandos* meets the fun of *Cannon Fodder* in this top-down game of tactics. Being the underdog has never been so much fun, and the rumble of tanks never so worrying.



RISE OF NATIONS
PCZ Issue: 129 - 90%

One of the best of the 'last generation' of empire-builders, *Rise Of Nations* - coupled with exemplary expansion pack *Thrones And Patriots* - is a uniquely satisfying and addictive treatment of the *Civ* genre.



STAR WARS: EMPIRE AT WAR
PCZ Issue: 166 - 86%

A brilliant real-time tactical map and amazing space conflicts makes *Empire At War* the best *Star Wars* RTS ever. It's only let down by its land battles - otherwise, it's beyond reproach.

Action/Adventure

Must buy!



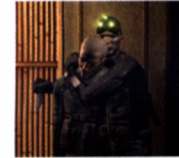
MAX PAYNE 2: THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE
PCZ Issue: 136 - 93%

The chosen poison for certain PCZ staffers after a long hard day, Payne's second outing is perhaps the most pixel-perfect example of joy-through-excessive-destruction on the market. Slicker than slick, breathtaking and quite beautiful, *Max Payne 2* provides the greatest gaming kicks that money can buy. It's extremely short, but so tense, well designed and replayable that you just won't care.



GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS
PCZ Issue: 155 - 92%

To think that the simple top-down car game has turned into this - a work of creative genius. Violent, brutal, smutty, freeform and hilarious - *San Andreas* is the summit of gaming achievement.



SPLINTER CELL: CHAOS THEORY
PCZ Issue: 154 - 91%

A tour de force from Ubisoft, *Chaos Theory* takes the *Splinter Cell* format and runs with it in solo, co-op and the now well-established spies vs mercenaries multiplayer. Smooth, lithe and good with a knife.



FAHRENHEIT
PCZ Issue: 159 - 90%

Murder most foul, with you as the killer. This twisting, turning, brilliantly-told plot features multiple character control, split-screen tension, branching scenes and several endings. From the brains behind *The Nomad Soul*.



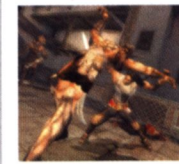
PSYCHONAUTS
PCZ Issue: 156 - 90%

Clever, witty, impeccably detailed and absolutely off its rocker - *Psychonauts* is proof that the anarchic edge of LucasArts hasn't completely left us. A slightly flawed game in some respects, but still a dazzling feat.



BEYOND GOOD & EVIL
PCZ Issue: 138 - 89%

We heap praise on this game on a monthly basis, but it's for a reason. Michel Ancel's superb journey through the strange land of Hillys is nothing short of storytelling magic. It's cheap now, so go out and buy it.



PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE TWO THRONES
PCZ Issue: 164 - 86%

The shirtless wonder finally makes it into the Buyer's Guide, not that any of his outings can be considered bad games. *TTT* manages to get all the ingredients just right this time.

MMOs



MUST BUY!
WORLD OF WARCRAFT
PCZ Issue: 152 - 95%
Blizzard's recreation of the classic strategy world in MMO form doesn't disappoint. Beautiful to look at, absorbing to play and with more content than you can shake a magic stick at.



EVERQUEST II
PCZ Issue: 150 - 95%
A Star Trek to WoW's Star Wars, EQII gives the original a much needed lick of paint, a whole new world to play in and a greater sense of depth and immersion. A time-sink in the true, classic sense.



GUILD WARS
PCZ Issue: 156 - 94%
How to make a gaming genre accessible to the masses. It shines with polish, thought and lack of monthly subscription fees. Newbies can feel at home too, thanks to a totally skills-based set-up.



EVE ONLINE
PCZ Issue: 130 - 88%
Elite online has been a long-held fantasy and this space sim is the closest yet to making it a reality. Its slow pace belies the options on offer, from mining or trading to piracy - it's up to you.



CITY OF HEROES
PCZ Issue: 155 - 86%
Nothing beats the feeling of spandex and fire-beams shooting from your eyes. This super-powered MMO lets you live all those heroic dreams to the full. Nietzsche would have a field day.

Simulation



MUST BUY!
X3: REUNION
PCZ Issue: 162 - 92%
Finally, a space sim to better X2: The Threat, and it just happens to be the sequel. Possibly the best-looking game ever to appear on a PC. Plus, it plays well too.



IL-2 STURMOVIK: FORGOTTEN BATTLES
PCZ Issue: 128 - 92%
While flight sims are becoming rarer and rarer, at least the quality remains high. None more so than this ultra-classy WWII combat sim. Chocks away, comrade!



MICROSOFT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2004: A CENTURY OF FLIGHT
PCZ Issue: 133 - 89%
No, you don't shoot things, no there's no mission structure, yes there's the best non-combat flight experience to date. History can be fun.



BUDGET
FREELANCER
PCZ Issue: 128 - 84%
If X2 is too slow for you, Freelancer should fit the bill. Plenty of trading, bounty-hunting and space piracy, but with the emphasis on action rather than realism. Space has never been this much fun.



FALCON 4.0
PCZ Issue: 158 - 82%
An example of fanbase enthusiasm saving a once-dead series, Falcon 4.0 lives on thanks to the dedication of its hard-working players. The best modern-day fighter sim on the market.

Driving/Racing



MUST BUY!
GT LEGENDS
PCZ Issue: 161 - 92%
While GTR takes care of modern-day racing, GT Legends does the business for historical driving. A natural successor to Grand Prix Legends, it's like the swinging '60s never ended.



GTR
PCZ Issue: 153 - 90%
As real as it gets. Probably. The complete driving solution on a PC, with all the drifting, shunting and racing you need. Invest in a decent force-feedback steering wheel and pedals set-up though.



LIVE FOR SPEED
PCZ Issue: 158 - 90%
Online racing at its best. Realistic handling, hilarious crashes and a racing community second to none. On the right servers that is. A remarkable achievement by such a small team.



NEED FOR SPEED: MOST WANTED
PCZ Issue: 163 - 88%
Thrill-packed racer from EA, this time with the emphasis on high-speed police chases and notoriety factors. You can still make like Westwood with the car pimping though.



TOCA RACE DRIVER 3
PCZ Issue: 165 - 85%
If you're into cars, this is about as essential as petrol. With a massive collection of 35 motorsport genres, a great damage engine and realistic tracks, there's plenty of mileage in this superb racer.

God games



MUST BUY!
THE MOVIES
PCZ Issue: 162 - 95%
Life as a movie mogul, games don't get better than this. Not only a god/management game par excellence, but also a complete home movie-making kit. Brilliant.



BUDGET
BLACK & WHITE 2
PCZ Issue: 161 - 93%
The original split opinion, and this sequel does the same. We love it though, and think it's erased all the problems as well as adding plenty of new options to boot. It's gorgeous too.



BUDGET
BLACK & WHITE
PCZ Issue: 150 - 90%
Lionhead's controversial vision brought out your good/bad side and featured an ambitious mix of role-playing, strategy and great AI. It can now be yours for a mere fiver, making it a god among mortals.



EVIL GENIUS
PCZ Issue: 147 - 84%
Ever wanted to say 'No Mr Bond, I expect you to die', or create giant evil lairs inside hollow volcanoes? Well now you can with this great megalomaniac sim. It's always fun being bad.



VEGAS: MAKE IT BIG
PCZ Issue: 135 - 84%
An in-depth tycoon game with all the 3D graphical glitz and glamour of Vegas itself. Provide hotels, casinos and over-priced magic shows that suck the money out of the punters.

Sport



MUST BUY!
PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 5
PCZ Issue: 161 - 93%
Football, football, football. Morning, noon and night. The beautiful game in a beautiful game. Not only the best version of Pro Evo ever, also the best footy game ever.



FOOTBALL MANAGER 2006
PCZ Issue: 162 - 90%
One year on and the best footy management game is even better. Quick Tactics, half-time team talks, physio reports - changes are small but add up to a terrific whole.



TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2006
PCZ Issue: 161 - 85%
Travel through time playing Tiger Woods throughout history. Only in an EA Sports game. Tiger 06 is the best PC golf game yet, mainly thanks to the two career modes.



NHL 06
PCZ Issue: 160 - 84%
Ice hockey may not be the UK's number one sporting pastime, but that doesn't make EA Sports' incarnation of it any less fun. Exciting, breathless and violent ball-out fun for the whole family.



MADDEN 2005
PCZ Issue: 152 - 84%
Although the 2006 version is now upon us, this is actually the better option (at least until 2007 arrives). In truth, there's little to differ between the versions, but this one just feels more fluid.

RPGs



MUST BUY!
THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION
PCZ Issue: 167 - 95%
Oblivion's sublime graphics, intuitive character-creation and massive freeform gameplay put paid to the myth that you have to own a beard to enjoy RPGs.



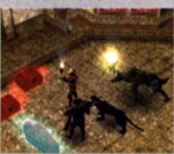
BUDGET
KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC
PCZ Issue: 137 - 94%
KOTOR is the best Star Wars game of recent years. Moving, dramatic and fairly adult in tone, it also has a hefty dose of lightsabers to keep you happy.



BUDGET
THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND
PCZ Issue: 116 - 94%
Possibly the most intimidating, yet wonderful game we've played - the breadth and depth of Morrowind remains a remarkable achievement.



DEUS EX
PCZ Issue: 93 - 94%
This remains the benchmark in FPS RPGs. Twisting sci-fi plots, exciting freeform levels and some moments of pure exhilaration and drama help retain Deus Ex as the alpha male of the gaming world.



NEVERWINTER NIGHTS
PCZ Issue: 118 - 91%
It may not have the depth of Fallout, but the customisation options in this are so extensive that it's been granted a very long life. Still a wonderfully immersive game.

INCOMING!

All approximate monthly dates are correct at the time of going to press

August/September

ARCHLORD
BROKEN SWORD: THE ANGEL OF DARKNESS
CALL OF JUAREZ
CIVICITY: ROME
COMPANY OF HEROES
DARK MESSIAH OF MIGHT & MAGIC
DARKSTAR ONE
DEFCON
FACES OF WAR
GOTHIC 3
LEGO STAR WARS II: THE ORIGINAL TRILOGY
LMA MANAGER 2006-06-06
MAELSTROM
PARAWORLD
RESIDENT EVIL 4
SPLINTER CELL: DOUBLE AGENT
WARHAMMER: MARK OF CHAOS

CODEMASTERS
THQ
ASCARON
2K GAMES
THQ
UBISOFT
ASCARON
INTROVERSION
UBISOFT
JOWOOD
ACTIVISION
CODEMASTERS
CODEMASTERS
DEEP SILVER
UBISOFT
UBISOFT
NAMCO

Late 2006

AGE OF EMPIRES III: WARCHIEFS
BATTLEFIELD 2142
ENEMY TERRITORY: QUAKE WARS
FEAR: EXTRACTION POINT
JUST CAUSE
MEDIAEVAL 2: TOTAL WAR
PHANTASY STAR UNIVERSE
SAM & MAX
SPORE
STAR TREK: LEGACY
STRANGLEHOLD
STRONGHOLD LEGENDS
THE LORD OF THE RINGS ONLINE: SHADOWS OF ANGMAR
UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2007
WORLD OF WARCRAFT: THE BURNING CRUSADE

MICROSOFT
EA
ACTIVISION
VU GAMES
EIDOS
SEGA
SEGA
TELLTALE GAMES
EA
BETHESDA
MIDWAY
2K GAMES
CODEMASTERS
MIDWAY
VU GAMES



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- **Splinter Cell: Double Agent**
- **Assassin's Creed**
- **More...**



5 TRIAL GAMES TO PLAY!

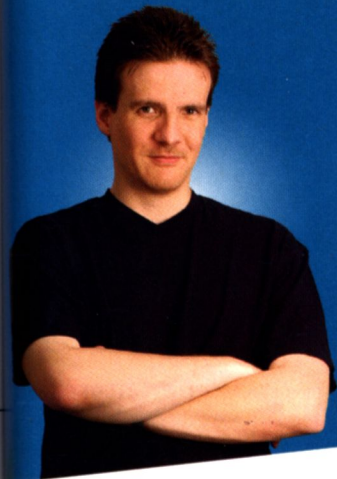
+ HALO 3 MASSIVE MOVIE!

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• GHOST RECON • KAMEO • TOP SPIN 2**



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Better gaming through technology



Car alarm

LIKE ALMOST EVERY car on the road, mine has far more brainpower under the bonnet than behind the wheel. From engine management to climate control, cars are controlled more by computers than by drivers – and it worries me, because I know what computers are like.

My car's alarm started going off at 4am and then, on a journey the following evening, the passenger seat started moving forward by itself. This wouldn't have been so bad, only my brother was on it at the time and I feared for the takeaway on his lap. It was time for the laptop treatment.

Back in the day, getting your car serviced involved a scary-looking baboon with a large wrench and 20 Embassy in his top pocket. Now, you get a guy in a smart overall carrying a laptop and a long cable: the laptop asks the car what's wrong and the car gleefully tells all. "And guess what," it chirps. "He regularly does over 100mph on the motorway!"

The service department phoned me back to tell me that the car's software had been 'patched' to cure the alarm problem and my average speed had been sent to the police (OK, maybe that's not true). Next day, the car was displaying error messages in French and the indicators wouldn't work. And then the alarm went off.

Seems like you can't get away from software 'upgrades' that make things worse. Sometimes I hate computers.

Wand

Phil Wand, hardware editor

CORE BLIMEY

New Core 2 Duo processors blast fastest Athlons



JUST AS AMD clambered into bed with Dell, early benchmarks of Core 2 Duo processors showed that Intel's new chips were not only faster than the products they replaced, but were also universally more rapid than any Athlon – including the FX. More

worryingly for AMD, the Core 2 Extreme will be even quicker still.

The Core 2 Duo most gamers will buy will be the 2.66GHz E6700, with the pricier X6800 Extreme hitting 2.93GHz. All chips are 64-bit, with a 266MHz quad-pumped front-side for a bus speed of 1066MHz.

The LGA775-based range uses less power than any Pentium-branded predecessor, or indeed any AMD rival, meaning that your PC will be faster but cooler. Keep an eye on retailer stock later this autumn. For more information, head to intel.com.



One downside to Core 2 Duo is that Apple will put it in Macs.

NEWS ROUND-UP

Windows Vista is almost here, but is still feeling rather clunky. The Beta 2 release – touted by Microsoft as the "biggest software download event in history" – works pretty much as advertised, with Internet Explorer 7 remaining wobbly and the interface reduced to a crawl in several key areas. It also lurches 10GB of your HDD and 0.5GB of your RAM before you've installed or run programs. If you curse any modern technology that's laden with stupid features and is irritatingly slow, you're not going to like it. Oh, and no game works with Vista yet. When most reviews of the new Windows revolve around how it looks rather than how it goes, it's time to be scared. microsoft.com/vista

Last month, I predicted that the arrival of NVIDIA's GX2 models – in essence, two GPUs on one card – would lead to the price of single GPU products softening. Well, it hasn't. LeadTek makes one of the cheaper variants, the GeForce 7950 GX2, but it's still over £400. The equivalent 7900 GTX remains around the £325 mark. What has happened is that Socket 939 Athlons have tumbled after AMD switched to AM2. Get 'em while you can!

Microsoft
DIRECTX

THE DIRECT APPROACH

Hardware-accelerated physics now

IF YOU READ my review of the ASUS P1 PhysX processor last month, you'll know that, rather sadly, it's not worth the effort. The chip delivers in spades something no game can translate to the screen: it's too much, too soon, and at the wrong price.

Now that Microsoft has announced it will be

offering developers hardware-based physics processing with DirectX 10, AGEIA must wonder if it's time to pack up and go home. The DX10 approach, like Havok FX, delivers a richer, more realistic environment by using slack bandwidth in your graphics card – something every gamer already has – to do the work. microsoft.com/directx

WARNING:
**THIS MONTH'S
HARD WORDS**

BY STEVE HOGARTY

Gadu-Gadu: The third boss from *The Legend Of Zelda*, you have to use the bow on his tentacles then get him in the eye with your bombs. **GAIM:** Gaim is wot we all lik 2 play at PC zoen. **Mega Bass:** A really big and obvious fish joke. **Media Accelerator:** Pressing fast-forward to skip through the *ITV News* programme stuck in the middle of *Die Hard 2*. **CrystalBrite:** Gets to work three times faster and gets your glassware seven times sparklier – now with added Powerball action. **5612WLMi:** An in-joke at Acer, stands for 'Laptop 5,612 – We Lack Marketing Intelligence'. **CORE 2 DUO:** New single out on Friday from the UK's latest hottest twosome. They're like H and Claire, only better!



SPECIFICATION

Processor Core Duo T2300 1.66GHz **Screen** 15.4-inches
 1280x800 CrystalBrite **Wireless** Integrated 802.11 a/b/g
Graphics GeForce Go 7300 **RAM** 1GB DDR2 533MHz
 (expandable to 4GB) **HDD** 1 Travelstar 100GB SATA
Optical 1 DVD-SuperMulti **USB** 4 ports **Sound** Stereo **OS**
 Windows XP Home **Weight** 2.89kg **Warranty** 12 months

ASPIRE 5612WLMi

PRICE £770 **MANUFACTURER** Acer **WEBSITE** acer.co.uk

THE 5612WLMi IS my first look at the Centrino Duo laptop platform, Intel's umbrella term for its new Core Duo processor coupled with 802.11 a/b/g PRO/Wireless on a Mobile 945 Express chipset. But you knew all that.

As with all other Aspire models, it's good-looking, with an excellent screen and an overall finish which belies the price. But as the second cheapest Centrino Duo notebook in Acer's catalogue – its sibling, which has a smaller hard drive and Intel 945GM graphics, is £100 less – the 5612WLMi isn't the most stellar performer.

What I mean is, it puts value before grunt and isn't cut out for the likes of *Oblivion* or even 3DMark06. It's the kind of laptop that makes you want to take a gin and tonic outside and reply to all your email and forum posts from the comfort of a sun lounger. And then play *Counter-Strike* or Peter Stock's superb *Armadillo Run*.

The CrystalBrite lid on this Aspire offers fast response times and a beguiling picture full of rich colours and dark shadows. As with standalone LCD products featuring the same surface treatment, you may find that the gloss black finish reflects a little too much of your surroundings and distracts you from your game. That said, it's not too much of an effort to shield the screen from external glare, and unless you're playing on the beach in direct sunlight, it's not something that would affect your score.

As for the 1.66GHz dual-core Core Duo, Intel's latest processor is a giant stride on from the old single-core boiler. My everyday notebook uses its forerunner, the 1.6GHz Pentium M chip, and when mucking around in Windows applications, the Core Duo in the 5612WLMi is unquestionably more rapid. When applying Photoshop filters, encoding DivX videos or looking at complex

Acrobat documents, the Acer takes half as long to do the job. Seriously. In CPU benchmark bar charts, it sits right alongside the 3.0GHz Pentium-D 930 desktop product.

The problem we gamers have is that the GeForce Go 7300 graphics engine is no match for modern blasters like *Quake 4* or *Battlefield 2* – it pretty much grinds to a halt when set to use the lid's widescreen resolution – and in these situations, the Core Duo processor may as well be a plate of rhubarb crumble. And while it plays old *Battlefield* and *Half-Life 2* at 1280x800 with only the odd spell of wooziness, you're never going to be tempted to sell your desktop. So it will only ever be an addition to your family.

If you're looking to keep your PC and want a weight-free laptop that gives you the freedom to move about, the 5612WLMi is an attractive product at an attractive

price. I have but a couple of issues: the plastic surrounding the power button bends with a confidence-killing inward motion when you push it, and the short warranty sends out all the wrong signals to potential buyers. But overall, this Acer feels like something that should survive years of use. **PCZ**

PCZONE

◀◀◀ VALUE • PERFORMANCE ▶▶▶

82

FP93GX

PRICE £245 MANUFACTURER BenQ WEBSITE www.benq.co.uk

BENQ TOUTS ITS FP93GX as a 'gaming screen', which is rather odd. I mean, there are gaming motherboards, gaming mice and even gaming keyboards, but gaming monitors? They'll be launching gaming network cables and gaming blank CDs next.

Ah wait, the response time. Of course. That 2ms on the spec sheet is stand-out low enough to convince owners who still have CRTs – all seven of them – to upgrade their way out of the Jurassic era and into the 21st century. Because it's plenty fast. That said, when 8ms screens hit the market some while ago, the issue of ghosting pretty much disappeared there and then. If anyone still has a CRT it's because they like it, not because they don't believe LCD is somehow not fast enough. In short, 2ms is peachy, but I'm not sure it makes a difference.

Actually, I'm wrong. It does. In order for BenQ to endow its panel with such a fast reaction time, the manufacturer cut the number of colours the FP93GX's internal brain has to think about. So while the picture is fine when you're playing *Shooty Bangs* or *World Of Weavers* – I'd go as far as to say the image quality is right up there with the very best – it gets ropey when watching action films either on DVD or via a TV tuner. It just looks somehow wrong. Maybe the FP93GX really is a gaming monitor. Try before you buy.

SPECIFICATION

Screen size 19-inches Resolution 1280x1024
Response 2ms Bright/Cont 300cd/sq.m/700:1
Weight 6.5Kg Connections Analogue (D-Sub), DVI
Warranty 36 months



PCZONE VALUE • PERFORMANCE >>>> **77**

FINGERPRINT READER

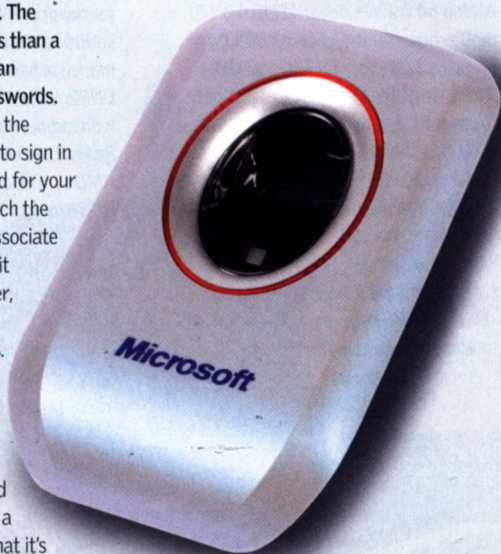
PRICE £23 MANUFACTURER Microsoft WEBSITE microsoft.com/uk/hardware

I'LL ANSWER THE most obvious question first: yes, this really works. Rest a finger or a thumb on the pad and in an instant, your PC will know whether it's you or your annoying brother. The recognition process takes less than a second and is much faster than remembering and typing passwords.

You can use the reader at the Windows Security screen or to sign in to websites – when prompted for your username and password, touch the pad and create a log-on to associate with them. Next time you visit Amazon, Hotmail or wherever, touch again and you're in.

There are two drawbacks. The first is that it only supports Microsoft's browser, meaning Firefox users must resort to one of several ropey extensions. And second, you have to agree to a security disclaimer stating that it's

for 'convenience only' and shouldn't be used to access sensitive data. For home buyers though, that shouldn't be an issue.



PCZONE VALUE • PERFORMANCE >>>> **82**

SRS-A205

PRICE £23 MANUFACTURER Sony WEBSITE sony.co.uk

WHAT A HANDSOME pair of speakers! They certainly tick all the right boxes for a place on your desktop: stereo in, aux in, headphone out, magnetic shielding, plus they're mains-powered with an integrated transformer. And a Sony badge too.

Shame they're so average. The sound they produce is neither bright nor clear, a result of their maker's preoccupation with low notes (the sticker on the box proclaims 'MEGA BASS', when what it really means is 'HARDLY ANY TREBLE').

Frustratingly, there's no tone control, meaning you have to tweak out the booming with third-party software or the equaliser tool that came with your soundcard. And even when you do, the sound is still a bit drab.

The 10W pair do a good job of pumping up volume, but hum like a cheap neon sign – something that's only exacerbated by the pumped-up bass. For a few more quid, you could get a set of Creative Inspire P5800s.



PCZONE VALUE • PERFORMANCE >>>> **69**



DEAR WANDY

If it ain't broke, don't fix it. If it ain't working, don't panic...



Problems?

We've all got them you know... Up to your neck in debt? Partner sleeping around? A propensity to wake up on Saturday morning with a kebab and beer can stuck to your face? We can't help with any of those (but if you know the answers, let us know), but we can solve all of your hardware hassles. Wandy knows everything and is willing to help if you email him at wandy@dearwandy.com, including as much information as necessary and system specs where applicable.

WHAT NO PC?

Q I've just got rid of my old machine and have around £1,200 set aside for a new one. I've already sorted everything but the graphics card. I have my mind set on a Radeon X1800 XT, but was wondering if an SLI or CrossFire configuration would be a better bet with my budget?

Peter Hayes

A If someone handed me £1,200 to go and buy myself a PC, I'd stick it in a high interest bank account until the next generation of Windows together with the next generation of DirectX video cards appear. But since you've sold your PC, the decision is made rather tricky because you need something to tide you over.

My advice would be that you buy yourself a decent Socket AM2 motherboard (£120), a high-end Athlon 64 X2 dual-core processor (£395) and 1GB PC2-6400 memory from a non-value brand line (£95) to give you the basis of a very decent gaming platform. Don't go wasting more than £200 on a video card

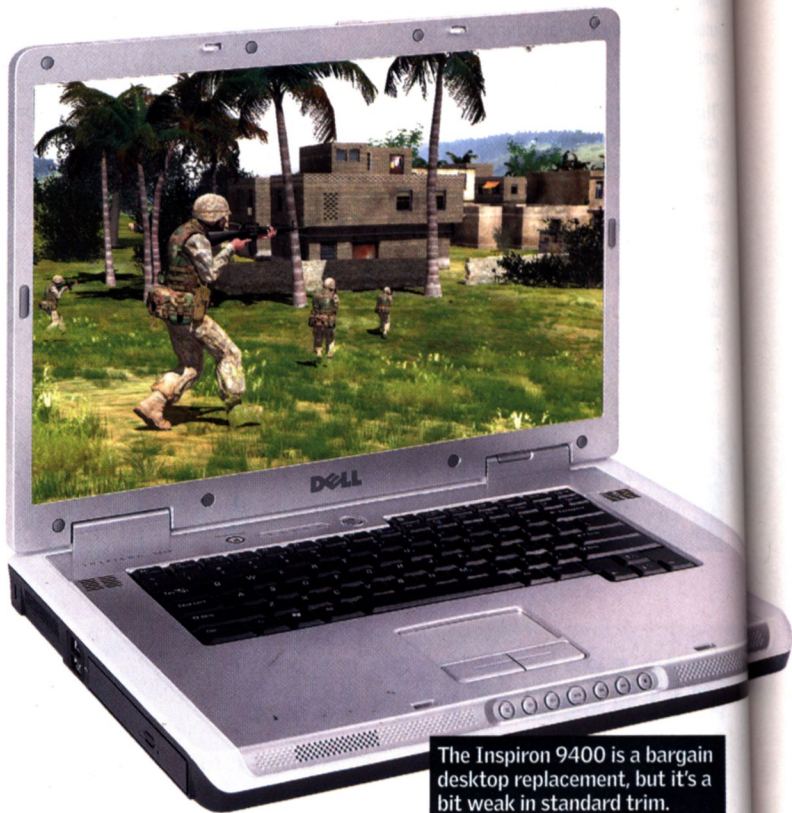


The M2N32-SLI Deluxe. Your friends will hate you.

because you'll be looking to change it for a new one not long from now – the X1800 XT you suggested is an excellent choice.

Your total spend shouldn't need to be more than £750, including splashing out on an Antec P180 quiet case (issue 165, 94%), giving you ample left over to really splash out on one of the faster DX10 cards later in the year, plus another 1GB RAM.

As for the question about SLI, I'd be inclined to buy an AM2 board with SLI – the M2N32-SLI Deluxe/Wireless Edition would be an excellent choice, although the current BIOS doesn't work with NVIDIA's tweaking tools – for the simple reason that you can't use the feature in future if you don't have it.



The Inspiron 9400 is a bargain desktop replacement, but it's a bit weak in standard trim.

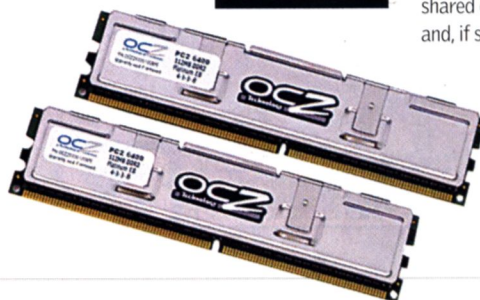
NOT SO FAST

Q Having just built my very own PC, I'm in gaming heaven. It's an Athlon 64 4000+ on an ASUS A8N-E motherboard with GeForce 7800 GTX graphics. I already had two 512MB 400MHz RAM sticks, but I've just noticed my board takes up to 600MHz. Can I get RAM this fast? Will I get even better performance with two 1GB sticks at 400MHz? What the hell is DDR2? Help!

Ian Fowler

A Your A8N-E board only supports PC3200 memory, ie the 400MHz modules you have in there now. The more

PC2-6400 RAM.



recent Socket AM2 processors feature support for dual DDR2 – up to 667MHz for single-core chips, and up to 800MHz for dual-core – thanks to a new memory controller. In theory, this gives the X2 models a bandwidth of twice the current DDR2, but as I mentioned last issue you won't notice the performance gains. Really, the change is about bringing AMD's product range in line with emerging DDR2 memory standards.

LAPUP TOPGRADE

Q I recently bought a Dell Inspiron 9400 with Intel's Media Accelerator 950. I heard from a friend that it may be possible to upgrade this chip to an actual graphics card rather than the shared one I currently have. Is this possible and, if so, how?

Will Cowling

A The short answer is no, you can't. While there are a small number of notebooks which feature modular graphics, your Inspiron's configuration

DRIVER WATCH

Keep your PC happy

GRAPHICS		
MANUFACTURER	DESC	RELEASED
ATI	CATALYST 6.5	25 MAY 06
NVIDIA	FORCEWARE 84.21	17 MAR 06

SOUND		
MANUFACTURER	DESC	RELEASED
Creative	SOUND BLASTER X-FI 2.070004	15 NOV 05
Creative	AUDIGY, AUDIGY	24 JAN 06
	4 208.0004	

@ wandy@dearwandy.com

✉ dearwandy, pc zone, future publishing, 2 balcombe st, london, nw1 6nw

"Cracking open a laptop isn't easy, and the slightest whiff of a screwdriver will destroy its guarantee"

Possibly not what Will Cowling wanted to hear



was frozen the moment you hit the 'Checkout' button on the Dell website. And although you probably felt pretty smug having shaved £550 off the cost by opting for the Media Accelerator 950 over the GeForce Go 7900 GS, the power difference should be pretty obvious by now.

If you'd bought a machine which could be upgraded (for example, rockdirect's Pegasus 650), you'd still have to return the unit to the manufacturer to complete the upgrade process. Cracking open a recent laptop isn't anywhere near as easy as opening your desktop, and the slightest whiff of a screwdriver will destroy one of its most important features - its guarantee.

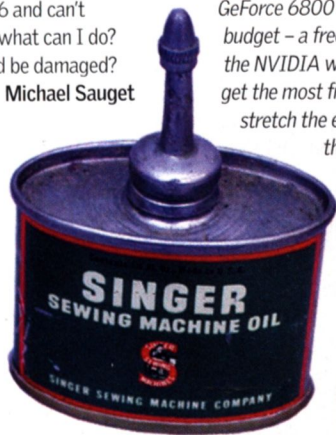
If you don't mind pulling off the 'warranty void' stickers, you can buy modules which allow you to upgrade MXM-based machines. Pay a visit to mxm-upgrade.com for details, and see if your laptop is listed in the compatibility chart.

DEATH RATTLE

Q I bought myself a new PC last October. I didn't like the 32MB onboard graphics, so I bought a GeForce 6600 - and for a while, everything was great. I didn't know it at the time, but the card needs a minimum 300W PSU. Now every time I turn on my PC, I hear a sound which I think is my graphics card making a death rattle. I thought I should check my power supply, which turned out to be 250W. I'm worried because I'm 16 and can't afford to buy a new one - what can I do? Can an underpowered card be damaged?

Michael Saugert

A You're not going to murder a 6600 by running it on a slightly underrated PSU. Don't tell anyone, but I've had a Radeon X800 XT humming merrily inside an old 250W desktop case for yonks, and despite the fact it's about 100W



short of the manufacturer's requirements, it's never given me reason to doubt its stability. So don't fret.

As for the noise, that'll be either the fan in your power supply, the fan over your processor or the fan on the GeForce. If it's the CPU or GPU fan, you should be able to simply blow out the dust or peel off its label and drop on a tiny amount of sewing machine oil (if your mum doesn't have any, you can pick up a tube for around £1.50 from any haberdashery store). If it's in the power supply, it might be a good idea to upgrade, but if you're seriously short of cash you can do the same trick with the sewing lubricant again. Just make sure you unplug your PC and DO NOT use a flammable oil from a tin in your garage! Because that would be very stupid.

USEFUL LIFE

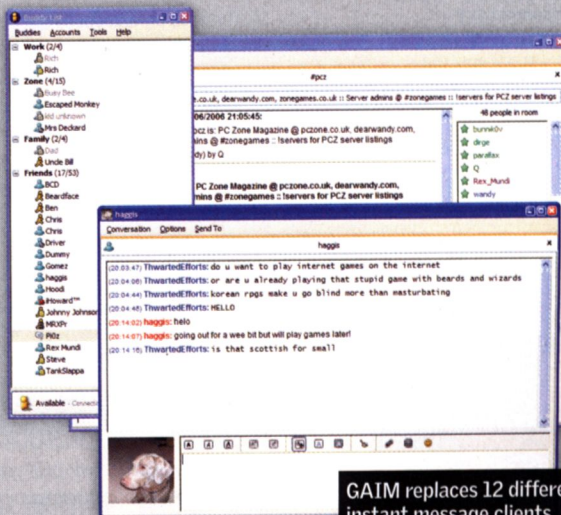
Q I want to know if I can get another 6-12 months extra life out of my PC for, say, £150 or so. I think my graphics card is my weak point. I have an Athlon XP3000+ on an ASUS A7N8X, 1GB PC3200 and GeForce FX 5600.

Andy Watts

A You're right, that video card is crappier than a septic tank at a trailer park. Additionally, the A7N8X is an old AGP motherboard and so you're limited on choice, but you can still buy a GeForce 6800 GS card in your budget - a free copy of nTune from the NVIDIA website will help you get the most from it all. If you can stretch the extra £50, I'd go for the more modern 7800 GS, as it will take a slightly higher level of detail before wimping out. You're quite wise to leave your PC buying until next year. **PCZ**

Any light oil will do, as long as it doesn't catch fire.

50 UTILITIES YOU HAVE TO USE BEFORE YOU DIE



GAIM replaces 12 different instant message clients.

13 GAIM

COSTS FREE
gaim.sourceforge.net

"Hello son, how are you?" My mother asked me this question just after Christmas, and I nearly fell backwards off my chair and into the waste paper basket. Not only had she managed to install, sign up for and use an instant messenger program on her PC, she was also using her PC without phoning me for step-by-step instructions.

If my mum has started using instant messenger (IM), you can be sure that everyone else has been doing it for years. The trouble is that there are so many different IM protocols, none of which are compatible with one another. So if your brother in Australia is using a copy of AIM, you'll need to install AIM in order to talk with him.

But actually, you don't.
Aha-ha-ha! So-called

'multi-protocol' programs such as Trillian and Gaim put all your contacts inside one application, meaning everyone you know - whether they're on AIM, MSN, Yahoo!, Jabber (ie Google Talk), ICQ, IRC, SILC, Novell GroupWise, Lotus Sametime, Napster, Zephyr, or Gadu-Gadu - will appear on your desktop.

The problem with Trillian is that it costs money. And as with any commercial product, each new version has so many stupid and demeaning features added to it that even Microsoft Office looks slim alongside it. By comparison, Gaim has remained delightfully thin and sylph-like. Each of your conversations is presented in a Firefox-like tab, and you soon lose track of who's on what protocol. Which of course is how it should be.

FORUMS:
DIRECT FROM
DEARWANDY.COM

Q: My daughter needs a space-saving LCD monitor which allows her to use her PC and separately to watch TV. Any advice? **A:** I'll go out on a limb here and suggest a product I've only read about: the £399 HUMAX LGB17DIT. Long experience with other HUMAX products leads me to believe they're the very best of their type in terms of reliability and manufacturer support. The 17-inch LGB17DIT includes an analogue terrestrial tuner as well as a digital Freeview receiver, allowing you to use it independently of the PC.



WATCHDOG

Not all companies are bad – but if they are, write to us for help...

Here to help!

Companies pissing you off? Don't feel your voice is strong enough to shout down the suits? Email Suzy at watchdog@pczone.co.uk with the subject heading 'Watchdog', or write to her at the address above. Pleased remember to include your name, address and contact number, and all purchasing details such as reference and invoice numbers.

OMG OEM!

If there's one piece of software that's essential to any PC user, it's the operating system. So when Graham Anderson's Windows XP Professional SP2 disc developed a crack, he got straight on the phone to Microsoft to try and get a replacement. However, since Graham's copy of Windows was OEM, they refused, instead saying that he should contact the manufacturer of his computer instead. Unfortunately, Graham bought it from Special Reserve, who have now shut down and now he's left wondering if his only solution is to buy a new copy.

After we got in contact, Microsoft supplied Graham with a new Windows disc. They also stated: "If you have to replace lost, broken, damaged or defective Microsoft software disks, and your software came pre-installed with your new PC, you'll need to contact either the manufacturer (OEM) or the System Builder who built your system. If they're no longer in business, or you can't find their contact details, give our customer services team a call on 0870 601 0100."

NOT OUR SAVIOUR

On May 1, reader Lewis Fairbairn made an order on credit with Savastore.com for over



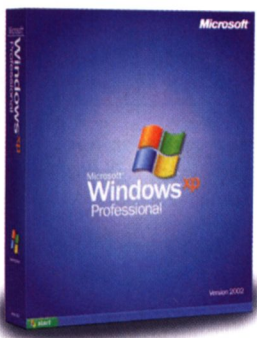
swapped his memory sticks, saying he'd have to return the next day for the motherboard. Once home though, he found two of the four sticks they'd swapped were dead anyway.

The next day he returned, only to be told that the motherboard had been tested and found to work perfectly, despite the physical damage. After giving him two new RAM sticks, Lewis asked them to be tested, only to discover that these were both dead too and there were no more in stock.

After Lewis's face turned a very vibrant shade of purple, he was eventually offered a different brand of memory in replacement. Getting home, he got on with the process of building his machine out of the hard-won parts, but once everything had been put together, he discovered that the machine would regularly freeze and reboot itself for no apparent reason. With the symptoms pointing to either the motherboard or

graphics card, but with Savastore having allegedly tested the motherboard and found it to be fault-free, Lewis asked Savastore to test his graphics card for him. They stated that they could, but should it be found to be working, he would be fined £10. Since then, he's purchased a cheaper motherboard elsewhere and after installing it, found his system works perfectly.

*After a quick flurry of phone calls, Savastore.com replied to Lewis stating: "We strive to provide the highest level of customer service possible and apologise that we have failed you on this occasion." They offered to refund the second credit arrangement and delivery fee, and once Lewis has decided on a replacement motherboard, to collect and refund the old one and send the new one out free of charge. Let's hope this one works, eh? **PCZ***



After giving him two new RAM sticks, Lewis asked for them to be tested, only to find that they were both dead

£1,500 of equipment to build two systems. During the next few days, a multitude of problems surfaced with Lewis's order. First, he had to cancel and re-order due to items that showed as 'in stock' actually being out of stock; second, he was charged twice for the credit arrangement; third, parts were delivered on separate dates even though he'd been told they'd turn up as one; and last, the 'next-day delivery' he'd paid for turned into 'three days'.

You'd have thought that this would have been the end of his problems, but once everything had arrived, he discovered that one of the motherboards was physically broken and the RAM sticks were not the speed he ordered. Ringing Savastore.com, they informed him he could pop into the store and swap his faulty equipment. However, when he arrived, they only

THE ACCUSED

Microsoft

savastore.com
a division of WATFORD electronics

Guilty until proven innocent

SAINTS NOT SINNERS

BACK IN 2004 at the Gamestars Live event, reader Matt Wilson bought a power supply from Hiper during their end-of-show auction for a bargain price. A year and a half later, Matt had finally collected all the bits he needed to put his PC together, but when it was assembled and the power switch flicked, nothing happened. It turned out the power unit was broken, but since

Matt bought it at an event and didn't get a receipt, he figured he'd have to fork out for a new one. Trying out Hiper's technical support though, they issued him with an RMA number and he posted the unit off to them. A week later and a package arrived at Matt's door, but instead of it containing his repaired old unit, a shiny new one which turned out to be the next model up had taken its place. Hats off, Hiper.

W2 FIRE

Velocity X-FX

AMD Athlon 64 X2 4800+ CPU,
Dual Crossfire Radeon X1900XT 512MB,
2GB OCZ Platinum Enhanced Latency memory,
250 GB SATA2 HDD, Logitech keyboard + G5 mouse
NEC DVD-RW, 16x DVD-Rom drive,
Microsoft Windows XP Home.

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SLI ready Nvidia Graphics 7950GX2 512MB,
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REMEMBER:
YOU ALSO NEED
MONEY FOR FOOD
AND CLOTHING

We are legally required to remind readers that money splashed on hardware may be better spent on families, wives and girlfriends. PC ZONE isn't liable for any estrangement that may ensue.

HARDWARE DIVIDE

Sadly, money can't buy you love. It can, however, buy you a new graphics card. Rejoice!

LOADED?

GRAPHICS

X1900 XTX

EXPECT TO PAY £371

MANUFACTURER CONNECT3D

WEBSITE www.connect3d.com

Like its GeForce 7800 GTX predecessor, our current video card champ is a reference card. It's also the fastest single device available, putting most dual-card configurations in the shade. We've chosen the Connect3D variant as it's a no-nonsense package for sensible money, making it an ideal grounding for CrossFire rigs.

PROCESSOR

ATHLON 64 FX-60

EXPECT TO PAY £740

MANUFACTURER AMD

WEBSITE amd.com

Running at 2.6GHz, the Athlon 64 FX-60, actually clocks slightly slower than its predecessor, the FX-57, but runs dual-cores each with a 128KB L1 cache. In essence, it's seriously bloody fast. If you're looking to build an overclocked colossus which smokes 99% of other systems out there, look no further.

MOTHERBOARD

FATALITY AN8 SLI

EXPECT TO PAY £125

MANUFACTURER ABIT

WEBSITE www.abit.com.tw

Designed specifically for gaming, the nForce4 SLI-based Fatal!ty AN8 supports all 939-pin AMD processors. As well as SLI support it features ABIT's Guru Panel, a front-mounted display unit for overclockers. The board also uses a bevy of ABIT features, including OTES cooling and AudioMAX 7.1 onboard audio.

HDD

RAPTOR 150GB

EXPECT TO PAY £190

MANUFACTURER Western Digital

WEBSITE www.wdc.com

Travelling at 10,000rpm and with a 4.5ms seek time, the Raptor is billed as the world's fastest SATA drive. It's also now double the size, meaning you now need just one of them in your rig. But two in RAID-0 configuration will give you oodles of space and make *Battlefield 2* really fly.

SCREEN

MULTISYNC LCD1970GX

EXPECT TO PAY £311

MANUFACTURER NEC Mitsubishi

WEBSITE www.nec-display-solutions.co.uk

The LCD1970GX is a 19in LCD screen, with an 8ms response time and an inky black glass screen that saturates all the colours and darkens the shadows. It includes a joystick controller for the on-screen display, and a four-port USB hub.

SOUND CARD

SOUND BLASTER X-FI FATALITY FPS

EXPECT TO PAY £129

MANUFACTURER Creative Labs

WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com

Slightly bonkers soundcard for audiophiles with deep pockets. Supports EAX 5.0, with 64MB X-RAM for top quality sound effects. CMSS-3D works magic on a stereo signal and makes headphone gaming crystal. Sounds nicer than an Audigy, but still painfully pricey.

SPEAKERS

Z-5500

EXPECT TO PAY £188

MANUFACTURER Logitech

WEBSITE www.logitech.co.uk

They'll cost you over £200, but they're also the best speakers we've ever tested at PC ZONE. They make both games and movies ravish your ears, and you'll soon find yourself blowing the dust from your old CDs and DVDs just so you can sit in the middle of the sound and revel in it.

SKINT?

GRAPHICS

X800 GTO

EXPECT TO PAY £110

MANUFACTURER GECUBE

WEBSITE gecube.com.tw

You could save yourself a tenner and go for the 8-pipeline GT, but you'd be missing out. The GTO is without doubt the mainstream card to go for: an overclocking dream, it can trump the 6800 GT on maximum detail and this GECUBE comes with a heat-pipe and sensible bundle.

PROCESSOR

ATHLON 64 3000+

EXPECT TO PAY £88

MANUFACTURER AMD

WEBSITE www.amd.co.uk

If you don't mind getting your hands dirty in the BIOS, Athlon 64s can be highly rewarding - particularly so on an nForce4 motherboard. Famous for overclocking and top performance in games, there's really no alternative. This AMD chip is the one to have if you're building to a budget.

MOTHERBOARD

ABN-E NFORCE4 ULTRA

EXPECT TO PAY £55

MANUFACTURER ASUSTek

WEBSITE uk.asus.com

The ABN-E supports the full range of Athlon 64 FX, dual-core Athlon 64 X2 and Athlon 64 chips, plus PCI Express and 7.1 channel audio. The nForce4 Ultra chipset has more features than a circus has clowns, and ASUS includes a raft of its own, as well as some serious overclocking tools.

HDD

1200JS SATA

EXPECT TO PAY £48

MANUFACTURER Western Digital

WEBSITE www.westerndigital.com

It's not like a 120GB hard drive is unfeasibly huge any more, but it's more than enough for the casual gamer to do a spot of casual gaming. A few good titles, a couple of hundred music files and the odd porn flick will still leave plenty of room for Windows to manoeuvre.

SCREEN

VE710S

EXPECT TO PAY £159

MANUFACTURER ViewSonic

WEBSITE www.viewsonic.co.uk

Not a lot of dosh buys you an awful lot of screen. The VE710s is a budget-priced 17in flat panel featuring an 8ms response time and 1,280x1,024 resolution and producing bright, crisp images worthy of the ViewSonic name. The company's UltraBrite technology gives rich and vivid colours in games.

SOUND CARD

SOUND BLASTER AUDIGY 2 VALUE

EXPECT TO PAY £32

MANUFACTURER Creative Labs

WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com

If you're a casual gamer, there's little point throwing half a mortgage payment at your soundcard because you'll not be able to tell the difference. The cheap Audigy features EAX 4.0 and Dolby Digital EX support, and makes an awful lot of sense.

SPEAKERS

INSPIRE P5800

EXPECT TO PAY £39

MANUFACTURER Creative

WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com

You can go cheaper, but to meet the quality of the P5800 you'll need spend a lot more, as there's no better set in this price range. The subwoofer is deep and creamy, the satellites crisp and clean. A wired remote, line-in and headphone jack complete a very decent little package.

FREE* GAME

for your mobile phone!

YOU PLAY WE PAY!



We tested dozens of games and picked out three of the most enjoyable titles...

CRASH 'N' BURN TURBO

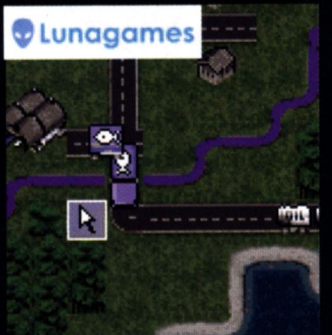
Crash 'N' Burn Turbo is a petrol-soaked, power-slidin', doughnuttin', 400-watt subwoofer slice of street racing. Choose your car, personalise it, then get out there and race it! There are no prizes for second place in this game... This mobile version of the brand-new console game for Xbox and PS2 lets you cause carnage and extreme crashes as you burn rubber around 16 different tracks. You can customise one of three different brutal, snarlin' racing cars and race it through six different championships. Smash and slam your opponents and leave them trailing in a cloud of nitro smoke!

TRUCK TYCOON

There's gold in them thar 18-wheelers! Now you can build your own trucking empire in this massive strategy game. To make it big in *Truck Tycoon* you need to build, expand and manage your empire across large terrains and make a healthy profit by transporting all sorts of goods ranging from passengers, mail, oil, fish, lumber, coal and various products. Buy trucks and lay new roads to expand the power of your trucking empire. Build and enhance cities to increase your wealth including houses, hotels, oil refineries, factories, lumber shacks and post offices.

CASPER IN MIDNIGHT MANSION

Play as both Casper and Wendy in this spook-tacular puzzle game! It's Halloween and the evil Witch Weevil has kidnapped Wendy, The Good Little Witch. Evil Weevil plans to cast a spell at the stroke of midnight that will strip little Wendy of her beauty and leave her horribly disfigured, and only brave Casper can rescue her from this terrible fate. If that wasn't enough, Casper's crafty uncles - The Ghostly Trio - are hot on his tail and are intent on feeding him 'mean pills' in a bid to turn poor Casper as mean and twisted as them.

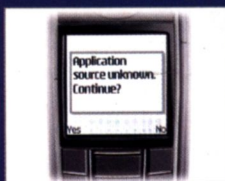


Just choose one of the 3 titles listed, then text **PCZONE** to **62344**. Check out the 'How It Works' panel for more information. It's easy!

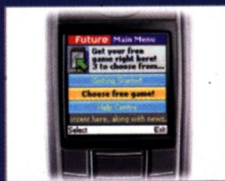
How it works: Just follow these simple steps to your FREE* mobile game!



Just text PCZONE to 62344. We'll send you a FREE message containing the link you need to download the PCZONE service.



Say 'Yes' if prompted to download the service. Problems? Text HELP to 62344. Add your mobile type if known - eg HELP K750i.



Check compatibility, choose your free game and get access to hot content, compos and news whenever you want.

No subscriptions! No worries!

No need to worry about sneaky subscriptions - there aren't any! Plus, our unique system checks automatically to make sure you can only get a game that works on your phone.

TERMS & CONDITIONS: Usage of the PCZONE browser service is subject to GPRS coverage, handset capability and network availability. A full list of compatible handsets is published in the FAQ at www.mad4games.com. At peak times, SMS traffic may be subject to network delay. Your phone must be WAP-enabled and able to run Java games. Once connected, the service will check product compatibility with your phone. If you need assistance on connection or other issues, text HELP to 62344. *We do NOT charge you for the service, but usage requires a short WAP and/or data connection for which your operator may charge at your normal rate. Casper the Friendly Ghost © 2005 Harvey Entertainment, Inc. CASPER and all Harvey characters, their logos, names and related indicia are trademarks of Harvey Entertainment, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Produced and published by iFone under licence from Classic Media. Crash 'N' Burn, Eidos and the Eidos logo, are registered trademarks of the Eidos Group of Companies. Mobile version developed and published by MacroSpace Ltd. Truck Tycoon © 2006 Lunagames International. All rights reserved. By using the service, you agree to abide by the terms and conditions published therein and at www.mad4g.com. Offer expires August 2, 2006.



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All hands-on playtest inside!

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Nintendo[®]

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE

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6 DECALS

New issue

OUT NOW





PCZONE

FREEPLAY



Skint? Play PC games for feck all...

WHAT'S FREE THIS MONTH

FREE GAMES!

The great indoors

HAVE YOU EVER sat on a bus and mindlessly fidgeted with the strap on your bag, folding it over and over again so it becomes all neat?

I do it all the time, but today I noticed there were two equally bored people watching me do it, entirely unaware that I'd spotted them. And so what had started as a casual and relaxing habit was now a gruelling test in the spotlight, of which failure would mean incurring the passive judgement of two strangers. Under such pressure, my finger slipped and the pleated strap flopped away from my hand tragically. I let out a tiny gasp. The two strangers looked away, emotionless, their interests shifted. I was left a broken man. Buses are hard to do, just one of the many horrors of outdoor life. So I recommend staying inside and playing our free *World Of Warcraft* trial for 14 days instead. Close the windows just to be safe.

Steve Hogarty

Steve Hogarty, staff writer

Try this!

Lara's got soul...



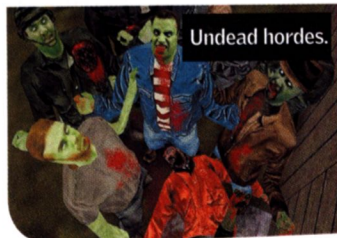
You'll have to finish the game, complete all of the time trials and gather all of the secret items in all of the levels. Doing all of this will give you 100% completion, and will unlock the ability to wield the Soul Reaver sword at any time by simply holding Backspace and pressing O.



Online worlds.

100 Demo Pages

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Undead hordes.

102 Buzz

News and culture from a world of free PC gaming



Bi-pedal bosses.

106 Freeware

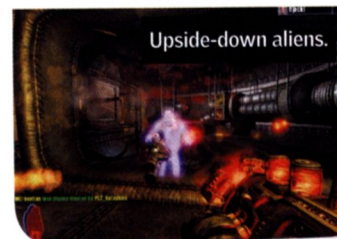
The crop-cream of free Internet gaming delivered straight to your doorstep



Speedy hedgehogs.

108 Play!

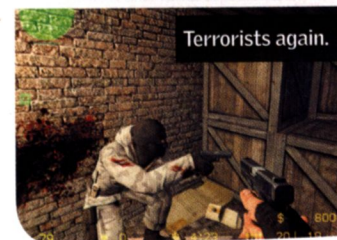
Essential reviews of the latest mods, maps and add-ons



Upside-down aliens.

112 Fight Club

Take us out, online! Now with more trounce to the ounce!



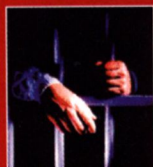
Terrorists again.

114 Counter-Strike: Source

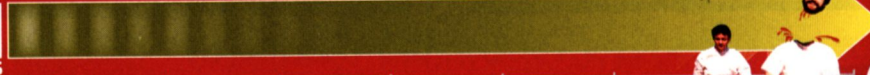
Own noobs! You devil



PCZONE
FREE-O-METER



0 HOURS



236.4 HOURS*

*Approximate amount of completely free stuff this month



FREEPLAYDEMOS

Demos

On the DVD – free games galore!

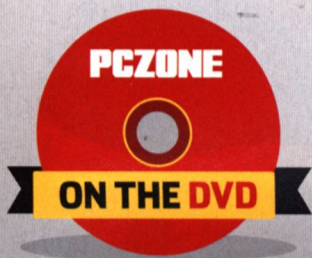


EXCLUSIVE!

WORLD OF WARCRAFT

Play the world's biggest online RPG for free right now!

www.worldofwarcraft.com



Having problems getting something on our DVD to work? Phone our helpline on **01225 442244** and ask for cover-disc support. Alternatively, email support@futurenet.co.uk, including as much information as possible about your system and the nature of your problem.



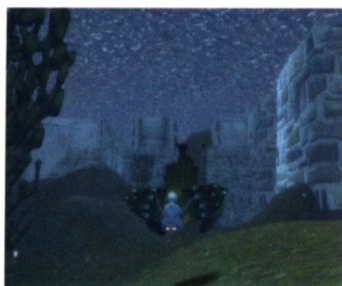
LOCK YOUR DOORS, bar your windows and wave goodbye to your loved ones, because this month we're giving you the world's biggest, most addictive online RPG for absolutely nowt. For the next 14 days you're not going to be doing much else than exploring Azeroth with your virtual elf friends.

If you've managed to avoid the *World Of Warcraft* phenomenon up to now, you've probably been hiding in a cave with a cardboard box on your head – and you've also been missing out one of the biggest games on the planet. Thanks to the free trial on this month's DVD, we're going to show you what you've been missing out on, with a fortnight of unrestricted adventuring at your disposal.

So what could you get up to in those 14 free days? If you're feeling a bit adventurous, you could battle Azeroth's

hordes of monsters and get inside those critter-filled dungeons. But if a more relaxing game is your thing, you could spend your two weeks exploring the massive world, helping country folk and generally taking in the epic sights and sounds of the universe.

If you're thinking of taking up permanent residency in *World Of Warcraft*, the trial is also a brilliant way of experimenting with the game's many professions. There's 12 of them in all, from the relaxing life of a fisherman, to the creative work of a blacksmith to the good samaritan role of the first-aid profession. You can't write about games for a living in-game, but hey, enchanting swords is more fun anyway...



HOW TO PLAY

Your unique authentication code, good for 14 days of *World Of Warcraft* gameplay, is located on the back of the **PC ZONE** DVD box. In order to begin playing, you will need to create a 'Free Trial' account, including your credit card information. Your credit card will not be charged for this 14-day free trial period. To continue the adventure beyond the free trial, purchase a retail copy of *World Of Warcraft* and play for an additional **FREE 30 days**. Only after this period ends will monthly fees be applied to your credit card. An Internet connection is required to play.



GREENIE-MEANIE

Orcs are the most prolific of the horde races, waging war on and generally hating humans. If you want a character who's a bit tougher in melee combat – especially with an axe – then these green chaps could be for you.



ZOMBIE-WOMBIE

The second most-intimidating horde race are the undead, who are immune to all sorts of magical attacks and can swim underwater far longer than other races. If you're a keen rogue, we recommend this lot.

WANT A RACE? Pointy ears or pointy horns? Hmm...



HUMAN-SCHUMAN

The humans are the most widespread of all races and are natural all-rounders, proving themselves both powerful warriors and keen craftsmen. They're also one of the few races who can have glorious, hairy beards.



ELF-SMELF

The night elves are the most popular of the alliance races, with an array of magic tricks and a pretty, treetop homeland. With their mystic, tree-hugging background, they lend themselves to the druid profession.

MICRO MACHINES V4

Stop driving around the kitchen and eat your cereal

www.codemasters.co.uk/micromachines/

YOU LIKE THE Micro Machines, young sir? Tiny little cars running around all bonkers like? We've seen many things in our life, but nothing prepared us for such tiny little cars! The way they dance, the miniscule rockets they fire at each other – it's more than a fast-paced racing game, it's a searing ballet, a wicked parody of all human life. Remember to play the multiplayer; that's always been the spirit of *Micro Machines*, as it is with all human endeavour. And life's greatest advice is truer than ever here – don't get pecked to death in the chicken coop level.



Where do you go to, my lovely?

When you're a tiny wee car?



UP ON THE RUTH

Whenever the word 'roof' appears, the urge to talk about Ruth Madoc consumes us. Ruth Madoc was born in Norwich in April 1943, before moving to Llanamlet. More quotes from her Wikipedia entry next time roofs come up, Madoc fans!



KITCHEN CAPERS

Kitchen Capers was only one of the mooted names for this level. Others included Culinary Chaos and Descent Into Madness Amongst The Pasta Jars. The name was eventually chosen by dipping a glue-covered egg into a bin full of confetti.

GLORY OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

What have the Romans ever done for us, or *Jon Blyth*?

www.haemimontgames.com

IT'S NOT THE first time in my life I've been told I've mastered the basics in town planning. Nor is it the first time that I've been told that I still have a lot left to learn.

However, *Glory Of The Roman Empire* taught me for the first time that people living in casas require sausages, bread and

linen. Apparently the inhabitants of my glorious Roman town are too classy to eat sausage sandwiches in the nude. Ungrateful swine – I should never have built them that massive golden statue. Well, if they don't want to eat they can just go hungry. I don't care.



1 Golden statues increase prestige of surrounding houses, by letting faraway peasants see how stinking rich you are and how much you care about their poverty.

2 This altar is so powerful that it 'altars' surrounding buildings into a higher level. This is where the word altar came from, in actual fact.

3 For all this mountain adds to gameplay, it could be a montage of puppy photos. Realism aside, where's our montage?

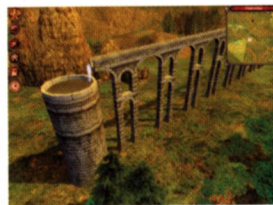
FREAK FACTORY

Look what I built!



HOUSE

I built a house, and that I see fit to document this utterly basic feat pegs me as a massive dullard.



AQUEDUCT

I didn't build this – I just found it there. So I built a house nearby and acted like I owned it.

THE BEST OF THE REST



X-MEN: THE OFFICIAL GAME

If you play this demo – which includes three full missions and a cut-scene – and convert the fun you have into kinetic energy, it will provide enough force to hurl a witch into a cave. snipurl.com/siu4



RUSH FOR BERLIN (MULTIPLAYER)

Rush For Berlin is the reason a massive Hitler head appeared on page 75 of issue 168, causing the highest outbreak of people hiding behind a magazine and saying "Grargh, I'm Hitler" since 1963. www.rushforberlin.com



PACIFIC STORM

On the other hand, if you converted the strategic brainpower required to beat *Pacific Storm's* demo missions into brotherly love, it would make a *Daily Mail* reader hug an immigrant. Aawwww. www.lesta.ru/en/?page_id=5



EARACHE EXTREME METAL RACING

The decibels produced by just four laps of this hell-racer – if filtered through a machine that turns volume into icing sugar – would be enough to cover a cake the size of Saturn. And it's not even real music. www.earacheextrememetalracing.com

PCZONE
HOT
DOWNLOADS

DARKSTAR ONE

www.darkstar-one.com



In space, no-one can hear you scream. So it'll be a silent wave of happiness that washes through the galaxy when you play this massive space-based title. Start bounty hunting, become an interstellar pirate or try smuggling to build up your spaceship.

NIGHT WATCH

www.fileshack.com/file.x?fd=8234



This fantasy RPG is based on the Russian sleeper hit movie of the same name, where the world is divided into two opposing forces. As a member of the Night Watch, you must use your magical powers to protect the forces of light.

SNIPPETS



UT: XMP PUBLIC RELEASE 3

www.free-monkey.com/main/utxmp
Unreal II's Expanded Multiplayer modification has recently let fly with a third release, fixing such abhorrent tragedies as the vehicle turret rotation on spawn and the 'revive-me dance' (which we've only just noticed in the changelog, and are now really intrigued to learn more about). *UT:XMP* fans, take note.



THE COFFEE MANAGER

snipurl.com/pcz_brew
 At the push of a button on Steve's keyboard, a prompt appears on all of our networked PCs asking what we'd like from the coffee machine. Our replies are thusly compiled and returned to him electronically or via the printer, meaning he won't forget who wants what. Genius!

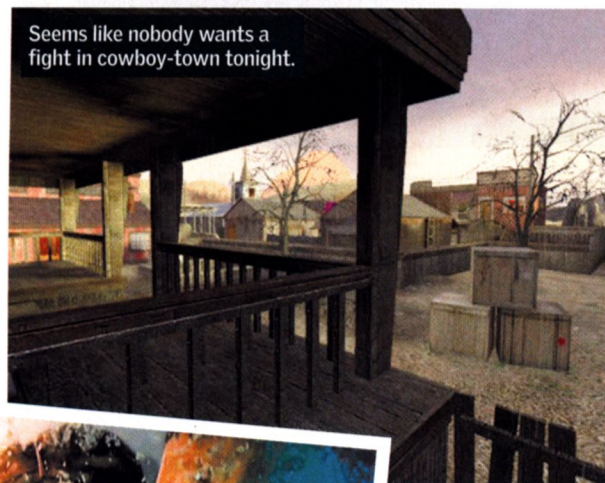
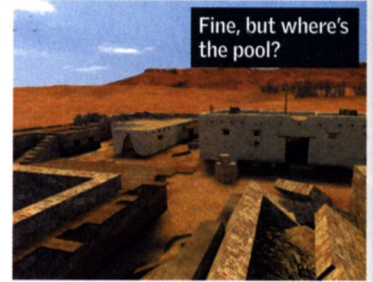
PISTOLS AT DAWN

Wanted: Outlaws & Lawmen rides into town

wantedmod.planethalflife.gamespy.com/saloon/ | Mod for: Half-Life 2

WHY IS IT that so few games have capitalised on the fact that, with the exception of the bit with the pirates and the other bit with the ninjas, the Wild West is the coolest era in history? *Wanted: Outlaws & Lawmen* is a welcome *Half-Life 2* mod, concerning itself with both the prostitute-straddlin' bandit and alcoholic sheriff halves of the western coin.

As it stands, it's unclear exactly what the team are hoping to create, with vague and ambitious phrases such as 'team-based questing' slapped across their website. We reckon it'll be a safe bet to assume a cowboy deathmatch scenario with pretty locales as shown here. This is one *Half-Life 2* mod you won't want to, wait for it... Dodge. Oh yes.



DOWN(LOAD) OF THE DEAD

Zombie Movie may contain zombies

2chums.com

PROVING THAT STEAM isn't just a way of pissing off people living on uni campuses or behind stringent firewalls, Valve have released the first movie to be distributed using their online delivery service.

Directed by Michael J Asquith and Ben Stenbeck of 2Chums Moving Pictures, *Zombie Movie* concerns, unsurprisingly, the undead. Available for download now, its b-movie-esque japes are worth a gander.

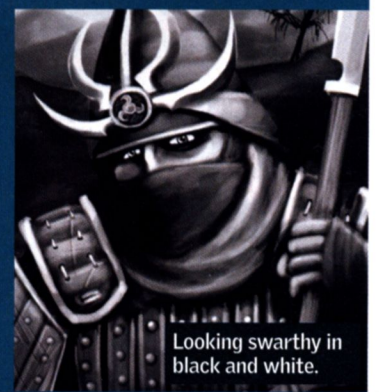
But what does this mean for Steam? If movies are permitted to vend their smutty undead wares on this beautiful and proud Internet of ours, will Valve ever dare attempt to sell music and TV shows over Steam? Probably not, but independent moviemakers should be paying attention anyway – Valve's delivery service may well become a convenient way of distributing their wares.

VOID IF REMOVED

Void draws a blank www.void-oblivion.co.uk | Mod for: Oblivion

MUCH LIKE WIKIPEDIA is an encyclopedia essentially built from scratch by its users, *Void* is a project which hopes to do the same for *Oblivion* mods. Starting with a completely blank world, modders will supposedly build and create content, be it a mountain, a town or just a rock somewhere, before sending it to the guys at *Void*, who will release new versions of the updated mod periodically.

Ever pessimistic, we can't see how this will work for fairly obvious reasons. Who'll decide what goes in? Who would want to submit work which may not even get implemented when they could release it themselves? Contradicting this ethos too, is the fact that the 'blank canvas' has an oriental storyline attached. Nevertheless, it's an interesting project and one which we'll be watching closely.



MINERVA MAN

Adam Foster, creator of the HL2 mod Minerva, waxes lyrical...

PCZ: Could you give us a quick run-down of what *Minerva* is?

ADAM: *Minerva* is an anti-modification for single-player *Half-Life 2*. I'm ignoring the standard, cargo-cult routine of weapons renders, concept art done in crayon, Web forums with flame wars and media releases. Instead, I'm taking an almost dogma-like approach to game design. The aim isn't to replace as much game content as possible; instead, it's to tell my own, apocryphal story set in the *Half-Life 2* universe, and to actually release something for the public to play."

PCZ: How do you go about scripting *Minerva*?

ADAM: "Cursed with an over-active imagination from a very early age, I've been writing short stories for years. Nothing's been published or

"Mapping for a computer game can be considered another form of writing a story – you have to pace things appropriately and provide clues regarding what will happen in the future in order to keep the player interested. To add mystery to a story, you don't hide everything away – you show just enough to get the imagination of the reader (or player) going. If you give them direction, they'll fight for it.

"As for actually writing the story, it's more a case of sitting at my computer and typing stuff in. Sheer excitement."

PCZ: What are your influences for the mod? What other mods have inspired you?

ADAM: "A giant influence remarkably few people have noticed are the *Marathon* games from Bungie, now more famous for the *Halo* series. The

they looked – unintentional, as I'd deliberately avoided playing *Halo* for some time, trying not to be too closely inspired. But still, very few people have noticed, so I think I got away with it."

PCZ: How much input have you taken from the community in shaping new episodes?

ADAM: "Too much, and not enough. Some of the major complaints about the first episode were that the messages were too cryptic and that there weren't enough puzzles. So, some of the major complaints about the second episode were: messages not cryptic enough and too many puzzles. You can't win..."

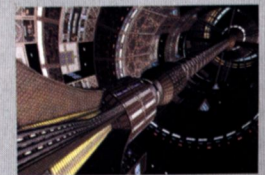
PCZ: What about professionals? Have the guys at Valve given you any feedback?

SNIPPETS



DAMN BIRDS

snipurl.com/s1de
This late entry for the Freeware section this month still deserves a mention. Play as a statue in a park, defending yourself from birds using a variety of weapons and armour you must purchase between rounds. Exactly who gives you the cash is unclear, but this is still very addictive.



INFINITY

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PCZ: How do you go about scripting *Minerva*?

ADAM: "Cursed with an over-active imagination from a very early age, I've been writing short stories for years. Nothing's been published or is available online, but it's meant I'm not exactly new to this whole plot and design thing. The signs were there from the beginning – even at primary school, I'd produce detailed maps and plans for the locations my stories were to be set in."

"Mapping for a computer game can be considered another form of writing a story – you have to pace things appropriately and provide clues regarding what will happen in the future in order to keep the player interested. To add mystery to a story, you don't hide everything away – you show just enough to get the imagination of the reader (or player) going. If you give them direction, they'll fight for it."

"As for actually writing the story, it's more a case of sitting at my computer and typing stuff in. Sheer excitement."

PCZ: What are your influences for the mod? What other mods have inspired you?

ADAM: "A giant influence remarkably few people have noticed are the *Marathon* games from Bungie, now more famous for the *Halo* series. The first *Minerva* map was very heavily inspired by a certain Silent Cartographer chapter from *Halo* – so much so that its original nickname was 'Flatulent Geographer'. Yes, really. When later looking at overhead screenshots of the two, I was appalled as to how similar

they looked – unintentional, as I'd deliberately avoided playing *Halo* for some time, trying not to be too closely inspired. But still, very few people have noticed, so I think I got away with it."

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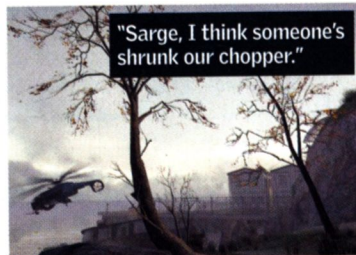
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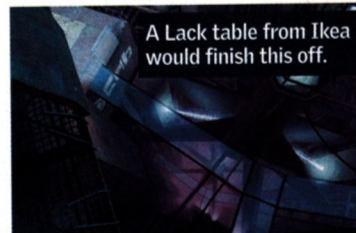
ADAM: "Feedback from Valve? Kind of, if you count being invited over to Seattle for a week and being given the chance to playtest the work-in-progress *Episode One* – along with some great conversations with some of the geniuses behind the *Half-Life* games. Does that count?"



It's like an Escher painting innit?



"Sarge, I think someone's shrunk our chopper."



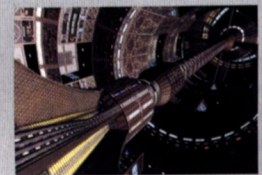
A Lack table from Ikea would finish this off.

SNIPPETS



DAMN BIRDS

snipurl.com/s1de
This late entry for the Freeware section this month still deserves a mention. Play as a statue in a park, defending yourself from birds using a variety of weapons and armour you must purchase between rounds. Exactly who gives you the cash is unclear, but this is still very addictive.



INFINITY

fl-tw.com
Infinity, a standalone space sim we featured a few issues back, now has some more videos worth watching on its site. In particular, a really big space station, full of metal and lights, hopes and dreams. They have occasional open beta tests too, so look out for that.

Bug-Fix of the Month

THIS MONTH
GHOST RECON:
ADVANCED WARFIGHTER



V1.1 means 'helicopters will no longer fall in certain situations'. What a relief.

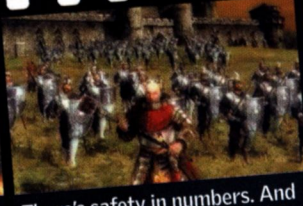
Movie of the Month

WARHAMMER: MARK OF CHAOS

If you thought that fantasy strategy games are only for people sporting exceedingly large beards, then you might want to take a look at *Mark Of Chaos*. With its firm emphasis on war rather than resource management, we can't wait to get our hands on this goblin-fest...



"Let's get ready to rrrrrumble!" He may only be small, but he's brought plenty of mates...



There's safety in numbers. And in wearing bloody great big sets of armour too.



Looks like all the king's horses and all the king's men... But where's Humpty?



Looks like this giant's had his fair share of mead. Just look at that belly!

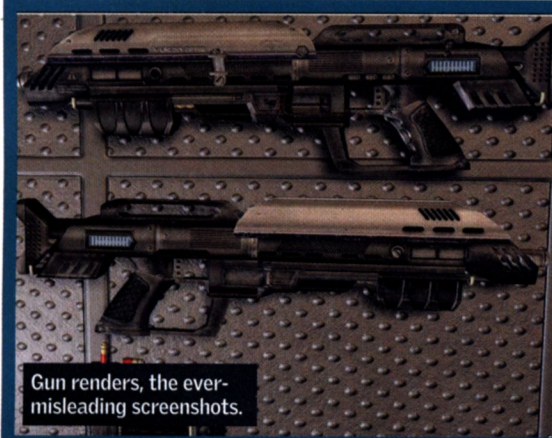
A STAR IS BORN

Birthstar: Frontline media all up in your face snipurl.com/pcz_birthstar | Mod for: Half-Life 2

WITHOUT WANTING TO beat around the bush too much, *Birthstar: Frontline* is shaping up to be the *Advanced Warfighter of Half-Life 2* mods. Well, set yourself in a near-future military conflict and you're begging to be compared to half of Clancy's back catalogue. As such, the mod goes hand in hand with the sort of equipment, weapons and player models you'd expect – what's far more interesting though is what the mod's promising in the gameplay stakes.

Their website reeks of exciting ambition. 'Fully collaborative gameplay', placing two players in a single-player map and prompting them to work together (or, as we'd put it, 'co-operate'). 'Unparalleled realism', realism with little to no parallels – meaning lethal damage systems and proper ballistics abound. 'Learning AI', which is capable of adapting to the various situations – the mod's features aspire to greatness.

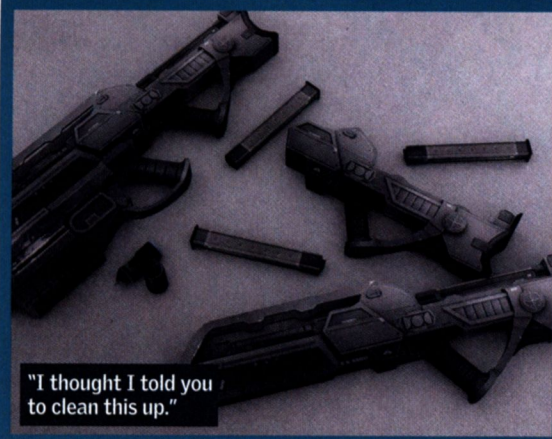
With a full team and a lot of interest being garnered from the community, *Birthstar's* ambition seems anything but blind. We look forward to seeing some in-game screens soon. Until then, we'll pore over these gun renders – looks like *HL2's* going advanced.



Gun renders, the ever-misleading screenshots.



"But wait, we'll also throw in this stylish tripod too!"



"I thought I told you to clean this up."



The invisible man tries on a new outfit.

BEAUTIFUL SOUTH

Southern Rise gets historical southernrisemod.com | Mod for: UT2007

WITHOUT A DOUBT, America's two most boring wars were the ones they fought in America. The Revolution, in which they changed some of our words around and chucked tea into the sea; and The Civil, in which some sister-loving rednecks attempted to take over everything. Historically accurate *UT2007* mod *Southern Rise* pits the Union fighters against the undead Condeaderate forces in what the developers are describing as a 'weird' and 'new' adventure, rather than a run-and-gun team deathmatch.

In the Acquisition game mode, 'Union heroes have to gather the head, heart and soul of Robert E Lee, so that it can

be destroyed. Once all three pieces have been gathered and returned to the Union heroes capture point, the Union heroes will win the match. If all Union heroes are killed, the Condeaderate team wins'. That has to be fun. Fallen heroes must go to purgatory before being allowed back into the game, which involves platform-jumping or riddles to quicken your respawn time, or simply waiting it out if you can't be arsed.

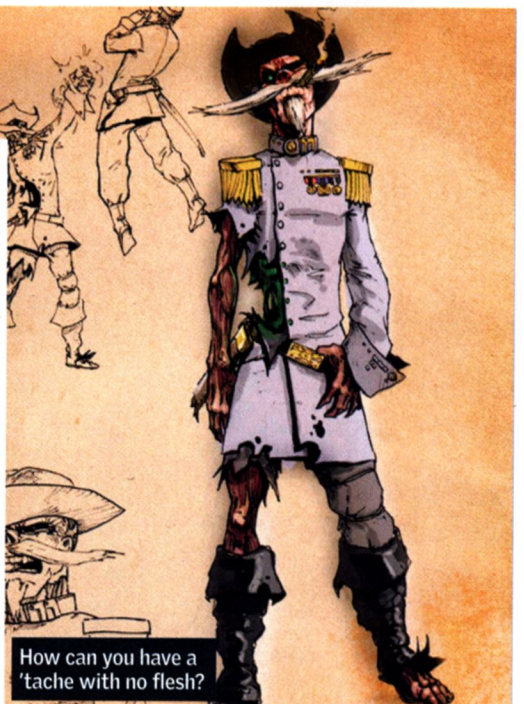
All we have to go on right now is the fantastic concept art, but original and interesting mods like this simply have to be commended. With a planned release for *UT2007* however, it's still some way off.



Sure, they can draw...



...But can they mod?



How can you have a 'tache with no flesh?



"Vindaloo, vindaloo, vindaloo, vindaloo, naaa naaa..."



Constant grimacing has been left in.

GRIMACING ZOMBIES

Dawn Of The Dead goes slow-mo maxpayne.levels4you.com/cdc/dotd/ | Mod for: Max Payne

ONE MORE ZOMBIE-SCENTED sprig to stick in your hair and/or bonnet is sliding down the greasy mod-chute in the form of *Dawn Of The Dead*, a *Max Payne* total conversion hoping to closely ape the undead-bothering antics of the cult classic movie.

Honestly though, not many of these mods get much further than a fetid hand thrusting outwards from a fresh grave before the developers get bored with making concept art, but *DOTD*'s one-man team seems to be zooming along, having nailed a few levels and skins already.

There are few games that lend themselves perfectly to the head-popping zombie-despatching mentality, but *Max Payne* is easily one of them. Also, you've simply got to love the grimacing green-skinned zombies – how much more authentic can you get?



Premature modification is becoming common.

CRYTEK PRE-SDK

Crysis modders get a head start www.crymod.com

EAGER TO NURTURE their devoted modding community, Crytek have released *Crysis* software development kits to both the developers of *Obsidian Edge* and *Navy SEALs: Covert War*. What this head start means is that by the time *Crysis* is released, there will be at least two mods released alongside it – a rarity among mods, which usually take months to become

anything approaching a playable product. *Obsidian Edge*, previously released for *Far Cry*, vastly improved the game's online side, adding realistic damage, character classes and new game modes. *Navy SEALs* will ebb towards the stat-building RPG side of things, adding real weapons and all that jazz. Still, we'll be waiting a while before either surface.

IT COULD BE YOU

Are you *The Chosen One*?

tcn.unreal.pl | Mod for: Unreal Tournament

HERE'S AN INTERESTING mod, albeit muted by the platform it's being developed upon. If you still own a copy of *Unreal Tournament* however, *The Chosen One* deserves your attention. Implanting massive chunks of RPG into the shooter's relatively shallow roots, this mod promises character development, a

full storyline, graphical upgrades to the original engine and lots of sub-quests. It's charming to see that *UT* hasn't been forgotten in the modding world, especially when they manage to tweak so much that's pretty out of it. *The Chosen One* should hopefully be out by the time you read this – if not, check out the beautiful screens on their website.



Before Batman found it, they just called it 'the cave'.

SO YOU WANT TO BE A...

CONCEPT ARTIST



NAME: Paul Edwards
JOB TITLE: Concept artist, Codemasters
WORKING ON: Latest *Op Flashpoint*, *Colin McRae Rally*, *TOCA Race Driver*
AGE: 29
EXPERIENCE: All the skills needed were acquired on the job

PCZ How did you get started?

PE "I was taken on as entry-level artist on the strength of my drawing skills, as I'd never used a PC before my first day here. It was a massive learning curve, but that was my foot in the door."

PCZ What's the pay like?

PE "After a few promotions and good fortune I would describe my situation as comfortable. Truly, the best reward is getting paid to make artwork for some of the best games on the market."

PCZ What does your job involve?

PE "More mundane duties include scheduling, and budgeting is becoming more important in today's cut-throat industry. The fun stuff involves creating artwork, from concept to finished in-game models."

PCZ How rewarding is your job?

PE "One of the greatest rewards is hearing gamers praising your game and getting genuinely excited about it."

PCZ What advice would you give to someone wishing to get into your field?

PE "Since I started, there are many dedicated uni courses available. Of these, the most promising candidates I've seen lately are those with flare, genuine artistic ability and a dedication to games. It's important to maintain core traditional skills. It's far easier to teach a good artist the tech side than train a technical guru how to draw. Ignore your mum when she complains: "You're always on that PlayStation instead of studying!" It's research. Above all, don't give up and if you're good enough, you will make it."



Freeware



Steve Hogarty takes a bite out of the freeware cake. Mmm, cake

NOITU LOVE AND THE ARMY OF GRINNING DARNES

We can't tell what they're so happy about

Developer: Joakim Sandberg | www.konjak.org/noitu.htm

Freeware is dedicated to bringing you the best free games content the Net has to offer – you'll never have to buy another game again. This month, we wonder if you read this little intro – it changes every month and it's sometimes funny. We also have freeware games with long names.

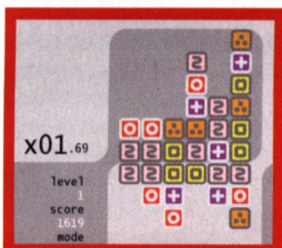
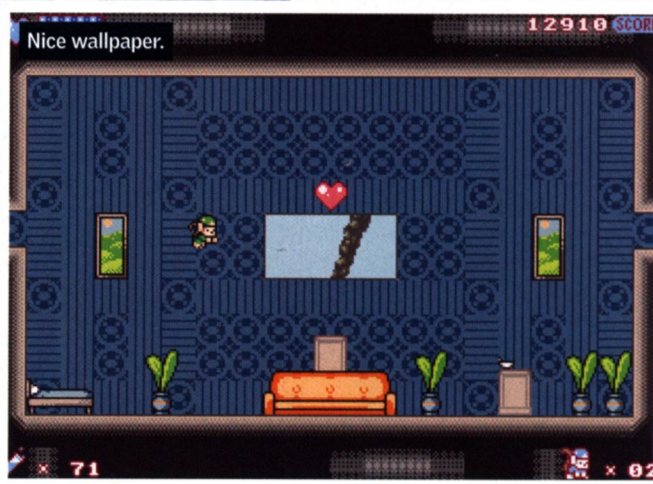
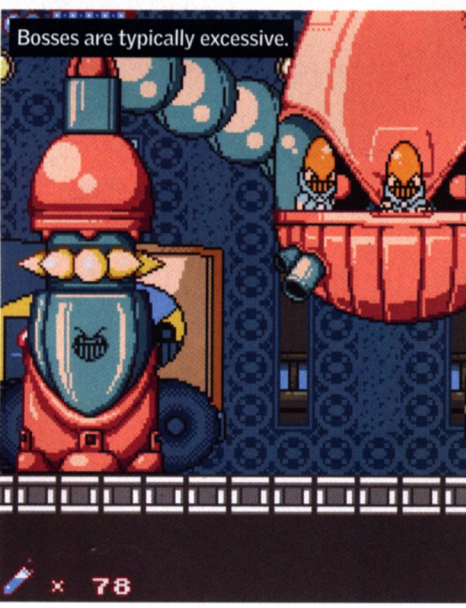
PROFESSORS FALL INTO one of three categories: university lecturers; the ones who work for what they believe to be a good cause but it turns out what they've been working on is actually a horrible creation that will kill many people and when they realise this they go into hiding or perhaps kill themselves; and the evil/insane sort. *Noitu Love And The Army Of Grinning Darnes* is set in the future, in a city which has arbitrarily become overrun by a robot army lead by professor Darnacus Damnation – an evil/insane professor.

A side-scrolling arcade beat 'em up which is best described as *Mega Man* meets *Streets Of Rage*, *Noitu Love* is a freeware title of such quality it could easily have seen a commercial release (well, maybe back in 1990).

Playing as Noitu, you must master the classic art of both jumping and attacking to traverse each level, encountering clever boss battles and new enemies along the

way. Despite being such a basic game (jumping and attacking constitute almost every button press), *Noitu Love* metes out interesting moments at such a pace as to keep you interested.

The evolution chambers found around the levels, for example, transform you into one of two things. You might become a little monkey, granting you the ability to jump really high and crawl into small spaces while removing your ability to attack; or you might become a psychic superhuman, who moves slowly and jumps feebly but has a powerful psychic attack. This paves the way for evolution-based puzzles and boss fights, as well as reminding us that in the future, we'll all be very smart and walk around with our hands behind our backs, and definitely won't become eight-legged cyber-spiders with our brains in precariously placed glass domes above our hairless blue bodies. Which is a relief.



Zi Wuh?

Dev: Alan Gordon
Web: secretblender.blogspot.com/2006/05/zi.html

LATELY, IT SEEMS that puzzlers have fallen back to their roots in as graceful and fantastic a means as possible. We've come from the blocky history of *Tetris* and arrived at the cube-y present of *Meteos* and *Lumines*. Blocks just work, they've got four equal sides, they're easily stackable and you know where you are with a block. Rectangles now, they're a bit trickier, a bit more unpredictable and wild, untamed and spontaneous like a feisty Latino girlfriend. Give me a dependable, level-headed block any day I reckon, and *Zi* shares my sentiments. Line up blocks of the same type, destroy them, increase your multiplier and chase big points payouts. It's simple, about as complex as one of those thumb things prostitutes used in the old days. A thimble, yes.

WITHIN A DEEP FOREST

Defecating popes nowhere to be seen

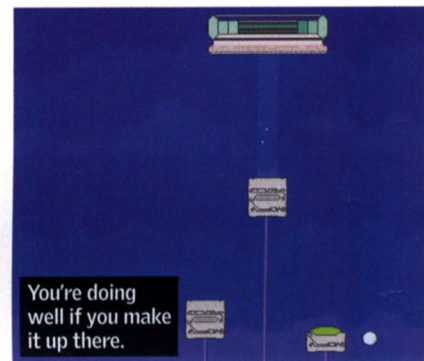
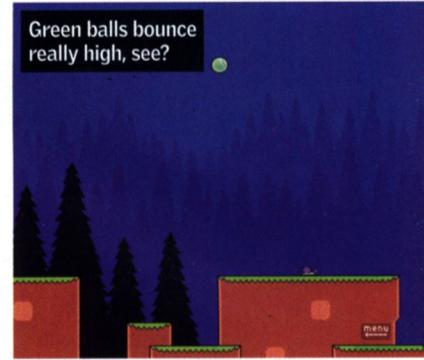
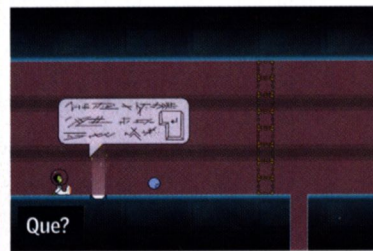
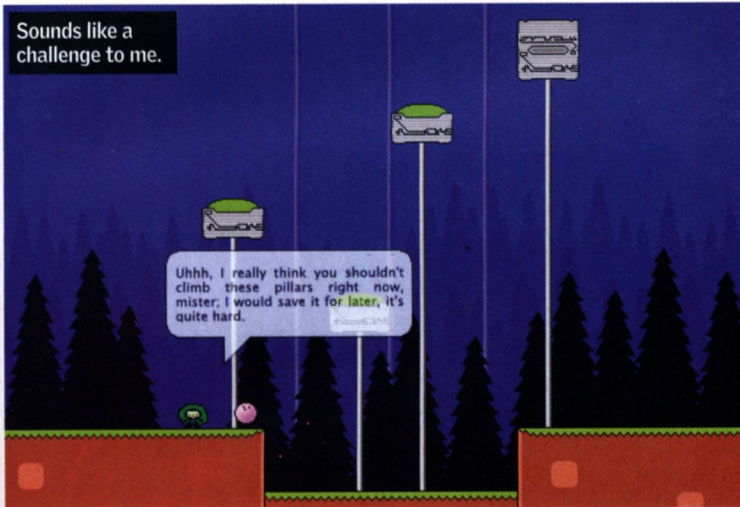
Developer: Secret Games | withinadeepforest.ni2.se

REMEMBER THE NOISE those cheap, plastic £1 footballs made when you threw them really hard against the tarmac on a hot summer day before they bounced back up and slapped you in the face? That's the noise most of the balls in *Within A Deep Forest* make as they bounce around their simplistic 2D-platformed levels, with tarnished poing-poing echoes of a misspent youth. *Within A Deep Forest* is a platform puzzler at heart, but the fact that you're controlling a bouncy ball forms

only the core of its charm. The controls are simple: hold 'S' to bounce higher, 'A' to stiffen and slow down, then attempt to navigate the titular forest, discovering new balls to use and secret areas to explore.

It's incredibly charismatic, with a soothing off-beat ambient tune dithering away and putting you in a state of calm not punctuated by frustrating deaths, as spawn points are frequently placed and lives are non-existent. New balls carry new abilities which must be mastered,

allowing you access to higher ledges, or across gaping chasms or simply past hungry tigers. *Within A Deep Forest's* charm is a deadly temptress, threatening to suck you into her world of sprites and helpful hedgehogs which say "Yikes!" if you accidentally pop yourself on them. Through difficult-to-master controls, context-based puzzles and outright style, *Within A Deep Forest* is a freeware game that won't bounce back up and slap you in the face.



INDIANA JONES AND THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH

Calling Doctor Jones Developer: Screen 7 | www.barnettcollege.com

HERE'S SOMETHING THAT'S been dancing merrily under the ever-spinning retro-green radar of LucasArts' legal team: a 'sister project' to their 1992 point-and-click Indiana adventure, *Fate Of Atlantis*. Still in its demo stages, *Indiana Jones And The Fountain Of Youth* is shaping up to be every bit as great as LucasArts' SCUMM adventures of old.

Carrying the sort of authenticity that usually warrants legal proceedings, the completely unofficial *Fountain Of Youth* is set before the events of LucasArts' *Fate of Atlantis*, and sees Indy creeping his red-lined way across an atlas to

the island of Bimini, which is crawling with Nazis, running gags and item-based puzzles. The level of production is staggering, quite easily falling into place with the game from which it draws so much inspiration. "Look at that panting dog!" exclaimed Will, having played the original to death. "It's just like *Fate Of Atlantis*!"

Considering another unofficial fan-made sequel, *King's Quest IX*, eventually got the all-clear from the respective publisher, it's not entirely unlikely *Fountain Of Youth* will get a full release by the end of the year. How much of Indy will be compromised, however, can't be guessed.



WEBGAME OF THE MONTH

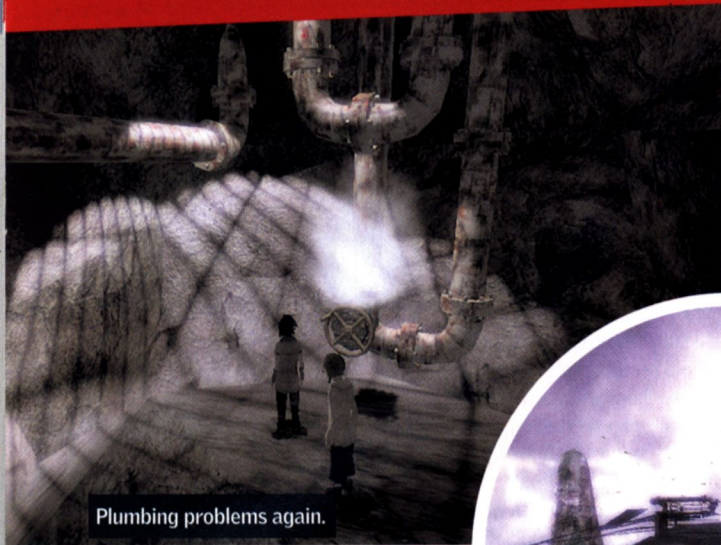
Chronon



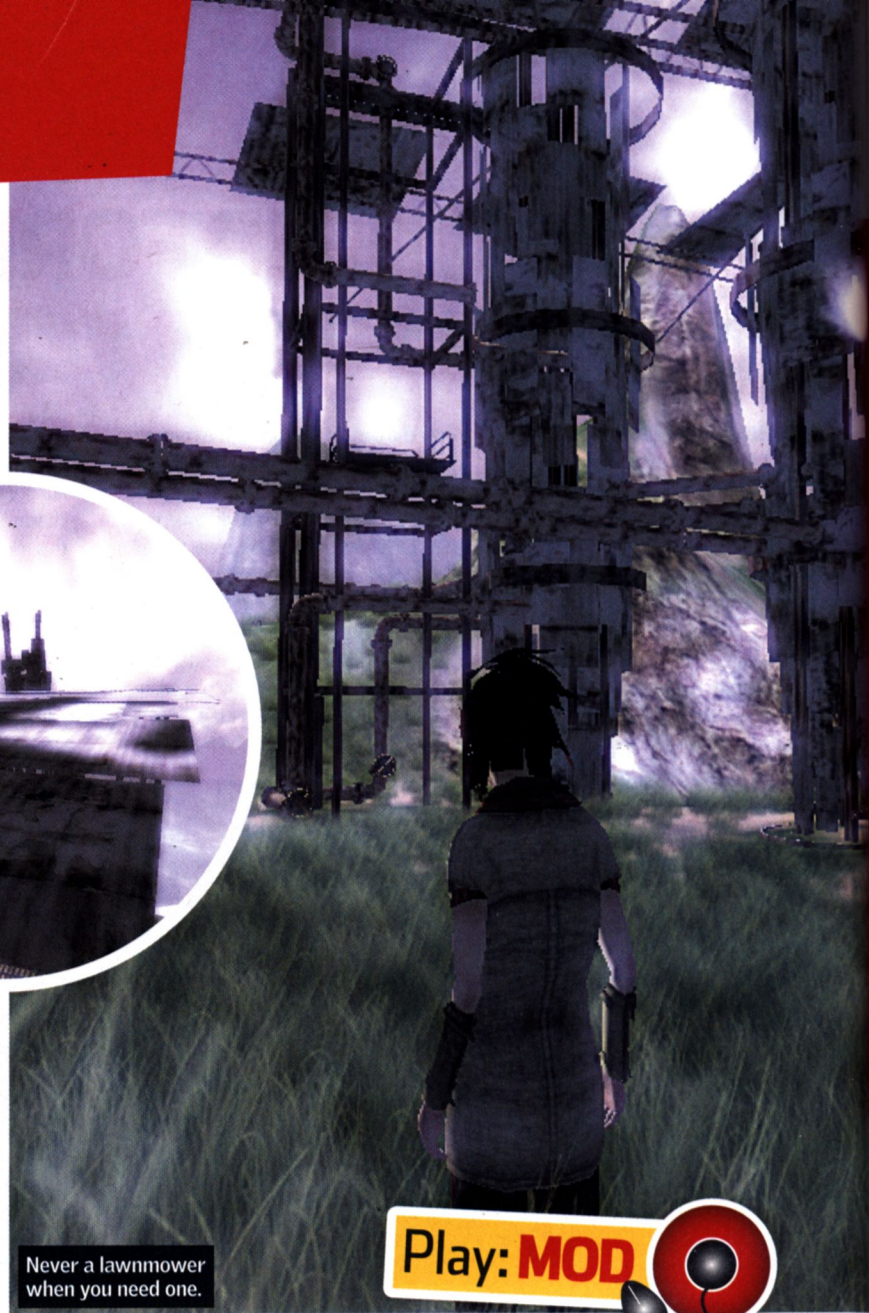
Dev: EyezMaze
www.eyezmaze.com/chronon/v0/

If the trial-and-error placement of objects in games such as *Grow, Grow RPG* and *Grow Cube* leaves you feeling completely unchallenged and slightly angered at the developer's inability to completely confound and destroy the parts of your brain used for remembering animal noises, maybe it's about time you checked out *Chronon*. From the same guy who created the aforementioned object-placement game, which required you to click on objects in a specific order until everything exploded in harmony, *Chronon* requires you to do it all again, except this time while switching back and forth through time. Place the wreath in the fireplace, then go to noon and put the wreath on the table, the egg on the wreath and open the window. Later on, a creature hatches, so you smash your face into the desk with frustration. Off you go then.

FREEPLAYPLAY!



Plumbing problems again.



Never a lawnmower when you need one.



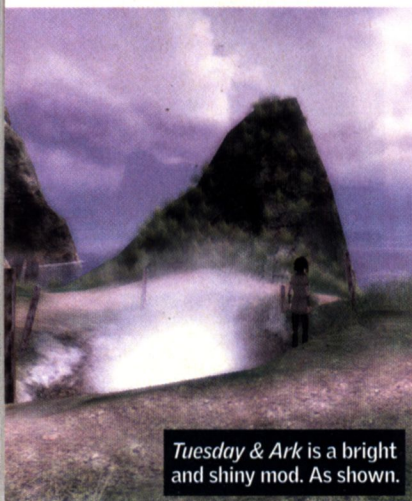
A little place where we can get together.

Play: **MOD**



TUESDAY & ARK

Jon Blyth is left feeling mildly haunted and a little sad snipurl.com/pcz_tuesday | Mod for: Far Cry



Tuesday & Ark is a bright and shiny mod. As shown.

THE LAST FEW mods I've looked at have had names like 'Todd Lander's Jedi Star Wars', or 'Ninja Sword Guy Fights'. Modders seem to make their names as descriptive as possible, perhaps because it's difficult to get your mod noticed if it's called 'The Grumpy Alliance' or 'Shadowy Thing'.

Which is why *Tuesday & Ark* cocks a head and raises an eyebrow. Even before I'd reinstalled and re-patched *Far Cry* (you'll need v1.3 or above to use *T&A*), the name had cleared some space underneath my solar plexus and half-filled it with a sense of gaseous nostalgia. This feeling has lessened now I know it abbreviates to *T&A*, though.

Evocative is the perfect word for *Tuesday*. Like *Half-Life 2*'s coastal buggy level, there's a strong sense of desolation.

The largeness and the loneliness is compounded by reluctant mechanical groans, a constant whistling wind and your companion, who remains mute throughout. It's hypnotically hollowing, like a free-roaming *Myst*. Leading your companion through the washed-out and bled-dry landscapes even adds a sprig of *Ico* into the mix too, albeit without the sense of immediate threat.

Stop using all those words and tell me what *Tuesday & Ark* is, you're screaming. Well, it's... It's a third-person game. Game's a little strong, though. It's a set of do-that-do-this simple puzzles, designed to bolster out the story between your player and the uncommunicative girl. The official website says it's 'a possible solution to creating

immersion using audio and video, without the traditional use of dialogue'. If that sounds like a university project, that's because it is. Tom Mountfort's project for Massey University, in fact. But it's still good, so shut up.

It's not perfect; the invisible walls that stop you falling from the cliff-tops aren't foolproof, and attempts to explore more adventurous areas are usually misguided, resulting in a glitchy glide to your death. Death has no place in a game with slow, unskippable cut-scenes and no save feature. On top of that, we also encountered stability issues, and getting your companion onto a lift you need to use can be awkward. That said, it's on the DVD, so give it a chance to seduce you.

TROY: DIVINE PLAYGROUND



Andy Robinson once entered a horse, but that's another story www.troymod.com | Mod for: Half-Life 2

WATCH OUT PREY! there's another spirit-bird game in town and this feathered wonder is god's right hand, plus special soldier-possessing powers. With *Troy: Divine Playground* at your side you could sway the outcome of any Spartan battle, or at the very least make entire colonies of field mice absolutely terrified of your phantom bird.

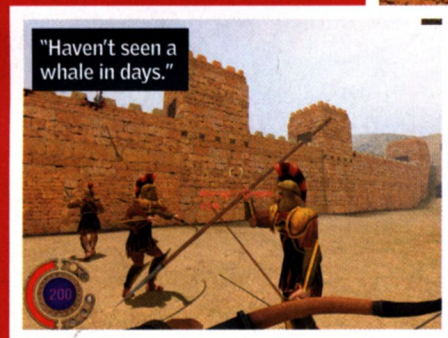
All this talk of divine mischief and ancient war can only mean one thing; we're in ancient Greece, where men are gods and gods are pissed off and shooting lightning absolutely all of the time. This *Half-Life 2* re-tinkering tries to recreate the most famous of Greek battles - y'know, the one from the rubbish Brad Pitt film.

In the one map provided, AI soldiers generally go about their business, aimlessly attacking each other with spears and arrows. With your handy spirit bird however, you can intervene in the computer chaos by possessing one of your soldiers and commanding their weapons and

powers yourself, as well as your own godly skills which are various among the three usable classes.

Sadly, in this latest version the AI soldiers are in need of some work (they're a bit thick), and clearer indication could also be given to where your objectives are. Further updates could improve *Troy*, but for now it's more mortal than divine. But, if at first you don't succeed...

Play: MOD



CHASE THE CHICKEN

Suzy Wallace investigates reports of fowl play



www.chasethechicken.com | Mod for: Unreal Tournament 2004

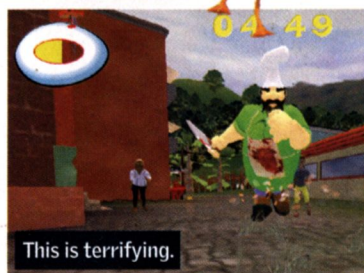
FARMYARD ANIMALS ARE a grossly under-used tool in games, but thanks to a surplus of free time and cheap booze, a bunch of students at the Art Institute of Vancouver have successfully harnessed the power of the chicken.

In this one short level, you'll play as our feathered friend, escaping from a kitchen and attempting to get to the other side of town, where a plane awaits to wing you away to safety. But things are complicated by the chef and any local inhabitants taking up the chase and trying their best to pluck you as you make your escape.

You can dodge, sprint and lay eggs to put off your pursuers, but the mod's greatest strength is in the sprawling town which features tight alleyways, obstacles to jump and plenty of alternate routes to investigate.

The gameplay might be pretty basic stuff but although aimed squarely at a younger audience, it's actually quite nicely balanced, taking a little while to figure out what to do and letting you progress a little more each time. While not quite poultry in motion, it definitely proves that, just occasionally, the hen can be mightier than the sword.

Play: MOD



PCZONE TOP 5 DOOM MODS



- 1 SONIC ROBO BLAST 2**
A fully 3D third-person Sonic game in the Doom engine. Why isn't everyone this ambitious?
- 2 GOLDENEYE DOOM 2**
Near perfect and impressive recreation of *GoldenEye 007* in the Doom engine.
- 3 ALIENS TC**
The first fan-made TC swaps demons for aliens and hell for lovely, lovely space.
- 4 BATMAN DOOM**
While Batman's yet to star in a decent game, he has appeared in this classic *Doom* mod.
- 5 CHEX QUEST**
Chex, the US Shreddies, packaged this kid-friendly mod with their cereal.

TASTES LIKE HEDGEHOG

Sonic Robo Blast 2 exhales scented pleasure into our eyes www.srb2.org | Mod for: Doom (Doom not required)



THE YEAR IS 1997. The Internet consists of Yahoo! and a couple of photoshopped pictures of Bert and Ernie being gay in a car. A man on the telly is warning you between programmes not to underestimate the power of PlayStation. The Mega Drive was given a nobleman's burial, but a drunken Saturn is weaving around the graveyard, doing piddles on the flowers and laughing.

It's a sci-fi dystopia, so it is. This is the environment that spurned then

schoolboy Sonikku to make his own *Sonic* game using Clik N Play. He freely admits it looked horrendous, which is why he joined forces with fellow fanboy SSNTails to create *Sonic Team Junior*, switched to the Doom engine, and sculpted *Robo Blast 2* from a hill of rings, sprites and sound effects.

Sonic aficionados now have a loyal fan community of their own – and it's impressive, considering the professional efforts of the grown-up Sonic Team, to

see how well the wee upstarts have translated the action of early Sonic into a pretty, and pretty playable 3D game. They've even got Internet multiplayer, with seven play styles and ten dedicated mini-maps. If you played *Sonic Heroes* and *Sonic Racing* to be left with a huge question mark rotating above your head, then play this. It's by no means perfect, but it's full of love. And best of all, Sonic doesn't talk or – urgarff – have a girlfriend.

Classic: **MOD**



ROCKET ARENA: UT
Reach for the stars

www.planetunreal.com/arena/
For: Unreal Tournament

THE LAST NEWS post on their website is from the year 2000, a year which, in retrospect, we didn't appreciate enough. It's about a new version, and where to find it. There was no goodbye, no indication that it would be the last news post: it's just like unearthing Pompeii and seeing all of those people who suddenly died while sleeping, dancing or throwing buckets of piss out of their windows. Even though they've since moved on, focusing on the *Quake* games, *Rocket Arena: UT* is still considered to be the best iteration, changing the game's DM mode into something about pure skill rather than chasing and hogging the best weapons. Setting everybody on a level playing field and placing them randomly on a map makes *Rocket Arena* a purer deathmatch experience.



Just look at the graphics.



It used to be so simple then...

ULTIMATE COMMUNITY MAP PACK 3

www.ucmappack.org | Mod for: UT2004

'Nothing to do with *Atic Atac*', sulks **Andy Robinson**

THE RELEASE OF Epic's graphically spectacular *UT2007* may be looming, but *Ultimate Community MapPack 3* proves that the *2004* edition hasn't hit the gaming dustbin just yet.

As the name suggests, UCM3 offers a selection of top-tier fan-made *UT2004* maps – six to be exact – all of which are created with the care and attention you'd expect from a full-priced release, only you don't have to pay a god-damned penny for them.

The usual array of warehouses and water-pumping facilities feature in the pack, but there are some more interesting inclusions like a giant floating meteor called *Altitude*, which as well as being all floaty-light has some particularly well-placed stairways making for some interesting gun encounters.

Another oddball edition is *IslandStrike*, an assault map which takes place on an

Australian, wait for it, island. We don't know if this was made by the same guy who did the *Fosters Brewery* map, but we'd like to think so.

Anything that drags us back to *Unreal Tournament* is a good thing, and hopefully we'll see more decent map packs before *UT2007* arrives to take over our lives at the end of the year.

Play: **MAP**



Wring the last drops from *UT2004*.

Looks windy out.

FPS CREATOR COMPETITION RESULTS!



Where were your eyes? Were they on the prize? If so, perhaps you won! If not, you didn't...

TO DESCRIBE OUR competition prize of a Dell XPS 600 and an NVIDIA GeForce 7800 as unbridled would be an understatement. More accurate would be to say that the combination of these two blindingly fast pieces of technology actively go around smashing up bridles. Two local bridle manufacturers have complained to us that at night, when we're all in bed, the Dell XPS is often seen holding down a bridle while the NVIDIA graphics card kicks the crap out of it.

As we can no longer sustain the wrath of the Westminster Bridle Manufacturer's Union, we've decided it's time to draw to a close our fantastic *FPS Creator* competition. Choosing three winners was no easy task, and required all of one lunchtime before we settled on somebody worthy of taking the prize off our hands. Thanks to NVIDIA, the plucky winner walks away with (or at least waits on the postman for) a Dell XPS, an NVIDIA GeForce 7800, a copy of *FPS Creator* and their winning game featured on our DVD! This is such an amazing prize, we can't stop saying NVIDIA!

But wait! There's more! There's always more! Two runners-up also walk away with a brand new NVIDIA GeForce 7800 graphics card and a copy of *FPS Creator* - which really isn't bad for knocking something together in the easy-to-use piece of software with the self-explanatory title. On a scale of one to amazing-competition-hooray-ness, this scored a definite 8.3. Well done to everybody who entered. All that's left to do now is tell you that the competition is closed, so stop sending us your CDs - and that you can see who won to the right...

AND THE WINNER IS...

SECRETS LIE - Josh Elliot from Somerset

The twisting, dark plot concerning animal-testing laboratories and guilt-suppressing drugs, the clever use of video cut-scenes, the possibly deliberately funny melodrama, the line "These were your workers... ONCE!!!", and the hilarious spoof director's commentary made *Secrets Lie* stand out as a clear winner. Find it on the DVD. Well done Josh, have a kick-ass PC.



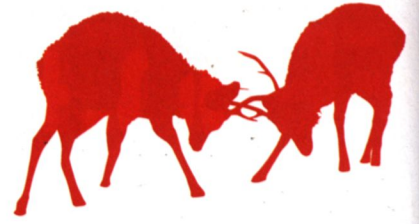
Runners-up:

SPAWN - Steve Robson, Durham
RESCUE MISSION - Joshua Griffin, Staffordshire

Spawn's action-packed, run-and-gun gameplay and *Rescue Mission's* heart-rending tale of a man stuck on a roof in Nazi Germany are worthy of our runners-up prizes. Well done!



Fight Club



Fifth rule of Fight Club: don't be sick on the floor. Or the ceiling

COME AND TAKE ON THE ZONE STAFF IN OUR MONTHLY ONLINE GAMING FREE-FOR-ALL!

WHAT WITH THE limit of eight players in the *Prey* demo's shootist rosta, this month's Fight Club turned into little more than a violent popularity contest. With Will taking on all-comers on a server called 'PCZone Fight Club 1' and Log brandishing arms upon 'PCZone Fight Club 2', participants were forced to choose their favourite writer. So it was then, that Log was happily battering readers on a full server for a full ten minutes before a single person ventured into the fray with Will. And even then he was called 'Tommy' by

default and disappeared before the game started.

Soon though, Will was happily discussing how ill everyone was feeling alongside such Fight Club and DearWandy.com stalwarts as jdlynch, hoodi, bsoltan and the nigh-on invulnerable djackl. Log, happy in the knowledge that he could beat people just as long as they joined the game ten minutes after he did, found death in the hands of Infection and the cruelly christened =115=Unre@l21HH, who may well have been a German who was

lost and found himself on our server by mistake. Craicx, Ripley and Tempest were also there: Log sends hugs. Much fun was had by all, and much sick was almost sicked.

Because Will has been bitching about how good he is at *Call Of Duty 2* multiplayer, next month's frivolity will take place in war-torn Europe. We'll have a thread up on both our forums at www.pczone.co.uk and Wandsworth's abode at www.dearwandy.com at least a week before our bout of mud-smearing violence (promise), so give it a good look-see, then join the fun!



One of those 'I shot you and you're dead' moments.

"Madam, your wall looks like a floor."

"Rub this cream on - that glowing should calm down."



Nice legs, Nureyev.

PCZ_Batephinx was blasted by Tommy

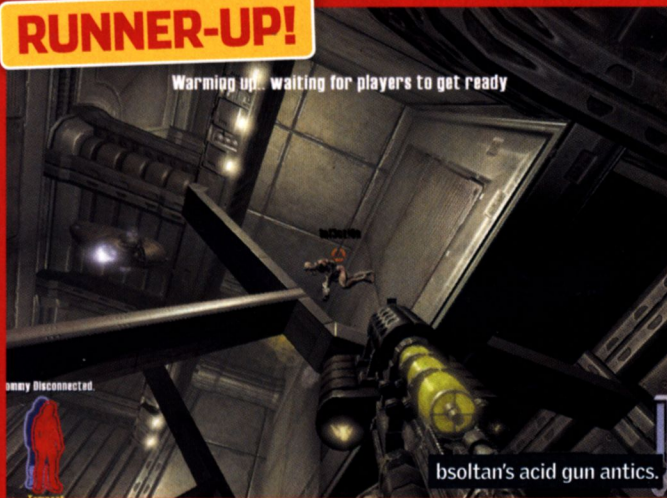
AND THE WINNER IS...

Shots of blood smears – we love 'em!

EVERY MONTH, WE invite you to take screenshots of your Fight Club escapades – if you can strictly classify violent acid attacks as 'escapades' – and send them in. And often, you do. And when you do, we sometimes print them. And when that happens, we'll send you some prize or other. And that, my friend, is the insane chain of causality that links simulated murder to free rubbish sliding through your letterbox. Well, if your parents won't positively reinforce anti-social behaviour, someone has to.

This month, MobyMatt strafes away with the goods, for capturing perfectly that unique sensation of sniping a man who's standing on the wall. No mean feat, given the pace of the action. Honourable mention goes to bsoltan, below. He may not win the prize, but he's a good lad and we like him. Email your shots to fightclubscreenshots@pczone.co.uk to join in.

RUNNER-UP!



Warming up... waiting for players to get ready

bsoltan's acid gun antics.

WINNER!



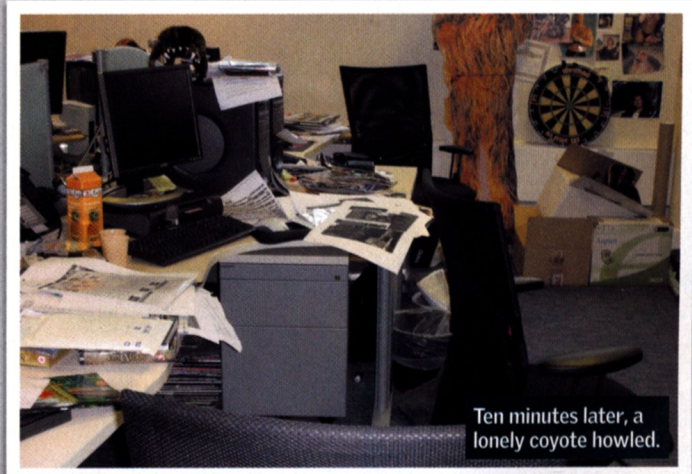
MobyMatt wins his trans-dimensional sniping badge.



WELL, JUST IMAGINE what we could have talked about this month! That's the beauty of the Internet, isn't it? You can talk about anything you like. Here's just a few of the things we might have talked about, in our monthly natterbox sessions, which – it is acknowledged – are the reason Arthur Askey invented digital character encoding in 1967.

So what might we have talked about? There might have been an ill-researched debate, in which it was claimed that world poverty and social iniquity are the fault of your mum. Or we could have discussed whether ghosts are real, or just someone wearing a suit made out of diamonds – like in that episode of *Inspector Gadget* that no-one seems to remember except Log.

You know, sometimes you lot are so much fun to talk to, it feels like you don't need us there at all. Cough. Sorry. Next *ZONE Chat's* date and time can be found on the forums at www.pczone.co.uk. We'll be there this time. Promise.



Ten minutes later, a lonely coyote howled.

How to join in!



If you fancy joining the *ZONE Chat*, then you'll need an IRC program and a Net connection. We recommend mIRC and you can find it on side two of our DVD. Just install the program, set the options, devise an online identity that'll make you stand out from the crowd, connect to a Quakenet server nearest to you, type /join #pcz into the command line, and hey presto, you're there! Chatting with the friendliest bunch of online readers you could hope to find. Remember, play nice and don't be rude.

Can't make Fight Club?

If you can't make it to Fight Club – perhaps the gripping plot of *Hollyoaks* is too much at the moment and you can't drag yourself away – then join other *PCZ* readers on the following public servers. *ZONE* staff might even be there. The latest info can always be found at www.zonegames.co.uk.

WHO'S WHO

Jamie Sefton *PCZ_NorthernScum*
 Will Porter *PCZ_Batsphinx*
 Suzy Wallace *PCZ_Uzibat*
 Steve Hogarty *PCZ_escaped_monkey*
 Andy Robinson *PCZ_EssexHoodlum*
 Phil Wand *PCZ_People's Front Of Judea*
 Jon Blyth *PCZ_Log*

1 SWAT 4
swat4.zonegames.co.uk

2 COUNTER-STRIKE: SOURCE
cs1.zonegames.co.uk:27015
cs2.zonegames.co.uk:27025
cs3.zonegames.co.uk:27015

3 HALF-LIFE 2: DEATHMATCH
hl2.zonegames.co.uk:27065

4 DAY OF DEFEAT: SOURCE
dod.zonegames.co.uk:27085

5 BATTLEFIELD 1942 DC MODDED
dc.zonegames.co.uk:14567

6 TEAM FORTRESS CLASSIC
tfc.zonegames.co.uk:27045

7 WOLFENSTEIN: ENEMY TERRITORY
et.zonegames.co.uk:27960

8 UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004
ut1.zonegames.co.uk:7777
ut2.zonegames.co.uk:8888

9 CALL OF DUTY
cod.zonegames.co.uk:28960

10 JOINT OPERATIONS: TYPHOON RISING
 Listed on NovaWorld

Need:

- ✓ A copy of *Counter-Strike: Source*
- ✓ Someone to swear at
- ✓ A spray tag with a picture of a naked lady

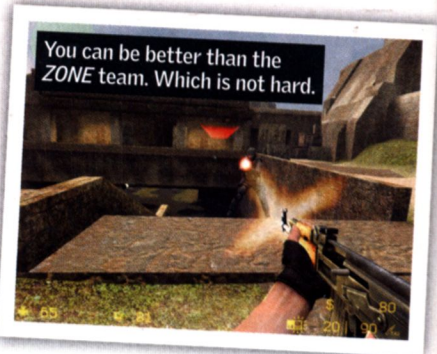
What you'll get:

- ✓ A respectable place on the Fight Club scoreboard
- ✓ Accused of being a dirty hacker
- ✓ Virtual bomb planted
- ✗ Social life

Own noobs in... Counter-Strike: Source

Andy Robinson has the bomb

I'VE SEEN ENOUGH humiliating defeats in our monthly Fight Club games to know that it's high time somebody made a *Counter-Strike: Source* guide – and mainly for us. But because your typical *Counter-Strike* opponent spends about 16 hours a day honing his camping skills, coming up with a guide that will actually help you not be crap is no easy task. Follow these tips carefully and we promise you'll rack up a few extra kills on the Fight Club scoreboard – then you won't have to knife Jon Blyth while he's reloading anymore...



Always take a knife to a gun fight.

01 KNIFE AND RUN

If you're not an avid *Counter-Strike* player, you may wonder why your team are slightly wide-eyed and knife-obsessed at the beginning of each round. This is because under the discerning laws of *Counter-Strike* physics, wielding knives makes you run faster – a bit like Reebok Classics, except you can stab people. Whip out your blade at the beginning of each round and keep running until the guns go off.

Sefton would be swearing at this point.

02 Know your maps

As with all FPS games, one of the most important factors of becoming not-rubbish online is mentally mapping the arenas in your head. This is even more crucial in *Counter-Strike*, where learning the traffic flow of a map can save you an embarrassing run-in with a Counter-Terrorist team, and a clever camping spot can swing the odds in your favour. Unfortunately, this is something you'll only learn through time and lost games. Consequently, the PC ZONE team know most maps like the back of their hands.

03 PLUCKY SIDEKICK

Your pint-sized sidearm can be incredibly useful in *Counter-Strike*. If you've got a Scout or AWP rifle, a good tactic is to switch to your sidearm when you're moving around, because with a sniper at close range you're about as useful as a cardboard racing car in the rain. Your plucky pistol also becomes invaluable in fire-fights: if you run out of ammo in a shootout, don't wait to reload, whip out your sidearm and unload in the enemy's face. Lovely.

Sidearms often save the day.

04 Plant the bloody bomb!

A worrying amount of players don't seem to grasp the simple process of planting bombs and rescuing hostages. *Counter-Strike* isn't a deathmatch game; when you feel the coast is clear, nab the hostages and make a dash for the rescue zone. Likewise, if you're a terrorist with the bomb in tow, for the love of all that's holy, plant it – and preferably somewhere sneaky, like the fountain in *de_inferno*. Not only will you win faster this way, you'll likely get more points too.

05 RECOIL IN HORROR

In most situations, burst-firing is the way to go in *Counter-Strike* – except for when you're in close-quarter combat. When you're up close and personal with the enemy, you're best off spraying (hold down the fire key) at their feet; usually the recoil will send your gun travelling upwards and you might even bag a crafty headshot. Silencers make your spray even more erratic; in enclosed maps, you can bag yourself some pretty lucky – and questionable – headshots.

06 What's your flavour... Of grenade?

Consider buying a grenade at the start of each round; they're useful, especially if you're playing on a server packed full of AWP vigilantes. HE Grenades are best saved for a bit later in the round; once the enemy's taken a dent to their health, a well placed boom-stick will send packs of them flying. Flashbangs and smoke grenades are a sniper's worst nightmare; try and get the smoke grenade close to the sniper, then throw a flashbang before running in.



07 ON YOUR KNEES

Get used to crouching; it increases your accuracy a great deal, especially when taking your first shot or when you're trying to pick someone off from a distance. For quick encounters, crouching not only increases your accuracy, it also makes you a smaller target. But don't try crouching in a heavy fire-fight; your decreased mobility will turn you into a bloody, flailing ragdoll in no time.

08 CHEEKY TACTICS

This is a very cheeky tactic, but it's so ingenious – and frankly hilarious – that we simply can't ignore it. If you're playing on a server that has a high amount of starting cash, on the first round buy yourself a cheap SMG and fire off all of your ammo. Now – and this is the mischievous part – throw your empty SMG at a single enemy, and if all goes well they'll automatically pull out the empty gun, leaving them defenceless as you shoot, stab and gnaw them to death. **PCZ**



Retro ZONE



All the best in emulation, abandonware and shameless gaming nostalgia...

ATARI ST



BESIDES BEING ONE of the first home computers with the kind of features once thought only to be found on alien spacecraft, the Atari ST was one of the finest games machines of the '80s. A 3.5-inch floppy disk drive, 512KB of memory and integral MIDI support (dance bands such as The KLF used one) made it a formidable competitor to Apple and Commodore. However, when emulating the machine it's the games which matter, and in that respect Atari didn't falter either.

Compilation discs containing handfuls of pirated copies of the latest games were readily available, and without annoying and intrusive copy-protection software like StarForce (codewheels and questions about the manual were used instead), the morally dubious gamer's collection expanded. Entire back catalogues of Automation disk images

are still available online too, meaning many of the ST's best games are just waiting to be rediscovered.

When Atari tried to sue Nintendo for a quarter of a billion dollars in 1989 after Gameboy trounced their Lynx handheld, claims of Nintendo creating a monopoly were thrown out. Their early '90s Jaguar console failed too, and Atari disappeared into the misty history of gaming emperors, before their good name was dug out of the ground and draped over Infogrames in 2001, consigning everyone's favourite armadillo-based logo to videogame history.

In their heyday however, Atari produced some of the finest and most technically impressive home computers available. The ST is one of them, so grab an emulator and check out the following games...

BUT HOW?

Take the frustration out of emulation

An emulator is a program which tricks your super-powered gaming PC into thinking it's an Atari ST, SNES, slot machine etc. The emulators are entirely legal, but due to vague publishing issues, it's not always legal to own certain game files (known as ROMs). So we won't be telling you where to download disk copies of ST games; rather, we'll point you to an emulator and let you figure out the rest. Try these...

Links...

- 1 **STeem Engine**
steem.atari.st

The most easy-to-use Atari ST emulator, simple to set up and runs most games.

- 2 **Little Green Desktop**
www.atari.st

Excellent resource for all things Atari ST, including game reviews & features.

The Atari ST had features once thought only to be found on alien spacecraft

SIX OF THE BEST The half-dozen Atari ST games you have to play

DUNGEON MASTER
The first 3D real-time RPG debuted on the ST in 1987 and is still an involving experience. A must-play.

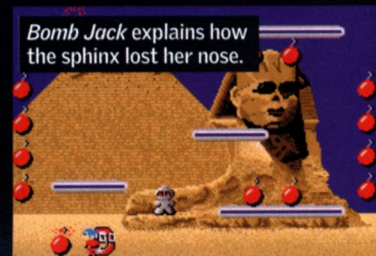
ELIMINATOR
Another achievement for sublime music in games, *Eliminator's* *WipEout*-style design was a hit.

SPEEDBALL 2
The Bitmap Brothers made-up sport was fast, violent and unlike anything before it. Utterly fantastic.

MERCENARY
A 3D first-person adventure which had an entire solar system to explore - its scale still hasn't been matched.

XENON
Better than its sequel, this vertical-scrolling shmup from the Bitmap Brothers had a kicking soundtrack.

DOUBLE DRAGON
One of the oldest beat 'em ups around, *Double Dragon's* two-player mode is still a huge amount of fun.



Bomb Jack explains how the sphinx lost her nose.



Three-way fisting with *IK+*.



Carrier Command - flying high.

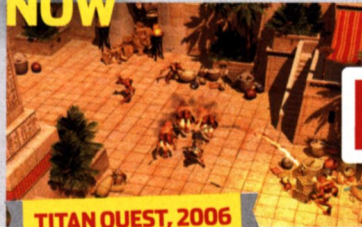


He's ready for action in *California Games*.

NOW & THEN

Diablo – where RPG meets RSI

NOW



TITAN QUEST, 2006

THEN



DIABLO, 1996

BEFORE GAMING NESTLED the RPG genre under its wing, the only people interested in playing with fantasy creatures and rolling dice to represent combat mostly sported exceedingly large beards and stomachs to match. But in 1996, *Diablo* came along and dragged the world of the RPG into the mainstream.

Featuring a fixed isometric viewpoint, oodles of armour and weapons, randomly-generated dungeons, a hugely popular multiplayer mode and combat that involved clicking on enemies until your left-click finger developed into a digit capable of inhuman feats, *Diablo* set the genre alight by replacing the emphasis on boring statistics with one on action instead. It was even credited with single-handedly creating the action-RPG genre.

OK, so the story was hardly going to win a Booker prize and the game was linear, but the act of running around hacking up various nasties proved itself to be fiendishly addictive and helped build upon *Warcraft*'s success to set Blizzard well on its way to gaming mega-fame. A true classic in every sense.



PLAY IT!



In order to save the maximum amount of skin on your fingers for the actual game itself, we've made it as easy as possible for you to relive those heady days of butchering demons by the thousand...

- 1 Choose *Diablo* from the demo section and prepare to enter the wacky world of DOS.
- 2 Making sure that Side 1 is facing upwards, shove the DVD into your player.
- 3 Once the menu's popped up, copy the *Diablo* files onto your desktop and double-click *diablo_s.exe*.
- 4 Kiss goodbye to the skin on your forefinger and start clicking to slay those demons!



MAME FRAME

Excellent. An arcade battler based on Matt Groening's greatest

DEVELOPER: Konami | YEAR: 1991

THE SIMPSONS HAVEN'T had much success in the world of games, but their 1991 coin-op classic is undeniably a gaming triumph for telly's favourite yellow family.

Using the classic 1989 *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* engine, *The Simpsons Arcade Game* is an addictive scrolling beat 'em up which has you controlling one of four Simpsons family members to save Maggie from the evil Mr Burns. You encounter all of your favourite Simpsons characters in the game, and some of them even make appearances as formidable boss

characters – like the drunken, bottle-tossing bartender Moe.

At the top of our favourites list are the fancy co-op moves in the game, which vary based on your mix of characters. For example, Homer and Bart combine for a devastating piggy-back of pain. The between-level balloon-pumping mini-games also tickle our fancy and have us mashing our keyboards like mentalists.

We're happy to sing lyrical over *The Simpsons Arcade's* faithful animation and co-op gameplay, but don't take our word for it – MAME's only a click away.



THE SIMPSONS ARCADE GAME

Smithers: evil.

WHAT IS MAME?

MAME is an emulator for over 6,000 arcade games, and is perfectly legal. However, on its own it's useless, and requires ROMs to play all the old coin-ops. These ROMs are copyrighted, so it's illegal to own them unless you own the arcade machine. We're not nagging, we're just letting you know.



Domestic goddess Marge battles with a hoover.



Opening levels far exceed later parts of the game.

Hey come back here with my kid!

BACK IN THE DAY...



3. TIE Fighter

By Jamie Sefton

Space combat sims are currently inexplicably unpopular – goblins now rule the roost over X-wings, which is beyond me. Forget *Star Wars Galaxies* – this is the defining game for George Lucas fanboys. The dual objectives for both your evil Empire commander and the even more evil Emperor's secret sect – that were often totally contradictory (capture a ship of rebels, or destroy it) – were absolutely compelling. However, it was Lawrence Holland's immaculate flight model for the TIE fighter craft that really provided the utter thrill of feeling like you were actually taking part in a decent *Star Wars* trilogy. *TIE Fighter* has never been bettered, and probably never will be.

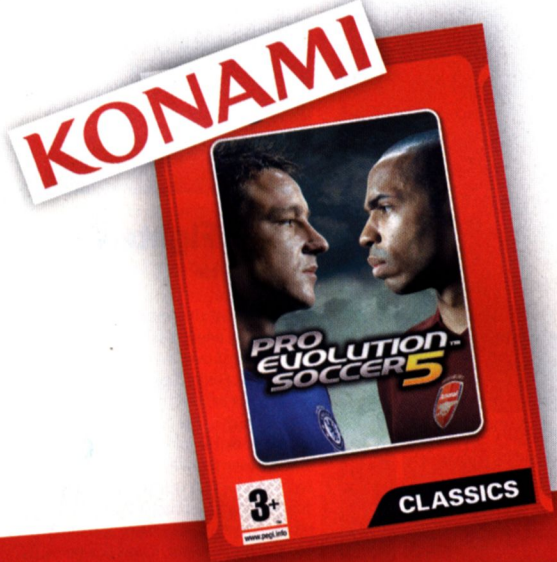
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STEVE HILL'S NeverQuest



Steve Hill has a second stab at *Second Life*

BANNED FROM THE Barbie Club! Following last month's inadvertent foray into the staff changing room – and subsequent altercation – it appears that enough is enough. Returning to the scene of the crime, I find a virtual crime scene tape that prevents me from getting within 10ft of the place. Hollering to anyone who will listen, I demand to be let in but it falls on deaf ears. I even email the owners, but receive short shrift.

Clearly still smarting from the incident, manageress Looli Hoffman recalls: "You didn't leave when you were asked to, you pulled your cock out and just sat there."

"My cock was already out," I plead, but she's not convinced. In desperation, I play the press card and explain that I'm giving them great coverage. Still, the lady's not for turning.

"You think that because you're a reporter who gives us some free advert gives you the right to treat my girls the way you did?" she barks. "If you knew me you would know my girls always come first!" "Oh grow up," I snap. "It's a largely pitiful pretend world populated by redneck Americans and tragic goths."

"Doesn't matter hun," spits Hoffman. "You need to respect everyone here, there's people behind the pixels."

"Entirely humourless people, evidently," I retort, and leave them to it.

SATISFACTION

Pounding the streets in impotent rage, I stumble across a reasonably well-appointed house. For want of something better to do, I break in, park myself on the sofa and watch a Rolling Stones video on the plasma screen. It's an

interesting experience, but hardly the same as having a buxom stripper hovering over your bell-end.

With The Barbie Club off limits, I check the A-Z for other mature outlets. The XXX Playground sounds a likely place, so I teleport straight there and land bang in the middle of the dancefloor. I've barely started my soft-shoe shuffle when Delia Darkes pipes up: "You want to come and watch me dance sweetie? Over by the pole. If you like, don't forget to tell my tip jar sweetie."

It's a hard sell, but Delia has the goods to back it up: a winning combination of hard body, blonde dreads, thigh-length boots and what appears to be a pair of wings. I'll spare you the smalltalk, but within minutes she's led me downstairs to a long room strewn with erotic paraphernalia. Various explicit pictures adorn the walls, and video screens show scenes of a graphic nature. Following some hurried negotiations – \$40 for ten minutes – I'm throwing Delia around the room like a ragdoll.

THREE'S COMPANY

She's a very flexible friend, offering a variety of positions and a stream of filthy talk, interrupted only by some token admin whereby she reminds me: "You have one minute left and I don't want you to not finish."

What can she mean? Finish my tea? Finish the Countdown numbers round? Either way, I decline Delia's offer of another ten minutes and bid her farewell. "Well, remember me sweetie," she pouts. "I'm unlikely to forget you," I say. "I did just [censored to protect the innocent]."

True to my word, I don't forget her, and after taking a couple of hours to think

about what I've done (and regain my strength), I'm back for more. And I really do mean more. Tanning one escort is all very well, but for double the money you can have double the fun. Reacquainting myself with Delia Darkes, and luring another compliant blonde, Obliv Krugman, downstairs, we're under starter's orders. Suffice to say, the specifics are unsuitable for a family magazine (or this one), but following a nervous start, they both feel the benefit of my girth, allowing me to tick the box of my first ever (virtual) threesome.

HILL'S ANGEL

Returning to the club some weeks later, neither party is in evidence. Within minutes, the unseen Geoffrey Hilbert asks: "You want to meet me when you got some money, big boy?"

"No homos," I politely decline.

"I'm no homo," protests Geoffrey. "I'm named after a poet. Geoffrey Hill."

"Terrifyingly, that's my dad's name," I splutter. "Definitely no."

"Well, I can understand that," laughs Geoffrey, looming into view and revealing herself to be a 16-year-old Asian schoolgirl.

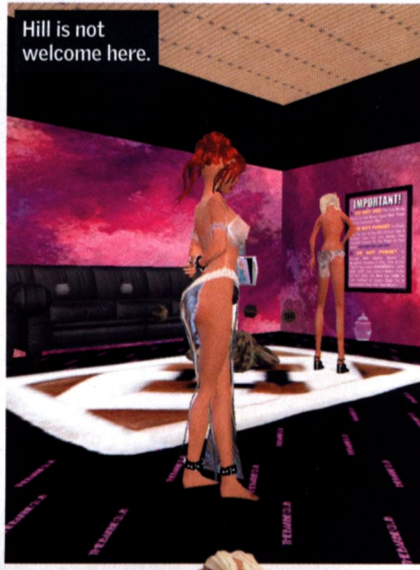
Suddenly revising my initial answer, I say: "Although you are better looking. What do you do for \$180?"

She lists her – expensive – menu of services, and I sheepishly follow her down to a dungeon where a couple are already going at it on a double bed. As Geoffrey explains that we have to work around them, I notice that her wig has fallen off.

"You're bald and you're named after my dad," I blurt, reneging on the deal and running from the room. Well, that's my story and I'm sticking to it... **PCZ**



Always knew Hill was a voyeur.



Hill is not welcome here.



SPECIAL EDITION

CALL OF DUTY: DELUXE EDITION

Steve Hogarty dons a helmet, points at nothing and silently shouts



Trenches aren't as safe as they should be.



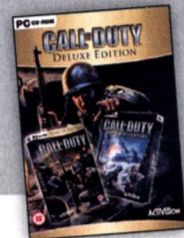
The plane knew it shouldn't have had that curry.

DEVELOPER Infinity Ward
 PUBLISHER Activision
 WEBSITE www.callofduty.com
 PRICE £24.99

IN THE BOX

Call Of Duty

Call Of Duty: United Offensive



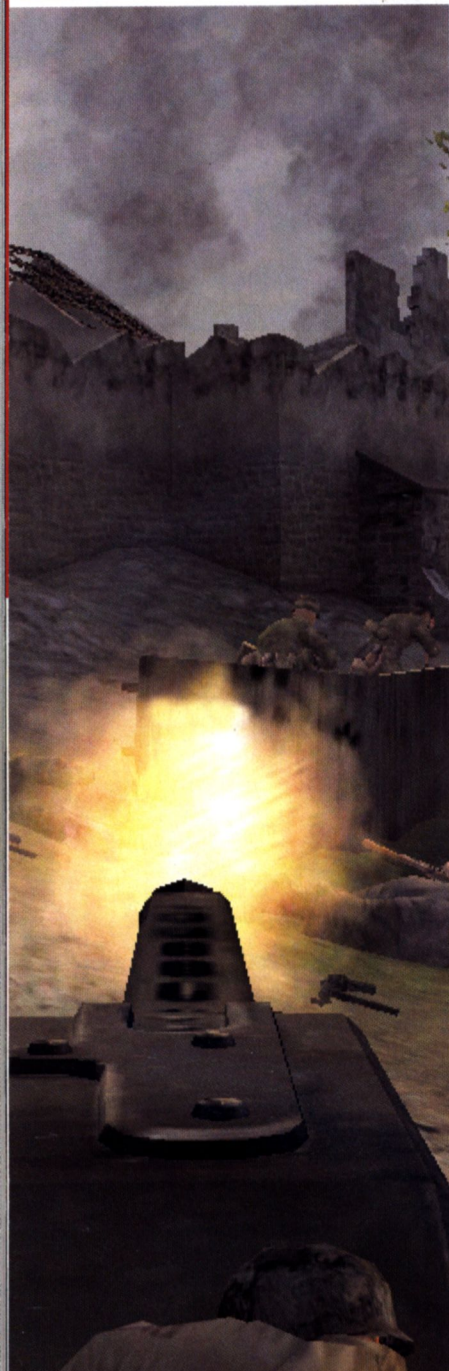
THERE'S NO PLEASING some PCs. 'There is no disk in the drive. Please insert a disk into drive D:.' Well of course there's no disc in the drive – you just asked me to insert disc two, there will inevitably be a brief period in which there's no disc in the drive. As a disc drive you should be prepared for these eventualities. 'Please insert Disk 1 and click OK to continue.' You already had disc one earlier! Why do you want it again? You should have done everything you wanted with it before I took it away. You can't have it now. 'Please insert the correct CD-ROM.' God, fine, jeez... Have the bloody disc. Oh, to work on a console mag...

You'd imagine a re-release of *Call Of Duty* packaged with its *United Offensive* expansion would have leapt on the

opportunity to stick all of the content on a single DVD, but it's not the case. Instead, they've spread the World War II goodness over four CDs, two of which are in those annoying stacked CD-holding things where you have to take the top one out to get to the bottom one, and the other two are in marginally less annoying paper sleeves.

ADD A SHORTCUT

Of course, the only reason I've written two paragraphs of disc-based diatribe (which admittedly can be applied to most games) is because this is the *Call Of Duty: Deluxe Edition*, and as such it needs very little explaining. Having received a Classic award almost three years ago, the World War II shooter, rather than turning heads, merely made sure they stayed



"Is it just me, or is it hot in here?"



Right in the arse.



Unlike a tank, a tank-top is a close-fitting sleeveless top.



Berets were cool in WWII.

fixated on a monitor for hours on end. We loved it, and Steve O'Hagan's opening paragraph hammered down a concrete testimony, championing *Call Of Duty* as 'the best single-player first-person shooter on release', while tentatively suggesting that the phrase should be followed with 'until *Half-Life 2*'.

As if it needs clarifying, we weren't wrong. Not breaking the war shooter tradition of coming in a box with a man in a helmet on the front pointing at something (sometimes you, sometimes an unknown objective or rare out-of-shot bird), while practising the kind of faces he makes when he peaks in physical ecstasy, *Call Of Duty* was full of Hollywood emotion. By that, I mean constant loud noises, having more dirt in the air than under your feet, and a man pointing at things and shouting orders above the din.

You could sit here and talk about how unbelievably immersive it was, or you

could argue that it's been done so much since *Medal Of Honor's* Omaha Beach landing that it's lost its impact, or you could say that both are true. Retailing at £25, and containing the *United Offensive* expansion however, the bottom line is that if you've never played *Call Of Duty*, this is your wake-up call. *United Offensive* adds 13 new missions over three campaigns, continuing the *Call Of Duty* saga in as epic a way possible.

NATTY NAZIS

Criticism attacks on three fronts, however: Scripting Beach, where thousands of soldiers will die because they're supposed to, hundreds of Nazis will flank in an expected and repeated formation, and explosions are triggered by walking past certain points. AI Hill, where the sworn enemies of Hitler and Churchill could saunter past one another with a doff of the cap and a hearty smile without ever

considering raising a gun. And solo mission Hedgerow-land, where this metaphor wears thin and levels where you're by yourself feel empty and dull.

I would also argue that it never quite matches the emotional intensity and genius implicit scripting of the Omaha Beach landing in *Allied Assault*, to which you may retort with the fact that *Call Of Duty's* multiplayer component achieved far more than *Allied Assault's*. To which I would respond: shut up, Omaha Beach landing owns all and *Call Of Duty* never came near.

I'm not completely blinded by *Allied Assault's* reproduction of the most epic battle in human history, however; *Call Of Duty's* later Russian campaign invokes similar experiences of awe and spectacle. It's a game full of impending tragedy, blind panic, exhausting action and a sense of urgency that was somewhat lost in its

United Offensive What's all this about?



Unlike a tank, a tree positively encourages hugs.

War, eh? Is it good for much? What advantages does it give us in our daily lives? This oft under-appreciated expansion pack for a start. While it may not have matched the original game blow for blow, it bolstered it with a whole load of war-themed padding. That's not to say it's all filler and no MG42-wielding killer though: *United Offensive* had its moments and had them well. Could you be without it? Of course. This expansion is recommended but hardly required to experience *Call Of Duty's* essence. As it stands in this *Deluxe Edition* though, it's a healthy bonus.

Call Of Duty is a game full of blind panic, impending tragedy, a sense of urgency and exhaustive action



Ice Magic™-covered mountains included.

sequel. That, and it's aged well too. The explosions and smoke effects might not be as impressive as they once were, but you'll never find yourself smirking at a blocky texture or a jaggy cow leg.

If you were drawn in by *Call Of Duty 2's* marketing campaign (which featured a man in a helmet pointing and shouting), but have yet to discover where the series started, this *Deluxe Edition* is an essential purchase. Although technically, if you want to discover where the series started, grab *Allied Assault*... **PCZ**

Unlike a tank, a tanka is a Tibetan religious painting on a scroll.



Well done you.



Have you seen the light?



THE RAVAGES OF TIME

CALL OF DUTY **1st**

CALL OF DUTY 2 **2nd**

MOH: ALLIED ASSAULT **3rd**

There's been a civil war over this in the ZONE office. *Call Of Duty 2* is ace, but the health system does take an edge from it. I therefore make *COD* numero uno officially the wInzOr. Sue me.

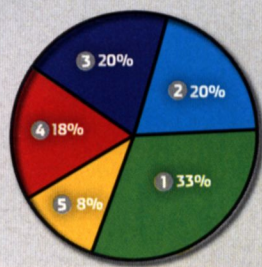
SUPERTEST

THE BEST GAME ENDING

The ZONE team thought it was all over. It is now...

YOUR VIEW

Last month's subject: which game is the funniest?



- SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND 1st
- PSYCHONAUTS 2nd
- GRIM FANDANGO 2nd
- DAY OF THE TENTACLE 4rd
- GARRY'S MOD 5rd

Crow555: "I think it's a travesty that you've omitted two comedy classics: *Giants: Citizen Kabuto* and *Armed And Dangerous*. My sides still haven't fully healed since - from both of them."

captain_moquette:

"*Psychonauts* gets my vote purely for the awesome conversation between the Irish Police Lungfish and the Mother-with-Pram Lungfish at the start of the Lungfish level."

The Tingle: "He destroyed the orphanage! The dog orphanage! The orphanage for puppies!!!"

psychoseal: "I only recently played *Sam & Max*, but the humour is spot-on even now and constantly had me in stitches - from the spoon bender with Tourettes to the little touches like the way you can hit Max on the head with a hammer in the Whack-a-Rat mini-game."

FIRST IMPRESSIONS LAST, they say. Not only is that a fantastic play on words (first, last, different meanings, we're still chuckling), it's also entirely incorrect. Last impressions last. That's why game endings are so important - if developers get it wrong they risk tarnishing everything they've done right up to that point.

So with these sentiments being announced by a chair-straddling Will, particularly enthused with finishing a game he'd been pouring hours of effort into, Jamie announced a spontaneous Supertest meeting. After a *Crystal Maze*-style journey to Meeting Room D, where Log fell into a shallow pool of tepid water and was unable to proceed, we were ready to discuss our favourite (and less favourite) game endings.

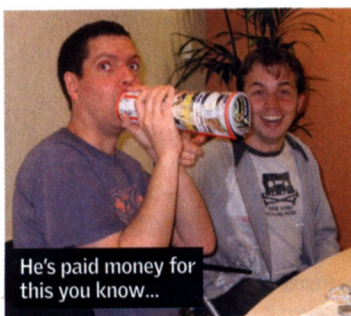
Helped immensely by Jamie's impromptu bassoon siren sound effect, which he makes by inflating a skin pouch in his neck, we managed to flag up all of the inevitable spoilers in this month's Supertest. Will thought the ending to one of the *Fallout* games was 'good'. Jamie

reckoned he really 'liked' the last bit of *Dark Forces*, Suzy 'enjoyed' the end of *Hitman: Blood Money*, Andy thought the end of *Half-Life 2* made him 'happy', and between making crap jokes about games turning out to be 'all just a dream', Steve championed *Max Payne 2*'s heart-wrenching twist of an ending as an ephemeral emotional juxtaposition of life and death. Meandering arguments ensued, mainly about how awful the ending to *Half-Life* was, how great the ending to *KOTOR* was, and how 'not bad' the ending to *Halo* was - an opinion met with apathy and general disinterest. Somehow, it's worth noting, we forgot to mention some great endings, such as *F.E.A.R.* - it's like we don't know anything.

But stop saying your opinions into the page and instead go to www.pczone.co.uk, click on the Forums button and type them into our Supertest discussion thread. Who knows, maybe you'll even get your unintelligent verbal spewing into the grey bit of the page on the left, just like the folk over there did.



Alyx: cliffhanger extraordinaire.

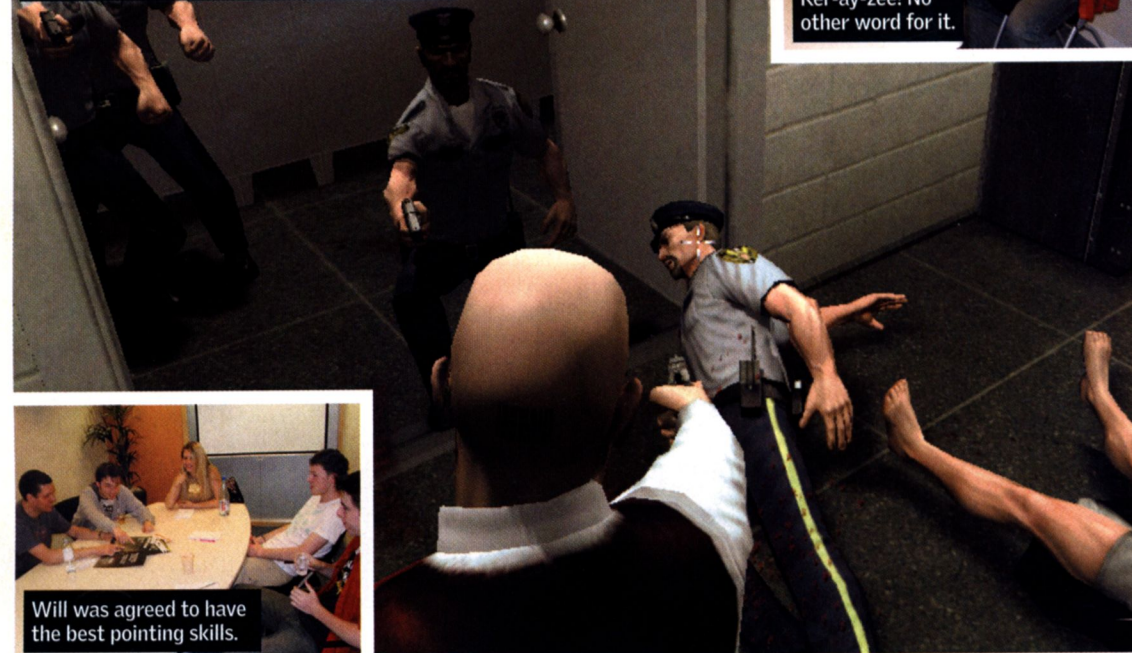


He's paid money for this you know...



Ker-ay-zee! No other word for it.

Be warned: *Blood Money's* excellent finale comes under frank discussion in the Supertest.



Will was agreed to have the best pointing skills.

computerandvideogames.com



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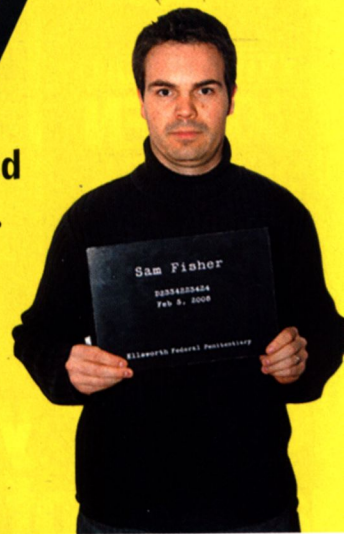
DEVELOPER'S COMMENTARY

SPLINTER CELL: CHAOS THEORY

We sneak into Ubisoft's iron fortress, pump them with truth drugs and find out all about the making of Sam Fisher's last chaotic adventure...



SAM FISHER HAS saved the world more than a few times now, but we regard his biggest and best adventure so far as last year's *Chaos Theory*, which saw the super-spy stuck in the middle of a massive global information war. Before Sam gets a new hairdo and goes all bad in *Double Agent*, we managed to get an audience with series producer Mathieu Ferland (right), who gave us the lowdown on the making of *Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory* – and more importantly, his attempts at finding girlfriends for two members of the development team...



02 WRESTLING WITH TECHNOLOGY: "Pushing technology is always a risk because being the first to do something implies that you might use primitive tools to develop content, as well as investing a lot of money in R&D. We wanted to provide a real next-gen feeling on current generation hardware. The technology had been developed early enough in development to switch to production quite efficiently. However, it was a real challenge because tools to produce such quality visuals were not totally optimised at the time. More importantly, we realised that creating such high levels of detail was time consuming and very costly for the project. Still, we wanted every level to be different and every zone to be unique. We'd never have reached such quality were it not for the massively motivated efforts of the whole team."

01 SETTING GOALS: "While *Pandora Tomorrow's* teams in Shanghai and Annecy (France) were dedicated to creating a new type of multiplayer experience, the Montreal team were already working on *Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory*. Our basic intention for the game was to provide the best quality in every element of its design – those that have real meaning to gamers. To achieve this, we read a lot of fan forums and conducted research to clarify what elements gamers most appreciated and to discover what content is less popular. From these observations and based on our own instinct, we identified many features to focus on in *Chaos Theory*, and our mindset

and main objective was to include them all so we could make the best *Splinter Cell* ever. "Basically, gamers wanted more open environments and free objectives: they wanted to create their own experience. Implementing this was such a challenge in a game like *Splinter Cell* because it deeply affected many gameplay elements, and so forced us to think of all possibilities and make things work whatever the player did. We wanted to improve the general tension in the game based on proximity and provide contextual cool situations to deal with, but also to equip the player with appropriate skills and tools, like Sam's knife and close-combat abilities."





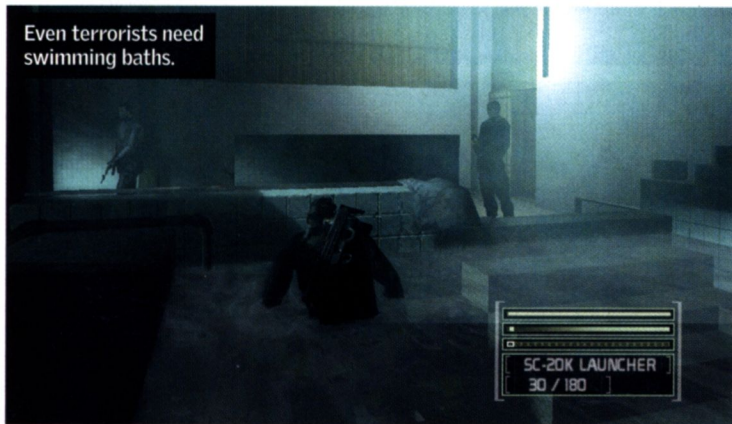
Perhaps the most tense multiplayer game ever.

03 FAN FEEDBACK: "We referred to fan feedback a lot – it was a major consideration for *Chaos Theory*, but as mentioned we also needed to trust our developer instinct experience. For example, the knife was the most wanted weapon by fans and it was a perfect fit with our intention to enhance tension based on proximity. With this in mind, the decision was easy to take and it was one of the first elements we added to *Chaos Theory*."

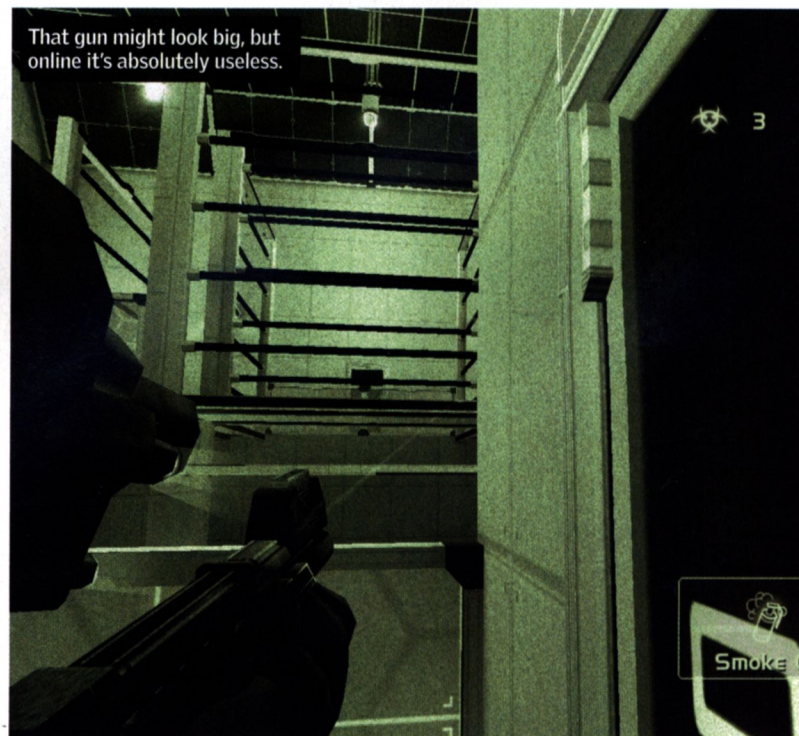
04 ADDING AND SUBTRACTING: "There were a few restrictions we needed to take into account when considering new weapons or gadgets. Globally, we were more restricted by animations than by actual gadgets. Considering the new systems and gameplay possibilities, we had to make choices with the player's weapons and abilities. For example, the 'SWAT turn' was removed in *Chaos Theory*, but we tried to design the game so that players didn't feel the need to do it – and they didn't miss it as a result. We did increase the gadget and weapon possibilities though, especially for fire-fight situations such as the shotgun and sniper rifle. We were able to keep most of our original weapon list, but we had to 'organise' them appropriately in different weapon's attachments to keep the controls simple."



Even terrorists need swimming baths.



That gun might look big, but online it's absolutely useless.



"We identified the features to focus on and then tried to include them all to make the best *Splinter Cell* game ever"

Mathieu Ferland, series producer, *Splinter Cell*



05 BUG-HUNTING: "Considering the ambition and complexity of *Chaos Theory* development, it was a lot of work – bloody hard work too. In fact, the team had to fix more bugs than in any other Ubisoft game ever: more than 50,000! Bugs or quality issues were mostly coming from the non-linear navigation. There was often a new context found by the QA team that we needed to deal with. Moreover, because of the high quality of the graphics, we needed to match many other elements like sound effects, animation, interactive objects or simply to improve collision detection, otherwise we could have seen a quality gap between the elements making up the game. Unfortunately, some of these gaps were unpredictable, since many parts of the game were put together late in development."

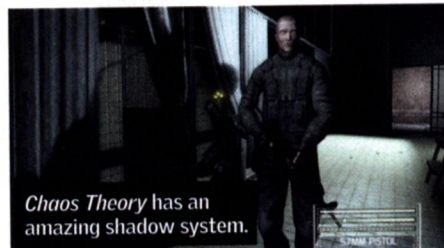
"Tell me where the bugs are!"



"During development, the team had to fix more bugs than in any other Ubisoft title ever – over 50,000!"

Mathieu Ferland, series producer, *Splinter Cell*

06 PLAYING CUPID: "During development, we decided that we'd help find a girlfriend for two of the team leads working on *Chaos Theory*. This was a good challenge since they'd been spending most of their time in the office, and therefore hadn't seen much of the real world. However, by the time the game had been completed, the team ended up with a 50% success rating in our challenge. I could tell you what happened after that, but I reckon I'll leave that for another time..."



Chaos Theory has an amazing shadow system.

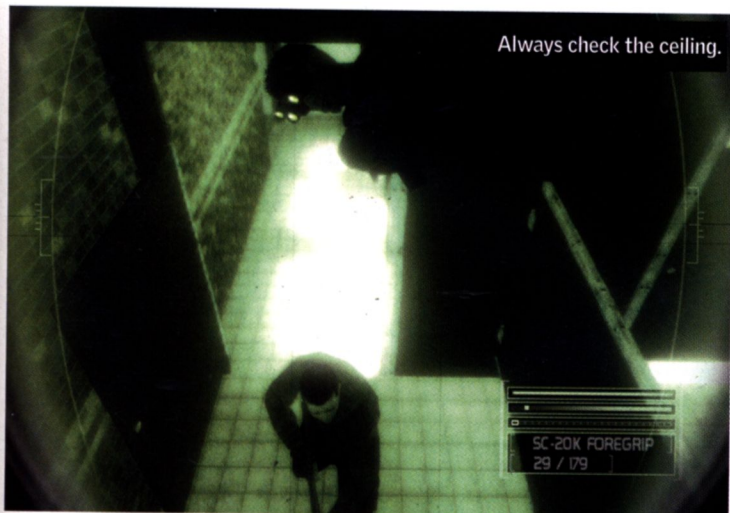
Let's face it, when someone's arse is that pert, you have to look...






The stationery cupboard: a spy's playground.

07 MISSED FEATURES: "There are some things we would have liked to have included in *Chaos Theory* if we'd had more time. Just as an example, we wanted to have more special features for the top alert level; when AI is in the highest level of stress, looking for you and firing at you. The AI was supposed to build barricades and use it as cover while shooting, stuff like that. We had to give up this feature though, for both technical reasons and time. Still, we were satisfied with the results on AI. Also, I wish we could have developed more co-op missions in the game, but I'm pretty pleased with how they turned out because they proved to be very popular with gamers."



Always check the ceiling.

08 CO-OP MODE: "The technology in *Chaos Theory* was highly improved over the previous *Splinter Cell*, and we needed to make everything online compatible in order to develop a type of experience we had in mind for a long time: a true co-operative experience. In *Chaos Theory*, we wanted to add an extra dimension to the game by adding the ability to play with a partner using the core solo mechanics. The pace of *Splinter Cell*, with its large number of slow animations and tactics was a perfect match for a nice co-operative experience, especially with the nice third-person camera angles. I really do think there's a lot of potential for co-op games in the videogames market, as long as you can match the interest with core gameplay mechanics." 



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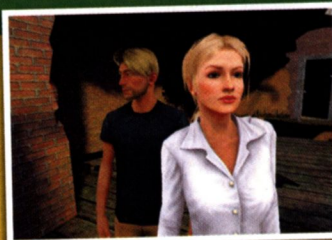
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