

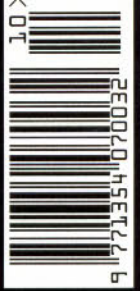
JEDI KNIGHT DARK FORCES II

OVER **30**
GAMES REVIEWED
& RATED!

ARMACK...
ON ID, ROCKET JUMPIN

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PC

World First!
INCUBATION
EXCLUSIVE FIRST LOOK AT THE
NEXT CHAPTER IN THE
BATTLE ISLE SERIES

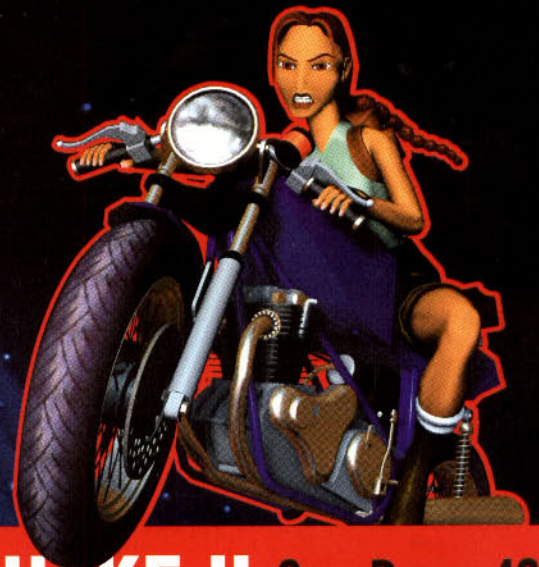


**WORLD
EXCLUSIVE
REVIEW!**

DARK FORCES II

AH64D LONGBOW II
THE FINEST LOOKING HELICOPTER SIM EVER?

TOMB RAIDER II
LARA'S BACK!
LOOKING BETTER THAN EVER



NG & QUAKE II See Page 42



Extensive multi-player support including 'Watch and Join modes'.



CAVEDOG ENTERTAINMENT™
PRESENTS...

TOTAL ANNIHILATION

Open Up To The New Landscape of War

In a distant part of the Galaxy, the Core and the Arm continue a thousand year battle over long forgotten ideals, destroying everything in their path...

TOTAL ANNIHILATION is a real-time war game featuring true 3D terrain and run-time generated 3D units. Tanks drive up and over hills, tilting and rocking with each bump in the landscape and impact with enemy weapons. Battle on diverse landscapes, including lava worlds, ice planets, desert valleys, alien tundra, towering mountain peaks and vast island-dotted oceans. Build defenses high in the hills for a better view and a better shot. Giant Bertha cannons pound the enemy from across the world. Planes bank and dive in intense air-to-air combat. Amphibious tanks drive into and dive under water for surprise attacks. Download new reinforcements from the web and swarm the enemy with hundreds of ever evolving units.

TOTAL ANNIHILATION'S 3D landscape is a revolution that demands deeper strategy and generates more realistic game play. Mobilize your forces and experience the new landscape of war!




www.cavedog.com



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a GT Interactive company



Blast the opposition into smoking fragments, leaving the world cattered with burnt out wreckage.

Take out a radar tower to cripple the enemy's intelligence.

Control the high ground.

The forest provides cover for surprise attacks.

True 3D terrain.

Send in high altitude bombers to take out enemy encampments.



Giant 3D environments, including extra large maps for 32 meg users.



Over 150 units and 50 missions.



Full complement of land, air and sea units.



CHARON

K'LHANNA

PRA'MIN

PE ASS

**THE POINT WHERE
REALITY AND
ANNIHILATION COLLIDE.**



ARCHON

ROCHAN

DAH'MON TARG

PERFECT ASSASSIN

PRESENTED BY GROLIER INTERACTIVE

"...PERFECT ASSASSIN COULD WELL FILL THAT GAP
BETWEEN ULTIMA AND BIOFORCE."
PC ZONE

"IT'S KEV'S SKILLS WITH A PENCIL AND INCREDIBLE
FANTASTIC IMAGINATION THAT SUGGESTS PERFECT ASSASSIN
WILL BE ONE HELL OF A GAME..."
PC GAMER

"... A PLOT THAT'S GOT MORE TWISTS AND
TURNS IN IT THAN A
COW'S INTESTINAL TRACT."
PLAY

"...THE KILLER GAME FOR '97!"
PLAYSTATION PRO

GROLIER INTERACTIVE PRESENTS PERFECT ASSASSIN A VERITAS PRODUCTION

CREATED BY KEV WALKER DEVELOPED BY SYNTHETIC DIMENSIONS

STARRING CHARON AS THE PERFECT ASSASSIN



GROLIER INTERACTIVE





CONSTRUCTOR 101



STARFLEET ACADEMY 58

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**WIN!
WIN!
WIN!**

A MONSTER TELLY!

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Brilliant-looking adventure game from French developers Kalisto.

Jonah Lomu Rugby 96

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Microsoft's latest instalment in the *Flight Sim* series is by far the best so far.

Constructor 101

Acclaim's wickedly humorous cross between *Theme Hospital* and *SimCity*.

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Psygnosis 36

More commonly associated with top console titles, Psygnosis are about to make a big splash on the PC scene. We visited Psygnosis in Liverpool to talk about their new batch of 3D accelerated PC titles.



Incubation 130

Remember the *Battle Isle* games? Well, *Incubation* is nothing like any of them, but it's made by the same team and it looks set to be absolutely fab. Read all about it.





Cover image © LucasArts 1997

Jedi Knight: Dark Forces 2

Dark Forces 2 arrives in the office at last! "The Force is strong in this one," we say. Turn to page 76 and all will be revealed...

FLIGHT SIM 98

98



Longbow 2

50



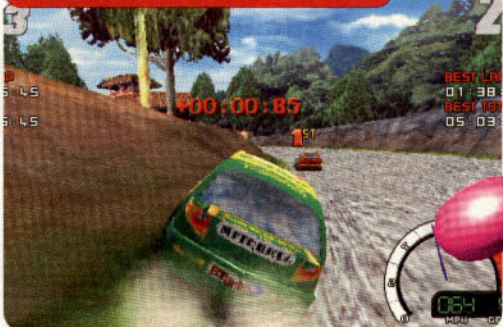
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The November issue of PC Zone goes on sale Thursday 2 October



ABC 55,083

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CD ZONE



Help!

The CD not working? HD playing up? The PC's being a total bast? Don't worry - phone our helpline and sort yourself out pronto!

HD DISK HELP

Phone Matthew on 01274 736990
Any week day between 9am and 4pm

CD-ROM HELP

Phone ABT on 01708 250250
Any week day between 11am and 6pm
(Please DO NOT phone the PC Zone office as your calls will NOT be answered)

If you are calling either help line, then please take note of the following points:

- If possible have your PC operating and near to the phone when you call.
- If this is not possible, note down all relevant information ie system type, sound card, RAM etc, plus the nature of the fault.
- Make sure you have a pen and paper to hand when you call to jot down the relevant info.

No CD?

If you are unable to get your grubby paws on the CD issue, then fear not! Simply fill out this slip, enclose your HD from the cover plus a cheque for a whole £1 and send it to:

CD Exchange (55), PC Zone, Dennis Publishing, 19 Bolsover St, London W1P 7HJ

Your details (please print clearly)

Name:

Address:

.....Post code:

.....

Please make cheques payable to:

DENNIS PUBLISHING Ltd.

CDs from previous issues are also available.

On the disc

This month we've got TWO fantastic CDs brimming with the very best in PC entertainment. As well as four mega exclusive demos, there's also a second CD packed with the latest 3D accelerator demos and patches. To access the software on this month's CD ZONE from Windows 95, pop the CD in the drawer and

double-click on the CD icon on your desktop. Simply double-click on the BROWSER.EXE file and this will launch the CD browser.

If you're running your machine under DOS, insert the CD and change to your CD-ROM drive (the default command is usually <D:>). Type <PCZONE.EXE> to launch the browser.

Contents

Click here to access the DOS demos on this month's CD

Click here to explore the Internet stuff, cartoons and the Our Price chart

Click here to see how some of the hottest new games are shaping up

DOS Demos

Our round up the month's latest DOS games.

Windows

All the latest Windows and Windows 95 demos, Internet essentials and the top utilities that no PC should be without.

Regulars

Cartoons, competitions and more...

Hotshots

Take a look at what's hot from this year's E3 games expo in Atlanta, Georgia.

Click here to access the plethora of Windows demos on offer this month

Click here to go back to the C:\ prompt and quit the CD

Installation shortcuts

If for some reason the front end to the CD won't run properly, you can still install each demo by bypassing the front end altogether.

Simply switch to the appropriate directory (as shown on the table below), type the install command (you can either type it in as one long line or press <ENTER> after each back slash) and then press <ENTER>.

For example if you wanted to run Interplay's Blood demo you'd type the following:

Type CD DOSDEMOS <ENTER>
Type CD BLOOD <ENTER>
Type INSTALL.EXE <ENTER>

The game should then install to your hard drive.

Manual installation commands

Demo	Directory/installation line
Take No Prisoners	windemos\gamedemo\tnp\setup.exe
IF-22	windemos\gamedemo\if22\setup.exe
Perfect Weapon	windemos\gamedemo\weapon\setup.exe
Ignition	windemos\gamedemo\ignition\setup.exe
Beasts & Bumpkins	windemos\gamedemo\bumpkins\setup.exe
PGA Tour Pro	windemos\gamedemo\pga\pgademo.exe
Rune War	windemos\gamedemo\rune\setup.exe
World Wide Soccer	windemos\gamedemo\soccer\setup.exe
X-Wing Vs TIE Fighter	windemos\gamedemo\xt\xtvtdemo.exe
Big Red Racing	windemos\gamedemo\br\winrace.exe
Dungeon Keeper	keeper\winsetup\setup.exe
Splat Pack	dosdemos\carma\go_small.exe
Tennis Elbow	dosdemos\tennis\go_small.exe
Constructor	dosdemos\construct\go_small.exe
GT Racing 97	dosdemos\gt97\go_small.exe
Comanche	dosdemos\comanche\install.exe
Wireplay	editor.ial\wireplay\setup.exe
Quake Rally	editor.ial\quake\qally\runme.bat
Quake Chess	editor.ial\quake\qess\runme.bat
Air Quake	editor.ial\quake\air\runme.bat

Game Demos

MINIMUM SPECIFICATION

You'll need at least a Pentium 75 with 8Mb RAM to run the software on this month's CD-ROM. Many of the programs are designed to run under Windows 95 and as a result, some of them may require 16Mb RAM to run satisfactorily.

Where appropriate, we've included the minimum specifications as a guide to each individual game demo.

DUNGEON KEEPER

BULLFROG/EA (WIN95 ONLY)

IN *DUNGEON KEEPER* you own some prime subterranean estate that is ripe for dungeon development. Starting out with a few bare rooms and corridors populated by a smattering of imps you must expand your underground empire wiping out all before you.

You direct the movement of all your minions from a rather nifty isometric viewpoint where you can rotate the map by pressing the 'control' key with the cursor/mouse. Once you've got used to the controls, which shouldn't take long, it's time to fit out a room to accommodate your treasure and then start digging out your new empire. You won't get very far unless you find some gold, so dig south and you'll eventually come across a great seam of the stuff. Soon enough you'll run into other dungeon



keepers who, like you, are out to expand their underground borders and they too will have troops to do their bidding. This is where the fighting starts, and rather than just stand by and watch the carnage, you can dive in and see your world from their point of view by casting a 'possession' spell and moving the critters about using the cursor keys and the mouse. When you've had enough of life as a mere mortal, go back and direct the action from on high. When you've had enough of the demo, well you'll just have to go out and buy the full version, won't you!

PANEL BUTTONS (Left to right)



INFORMATION This brings up the info on the number of rooms/creatures in your dungeon. Also, find out how much time you have until payday.

when gold reserves are plundered by wages.

ROOM Turn derelict cavern space into functional rooms from this panel.

RESEARCH If you need to conjure up a few more imps or need to possess one of your creatures, just cast the appropriate spell from here.

WORKSHOP At first you can only dig into sections from this panel. Eventually, you'll be able to build not only bridges, but traps as well.

CREATURES Info on what your many minions are doing, whether they be fighting, digging or catching zeds, track them down here.

CONTROLS:

	Up/down/left/right
	Rotate viewpoint
	Scroll screen faster
	Rotate screen right
	Rotate screen left
	Zoom in
	Zoom out

CARMAGEDDON SPLAT PACK

SCI (DOS)

UNLESS YOU HAVE SPENT MOST OF YOUR LIFE UP UNTIL NOW living in quiet solitude you will need little introduction to what the game is all about. This is a driving game. You drive around and the rest is up to you. Run people over if you want. Smear their entrails over your shiny red bonnet if that's what takes your fancy. If your competitors are becoming a bit tiresome, take them out. A bit of road rage never hurt anyone. If you really have to, race around. The only thing you can't do in this game is get out of your car and make yellow by the side of the road. Do you understand what to do now? You



will not be told again.

Installation is easy. Just click on the relevant label in the DOS browser, or if you already have a copy of the original game just copy the files from the

EDITORIAL\PATCHES\SPLAT

directory of the CD-ROM to the DATA directory of *Carmageddon*, overwriting the existing files. Remember the .TXT files must be in the root of the DATA directory.

Don't expect to see the blood flow, it's the green stuff only. Unless you have the Gore patch that is. And you do. It's on the CD. Hoorah for PC Zone. What would you do without us?



CONTROLS:

	Accelerate
	Brake
	Left
	Right
	Tighter turning
	Handbrake
	Change view
	Pratcam
	Toggle map
	Repair
	Recover vehicle

TAKE NO PRISONERS RAVEN/BRODERBUND

IF YOU WANT *QUAKE* FROM AN entirely new perspective, then you've got it with *Take No Prisoners* – the new action game from *Hexen II* creators Raven. You view the carnage from a sort of security camera perspective that follows you everywhere as you while away the hours blasting Growlers, rednecks and security troopers. Standard *Quake* keys should keep you from harm, you even have a console-type device called a Personal Data Device (stop yer grinnin' and drop yer linen). You can view PDD sections by



pressing the key with the first letter of the section name ('W' for weapons etc). Space opens doors as well as allowing you to make use of the computer terminals dotted around as you'll have to download passwords from them to access certain areas. A multi-player demo level has also been included called *Kill At Will* which is a standard frag for all, the full version of the game will have a feast of multi-player options for you to get your teeth into. Oh, if you do suffer from vertigo, you can get a low altitude perspective on the action.

CONTROLS:

↑ ↓ ← → Movement
ALT Strafe
D Stand
C Crouch
CTRL Fire/jump
SHIFT Speed
SPACE Speedlock
Use

ENTER Use item
Q / A Change weapons
W / S Change items
PG UP Camera up
HOME Camera down
TAB Camera middle
PG DN Aim up
END Aim centre
DEL Aim down

QUAKE RALLY

AS LONG AS YOU'VE GOT THE FULL version of *Quake* installed on your machine you can run these *Quake* add-ons. There's a four level playable demo of *Quake Rally*, a fully playable version of *Air Quake*, and the full version of *Quess* to muck about with. Each demo has its own individual installation procedure, details of which you'll find in the corresponding README files on the CD itself. To run the demos, type the appropriate command line option (eg *QUAKE -GAME -AIRQUAKE*) to start up. Again, check the help files if you're still unsure of what to do.



HD ZONE

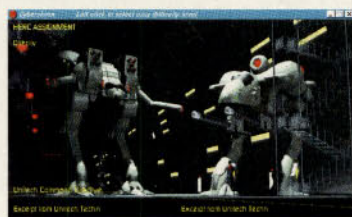
ON THIS MONTH'S FLOPPIES WE'VE GOT *Ancient Ivory*, a simple but addictive puzzle game, and *Aro*, a classic platformer. To load and access the software on this month's floppies, insert the floppy icon into your disc drive, double click on the floppy icon and type *ZONE*. Follow the instructions to install the game onto your hard drive. If you have any problems or require further information, edit the README.TXT file.



CD ZONE EXTRA

THERE ARE OVER 30 PLAYABLE DEMOS ON THIS MONTH'S CD, INCLUDING the excellent *X-Wing Vs TIE Fighter* from LucasArts, *GT Racing*, *Tennis Elbow* and *World Wide Soccer*.

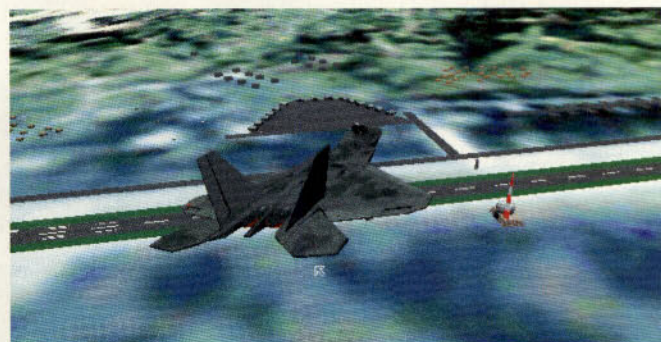
We've also got a special section on this month's CD dedicated to the Sierra Originals budget range, including *Earthsiege 2*, *IndyCar 2*, *Silent Thunder A-10 Tank Killer*, *Outpost* and *CyberStorm*. For full details, click on the CD icon and access the main menu.



iF-22: RAPTOR

INTERACTIVE MAGIC

THE FULL VERSION WILL GIVE YOU DYNAMICALLY GENERATED MISSIONS, but in this demo you'll be thrown into the thick of it right away. In the demo mission there are four waypoints each one presenting a varied challenge. Enemy aircraft will be in the vicinity as well as buildings and ground units to take out. The games readme.txt will give you more detailed instructions but if you really can't wait that long, then just remember the cursor keys should point you in the right direction – keys 1-0 (not the keypad) will control thrust and enter selects weapon. To fire selected weapon press the spacebar. Remember to make sure those bay doors are open if your going to drop a big one.



CONTROLS:

Loads of 'em (see readme.txt)

GENERAL CONTROLS

F1 / F11 Different Viewpoints
P Pause
TAB / SHIFT TAB Increase/decrease Accelerated time
CTRL X End simulation

FLIGHT CONTROLS

Z / X Rudder
H / H Flaps
↑ ↓ ← → Move flight Controls
G Landing gear
CTRL E Eject
+ / - Thrust
keypad Afterburner
ALT A Altimeter toggle

MFD & HUD CONTROLS

INS Combat mode
HOME Status mode
PG UP Navigation mode
/ Navigation range
Next HUD mode

COUNTER MEASURES

E ECM
C Chaff
F Flare
V Auto dispense

WEAPON CONTROLS

ENTER Select next weapon
SHIFT ENTER Select previous weapon
BACKSPACE Arm weapon
Fire weapon
D Open/close bay doors
L Select near target
T Select next target
SHIFT T Select previous target
Q Target info

He'll go to the ends of the earth for you.



For Windows 95® and MS-DOS®



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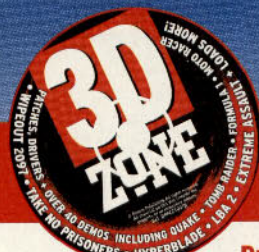


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3D ZONE

If you've got a 3D accelerator card tucked away in your machine, then you're in for a real treat.

EVERYONE AT ZONE HAS BEEN OUT IN force this month searching every sweaty nook and cranny for 3D accelerator card demos and drivers. We found so many, we decided to put together a whole CD that contains every 3D accelerator patch and



DISCLAIMER: PC Zone cannot accept any responsibility for the loss of data or damage through using this CD.

Drivers

Drivers for various cards can be installed by going into the \DRIVERS directory on the CD. They're divided into sub-directories relating to the manufacturers and can be installed just by clicking on the corresponding .ZIP file. Text files have been included where necessary which tell you what to do in case you run into difficulty.

Patches

If you want to spice up some of those games that are picking up dust on your shelves, you'll need to go into the \PATCHES directory and see if there is one in existence for it. As above, each game is divided by card and there are README.TXT files available to tell you what to do.

Getting Started...

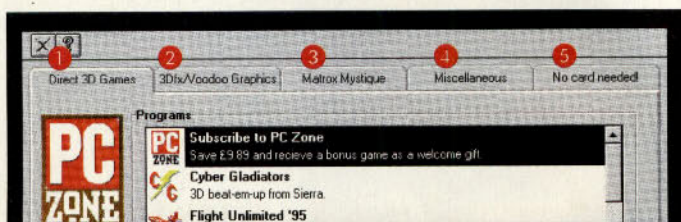
DOS users

Few demos make use of 3D acceleration in DOS. The ones that do exist can be accessed by running D:\DOSDEMO.EXE from the DOS prompt and clicking on the name of the demo you wish to install.

Windows 95

If you run D:\BROWSER.EXE from your start menu in Windows 95, or click on its program icon in Windows Explorer the familiar PC Zone browser will soon come into view. Once you've reached the menu screen, click on the relevant panel to access the demos available for your card. To find out how to install a patch or demo, access the relevant README.TXT files.

N.B. All the demos have been grouped by manufacturer where applicable. If you click on a divider you'll see a list of all the demos that support a particular card. In case of difficulty contact your card manufacturer.



- 1 You won't own this card 'cause there ain't one. These are all the generic drivers that any 3D accelerator card can use thanks to Microsoft's wonderful Direct 3D. If your card isn't featured anywhere else then dive in here.
- 2 If your card utilises The Voodoo Graphics chipset then peruse this list for dedicated games. Cards using this chipset are more popular.
- 3 If you have one of the more obscure cards, especially if it was made in Iraq, then see if any games support it here.
- 4 You don't need a 3D card to run these games. Point, click and away you go.
- 5 Matrox Mystique owners cards are advised to search this area first

WIREPLAY

IT'S NEW, IMPROVED AND SPANGLY WHITE. Wireplay, the on-line games service from BT is now available in a Windows 95 version. And all you zimmer-framed DOS dinosaurs need not despair, an updated DOS version that allows you to throw down your gaming gauntlet to others logged onto the service is also now available. This will not only allow DOS users to play against Win95 users with improved game performance, but also allow you to play against more players than before and have a wider selection of games to choose from. Contact BT Wireplay for further details on the DOS software. Win95 users will additionally be able to create and enter into chat rooms where they will be able to set up ranking tables and issue challenges on or off line.

All you need to get started is our life-enhancing cover CD where you'll find the Wireplay software and the latest version of *Big Red Racing*. A PC will make things considerably easier too, as will a half-decent modem and a BT phone line. What are you waiting for? Go kick some.

Minimum Specs.

486 PC (Pentium recommended for Win95 version)
16Mb RAM
28.8 Modem and BT phone line
CD-ROM



Getting Started

Installation is easy. Pop the Cover CD into your drive, and either from the DOS prompt run PCZONE.EXE for DOS version, or 'RUN' BROWSER.EXE from the 'START' button in Windows 95.

To log on you will have to enter your details and technical specifications, and once you have logged on and connected, you will find yourself at the news page where you can find patches and Wireplay-specific games to download, as well as news on games in general.

If you just click on 'OK' you'll find yourself in the locker room where you can search for any users who may be logged on and spoiling for a big red race or a spot of first-person death dealing.

Make sure your games are set up properly within Wireplay by pressing the setup button which you'll find by clicking on the Wireplay symbol in the bottom right-hand corner. If you install new games that can be played on the system then they must be configured here.

DO NOT PHONE PC ZONE - WIREPLAY HAVE THEIR OWN HELPLINE NUMBER



Once you've found a suitable opponent, either by responding to someone else's challenge or by setting up your own the software will run the appropriate game. If you can't find someone who will take you on right away, then you can always leave a challenge posted to commence at a certain time which others on-line at other times will see. You may not get a game right away, but leave a few messages and people will get to hear of you. You can always set up the computer to ring you up if someone wants to take you on at your favourite game.

Big Red Racing (Wireplay edition)

There's nothing worse than being given free access to the wonderful world of Wireplay and having nothing to play on it (well there is, but we won't go into that now). *Big Red Racing* was a big hit with us when we reviewed it. Not only has it got tons of tracks, but there are loads of vehicles in the game you can play around with too. By selecting *Big Red Racing* from the Windows games menu you can log on and enjoy multi-player drive 'em up action courtesy of Wireplay. Enjoy!

Technical Help:

If you have any problems contact the Wireplay help desk on Lo-Call 0345 577577. Their help desk staff are keen gamers who can help with many common PC problems.

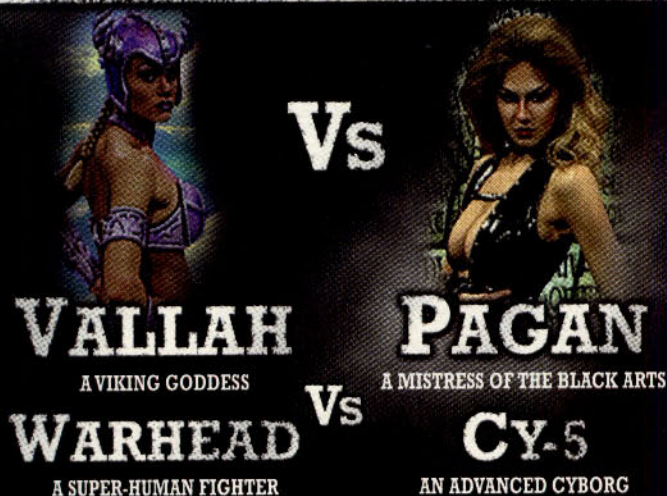
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BULLETIN

What's new! What it looks like! When it's out!

Daikatana slips to March

John Romero has admitted that *Daikatana* will not make it into the shops and onto our screens in

DATA PRO

Protecting the Earth from the scum of the Universe



Now breaking box office records across the globe, blockbusting sci-fi movie *Men in Black* is the hottest licence to rise from Hollywood in a long, long time. Will US developers The Design League deliver the goods with their game of the same name?

As reported last issue, this November will see the release of *Men In Black*, a new arcade adventure based on the blockbuster movie, currently on release throughout the country. PC Zone was recently invited to test out an early work-in-progress version of the game and came away suitably impressed.



The film (left) raked in over 84 million dollars in just six days in the USA. Will the game (below) repeat this success?



Men In Black, the game, is a puzzle-based shoot 'em up in the style of Infogrames' mould-breaking *Alone In The Dark*, albeit with better graphics and recognisable characters. Both Will Smith and Tommy Lee Jones have had their faces digitally scanned and mapped onto their polygon counterparts – to great effect, as you can see from these exclusive in-game screenshots. What you can't see from these shots, however, is how the characters move in the game. Agents J (Smith) and K (Jones) walk, run, fight, shoot and 'hang out' in their own, individual, inimitable style, as do the many alien bad – and good – guys which you encounter as the game runs its course.

Men In Black will also be pretty huge when completed, with over 200 locations to explore and tons of taxing puzzles to crack, interwoven into a storyline that takes the player beyond the film and into further scrapes with nasty alien beings. There'll even be new weapons to try out (which are top secret at the mo...), as well as favourites from the film itself (such as the devastating Noisy Cricket).

The game has yet to pick up a UK distributor (details of which we'll have for you next issue), but The Design League remain unphased by this, as PR dude Damon Le Geyt points out: "We don't want our game to be pigeon-holed as another crap movie licence. We've worked closely with the producers of

the film, used loads of original material and have created new weapons and creatures ourselves. *Men In Black* is going to be a great game."

Look out for a stonking preview in the next issue of PC Zone. **Z**



Men In Black doffs its cap at *AITD* and *Resident Evil*.

Turok comes to the PC



Acclaim Entertainment's highly-rated N64 adventure *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter* is currently in the pipeline for a pre-Christmas PC release over here in the UK.

Developed by Iguana, *Turok* wowed N64 owners earlier this year with its mix of frenetic first-person blasting action and tense, atmospheric adventuring. Now PC owners will get a chance to sample the game's many delights, plus many new features and graphical enhancements too.

Turok PC will be accelerator card-only, making use of translucency effects, filtering, mip-mapping, fogging and z-buffering. Iguana are promising native 3Dfx and PowerVR versions, with other chipset-specific versions in the pipeline. Have a look at <http://www.acclaimnation.com/anation/twitch/interactive/turok/> if you need more info. **Z**



November, as was originally planned. "We decided to slow down our breakneck pace to ensure that nothing is compromised," said Ion Storm head honcho Mike Wilson. "Design is law."

64 monsters, 32 weapons, 40 levels, 41 songs. Turns out it takes a while, and we're not going to give any of it up. The game is coming out in March, which will put us at ten months development time."

Not bad for a game that's five times larger than any Romero has ever done in the past. *Daikatana* will definitely set a new standard for what's acceptable content-wise in an action game:

"12 monsters, eight weapons and eight songs played over and over again will no longer do. Suck it down." PC Zone's *Daikatana Diary* will recommence before the end of the year.



Ocean on a roll

There seem to have been new announcements from Ocean every week for the past few months. Here's all the latest news.



Gaming guru Jon Ritman has taken his beard back to Ocean for *Matchday 3*, ten years after the last instalment of the genuinely seminal football game. Developed by Ritman's Cranberry Source, the player graphics will employ their unique Polar Sprout technology and the action will be viewed from a withdrawn perspective, enabling much of the pitch to be visible. *Matchday 3* will feature 24 international sides of varying difficulties and is set for an October release.



(Above) The very welcome return of Jon Ritman's *Matchday* series.

Ocean have secured another football game in the shape of *Soccer Nation*, developed in Newbury by Crush!, with the backing of Japan's Sunsoft. As previously mentioned in the On-Line section, it's an ambitious project that intends to unite a large part of the civilised world into an enormous football league.

Wetrix is a 3D puzzle game with a cunningly simple central concept, created by Manchester-based developers Zed Two. Random shapes drop onto a flat, isometrically-viewed square surface and must be used to construct pools, channels and dams to collect the water balloons that also fall. To score points, the water must then be evaporated by manoeuvring regularly plunging fireballs.

Holiday Island takes the 'god' game into the realms of hotels, swimming pools, casinos and crazy golf, as players compete for the lion's share of the tourist trade on an as-yet unspoiled tropical island. End-of-pier entertainment includes a hilarious farce starring Lionel Blair, Linda Lusardi and 'Tosh' out of *The Bill*. Z



Wetrix is a weird cross between *Populous* and *Tetris* – savvy?

After the fact

They may be milking it for all its worth, but fans of *C&C: Red Alert* will be chuffed to hear that Westwood are all set to release their second data disk for the game. *Red Alert: The Aftermath* will not only allow players to use *Counterstrike* units in multi-player games, but will also add a few new ones. Units to debut include Mechanics (who'll be able to repair armoured units), upgraded Tesla Tanks and Shock Troopers armed with Tesla Coils, and Demolition Tanks which can destroy enemy installations. In addition, The Chronosphere Tank will be able to zip around the battlefield undetected and the Missile Sub will give the Soviets a naval unit capable of taking out Allied land units. Two new campaigns have been developed, as well as over 100 multi-player maps. Expect to see *The Aftermath* mid-September for £14.99. Z



Allez Les Blancs!



As briefly mentioned last month, Electronic Arts' long-running football series is to be extended with the addition of *FIFA: Road To World Cup 98*, scheduled for an October release. Based around next year's kickabout in France, the game will begin in the initial qualifying stages, with 172 teams competing in 16 international stadiums for a much-coveted place in the finals. *FRTWC98* promises a refined 32-bit AI engine and hundreds of new animations. Commentary will again be provided by BBC stalwarts Des Lynam, Alan Hansen and John Motson. For sure, like I say, at the end of the day, we'll take each *FIFA* game as it comes. Z



More Dungeon Keeper

Having dried their tears and moved into the golden dawn of a post-Molyneux era, Bullfrog have announced plans for a

Dungeon Keeper expansion pack. Although Bullfrog are keeping things close to their chest, we do know that it has a planned Christmas release date. Expect more of the same with new creatures,

some new levels and extra features (maybe they'll include an 'office politics' feature, with ex-programmers raiding the dungeons?). Keep your eyes peeled for more information.



DATA PAD

Best served cold

Dark Vengeance – developed by Reality Bytes – promises a combination of frenetic beat 'em up action and cerebral hardcore adventuring. Five different polygonal protagonists await your command, each ready-armed with an array of fearsome weaponry with which to bludgeon your multitudinous foes into submission.

But *Dark Vengeance* is not all bare knuckles and axe-wielding action – you'll also have to master and utilise the mystical power of raw magic to succeed in this impressive-looking third-person kill-a-thon.

In addition, *Dark Vengeance* will also offer substantial multi-player support. Reality Bytes are currently quoting 32 players in a single game, which sounds interesting and could be well worth waiting for.

No word of a UK distributor as yet, so watch this space for further details as they emerge. **Z**



Timothy Zahn's Nexus Prime

Timothy Zahn, best-selling author of *Star Wars* novels, has been developing a story for Digifix's new real-time strategy game *Mission To Nexus Prime*. Battles will take place over four various terrain types within which there are particular hazards attributable to that environment. With 20 missions a piece, Humans take on the evil Rossch over deserts, jungles, volcanic and arctic waste-land and can expect rolling lava flows, meteor showers and quicksand. There'll be over 70 unit types to control with full multi-player support, a choice of screen resolution and a map editor. *Mission To Nexus Prime* should surface before Christmas. **Z**



Gadzooks! Timothy Zahn has obviously been playing a lot of C&C recently...

More MicroProse Mech madness



Highway to heaven or road to nowhere? *MechCommander* versus C&C et al.

MicroProse have a number of new games on the horizon, a couple of which have the word 'Mech' in the title.

Developed by Chicago-based FASA Interactive, *MechWarrior III* will extend the BattleTech universe some time next year, enabling players to control giant walking tanks called BattleMechs. The same company are also developing *MechCommander*, due for release around the same time. Again set in the BattleTech universe, it's a real-time action strategy game of tactical combat and resource management, with the player assuming the role of a MechCommander in command of a growing unit of MechWarriors and their assigned Mechs. Answers on a postcard.

Civ-heads will be able to slake their thirst for all things Meier with the release this Autumn of *Ultimate Civ II*. The package will include the original *Civ II Scenarios*, the new *Civ II Scenario Construction Set* plus additional scenarios set on new worlds, including Mars and Atlantis.

Trek-heads, on the other hand, may be pleased to learn that *Star Trek: First Contact* is due next year. Based on the film of the same name, players will be able to assume the role of any of the Next Generation crew members as they battle the Borg for command of the Enterprise-E, which has been recreated using the *Unreal* 3D engine.

Magic: The Gathering is to be given a new lease of life with an expansion pack planned for this Autumn. It will make available over 100 rare digital cards from the original Unlimited Edition, Arabian Nights and Antiquities trading card sets, and will also boast a new Sealed Deck Generator gameplaying feature, plus 60 new pre-made decks. <http://www.microprose.com> will serve those of you who crave more info. **Z**



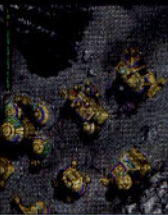
(Far left) *MechWarrior III* stomps in. (Middle) *First Contact* uses Epic's *Unreal* 3D engine. (Left) Add more to MTG with this new add-on pack.

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OUTPOST

DATA PAD

Swearing is cool

Interplay have released a 'Cuss Pack' for their celebrated hick 'em up, *Redneck Rampage*. The patch is only available to adults and will add

even more profanity and swearing to the game (as if it needed it).

To get a copy, send an e-mail to: **webmaster@interplay.com** referring to "Redneck Cuss Pack Waiver" and the following text: "I own



Eidos make the headlines again



Well, whaddya know - more Eidos games have been announced to complete their Blowfield-style take-over of the entire gaming industry.

Despite its rather bacterial title, *Plague* has little to do with the popular, pustule-inducing disease of the same name. It's more of a medieval *Command & Conquer* clone, set in a time when Joan of Arc was sizzling nicely on the pyre, and St George was busy bumming his fellow knights. (Are you sure about this? - Ed) Your pleasingly 3D rendered universe is centred around a small parish town, surrounded by glorious countryside. But alas and alack, this pastoral paradise is fraught with danger: pestilence, famine, ancient tombs and rival towns. As local head honcho, you must manage the town's resources, plan for the seasonal upheavals and, naturally, send your army out to duff up any nearby enemies. Heresy, riots, fires and the plague are everyday perils for you and your staff of farmers, wizards, spies and soldiers, but you can delegate all the management stuff to the computer AI and get on with the pitched battles if that is your wont.

Looking not dissimilar to another Eidos game, *Myth*, *Plague* has been devised by Ian 'Turn to page 4,280, paragraph 12' Livingstone himself and will see the light circa March 1998 AD. Amid a whiff of bandwagon jumping, *Steel Legions* has appeared, a Mech-based shoot 'em up featuring the usual flotilla of tiny little men in great big robots. Even after *MechWarrior*, *BattleTech* and *Shattered Steel*, there still seems to be plenty of room to manoeuvre in this tightly-packed genre. *Steel Legions* offers a randomly-generated battlefield, undulating and texture-mapped for up to 2,500 square kilometres, and warehouses of hi-tech explosive weaponry to fling around. The big sell here is the revolutionary AI, based on the



Will Eidos' *Plague* go through you like a dose of salts, or will it 'rock'?

current neural network technology. Mech forces are modelled around the

idiosyncrasies and personalities of each soldier, giving a more organic, unpredictable feel to your opponents. Also, your squad will happily receive and process orders, information and stimuli, and go off and 'do their own thing' if the situation arises. All the usual tech stuff applies - SVGA, 3D accelerated graphics, up to 100 players networked - all stamped with an October '97 release date.

Set in a futuristic city where everyone struts around like superheroes in Day-Glo cat suits, *Omikron* is looking like it will be a rather spiffy arcade adventure. Using a third-person roving camera view like an endoscope to expose every nook and

cranny of a complete 3D-rendered world, our sauntering superhero seems like he'll be caught up in a tangled tapeworm of a plot, fighting with motion-captured martial arts moves, using multiple objects, chatting to fully facially animated characters, and - most importantly - driving anti-gravity vehicles over innocent bystanders.

Back on planet Earth, the best golf game in the universe (in our humble opinion) has been given a facelift and is now labelled *Links LS 98*. The aching screen redraws of yore are gone, replaced by a new DirectX-booster engine, plus tanks full of visual enhancements such as waving flags, air traffic (helicopters and birds), water reflections, and all-round better artwork. If that wasn't tasty enough, *Links LS* also sports some modern multi-player mod cons including eight Internet players, a proper Tournament server system and native Win95 network support. It should be out by the time you read this, so contemplate going out and getting it, OK? **Z**



Looking 'vee cool' from Eidos: third-person arcade adventuring in *Omikron*. Now where were those tights?

the full CD version of *Redneck Rampage* and swear I am over 18, and don't mind cuss'n and using the Lord's name in vain." Alternatively, phone them on 01628 42366 and ask for a secret URL from where you can download it.

Your PC should soon resemble an Arkansas Tourette's Syndrome convention. Also for *RR* fans come rumours of an add-on disc, featuring all the usual extras and a level editor to boot. More details as and when.

A whole new ball game

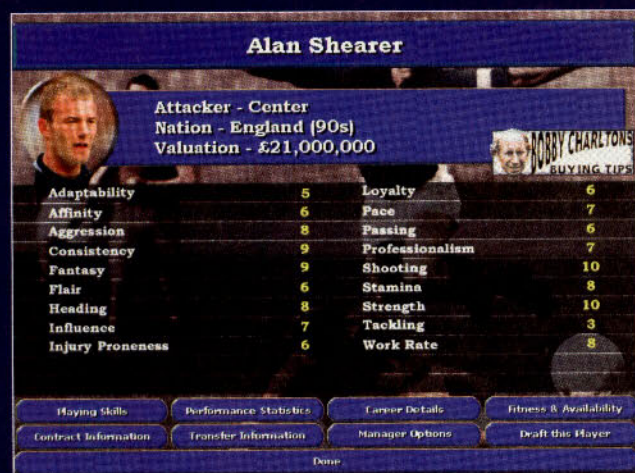


If you play *CM2* regularly, you'll no doubt spot that this is enhanced...

Fans of the mega-selling footie sim *Championship Manager 2* will no doubt be extremely pleased to hear that the Collyer brothers have just finished putting the final touches to the next instalment in the series.

The latest version, going under the guise of *Championship Manager 2 97/98*, will allow players to dabble in up to three different European leagues at any one time, select set pieces and penalty takers, and it features thousands of new players and teams. The brothers even claim to have removed the Everton bias, although we'll believe that when we see it. *CM2 97/98* will hit the gaming shelves at the end of September and will cost around £25.

Also due for release shortly is *Championship Manager All Stars*. Equipped with the same familiar engine and interface, players will be able to manage their very own ultimate fantasy dream team and lead them to cup and league glory, using a range of players hailing from the '50s up to the present day. *CMAS* will sport all the usual features found in *CM2*, but will also feature an in-depth database with biographies of all the greatest players (ie George Best, the Charlton brothers, Ian Wright) and details of European and South American player awards. There'll also be an in-depth sound commentary, provided by the legendary Kenneth Wolstenhome, and the developers promise that both the tactics (ie the passing game) and the player blend rating will be given a much-needed tweaking. *CMAS* is slated for release early next year and should set you back around £30. **Z**



Added stars and added stats in *Champ Manager All Stars*. Kick it Alan!

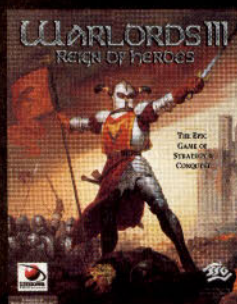


A KNIGHT but with the BATTLE AXE JUST GOT BETTER

PC Gaming World - "...Warlords III has the best AI we've seen this year - and maybe in any year"

PC Gamer - "Supreme fantasy action game"

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PC Zone

90%

PC Zone

classic -

"...Utterly compulsive"



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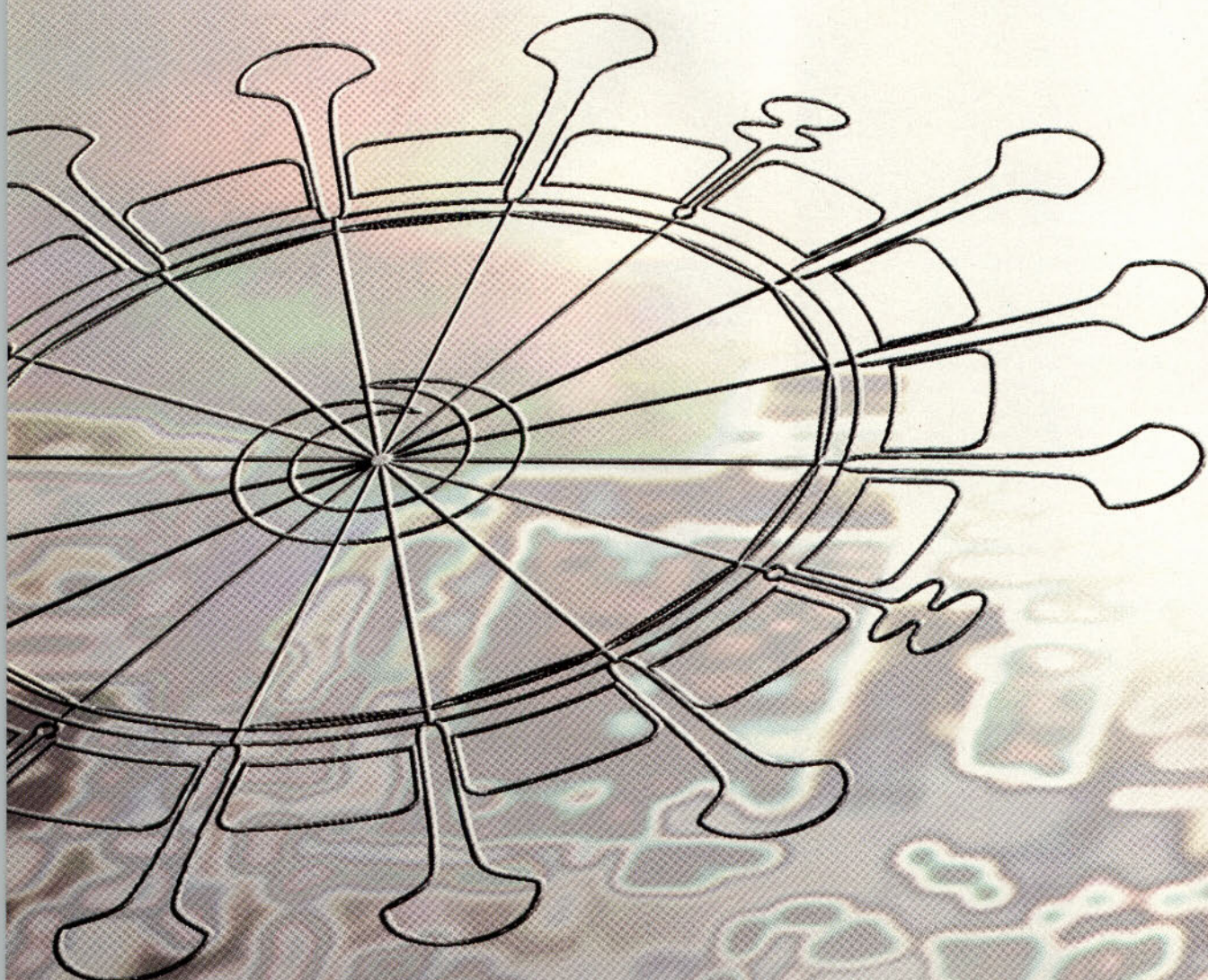
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Blood II

The follow-up to the haemoglobin-obsessed shoot 'em up *Blood* has been announced. Unsurprisingly, it's going to be designed and coded by Monolith

Studios, the progenitors of the original neo-gothic *Doom*-style spook-fest. Originally the game used the *Duke Nukem* BUILD engine, but this time round will use Microsoft's DirectEngine, which has been coded by, er, Monolith.

DirectEngine is designed to be hardware-only, meaning a 3D accelerator card will be a necessity, but the team insist that *Blood II* will support OpenGL, Direct3D and software versions as well. More news, and possibly shots, next issue.

DATA PAD



SWAT 2: shoot-out in the sun-baked streets of LA – just like in real life!

"Hut! Hut! Hut!"

It's high knees at Sierra as *SWAT 2* (the sequel to *Police Quest: SWAT*) is announced.

Promising a radically different look and feel from its slightly disappointing predecessor, *SWAT 2* is described by Sierra as a 'real-time action strategy-fest which emphasises the values of player freedom' – which in this particular case roughly translates into freedom to shoot anyone, at any time.

Ex-LAPD chief and SWAT supremo Daryl Gates is once again at the helm, providing expert knowledge for the scenarios and guidance on the tricks and tactics of the SWAT trade. You're also guaranteed access to all the usual hi-tech ordnance, such as a SWAT helicopter and devastating K9 units (which real SWAT blokes apparently use as a last resort on the kind of people who do not know when to stop shooting). Over 30 missions and a plethora of multi-player options also await.

You can check out the latest news and developments on the Sierra Website at <http://www.sierra.com/titles/swat2>.



(Left) On their days off the SWAT team head to the local building site to play inside large pipes.

Bolt-on missions for X-Wing Vs TIE

Living in hope that you've finished the original levels for *X-Wing Vs TIE Fighter*, Instant Access are developing 25 entirely new missions for LucasArts' smash-hit space combat simulator. Based on encounters from the best-selling *Star Wars* books, the *Stellar Combat Mission Pack* will also include 100 new missions for *Descent 2* and over 70 'select' missions for the original *X-Wing*, *TIE Fighter* and *Descent*. Featuring neither new weapons nor ships, the pack will, however, include free ISP software and four weeks of on-line gaming free.

If your pit crew's socks clash wildly with their hosiery and it's keeping you awake at night, maybe you need the *Perfect Grand Prix: Track Pack* also from Instant Access. This comprehensive editor acts as a new front end for fans of *Formula 1 Grand Prix 2* and allows you to change weights, rev limits, grip and engine power levels for any driver. The

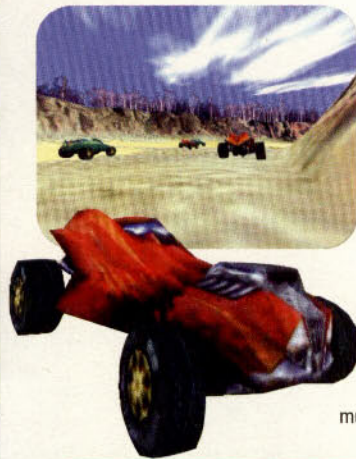
standard cockpit design can be updated with '97 season designs and you can even give yourself a shiny new helmet. Ten tracks are included in the pack. Some of them, like Brands Hatch and Donnington Park, are entirely new.

You'll need the full versions of one or more of the original games to make any use of these add-ons.

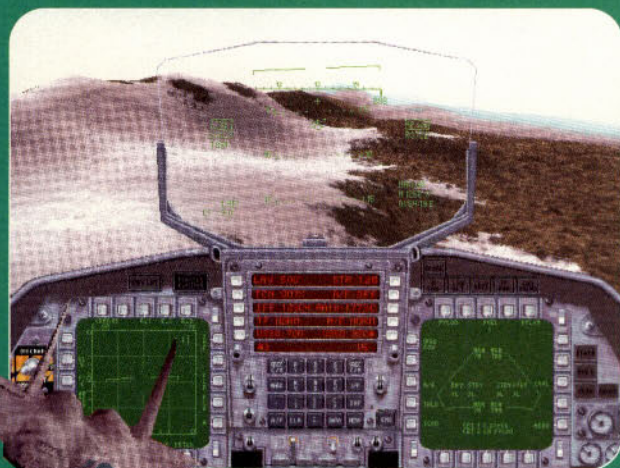
Release date for the *Track Pack* is set for September 1997. *Stellar Combat* should be on the shelves now.



Power to the people



Emergent Software's 3Dfx-only racer, *Powerslide*, has yet to be picked up by a UK publisher. The game has the player grappling with the wheel of a '50s-style hot rod-cum-dune buggy, with races taking place over a variety of rough terrains. As the name suggests, controlling said vehicle is similar to a rally game, with sliding around bends and negotiating adverse cambers pretty much par for the course. *Powerslide* is currently running at 60 frames per second and still boasts a distant horizon, with graphics cunningly morphing from low to high detail. It's not much use without a publisher, though.



I'm Jane, fly me!

The next flight sim from Jane's *Combat Simulations* is to be *F-15*, based on one of the world's most lethal strike fighters. Produced by Andy Hollis (*F15 Strike Eagle* series, *AH-64D Longbow*) with co-operation from Jane's top military analysts, high-speed air combat is the order of the day. A new graphics engine promises a state-of-the-art terrain and object system, and the Mission Builder should extend the replay value. Furthermore, multi-player and multi-position options will enable you

to take control of both the pilot and co-pilot positions. Covering an area spanning some 2.5 million square miles, this game should be big. We said BIG!



(Top) Marvellously detailed cockpits. (Left) Marvellously detailed exteriors.



Here's one bunny that's on the boil

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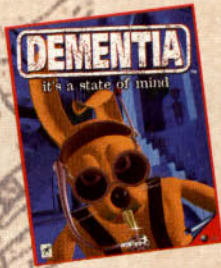
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*Actual in-game screens shown

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Achtung: Strategy Games!

It's chocks away, whiz bang ginger and high jinx in the great blue yonder as those masters of strategy, Avalon Hill,

reveal *Achtung: Spitfire!*, a strategy wargame which'll hurl you into the heart of RAF Fighter Command during its finest hour – the Battle of Britain. Based on Avalon Hill's award-winning

Over the Reich, *Achtung: Spitfire!* will offer the chance to play as Free French or Luftwaffe, and is due for imminent release. In a separate, radical departure, Avalon



DATA PAD

Quake Rally roars in!



You've got to be kidding? A complete racing game using the *Quake* engine, designed and coded by a group of Australian amateurs? "Rubbish," you say. "No, actually, it's really rather good," we retort.

While most games have curled up and decomposed by now, a year down the line the almighty *Quake* is still going on. Its open-architecture and spinny-rotatey™ engine has fathered a spawn of 'amateur' add-ons and soup-ups to the original game. A casual go on the Internet can bring you all manner of new textures, new weapons and new levels as well as the much-applauded Total Conversions, where groups of hardcore amateur game designers, programmers and artists create entirely new games out of the blistering *Quake* engine.

One such work of art is *Quake Rally*, a complete multi-player racing game which bolts seamlessly onto the *Q* game. Coded by Ryan 'Ridah' Feltrin of the Aussie team Impact, it adds everything you would expect from a drive 'em up. It has the gruesomely realistic handling of *RAC Rally*, the look of *Carmageddon*, the speed of *Screamer II*, the architecture of *Super Mario Kart*, and all the showers of pancreatic fluid we love and respect from deathmatch. "Yummy yum yum," as you should be saying.

Check this feature list out: seven different cars (including a stock car and a BMW – woo); skidding, headlights, reverse steering and leaning into curves; chase camera; different surfaces (mud, water, bitumen, and dry dirt); huge über jumps across scary, lava-drenched chasms; and a big blaring horn. Plus you get seven roof-mounted weapons to mess

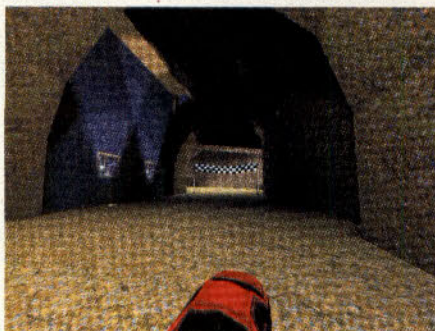


The starting grid, *Quake* engines revving. (Left) Sliding round corners does take some practice.

around with too. The Repulsor is an electric chassis-stroke-forcefield which pinballs any colliding cars into oblivion and protects you from whiplash damage on badly taken corners. The Sprazer bullets laser bolts in a spread, while The Detonator piles frisbee-shaped bombs behind you. For *Quake* aficionados, the super nail-gun is still included, as is the rocket launcher, of course, which has been obscenely upgraded with heat-seeking abilities.

The four levels on this month's cover CD are just a hint of what's to come. Pay careful attention to the Mining Station (QRALLY02), an awesome level, part toboggan run, part residential street. We also recommend you gasp and sweat over Cliffside Carnage, with its warren of secret shortcuts, chicanes and little assault courses (not to mention the 'secret' boss level at the end of the demo).

The steering system takes some getting used to. Even the start location where you choose your game type is a bitch to navigate at first (they really do drop you in at the deep end), but a few minutes



Quake Rally features some great level design.

Other *Quake* 'Total Conversions' of note

QUAKE CHESS by Impact Development Team (<http://impact.frag.com/quess>)

This one's a bit old, but sincerely worth a mention due to the sheer surrealism of its concept and the brilliance of its execution. No description is necessary really – it's the best multi-player game in the world blended with the best two-player game in the world. Demo on our CD this month. **Verdict: Most impressive.**





Hill have also set up a new division, the aptly monickered Visceral Productions, to develop *Defiance* – the company's first foray in the fraught world of first-person blasters. Supporting both DirectPlay and MMX,

Defiance promises strong storyline elements and addictive puzzle solving, as well as the obligatory full-on explosive action. No word yet on the exact style of this release – whether it'll be more of a *Hexen* than a

Quake, or, for that matter, a bit of a *Daikatana*. *Defiance* debuts in October. If you can't wait to find out more, seek out www.avalonhill.com and all will no doubt be revealed. You got that?



Impact are adding even more features to *Quake Rally*, such as skids (left) and new vehicles (right), so watch out for updates.



practice with the mouse and in-camera views will stop you toppling headlong into the lava and sprang off the walls.

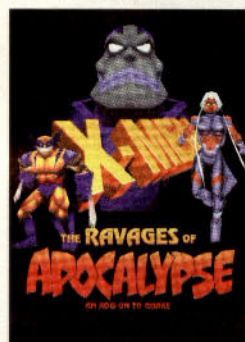
You'd be fools if you didn't try it deathmatch either. It's hilarious.

Imagine eight people on the grid, revving impatiently as the clock counts down. They all pile furiously forward, butting each other out of the way, screaming around corners, taking stupid risks to collect the out-of-the-way weapons, smacking into walls, toppling into lava, and flipping their fellow drivers into the air with one flick of the rocket launcher. You can play a straight multi-lap race, you can do time trials, or you can do deathmatch in an enclosed arena.

It all started as an 'experiment in mathematics' apparently, and now, seven months down the line, has proved that a) *Quake* 'rulez' and b) hard work, talent and imagination can create pretty stunning results. Later versions of *Quake Rally* (due any time now) will have computer-controlled 'bot cars to race against and some new maps.

There's nothing better, it would seem, than having a 3D CV. Ridah and the Impact team have been signed by Marvel Comics to do an 'X-Men' version of *Quake*, called *Ravages Of Apocalypse*, due very very soon (www.planetquake.com/x-men). And if it's even a quarter as good as *Quake Rally*, then it will be rather shiny and spiff.

Anyway, go play the demo on the CD, I'm sure you'll agree with us. In the meantime, if you want more information about Team Impact or any of their other projects, then head off to their Website at: <http://impact.frag.com>. Z



AIR QUAKE by Iikka Keranen (<http://www.student.oulu.fi/~ikeranen/quake/>)

Quake Rally was different, but *Air Quake*? Who would've thought you'd ever see a flight sim utilising id's famous 3D engine? But it works, and – hey – that's what counts. Even missiles lock on before homing into their target. And would you believe it – there's a playable demo on this month's cover CD for you to try out yourself. **Verdict:** Death at 20,000 feet.



SPECIAL FORCES by Clan SF (<http://www.sforces.stomped.com/>)

This conversion revolves around those elite troops made famous by Charlie Sheen in *Navy Seals*. Looking like a ground-level *Syndicate*, *SF Quake* features eight new weapons, ten new bad guys, nine new maps, and your familiar *Quake* guys dressed head-to-foot in SWAT team kit. **Verdict:** coolio.



PAINTBALL QUAKE by Quake Innovations (<http://www.qteam.stomped.com/>)

Based on the sad woodland sport of men, *Paintball Quake* pulls the weapons, the camo gear, and the capture-the-flag-iness of this fun activity into the *Quake* engine. It features an armoury inspired by real-life pressurised gas guns and an emphasis on team work rather than all-out slaughter. At least you don't get hurt when you're hit. **Verdict:** Hmmm...



QUAKEMECH by Assault On Terra V (<http://www.mechquake.stomped.com/>)

In *QuakeMech* you pilot one of those silly Japanese robot things around a tactical landscape packed with comms towers, bases, repair centres, and many, many other Mechs. Loads of new weapons are promised, as are laser sights and jumpjets. **Verdict:** Lick your lips. Z



HOT Line

Tracking the hottest games and their current release dates

Actua Soccer 2 (Gremlin)
Flight Sim 98 (Microsoft)
Jedi Knight (LucasArts)
Monkey Island 3 (LucasArts)
Populous 3 (EA)

Total Annihilation (GT Interactive)
Unreal (GT Interactive)

Earthsiege 3 (Sierra)
HEDZ (Hasbro)
Men In Black (TBC)
Quake 2 (id)
Tomb Raider 2 (Core Design)

Starcraft (Sierra)
Blade Runner (Westwood Studios)
Grand Theft Auto (BMG Interactive)
Match Day 3 (Ocean)

The Dark Project (Eidos Interactive)
Falcon 4.0 (MicroProse)
Star Trek: First Contact (MicroProse)

Duke Nukem Forever (GT Interactive)
FIGP3 (TBC)
SimCity 3000 (Maxis)
Sin (Activision)
Ultima IX (EA)

Tanktics (BMG Interactive)
Sentinel Returns (Psygnosis)
The X-Files (Fox Interactive)

Civilization III (MicroProse)
Daikatana (Eidos Interactive)

Descent III (Interplay)
Prey (GT Interactive)

T I M E L I N E

SEPTEMBER

OCTOBER

NOVEMBER

DECEMBER

JANUARY '98

FEBRUARY '98

MARCH '98

APRIL '98

MAY '98

JUNE '98

GAMES

of

Glory

FROM
TALONSOFT

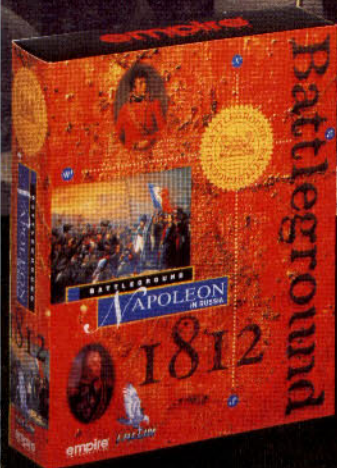


The Battleground Series: Challenging and entertaining... immense fun - PC Gamer. Wow! This is good - PC Zone. Excellent graphics and animation... a blast to play - Strategy Plus. Dramatic and realistic... outstanding - PCGW.

*Napoleon returning from Elba by Vasily Ivanovich Sternberg (Wilhelm) (1818-45)
Christie's Images/Bridgeman Art Library, London.*

BATTLEGROUND
NAPOLEON
IN RUSSIA

Outwit the greatest military minds in history and change the course of world events forever with the award winning Battleground Series from Talonsoft. You can either play alone or head-to-head via a modem, or on the internet. With eight titles out now, there's never been a better time to intervene on behalf of humanity.



TALONSOFT

empire
INTERACTIVE

Empire Interactive, The Spires, 677 High Road, North Finchley, London N12 0DA. Tel: 0181 343 7337, Fax: 0181 343 7447 www.empire.co.uk

Big Redline Racing

Beyond Games have announced *Redline* – a driving game which the developers claim "is set to take

Carmageddon's crown when it hits the shelves at the end of this year". *Redline* is set in a post-apocalyptic world where the only worthwhile pastime seems to be

racing cars and mowing down radiation-sick pedestrians. However, unlike *Carmageddon*, *Redline* will allow players the use of a variety of weaponry in which to take



DATA PRO



PC ZONE READER

PC Zone Awards 97

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CREATIVE LABS

Forget the Oscars, the Brits, the Grammys and even the BAFTAs. The only awards that really matter are the **PC Zone Reader Awards**. Read on to see how you can be a part of this fantastic event.

We need your help. We want to officially recognise the best game releases over the last 12 months, and we need your input to ensure it's the most important PC games awards ever. To make the event extra special, we've teamed up with hardware and PC peripheral giants Creative Labs to initiate the most comprehensive and accurately voted PC games awards ever.

It's not going to be an easy

task, though. Looking back over the past 12 months to September 1996, you've got to take in such mega hits as *Quake*, *Tomb Raider*, *Ecstasica II*, *Theme Hospital*, *X-Wing Vs TIE Fighter*, *X-COM 3*, *Hexen II* and *Dungeon Keeper*. The list goes on and on. In an effort to keep the voting process as simple as possible, we want you to nominate a game for each category using the coupon below. We'll then take your nominations and ask you to give your final vote next month. The results will be published in the January '98 issue following an awards ceremony to be held

on 4 December this year. Every nomination form we receive will automatically be entered into our special prize draw. Two lucky winners will receive a Creative Labs AWE64 Gold sound card, a state-of-the-art PC DVD drive, speakers from the fantastic Soundworks 200 range and a super-fast Graphics Blaster Exxtreme graphics card that will help turn your existing system into a gaming DREAM MACHINE! They'll also be invited to our exclusive awards ceremony as special guests of *PC Zone* and Creative Labs, which will be attended by the whole PC gaming industry on 4 December 1997. To help you see the wood for the trees, we're furnishing you with a list of potential nominees for each category. Remember, to qualify, your choice must have been released no earlier than September 1996. Send in your nominees to the address on the coupon to reach us by 14 September 1997. You can also nominate games on-line. Check out the *PC Zone* Website at www.pczone.co.uk for more info.



WIN! WIN! WIN!

Build Your Very Own Dream Machine with Creative Labs

The AWE64 Gold: A gold mine for music

Turn your PC into a gaming dream machine by slotting in the fantastic SoundBlaster AWE 64 Gold sound card from Creative Labs. This state-of-the-art card offers incredibly realistic audio with 64 simultaneous voices and stunning solo instrument sounds, thanks to the brilliant EMU8000 WaveEffects synthesiser and 4Mb of onboard RAM. Add a set of decent speakers and you'll have the best setup there is.

As well as being great for games, budding musicians can use the bundled software to edit and create their own life-like instrument samples and sound effects – and even lay down their own tracks using Steinberg's Cubasis Audio for real-time music editing and eight track digital audio recording.

The SoundBlaster AWE64 Gold card normally retails for around £149.99 and is available from all good PC dealers. For further information contact Creative Labs on 01245 265 265 or point your web browser at www.creativelabs.com.

CREATIVE
CREATIVE LABS



out opponents in both single-player and fully-featured multi-player modes. 'Daedalus' is the name of Beyond's new graphics engine, which they tell us has been designed to make full use

of 3D accelerator cards. MMX support is also expected, as well as support for VR controllers and headsets. Redline is currently on show at www.beyondgames.com.



AWARDS 1996/97



PC Zone Awards 97

Sponsored by

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Categories:

BEST ACTION GAME:

Hexen II, MDK, Quake, Tomb Raider, X-Wing Vs TIE Fighter, the list is endless...

BEST ADVENTURE/RPG GAME:

Diablo, DiscWorld II, Ecstatica II, LBA 2, ToonStruck...

BEST DRIVING GAME:

Carmageddon, Network Q RAC Rally, POD, Screamer 2, Need For Speed 2...

BEST PUZZLE GAME:

Baku Baku Animal, Puzzle Bobble, Quake Chess, Super Puzzle Fighter 2 Turbo...

BEST FLIGHT SIMULATION GAME:

A-10 Cuba, Comanche 3, Flight Sim 98, Flying Corps, F22 Lightning 2, Super EF2000...

BEST SPORTS GAME:

Actua Soccer Club Edition, Links LS, Pete Sampras Tennis 97, PGA Tour Pro, NBA Live 97...

BEST STRATEGY GAME:

Age Of Empires, Command & Conquer: Red Alert, Constructor, Dungeon Keeper, Syndicate Wars, Theme Hospital, Warlords III, X-COM 3: Apocalypse...

GAME OF THE YEAR:

Carmageddon, Command & Conquer: Red Alert, Dungeon Keeper, MDK, Puzzle Bobble, Quake, Theme Hospital, Tomb Raider, X-COM 3...

DEVELOPER OF THE YEAR:


Andrew Spencer Studios, Bullfrog, iD, Core Design, LucasArts, Raven, Shiny, Stainless Software...

PUBLISHER OF THE YEAR:

Acclaim, Activision, Eidos Interactive, Electronic Arts, Empire, Gremlin Interactive, GT Interactive, Interplay, MicroProse, Ocean, Virgin...

We'll also be presenting a special Creative Labs Technology Award and a PC Zone Special Award, which will be voted for internally here at Dennis Publishing.

Send your nominations to PC Zone Awards Nominations, PC Zone, Dennis Publishing Ltd.,

19 Bolsover Street, London W1P 7HJ. All nominations must reach us by the 14 September 1997, so you'll have to get your skates on! Alternatively, you can nominate games on-line. Check out the PC Zone Website (www.pczone.co.uk) for further details. 

Nomination form



BEST ACTION GAME:

BEST ADVENTURE/RPG GAME:

BEST DRIVING GAME:

BEST PUZZLE GAME:

BEST FLIGHT SIMULATION GAME:

BEST SPORTS GAME:

BEST STRATEGY GAME:

GAME OF THE YEAR:

DEVELOPER OF THE YEAR:

PUBLISHER OF THE YEAR:

Name:

Job title:

Address:

Postcode:

Daytime tel no:

☐ Please tick if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers or new products from other companies.

☐ Tick if under 18 years of age (we need to ask this question so that we do not mail inappropriate material to minors).

Terms and conditions: Postal entries with all questions answered correctly will be entered into the prize draw and winners will be selected at random after the closing date. The editor's decision is final. No correspondence will be entered into and all winners will be notified by post. This competition is not open to employees of Dennis Publishing or participating companies. Only one entry per reader. No cash alternative will be offered. Submission of entry will be taken as acceptance of the rules.

They're Luscious

Jill Cuniff, lead singer of rock/rap band *Luscious Jackson*, is to lend her sultry vocal talents to *Enemy Zero*, a new adventure game based around the

concept of sound and the gaming environment. Cuniff is to play the voice of the game's main character, Laura Lewis, the sole survivor on a spaceship teeming with deadly, invisible aliens. "I am excited about this project because it gives me

a chance to stretch my performance abilities to convey all the terror, frustration, anger and surprise found in the game," said Cuniff. *Enemy Zero* is due for release in November through Sega. We'll have more details for you soon.



DATA PAD



There's a degree of madness in the area this month, with my relentless quest for knowledge unearthing some particularly bizarre stories.

It is a fairly safe bet that a number of you have considered the notion of getting your hands on the not inconsiderable mammary glands of **Lara Croft**, the ubiquitous star of **Tomb Raider** and its forthcoming sequel. You may, therefore, be interested to learn that one man has achieved just that, although, disturbingly enough, it was the father of the girl in question. Allow me to explain. Lara Croft is a fictional character (despite what may go on in your depraved minds). In a shrewd marketing exercise, publishers Eidos have employed a model by the name of **Rhona Mitra** to impersonate said character, even to the extent of releasing a record under the name Lara Croft. Rhona's father is Dr Anthony Mitra, a plastic surgeon, and he recently performed an operation on his daughter to increase her bust from a modest **34A** to a far more suitable **34DD**, thus enabling her to bring more authenticity to the role. Even a lower-end tabloid saw fit to dedicate half a page to the story, at the same time revealing that Rhona once appeared topless in the little-known series **The Man Who Made Husbands Jealous**. The rag also carried the news that Rhona took drugs during her early teens and carried the following quote: "I did a hell of a lot of Es and cocaine. Sometimes I think I should be dead. It was nasty." Meanwhile, rumours abound that Lara is to be portrayed in a Hollywood movie by none other than Hugh Grant's commendably loyal girlfriend, **Liz Hurley**.

Moving swiftly on, sinister news reaches me from Middlesbrough, of all places. Local developers **Iguana** are currently working on **Shadow Man**, based on the comic-book character and due to be published by **Acclaim**. The game draws heavily on the voodoo aspect of the comics, and it appears that some of the team are becoming far too involved in the project, to the extent that at least one member has undergone psychiatric treatment. As an example of their current state of mind, a request for a brief outline of the game was met with the following poem, printed in a suitably gothic font:

*Shadows born at the confluence of worlds to mope between.
Dead Side: partly living, the Asylum of the Heart - where
darkness manifests at the edge of reason.*

*What sleep is here? What dreams play dead in the uncanny
coiling of a snake's mortal shuffling. Sun in hand. Hand the
arcing deathblow, herald the end of All Things. The Horror.
The horror.*

Bleedin' Goths, they get everywhere.

Over in the good old US of A, a new amendment proposes to ban PC games from all computers owned by the Federal Government, and to prohibit the purchase of computers with pre-installed games. The bill's sponsor, one **Senator Lauch Faircloth**, claims: "The removal of these games will save millions, if not billions, in lost productivity. It is time to pull the plug on people playing computer games." Interestingly, the bill has yet to be approved by **President Clinton**.

Sega have broken off an agreement with **3Dfx** to use their technology in a new console, and are now believed to be working with **NEC's** rival **PowerVR** chipset. President of 3Dfx, **Greg Ballard**, said: "We are disappointed with this notification and believe that it is without legal justification."

Quake II will feature an introductory animation, a first for any id game. The sequence will set up the storyline, which involves space marines infiltrating a military fortress on an alien planet in order to save the Earth.

Regular readers will be aware of **Telstar's** prospective **Powerboat GT** and interplay's forthcoming **F1 Powerboat**. Following a stern fax, one party has backed down. Yes, Telstar's game will now be known as **Speedboat Attack**, its third moniker to date, having started life as **Aqua'tak**. Now there's an unusual technique for gaining extra coverage... Taxi!

Console-style RPG hits PC



Good RPGs have been thin on the ground recently, but developers Ravid are hoping to turn fortunes their way with console-style RPG *Septerra Core*.

Featuring 200 locations over seven continents, the game should offer a wealth of different styles and cultures for the player to interact with. Borrowing heavily from Japanese styles, *Septerra Core* is said to be similar to games like *Phantasy Star* and *Final Fantasy*. The game will have 16-bit graphics, full speech and a comprehensive battle engine featuring both real-time and turn-based elements. Set for release in the second quarter of '98, *Septerra Core* will hopefully breathe new life into the stale sails of the role-playing genre. **Z**



Big blue Japanese hairstyles (left), and traditional oriental adventuring in Ravid's *Septerra Core*.

Empire sign Player

Scheduled for October, *The Golf Pro* will offer the choice of playing as Gary Player or taking your chances against him. Rather than rely on the time-honoured three-click method of swinging the club, *The Golf Pro* promises an innovative



control system known as Mousedrive, with power administered according to the amount of purchase given to the mouse. The game will also feature a genuine handicap system and will initially comprise two courses: England's St Mellion International and America's Hilton Head National, the latter designed by Gary Player himself. **Z**

You read it here first

All the latest 'goss' as we go to press... Activision have announced a deal to acquire Raven Software (the people responsible for *Hexen 2* and *Mageslayer*) which, upon completion, will see them become a wholly-owned subsidiary of the company. Brian and Steven Raffel, the founders of Raven and its principal shareholders, will continue to manage studio operations. Staying with Activision for

the moment, we can also reveal that they have signed a deal with US board/computer game company Avalon Hill, to bring their successful board game *Civilization* to our screens early next year. Erm, we think MicroProse may have something to say about that...

Whispers from Westwood Studios tell of a 3D version of *Command & Conquer* in the pipeline, code-named *Commando*. Details of the game are currently under

wraps, so we'll have to let you know more as further news comes in.

Finally, Monolith have announced another add-on pack for their ace shoot 'em up *Blood*—called *Plasma Pack*—with 11 new single-player levels, seven new monsters and new weapons (Tesla Cannon, Napalm Launcher, and Sphere of Incineration). It'll also support 3Dfx cards and should be out over here before Christmas. **Z**

Revenge.

You can almost taste it.

You were once an innocent man.
But having been brutally slain and banished
to Hell has put a bad taste in your mouth...
You are Kain — damned to the savage existence of
a vampire for all eternity. Revenge consumes you as you
journey through the depraved lands of Nosgoth in search of
your murderers. Quench your desire for vengeance with the
blood of innocents in real-time. Morph into Wolf, Bat, Vampire
or Mist to slaughter those who stand between you and those
who wronged you.

Revenge...nothing is sweeter than the blood of your enemies.

BLOOD OMEN LEGACY OF KAIN



Explore the carnage at
www.activision.com
or www.crystald.com

HOT Shots

Ooh, ooh - look at us - Hot Shots hits the four-page mark. Aren't we posh? "But why four pages?" We hear you cry. And the answer is: "It's a jungle out there." Yes, there are literally zillions of games in development due to come out before Christmas. We've mentioned them previously, but have now deemed them worthy enough of an update.



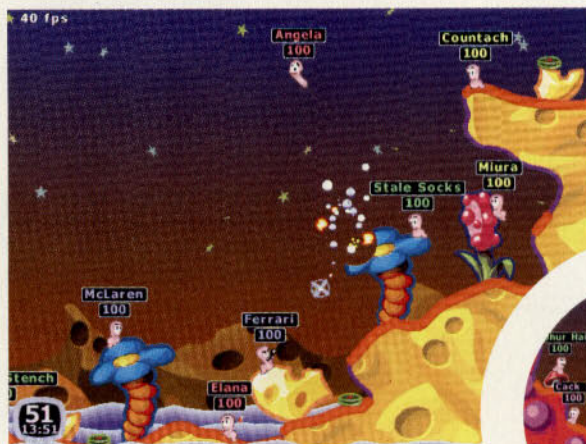
UEFA (Ocean)

"We hate the Cockneys, the Scousers, of course, and Leeds!" Ho, ho - those Manchester United-supporting Ocean guys are no doubt adding top-secret booster code to their 'virtual' (ahem) counterparts in the forthcoming soccer sim, *UEFA*, at this very moment. That is, unless Manchester City supporters are programming the AI... which'd be funny. And what about all that effort that went into Eric Cantona, eh? Gremlin made the same mistake. Still, never mind lads - game's looking great.

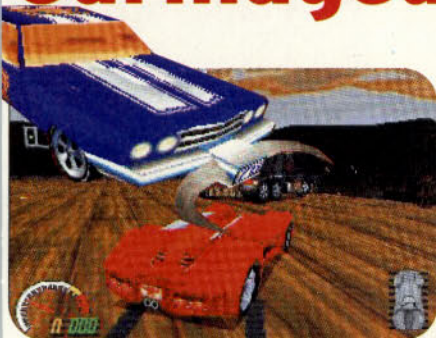


Worms 2 (MicroProse)

Sequel to one of the most addictive multi-player games in the entire universe, *Worms 2* has numerous new options which allow the player to tailor the game by selecting which weapons the teams start with and how much damage can be caused to each worm. In addition, players can also create their own arsenal through the use of a weapons editor, a feature that allows you to invent awesome new weapons by combining different weapon types. Along with the editor, the game includes over 60 new weapons, high-resolution, cartoon-style graphics, a whole range of new sound effects, speech and music tracks (including a programmable jukebox), and the ability to play with up to eight players over the Internet.



Carmageddon Splat Pack (Sci)



Highway to Hell

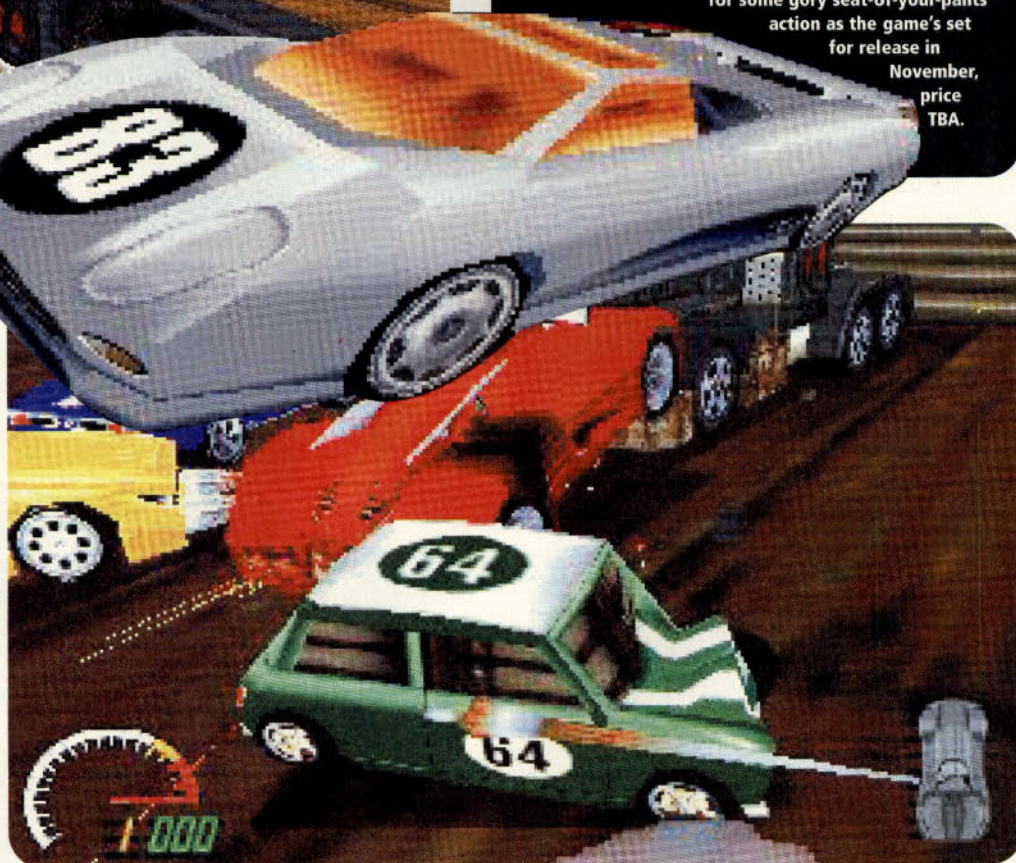
More of the same is on the way for fans of *Carmageddon*. The *Splat Pack* is being developed in-house by Stainless Software and features 15 entirely new vehicles including a fabulous-looking, *Duel*-inspired truck and an unsurprisingly small Mini. There will be 18 new tracks featured over four new worlds, (one medieval, two urban and one based in hell). Some levels that were left out of the original release will be incorporated, as will some tracks specifically designed for multi-play. A patch for 3Dfx users will be included. The good news is you won't have to hold on too long for some gory seat-of-your-pants action as the game's set for release in

November,
price
TBA.

Bang to rights

One of the few criticisms of *Carmageddon* was that some of the vehicles were a bit bizarre. With the *Duel* truck and a giant 4x4 monstrosity, developers Stainless hope to bring in "more recognisable vehicles".

"What we wanted was a more varied scale," said lead artist Neil Barnden. He's also keen to ensure that the extra tracks are kept less abstract. "People like to smash up things they can relate to," he revealed. There is talk of more pedestrians populating these new levels, but if you're expecting them to bleed red you may be disappointed. Says Neil: "We'd be physically arrested if they did." And he isn't joking either - which is blummin' harsh if you ask us.



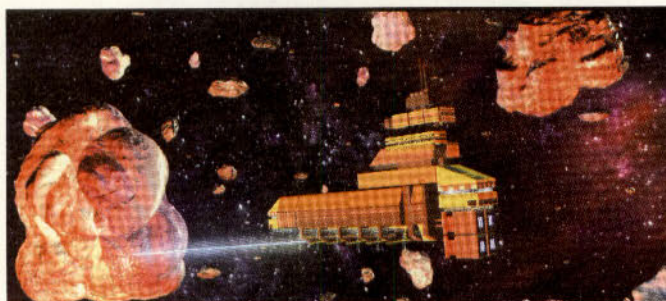
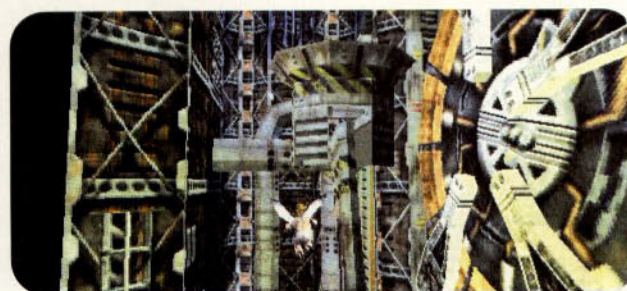
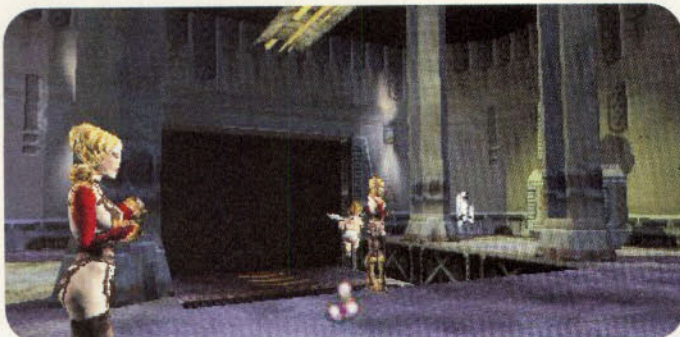
HOT Shots

Messiah (Interplay)

Dave Perry's development company Shiny Entertainment houses some of the most talented programmers and designers in the software business. When *PC Zone* first saw a working demo of *Messiah*, we were convinced of the fact.

The story of a cherub with attitude, *Messiah* will be a mixture of action and strategy set in a number of impressive, decaying environments. The programmers at Shiny have come up with a completely

new 3D engine to the one used in *MDK*, which mixes massive polygon levels with highly-detailed, 'smoothed', motion-captured characters. In short, it looks stunning. For more info check out www.shiny.com.



Wing Commander Prophecy (EA)

Wing Commander gets the 'next generation' treatment in *Wing Commander Prophecy*, the latest in the best-selling *Wing Commander* series of games from Origin. With a new space combat engine, *Wing Commander Prophecy* will feature all new graphics and sound in kicking off a new trilogy. Featuring new player characters and new aliens designed by artist Syd Mead, *Prophecy* will still boast a few old faces including Mark Hamill of *Star Wars* fame. With *Wing Commander* originator Chris Roberts now fronting Digital Anvil, *Prophecy* is sure to have a different feel than all its predecessors.



7th Legion (MicroProse)

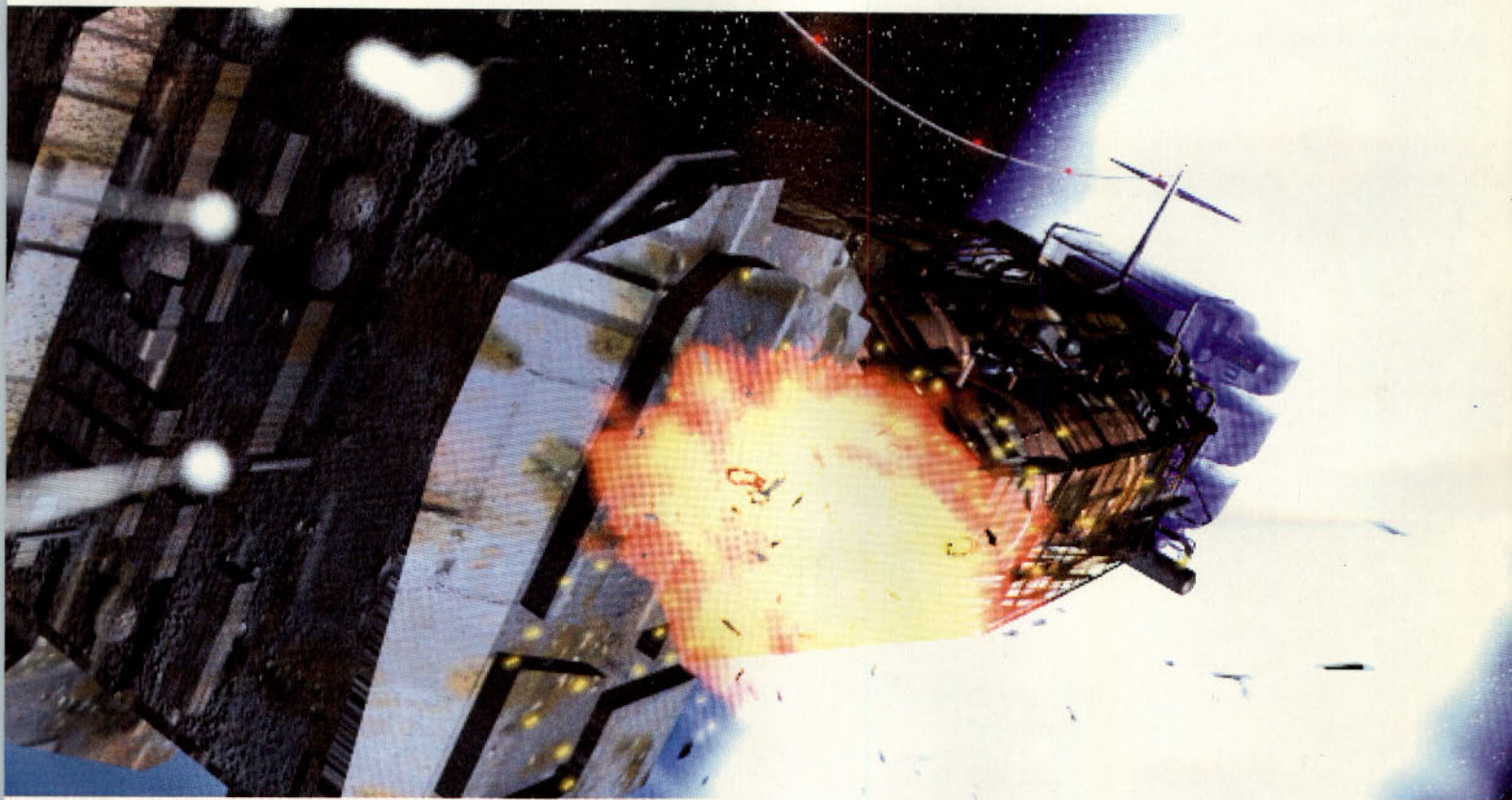
We first reported on Epic MegaGames' *7th Legion* way back in *PC Zone* 49, and since then things have been bubbling away nicely in development, even though the game has remained without a UK publisher. Now MicroProse have stepped in, picking up the UK publishing rights and announcing the intention to release the game in the leafy month of October.

7th Legion's graphics appear sound, but its real-time strategy/action sensibilities have yet to be proved effective. As with most games of this type, the proof of the pudding will be in the eating. Or in the handiness of the AI, if you prefer a more literal analogy.



Starcraft (Blizzard/Sierra)

We've been waiting patiently for Blizzard's forthcoming strategy epic for several months now, and judging from the updated presentation of the game we received last week, our extensive period spent in anticipation of a major event will not have been in vain. According to the higher echelons of PR Management at Sierra, *Starcraft* is almost completed and should be with us for review next issue (unless something goes seriously awry at Blizzard's HQ in LA between then and now). *Starcraft*'s extremely versatile gameplay, huge choice of units to control and superior graphics will surely put it alongside the leaders of the real-time strategy gaming pack when it's released. With any luck then, this may act as a deterrent to all the software publishers out there churning out half-baked *Command & Conquer* clones and sending them here to be greeted with the scorn and derision they deserve. Whatever happened to originality in gameplay? (Er, what's that? - Several thousand software publishers) As you can glean from the accompanying screenshots, *Starcraft* is shaping up to be absolutely fantastic. What you can't see, of course, is how it plays. But that's okay, because we'll be bringing you the full exclusive uncensored review of the game as soon as is humanly possible. Watch this space.



**PC
ZONE**

our price

CHART

Predictions

Welcome to PC Zone's version of *The Chart Show*, sponsored by Our Price. Each month it'll feature the titles we think will be flying off the shelves in the coming weeks, and it will also play host to exclusive news and competitions.

T

HIS MONTH SEES ANOTHER GREAT OFFER FROM OUR PRICE – THE KIXX 'JACK-IN-A-BOX' promotion. From 25 August, if you buy a Kixx title from Our Price you could find yourself walking out of the store with some great prizes. During the promotion, each Kixx title will contain a special voucher revealing what you've won, and prizes range from multimedia PCs to free software and annual subscriptions to your favourite games title – PC Zone. So get down to your local store and check out the games section now!

And talking of great deals, if you haven't added *Extreme Assault* to your games collection yet, then Our Price is the place to buy it – it's on special offer at just £24.99. Finally, to take part in this month's Our Price Top 10 prize giveaway, just put pen to paper, answer the question below and send it in to: PC Zone Our Price Competition CPCZ710A, Bradley Pavilions, Bradley Stoke North, Bristol BS12 0BQ, UK.

**Our Price
Question:
Who does the
commentary for
Actua Soccer?**

Rules and restrictions: All entries must be received by Tuesday 30 September 1997. No correspondence will be entered into. The editor's decision is final and the winners will be notified by post. All other usual restrictions apply.



1

DUKE NUKEM
(GT Interactive)
£9.99



2

**DUKE NUKEM
APOCALYPSE**
(Eidos Interactive)
£16.99



3

ACTUA SOCCER
(Gremlin Interactive)
£7.99



4

CARMAGEDDON
(SCI)
£24.99



5

**CHAMPIONSHIP
MANAGER 2**
(Eidos Interactive)
£9.99



6

**DUNGEON
KEEPER**
(Electronic Arts)
£29.99



7

**DARK FORCES
(WHITE LABEL)**
(LucasArts/VIE)
£9.99



8

**EXTREME
ASSAULT**
(Blue Byte)
£24.99



9

**FIFA SOCCER
MANAGER**
(EA Sports)
£29.99



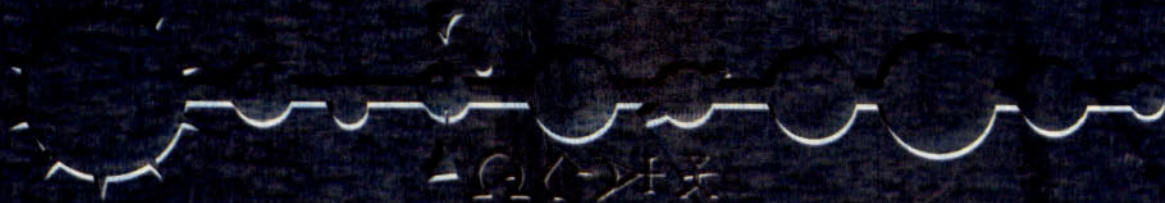
10

**ATOMIC
BOMBERMAN**
(Interplay)
£17.99



DISCLAIMER: The Top 10 printed is correct at the time of going to press but positions, titles and prices may vary throughout the month.

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COMING THIS AUTUMN

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PSYGNOSIS

THE 3RD DIMENSION

STEVE HILL USED TO LIVE IN LIVERPOOL AND STEAL FOOD. PSYGNOSIS STILL LIVE IN LIVERPOOL AND GLADLY BUY FOOD FOR VISITING JOURNALISTS. FUNNY HOW THINGS TURN OUT. OH, AND THEY'RE ALSO RELEASING A HOST OF GAMES THAT WILL ONLY WORK WITH A 3D ACCELERATOR CARD. READ ON TO FIND OUT WHY THEY'RE TAKING SUCH A BOLD STEP FORWARD...

M

AINLY RENOWNED FOR THEIR PLAYSTATION titles (they are owned by Sony, after all), Psygnosis are gradually starting to pay more attention to the burgeoning PC market. Following the '3D accelerator-only' conversions of Formula 1 and WipeOut 2097, most of their forthcoming games will also be restricted to those in possession of a magic card, and you'll find details of some of these titles liberally scattered around the following pages. Some might say this is a bold move, although you certainly won't find anyone at Psygnosis agreeing with such an opinion.

Technical director Dominic Mallinson explains the shift towards the PC: "It's a combination of things. I think the most important one was the 3D cards. We looked at the PC originally and were a bit disappointed about what we could do. If you look at the way console and PC have evolved over time, the console's been ahead pretty much all the way through the '80s and well into the '90s. It's

people – enthusiast gamers – that will have this hardware capability for this Christmas."

So what are the benefits of the accelerator revolution?

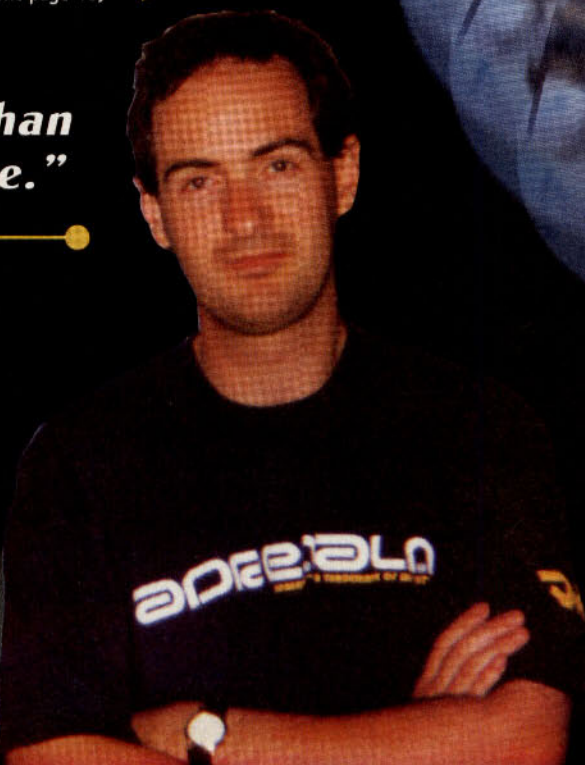
"We've built up a heritage of producing really great 3D games on PlayStation, and historically we couldn't replicate that on PC because we didn't have the available power. Now we have, so we can bring the same level of 3D gaming to the PC and actually extend it and make it better. But it also gives us a lot more free time on the PC to do other things. Whereas when we did try and do PC games we spent all the time

(cont page 40) ►

"It's easier for us to develop for 3D cards than it is to do it in software."

only recently that we've seen the PC becoming a games machine as well. Traditionally it dealt with spreadsheets, word processors, maybe the occasional bit of educational software, but this year it's transitioned (sic) into being a real games machine – and that's the main reason we decided to attack it."

Limiting potential customers to those in possession of an accelerator card could be considered a gamble, but not by Dominic: "There's no gamble involved from our point of view. Obviously we are concerned about those people that aren't able to run our software because we've gone 'accelerator-only'. And that does worry us, we're not totally blasé about it. But there are going to be plenty of



Dominic Mallinson, technical director of Psygnosis. No relation to our man Mallo.



G-POLICE

Rather than floundering hopelessly for a succinct media-friendly soundbite, let's just get the producer, Ross Thody (below), to explain what *G-Police* is all about.

"Spanning 35 missions, *G-Police* is a fast, exciting flight simulator based in a highly populated true three-dimensional cityscape, and it's heavily biased towards shoot 'em up air/ground combat.

"*G-Police* provides the player with a unique opportunity to become a G-Cop and patrol the streets of a virtual city in a heavily-armed Havoc close air support gunship."

So who are the G-Police exactly?

"The year is 2097. Elected government has been deposed by the big corporations. These corporations reluctantly agree to fund an independent force to police their territories: the G-Police are just such a force."

This Havoc thing, tooled up is it?

"Oh yes, indeed. The Havoc has a vast array of weaponry available to it, ranging from the Vulcan cannon to a devastating plasma launcher, and then there's the 1000kg bomb for getting rid of a whole bunch of things that move and those things that don't, like buildings. As you progress through the game, more weapons become available. All the civilian traffic is vulnerable to your weaponry, so when firing unguided

rockets at ground targets, for instance, be careful you don't trash that school bus! But don't worry, you won't be reprimanded too harshly. The G-Police are well aware of how tough it is out there!

"Don't get too cocky, though – your enemies are furnished with military hardware that's far more powerful than your Havoc."

Where is *G-Police* based?

"The game is based on Callisto, one of Jupiter's moons. Technology has advanced to the point where humans are able to colonise our solar system. Vast domed cities now litter the nearest planets and moons, protecting their occupants from the harsh conditions outside."

There's a bit of an in-depth plot, isn't there?

"The storyline of *G-Police* was originally written by a professional script writer, but was adapted to suit the game structure. This meant that the script and missions were developed to complement one another – you won't find out how it ends until you reach the outro."

G-Police has a very distinctive style. Where did this come from?

"The style of the environment was influenced by films like *Blade Runner*, *Outland* and *Aliens*, incorporating dark visions of the future. The team studied these closely to get a feel for what the game required."

It looks like *Blue Thunder* to me, but budding Roy Schneiders can find out for themselves this Christmas.



(Above, top to bottom) That's your Havoc craft, that is. *Blue Thunder*, anyone?

- *G-Police* features extremely impressive FMV. This is some of it.
- The accelerated graphics are pretty cool, although a non-accelerated version will be available, running under DirectX.

(Bloke inset above) *G-Police* producer, Ross Thody.

FORMULA 1 97

F1 is back, and it's had intensive surgery. As well as being brought up to date statistically, faults that became apparent in the first game have been corrected, and it has also been given a full 3D accelerator makeover.

One of the major gripes about the original *F1* was that the other cars weren't subjected to pit stops. Associate producer Pete Smith concedes: "Yeah, there was a bit of a problem with the pit stops. Obviously, everything like that's been fixed as well as enhanced. We've now also got failures, so your car could stall on the start, and another car might stall as well. Your engine could blow up halfway round, just like real life. Or something could happen to your engine that will slow you down, so there's a possibility that you then might have to limp round to the pits."

"We've also got pit lane commentary, so the actual guys in the pit lane will tell you that, for example, 'Your tyres are running low' or 'That was a bad crash, do you want to come in for pits?'. This adds a little bit more strategy to the game as well, because although they may say 'Come in for pits now,' you'll think 'Do I want to? I might go in later.'"

The AI in the original *F1* was hardly Mensa material, but all should be well for this one. Producer John Rostron explains: "All the telemetry is based on stuff given to us by Jordan, so all the other cars should race around in sort of realistic times, and they can all adapt their own race strategies. When we went down to Jordan, they gave us speeds into corners, speeds out of corners, stuff that Ralph Schumacher was actually doing. In the game you can even have a printout of that, and save the files."

"There's a training mode as well that will work out where you're losing speed and so on. There's also a training mode where they've got a racing line, and it'll put a red patch on the racing line to show where your ideal braking position is. And obviously, if you're somebody like Michael Schumacher, you'll brake after that particular patch."



(Left, top to bottom) That'll be Verstappen then, in Australia by the looks of it.

• The same camera views have been maintained. This one's fairly manageable.

• Jesus Christ on a bike! High speed mither.

• Hey look, it's just like on the telly.

(Bottom) *F1 97* producers Pete Smith (left) and John Rostron.

TALK ABOUT THE WEATHER

Pete: "We've got two kinds of modes with the weather, random and variable. They sound exactly the same, but with random mode it can either be raining or it can be sunny throughout the championship. So one race might be raining, one might be sunny. But if you've got variable, it can actually start raining in the race, just like in real life."

John: "It can start raining and drying off, and obviously that'll affect your handling of the car; it should also affect your strategy so your pit crew at that stage should tell you to come in. The other cars can also decide what they're going to do, whether they're going to opt for a two- or three-stop race."

POINTS OF VIEW?

John: "The same camera views, but for Grand Prix mode you've also got a cockpit view where the guy's arms are modelled on the wheel so you can see him fight into corners and so on. The displays are also totally different in both modes. In Grand Prix mode all the textures and everything are completely different – they're a bit more toned down and more realistic. In arcade mode everything's really bright, you can powerslide into corners and do stuff you couldn't really get away with in normal Formula One."

What's the betting these guys are in favour of 3D cards?

John: "Fantastic idea because it allows awesome games on PCs..."

Pete: "...without spending horrendous amounts on upgrading chips. Just slot in an accelerator card, especially the ones that are separate."

But what if you haven't got one?

John: "Someone's got to lead the market."

Pete: "It's the way forward."

We want to be cutting edge."

Shock.

READ... THIS... NOW!

The new commentary is more varied and action-sensitive, with stalwart Murray Walker joined by Martin Brundle. One of them is a bit more excitable than the other. See if you can guess which one we mean from this snippet.

Murray Walker: "Alesi. A bit of a knock there I think, Martin."

Martin Brundle: "You're right there, Murray."

MW: (In response to driving the wrong way round the track): "That's a Benetton. What is he doing?! In all my years of commentating on Formula One I've never seen anything like it! He's hit Ralph Schumacher!"

Pit Crew: "Are you OK?"

MW: "It's Alesi! He's ended up off the track and on the grass! Look at this! LOOK AT THIS! Somehow the two cars have ended up hitting each other nose to nose. He's hit Larini! I fancy some argy bargy there, Martin."

MB: "You're right there, Murray."



COMING SOON...

Psygnosis have a host of games due next year, all supporting this funky 3D business. Gangster adventure *Respect Inc* is set in 1930s Chicago where crime, bribery and corruption are commonplace. *Sentinel Returns* is a remake of Geoff Crammond's '80s classic *The Sentinel*, and should provide a nostalgia trip for those old enough to remember the first one, as well as showing youngsters what games used to be about. If World War II-flight sims are your bag, *Wings Of Destiny* allows you to fight for either side. *Psybadek* is an arcade adventure with a distinctive Manga/anime style, featuring a guy called Xako and a girl named Mia. *Profiiteer* promises to be a lightning fast arcade shoot 'em up with a tactical slant, housing over 30 missions and an array of unique alien races. *Elric* draws on the creations of top goblin writer Michael Moorcock, and is a pure beat 'em based on combat and use of magic. And finally, there's the 3D platformer *Rascal*. It looks like being a busy year.



The Psygnosis game palace in, um, luvverly Liverpool.

drawing polygons – 80 to 90 per cent of the time was just physically rendering a screen of polygons – now that time has been significantly reduced so we've got more time to worry about gameplay mechanics and more design features."

So there's no danger of concentrating on the 3D effects and forgetting about the game then?
"No. We're definitely not going to let that happen. In fact, it's easier for us to develop for 3D cards than it is to do it in software. There's more time available on the PC for the rest of the game to run, so therefore it will actually encourage us to do better things with the game."
Which is good news for hardcore gamers everywhere. Start saving for that new card now. You heard. 2



SHADOW MASTER

Set in a dark fantasy scenario, *Shadow Master* is a 3D first-person affair based in an all-terrain battlecraft. Producer Chris Rowley explains:

"The *Shadow Master* invades worlds and strips them of their natural resources. You start off by defending your own home planet and solar system from him. Once you've succeeded in that, you move on world by world to remove his minions from each one. Near the end of the game you'll go out of your own solar system and take on the *Shadow Master* on his home planet."

The game is heavily themed around the artwork of Rodney Matthews, the man

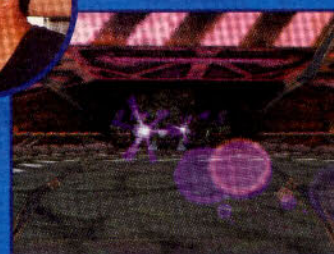
responsible for prog-rock album covers, Michael Moorcock book jackets and an array of calendars and posters (see your local Athena for details).

Why? Chris Rowley explains: "The team are fans of his graphical style.

All the creatures are very visually unique, and the same is true of the textures. A lot of the world concepts are his in appearance – they're very distinctive and very colourful. The creatures you're fighting against are clearly very unpleasant pieces of work. They're all very sinister."

They certainly are, and thanks to 3D acceleration, they manage to maintain their grisly shape even up close. Unsurprisingly, Chris is in favour of obligatory 3D cards: "I think it's the right way forward on the PC. In the past, the PC wasn't let down by the processing power, but by what we could do with it graphically. With 3D cards we can now match any console. Take *Shadow Master* – the PC version's better graphically. If you're buying a decent PC for about a thousand pounds, for an extra hundred you can have an absolutely rock-hard piece of graphics on top. And I think people are willing to pay that to play the games."

Well, are you? Are you?!



(Top) The graphical style will be familiar to anyone who's ever bought an album by Asia, Barclay James Harvest or Yes.

(Above) Note the graphically impressive (and utterly pointless) lens flare. (Inset above) Chris Rowley, producer of *Shadow Master* and *Rascal*.

OVERBOARD!

Producer of *Overboard!*, Alan Bunker, ex-journo turned games producer, is renowned for upsetting people with his frank northern manner.



(Above) *Overboard!* in deathmatch mode. Crikey. (Right) Alan 'Chunky' Bunker, producer of *Overboard!*



So Alan, what is *Overboard!* all about?

"Well, it's an arcade/action puzzle game on the high seas where piracy is encouraged, smuggling is mandatory and reducing townspeople to quivering wrecks as you conquer their land is downright fun."

Yeah, yeah, yeah... What do I actually do?

"You take control of a galleon and the idea is that you have to negotiate your way past enemy ships and land-based turrets, a variety of strange sea creatures and a number of natural yet deadly elements in an effort to find an X marking the spot – yes, it's as simple as that!"

It really is that simple? What about weapons?

"The weapons include front-firing cannons, broadsides, flame throwers, flammable oil slicks, mines, depth charges, lightning and rockets. All of them are scaleable to a maximum level of five – the flame thrower with level five power is nothing short of awesome."

"You can turn your galleon into an

airship, or a steamboat for that injection of added speed, and even an armour-plated beast of a ship which spits in the face of its enemies."

Bosses? Are there bosses, Alan?

"*Overboard!* stars five spectacular guardians spread over the five in-game regions. Caribbean features the giant lobster, the Inca region has a monstrous Inca statue, a dinosaur in the Arctic, a floating fortress in the Industrial region and finally, a Genie at the end of the Middle East."

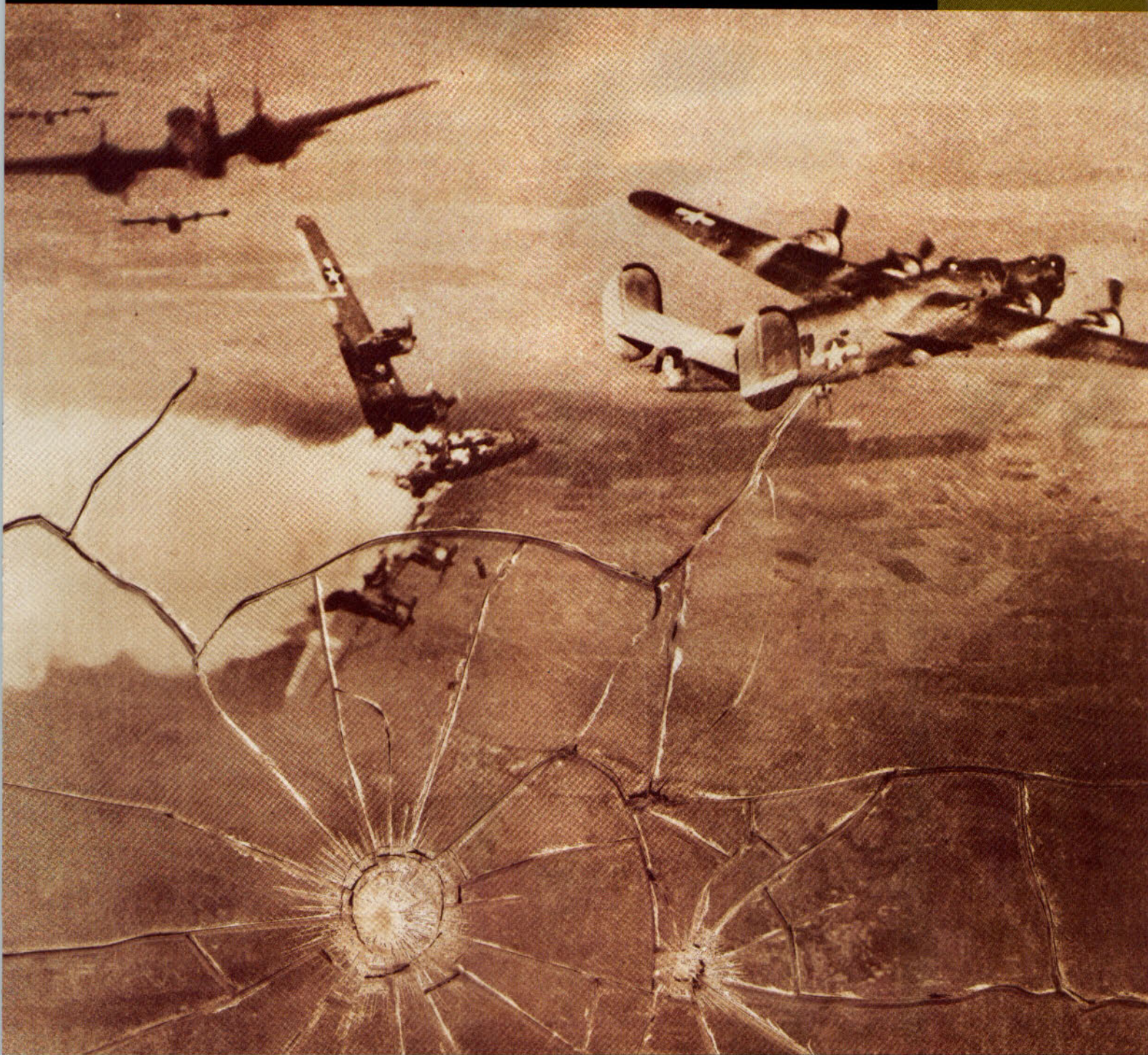
Any other creatures, Alan?

"We have sea monsters, buzzsaw Octopi, kamikaze fish, ghost ships, sharks and lots more. The Bomb Fish are the best – they target your ship and chase you, getting bigger and fatter all the while."

Then after a... "

Alan, please stop talking. Thank you.





FEEL THE SHATTERING EFFECTS OF WAR

In WWII air combat, anything could happen. In *Fighter Squadron* it actually does. Revolutionary flight advancements and "live environments" with individual object AI make everything you do — and don't do — affect your flight experience. So shattered windscreens have a real effect on your aircraft... and on your pride. *Fighter Squadron: The Screamin' Demons Over Europe* — the latest elevation in flight realism from Eric "Hellcats" Parker.

CONFRONT YOUR DEMONS THIS AUTUMN.

**FIGHTER
SQUADRON**
THE SCREAMIN' DEMONS OVER EUROPE



Live environments feature concussion effects, terrain deformation, and integrated road and rail systems which offer unparalleled interactions like tunnel fly-throughs.



Nine WWII aircraft duplicate plane physics for true-to-life dogfighting manoeuvres such as snap rolls, tail slides, Immelmans, barrel rolls and spin outs.



Customisable planes, an objective-based mission editor, multiplayer combat and native 3-D card support with up to 30 frames per second.

ACTUAL IN-GAME SCREENSHOTS

Oi!

...Carmack

He programmed *Wolfenstein*. He programmed *Doom*. He programmed *Quake*. And now he's really, really rich. But it hasn't stopped him from caring about games. **David McCandless** corners John Carmack of id Software...

P

RETTY SPARTAN, IS THE OFFICIAL LINE on John Carmack's office. A mere six workstations sit humming on a row of desks. A couple of biros and a bit of paper can be seen. Oh, and a bunch of real life, real sharp medieval swords are piled in the corner. Carmack is articulate and boyish looking. He could easily be 14, but he drives a rather expensive Ferrari and is regarded as one of the greatest programmers in the world. He's not exactly a party person, though he's rather 'good' at writing real-time, perspective-correcting, dynamically-lit 3D game engines. But you knew that.

PC Zone: Did you always anticipate *Doom* and *Quake* to take off in quite the way they did?

John Carmack: It's worked out how we expected it to, really. There have been conscious decisions at every stage that we have to make. We made some conscious decisions in *Doom* to make it more amenable to the modifications. Then in *Quake*, we went a further step and created a really excellent extension mechanism. So yeah, I would have to say we made all the right decisions, but we're still surprised at how extensive it has been.

PCZ: Does it please you?

JC: Yeah, it's gratifying to see.

PCZ: And does it please you that you're employing people now from the community who you've indirectly trained?

JC: We've known for a long time that people from the community would get jobs because of what they did. Now you can do such cool stuff with *Quake*, and show that you can work with an established code base, do something interesting, innovative and worthwhile. Any kind of product is worth so much more than where you went to university



(Left) *Wolfenstein* or 'Attack Of The Aryan Nazis' as we could dub it. id Software are based in Texas. No connection. (Top Right) *Doom* - "biggest selling action game of all time". Apparently.



or any past job performances. It's a good, solid level playing field for people who want to get into the industry.

PCZ: So what is id's next step?

JC: We're going to continue to push the technologies. The thing which makes the industry so interesting is that we ride the technology currents. We're getting twice as much processing power every 18 months. I have vague ideas of what the next two generations are going to look like.

PCZ: So what are they going to look like?

JC: Okay, we're now moving into curves and fractals and atmospheric effects that we couldn't attempt before because the geometrical calculations were too high. We're also going to be riding the 3D acceleration wave, which is great for us. *Wolfenstein* to *Doom* to *Quake* have all been riding the CPU wave, so on this next wave we also have these graphics accelerators. We'll be able to get twice the polygon rate, twice the geometrical complexity of the worlds we create. That's going to be nice.

PCZ: Is this going to mean more detailed, better graphics for games?

JC: A fairly bad *Doom* scene or a moderate *Quake* 2 scene can have 5,000 triangles visible. I expect the next game generation aimed at hardware to be averaging 10,000 and peaking around 20,000 triangles visible in a scene. So when

What's Your Game?



you're looking at a guy, instead of seeing planes on the sides of his head, it'll be smoothly contoured using bump-mapping. And when you get right up to walls with pictures of pipes, the pipes will actually bend out of the wall. They'll have shape to them rather than just being a veneer over a flat geometry.

PCZ: What about lighting?

JC: I've got three or four major directions I'm still investigating. It's probably going to be like Quake where we'll try everything and figure out which one works best. Dynamic shadows from static lights will be cool. For instance, you could have a monster's shadow creep up against a wall, projected from a low-lying lantern. I've got that stuff pretty much figured out. The big problem is dynamic shadows from dynamic lights, and you can just go ahead and do that - intersect every light with every polygon, project onto every polygon behind it - but that's not going to be feasible to maintain an interactive frame rate.

PCZ: Anything else?

JC: Atmospheric effects are going to be a big thing. When you think 'fog' in computer graphics right now, you think of the haze where everything fades into white. People use it as a crutch instead of proper scene management, so they render to a certain point and then stop you seeing large areas. The future will yield volumetric effects. Instead of a consistent atmospheric absorption, you'll be able to have low-lying mist. You'll toss a grenade down onto the floor and you'll see the clouds rush away from it. All effects like this are possible.

PCZ: Everyone in the universe seems to be doing a Quake-style game or a Quake-style engine. Do you not feel threatened by Prey, or Jedi Knight, or even Microsoft's new engine?

JC: If you step back in time to a year ago, Quake had been out for around a month ▶



◀ and everyone was talking about how these *Quake* killers were right around the corner. A year ago. And still none of them – not a single one – has shipped.

PCZ: But *Jedi Knight*'s coming out very soon, isn't it? Surely that comes close to *Quake*?

JC: Yes, with *Jedi Knight* the content's good, but it's not a technologically superior engine and they know it. They're doing the same thing that I am – but they're still half a step behind.

PCZ: But surely there are other 'Carmacks' out there somewhere?

JC: There are very few people who have the right resources and focus to do this. It's getting tougher all the time. People look at *Quake* and say "Wow 3D graphics", but not even a third of the code is in there, let alone a third of the effort. There's a gulf between the demo you show to people and an architecture you use for production work that's going to ship a commercial game. Integrating the sound, doing the network communications, handling the control and the game extension language – this all has to be done. You can't just say: "I've got a little demo and I can fly around a 3D world and it looks like *Quake*, and can I be a millionaire now?"

PCZ: So you're not bothered about your rivals?

JC: I'm not really worrying about being scooped to the next generation, no.

PCZ: Just what was going on during *Quake*'s much rumoured problems?

JC: We were actually getting concerned about development cycles. *Wolfenstein* took six months, *Doom* took a year. *Quake* took 18 months to develop. That was really too long and a lot of people were fraying really badly. *Quake* was messed up due to internal issues rather than conscious decisions.

PCZ: So what does this mean for id Software games? Are we going to see any different game styles from you guys?

JC: The idea of a making a simple game versus a complex game is definitely going to stay.

PCZ: Oh, okay, so I've got this great idea for Porn *Quake*. You know, 'spoooge cannons' and loads of tunnels. I want to license the *Quake* engine – how do I do it?

JC: Well, we've almost got a clean, simple sign-it-here licence. You can negotiate for more upfront and less royalties. The ranges have been from several hundred thousand to a million dollars, balanced against the royalties.

PCZ: Eek. Might have to get a loan then.

JC: It works out well for us because we're still getting a substantial amount of return on it

PCZ: I bet. But doesn't it get kinda... competitive?

JC: There's some sniping about who's doing what and all that, and when people start treading on each other's release dates, then it gets a bit ugly. But you can look at it and remind yourself that if Ion Storm have a spectacular success we'll probably make more money than anyone there makes out of it – because we've got a big chunk of the royalty.

PCZ: Are you going to bung the *Quake* engine out into the community one day like you did with *Wolfenstein*?

JC: Yeah, definitely. There's a book coming out this year that's basically 'Inside *Doom*', with all the source code. I look forward to the time when we can do that with *Quake*. For one thing, *Quake* has the cleanest, most elegant internal structure

of any of the projects – that's easier for people to read and digest and learn things from.

PCZ: Will *Quake 2* be Quakeworld compatible?

JC: It's not compatible. *QW* was my research project that lots of people got to play with. A lot of that technology will be rolled into *Quake 2*. We're going to make it as good an on-line game as possible. So yes, the network game will have some significant enhancements.

PCZ: Do you think there'll be a stage where a future engine will become the standard, an operating system if you like, for games?

JC: We're a lot closer to that right now. After *Doom* was released, there were 50 teams doing *Doom*-style engines. Most of them failed miserably and I think many companies took this as a learning experience. And in the end there were only a couple worth a damn. There was the BUILD engine which 3D Realms used and there was *Dark Forces*. *Quake* is a hell of a lot more complicated to duplicate than *Doom* was. But when you balance it against say, half a million dollars, for most companies it makes good business sense to license the engine with proven technology instead of taking a blind shot. We stopped after about six licences but we're going to open it up after *Quake 2* ships. We're going to wash our hands of it. We're on to other things. Let everyone else fight it out over content.

PCZ: Is this going to improve the quality of games?

JC: If you have eight companies doing roughly similar games with the same technology, then they'll have to compete on content. It's almost like a console for PC games. The console has the same hardware capabilities and everyone has to differentiate without radical technical innovation. It's like there's now a gaming platform with the *Quake* engine and people differentiate on content.

PCZ: Which can only be good for the gamers, right?

JC: Absolutely. We're in a good position to capitalise on it

"I don't believe in vacations. Last year I took five days. I had a laptop but I still went nuts."

because we're taking a sizeable chunk out of everyone's pie. For the gamer, it's clearly going to be a good thing. There will be more games to choose from, but the entire breed should be improved by the competition.

PCZ: What are you going to do next?

JC: We might do a *Quake 2* mission pack. It depends on how much time I spend on research stuff. I've actually spent more time improving *Quake 2* than I intended too. I'm really looking forward to taking my clean sheet of paper and starting over again.

PCZ: Are you going to go on holiday?

JC: I don't believe in vacations. Last year I took five days and went to England. My God, I was nuts by the time I got back. Actually, I had a laptop with me but it wasn't the same. 7



(Left) *Quake II* – fab and imminent. (Bottom) The game's logo (fangs, geddit?) and the youthful Johnny Carmack.



(Left) *Quake II* yet again, showing off the big, scary weapons and the monstrous nasties endemic to the genre.

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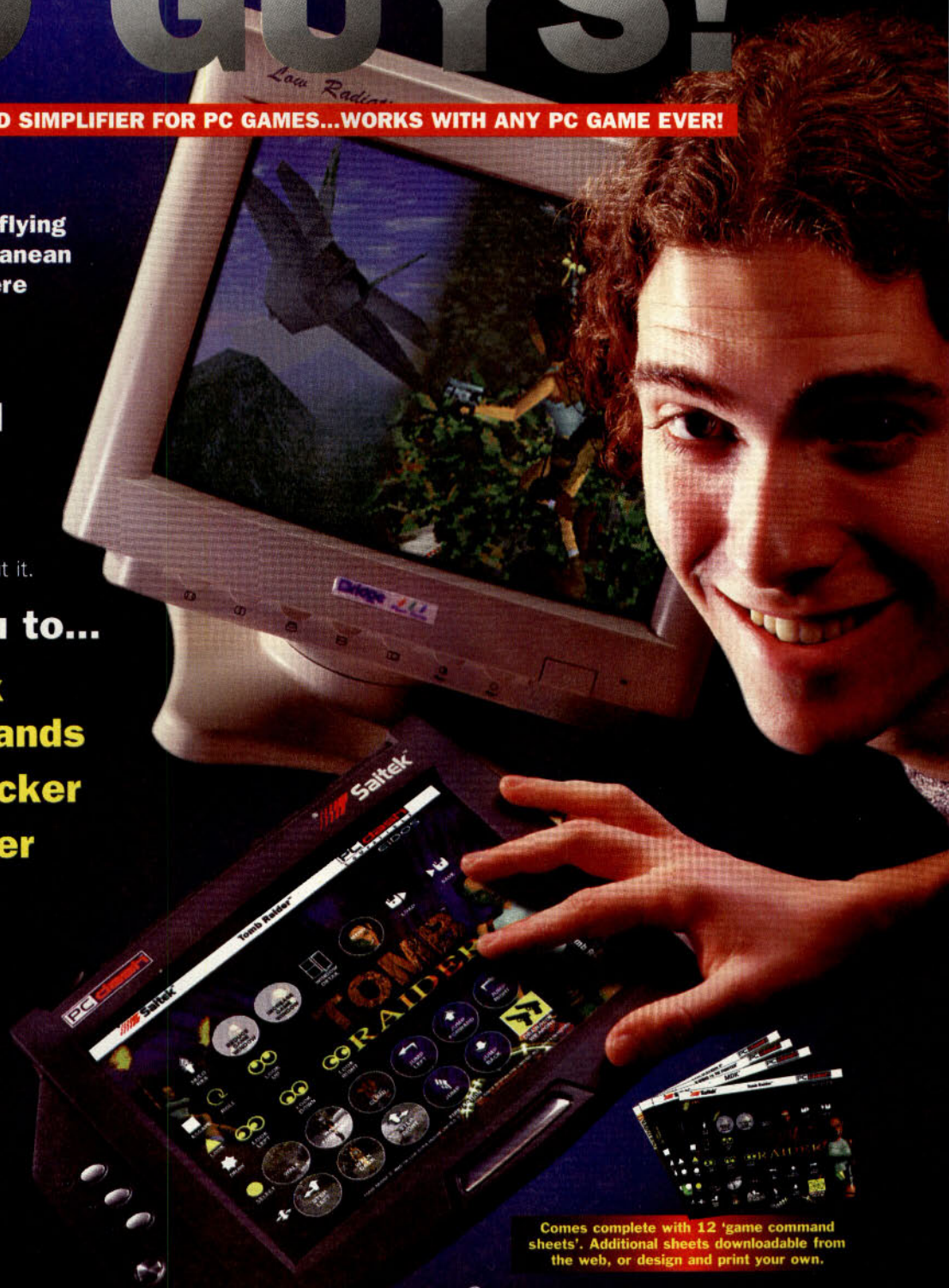
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TOMB RAIDER II

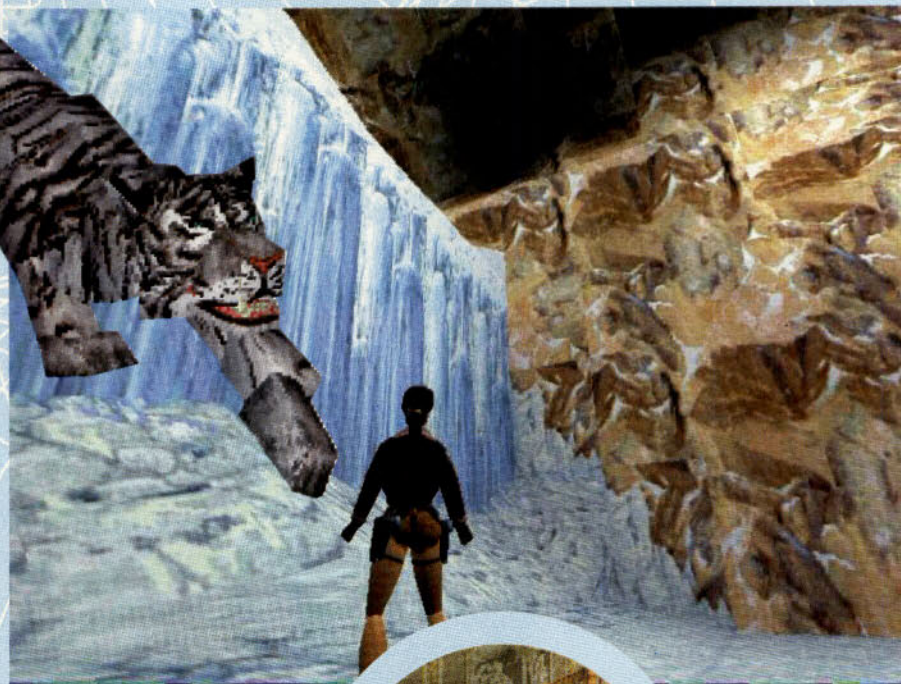
Tomb Raider II is entering the final stages of development up at Core Design's Derby HQ. We sent **Charlie Brooker** up there to harass the team, get taken out to lunch, and fill up a micro-cassette tape or two. And what do you know? He did.

7

JUST OUTSIDE DERBY STATION THERE'S A Rail Research Centre. God alone knows what goes on in there, but here are our best two guesses: one, they're investigating a new kind of train which requires no rails whatsoever, comprises of a single carriage set upon four rubber-encrusted wheels, and goes by the working name of 'car'; or, two, they just hang around inside banging pieces of steel with spanners in an pathetic attempt to sound busy. Whichever way you look at it, it's unlikely that the team inside is going to produce a significant advancement on the common or garden train. After all, if it ain't broke, don't fix it.

In Derby itself you'll find the headquarters of Core Design.

Like the Rail Research crew, they're also working on a new version, something which, on the face of it, would be nigh-on impossible



to improve. They're working on *Tomb Raider II*. But there's no spanner-banging time-wasting going on here.

Well, that's the tortuously contrived trains-and-games opening paragraph out of the way. Now, is Lara Croft going to get them out this time round or what?

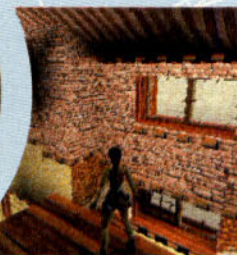
Boom bang a bang

One of the most irritating things about visiting a development team is the amount of noise that finds its way onto the dictaphone tape. Unfortunately, the interviewees tend to demonstrate the games more or less continuously while they're talking – usually with the speakers on their PC turned up to a respectable volume. To the human ear, these accompanying sound effects aren't particularly intrusive. The ultra-sensitive microphonic ear of the dictaphone, however, perceives them as just a deafening, cacophonous maelstrom, capable of drowning out all but the loudest of human screams. Upon our return to the PC Zone bunker, the tape is played back to much anticipation, only to reveal plenty of exchanges, such as the following:

PC Zone: So, is the game going to be much bigger this time around?

Gavin Rummery, lead programmer: Well, there are now 15 levels this time around, which is only one or two more, but they BANG BANG BANG BANG BANG BANG. BLAM. SMASH. CRUNCH. BANG BANG BANG BANG BANG (repeat for at least another ten minutes).

It's all your humble correspondent's fault, of course, and I accept full responsibility. Still, there was plenty



(Above) *Tomb Raider II* has far more external locations than its predecessor. You'll be able to see clouds and sky and everything.

The goddess Lara: her creators speak out

PC Zone: Were you surprised by the drooling reaction to Lara Croft?

Gavin Rummery: Totally surprised.

Neil Boyd: Not for one moment did we consider that people would react as they did.

PCZ: How did you feel when you saw her on the cover of *The Face*?

NB: That was quite overwhelming really. They concentrated more on her than the game itself.

GR: I thought they managed to produce a pretty boring article personally.

PCZ: So are you sick of the sight of her? Would you like to put people off, by giving her

great big hairy armpits or something?

GR: Not really. And besides, when we do get sick of her we can kill her off in lots of different ways. There are loads of traps for her to 'run into'.

PCZ: She always struck me as an ideal *Blue Peter* presenter; you know, an upper-class, pretty, all-action girl...

NB: Yeah, but I thought you had to have a speech impediment to get anywhere in presenting now. Or come from the north.

GR: That's the same thing isn't it? Oh, um, please don't quote me on that.

Product details

Developer: Core Design

Publisher: Eidos Interactive

Website: www.core-design.co.uk

Release date: November



(Above) The *Tomb Raider II* team. Pretty maids, all in a row. Except for the boys, that is.

of information left to be gleaned from the aforementioned tapes – and, naturally, the ol' memory sacs...

PCZ: What's different about this sequel, then?

GR: Well, we've upped the danger quotient a bit, because people reckoned they wanted more enemies. And Lara's got some wacky new moves. And a new ponytail. It swings around as she moves.

PCZ: You could use that elsewhere to make a realistic Linford Christie character...

GR: Erm, yeah. There's also a level on a sunken ship, which is mostly submerged. And there are new weapons. Like the BANG BANG BANG BANG BANG and this BRAPPARAPPARA PPARAPPARAPPA which isn't much use up close but BRAP PARAPPARAPPA good for taking out baddies from a distance and this PING PING PING PING harpoon gun, which hasn't

got the right sound effect in place yet. And there's Venice... um... new lighting effects... flares... and um... BANG BANG BANG BANG. Neil Boyd, graphic artist: And she can wade through water now. Before you were either in the water, or out of it. There wasn't any middle ground. Now you can walk through waist-high, although it does slow you down a lot.

PCZ: Can we look forward to any different kinds of puzzles then?

GR: There are a few new things to deal with, yeah. There are new switches, but fundamentally, it's pretty similar really.

PCZ: New switches? Is that it? Bor-ring...

I couldn't possibly comment

At this point, casual readers could be forgiven for falling sound asleep and dribbling with dreams of Lara. After all, so far it just sounds like a slightly better version of the (admittedly brilliant) first game, doesn't it? Well, yes, but...

PCZ: What with the success of the first *Tomb Raider*, you must be under a lot of pressure with this sequel.

"We've been trying to put in as much new stuff as we can, half of which I'm not willing to show you."

The face that blurred a thousand fists

Ladies and gennelmen, please will you lend a big hand for Lara Croft. The only videogame character – apart from *StreetFighter 2*'s Chun Li – to have led grown men (albeit very sad grown men) to sneak off into the bathroom for a clandestine Yop-squirting session. Despite the production team's claim that Lara was never really intended to become a pin-up, and their ascertainment that the infamous Internet-spawned nude fakes of her are "really sad", there's no getting away from the fact that Core's own promo material consists of naught but overtly sexual images of the virtual Ms Croft, variously clad in wetsuits, tight shorts, or posh frocks, continually toting a gun of some description.

Which is fine, really. But let's face it – the audience wants something a little more daring. We all know what she looks like with her clothes on, but that isn't good

enough in these days of 'ironic' titillation. Every tuppenny female celeb in the nation – from *Big Breakfast* presenters to overrated ex-*Brookside* pseudo-lesbians – has been pictured virtually naked in the pages of *Sky* or *Loaded* magazine at one point or another, in a largely successful attempt to distract attention from the fact that none of them have any interesting notions in their stupid heads. So why not our Lara? Isn't she vapid enough? Perhaps she's just too big for that kind of caper? Or perhaps not.

Here's the big moment. Self-abuse fans, you need fret no more. It's a world exclusive. Unbuckle thy belt and clench thy fist... it's Lara Croft, stripped completely bare!

Okay, so she's just a wireframe underneath. But c'mon, what did you expect? A pink shot?





GR: Well yeah. Obviously, we're under a lot of pressure. We've been trying our hardest to put in as much new stuff as we can, half of which I'm not willing to show you.

PCZ: Oh yeah?

GR: Yeah. Basically, we're putting in all the things we wanted to include the first time round, such as the hair. And we've tweaked the camera quite a lot. The controls are a lot more immediate now as well.

NB: Whereas before you had to wait for an animation sequence to finish before Lara would jump, now she does it as soon as you press the button.

GR: We've also put a lot of work into the end sequence as well.

NB: Lots of people were disappointed with that on the first outing – we would have liked to have done more, but we simply ran out of time.

PCZ: So can you give us an idea what happens at the end of this one?

GR: We're not going to tell you.

PCZ: Well then. I want to know what else is new. What new weapons are there? Or are you just not going to show me?

GR: I'm not going to show you a single one of them. Because it's good.

PCZ: Oh, so it's like that, is it? Well, I'm not satisfied. I want to see some new stuff.

GR: She's got a brand new passport, on the options screen.

NB: There is other stuff too, but we can't tell you about those bits.

PCZ: Why on earth not?

GR: Well, because then you'd print it in your magazine, wouldn't you?

PCZ: Erm, yes... That is the idea.

Susie Hamilton (Core PR): There's loads of things in there that we're never going to tell anybody about.

PCZ: What, even after it's been released and everybody's played

it? You're going to deny the existence of the new bits?

All: Yeah.

Think they're hiding something? You're absolutely right. They are, the mean rotters.

A chink in the armour

Later that afternoon, we're in the company of Adrian Smith (Core Design's director of operations), who shows us around the building and introduces us to one Nathan McCree, who's created all the sonic effects in the game. After treating our ears to a snatch of the new *Tomb Raider* theme tune (which is similar to the original, yet noticeably different), he then goes on to demonstrate some of the game's new '3D' sound effects. To do so, he loads up a snow-filled level, and sets Lara running this way and that, selecting different weapons and firing them off to demonstrate the way the noises pan around. Impressive, sure, but...

"And have you seen this?" Suddenly, Nathan directs Lara

World wildlife gunned down

PCZ: Was there any comeback on the number of endangered species that Lara killed in the original *Tomb Raider*?

Gavin Rummery: We were surprised about that because we didn't hear anything really. We were expecting some flak, but there wasn't any.

PCZ: Any chance of a secret level where she gets to run riot through London Zoo?

Neil Boyd: There's still time...

GR: It was never meant to be just gratuitous blowing away of animals – although we've got plenty of new beasts in the sequel, and I imagine 95 per cent of those are endangered species.

PCZ: Is that how you chose

them? Did you look in an encyclopaedia and find out which ones are the most endangered, and then get her to kill them? Any chance of her stealing some rare birds eggs and then hurling them at a wall?

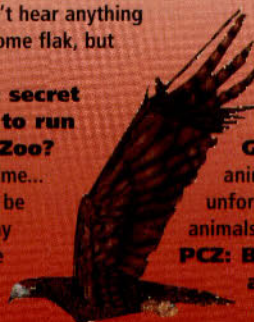
NB: No. We've got eagles though, they're pretty rare.

GR: We can't help it really. The

animals have to be ferocious and unfortunately most of the ferocious animals on the planet are also endangered.

PCZ: But what have you got against animals, don't any of you have pets?

NB: Yeah, but look at this (he shoots an on-screen beastie repeatedly in the face). He's just asking to be put out of his misery.



toward a previously unnoticed vehicle, which looks somewhat reminiscent of a jet-ski, except it's obviously designed to run across snow. Is it just a prop, or...

"No!" interjects Adrian, by this time almost yelling at me. "They can't see that yet!"

Sorry – too late. God it's tough being a journalist... 7

Doooh, that's new

When they weren't being as secretive as defence contractors, the team did loosen their lips enough to let spill on some of the other new features that will make *Tomb Raider II* a charming festival of digital loveliness...

- Lara, the animals and the human enemies are all far more detailed this time around, as are the levels themselves.

- *Tomb Raider II* is Windows 95 native, and will run in a resizable window.

- It will all be DirectX compatible, and should support a wider range of 3D accelerators.

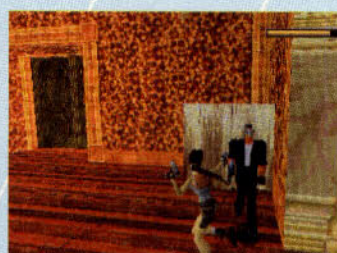
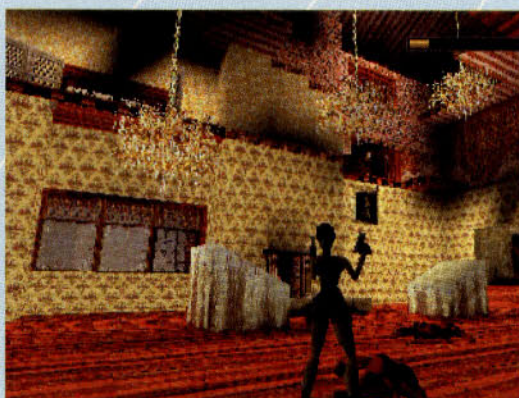
- Lara has a couple of new outfits.

- She's also got a new training ground: an assault course in the garden of her posh mansion.

- There are plenty of exterior levels.

- Brand new moves for Lara, including climbing and wading.

- A plot that makes sense.



(Above) *Tomb Raider II* promises to be just as gameplay-gasmic as the epoch-fracturing original. Unless they balls it all up, that is.

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LONGBOW 2



"So, it's a fantasy role-playing game about a magical arrow-firing weapon, yes?" asked Paul Presley. The man's a cretin, but since he's the only one here who can work the email software...

7

LOVE HELIMACHOPPERS (AS MY BELOVED grandmother used to call them before the genial Dr Rosen prescribed her the red pills). I think it was when Airwolf was on the telly that I first harboured a desire to learn how to control torque and collectives and hover over the ground. Or perhaps it was just simple a desire to have a name like 'Stringfellow Hawke'. Let's face it, he was never going to grow up and become a tax inspector or a chartered accountant with a moniker like that.

Anyway, the point I'm trying to make is that EA's rather impressive *Jane's Apache Longbow* is about to make an appearance for the second stage of its lifecycle and it's so realistic in terms of graphics and flight modelling that all my boyhood dreams can be fulfilled (especially the ones about dropping laser-guided rockets on my secondary school).

Get your rotors turnin'...

In order to find out just how good it's looking, we caught up with Andy Hollis, *Longbow 2's* project leader, and presented him with some tough, no-nonsense questions in our usual customary hard-as-nails style...

PCZ: So, Mr Hollis, sir. What's new this time round, if we might be so bold?

Andy Hollis: Well for starters, there's an all-new graphics engine, built from scratch to fully support 3D hardware acceleration while also advancing the image quality for the software-only audience. The terrain itself has four times the amount of detail in the elevation data, so the world has more irregularities in the roll of the hills, valleys etc. Also, the terrain has been built in a new way and offers far more variety from area to area. The objects themselves have at least four times the detail; some have over eight times more than before for really awesome-looking photo-realism. All in all, the visuals set a new standard for image quality.

This time round there are multiple helicopters, too. In addition to the Longbow, you also have missions to fly the Kiowa Warrior in a scout role or the Black Hawk for troop insertion/extraction. These are simulated with the same level of detail and fidelity as that of the Longbow itself, so players



(Above and left) Three years ago these would've been an intro sequence. Today, in-game graphics, and the heads are synchronised with the guns and move appropriately too. Some of the ground objects have yet to be finished.

can now enjoy a wider variety of mission types and game experiences as a result.

There's also what we call seamlessly integrated, multi-position, multi-player options. Basically, players can combine forces and battle each other in almost any combination. They can be in either seat of up to eight helicopters, and in the force-on-force campaign they can play on either side of the conflict. And you can also mix and match between helicopter types, with you in a Longbow and your friend in a Kiowa or Black Hawk, and so on. Connection is supported for two players via direct connect and modem, up to four via Internet TCP/IP, and eight players over a LAN.

PCZ: Why focus on the Apache again? Wouldn't you have



Product details

Developer: Origin

Publisher: Electronic Arts

Website: www.janes.ea.com

Release date: Late October

preferred to perhaps concentrate on a newer model?

AH: The Apache is the newest operational attack helicopter in the US arsenal and the latest variant is the Longbow, with production in progress and operational capability imminent. In order to maintain a high level of authenticity and realism, we choose to simulate only equipment which is in operation or at least very close to it so that we can get full knowledge of how it really works. These are aircraft which have a real combat heritage, with aircrews we can work with. Also, the non-classified operations manuals can furnish us with all the necessary information on how things really work – we do the extra work to get it right and we don't cut corners. If we'd chosen an aircraft that's still in prototype stage, such as the Comanche or something, this wouldn't have been possible as we would have been forced to make educated guesses on so many aspects. That would've resulted in a much more simplistic type of product.

PCZ: So just how accurate can you be with the flight models? Is there anything you have to sacrifice for the sake of gameplay?

AH: Well, our simulation is extremely accurate. Given the printed materials we have access to, the hands-on time with the real aircraft (several happen to be stationed just up the street), the face-to-face time with actual Longbow aircrews and, of course, all the information from *Jane's*, we know how the real thing works, and we've passed that on to the player. Having said that though, we also realise that not all players are the same and that each may want a different experience. To that end then, we offer a wide range of customisable options so that the game can be tailored from a simple fly-and-blast all the way up to a finely detailed high-fidelity simulation of modern attack helicopter combat. If at any time



(Above left) And so farewell, Apache. A sim of true promise and wonder. (Above) The Red Devils and US Air Force indulge in a spot of synchronised skylarks. Oh alright, perhaps not.

reality gets in the way of fun, we allow for both options.

PCZ: But when it comes to researching the realism, where on earth do you start? Did you get to mess around with the different helicopters in real life?

AH: Oh, we do a tremendous amount of research. We start with *Jane's*, which gives us access to the latest up-to-the-minute database of military combat information for the whole world. Printed material, images and manufacturer's contacts are all part of the package. Next, we work with the manufacturers of the aircraft who supply us with video,

“The goal is to provide a compelling and dramatic play experience outside of the missions themselves.”

pictures and operator's manuals; they can often provide access to aircrews and the aircraft as well. Finally, we work with the operational military (in this case the US Army) who allow us to access aircrews, aircraft, watch exercises, record sounds, discuss tactics and missions etc. Aircrews are also instrumental in providing feedback as the development progresses; they help us gauge how accurate the sim is and offer suggested improvements.

PCZ: And just how co-operative are the military?

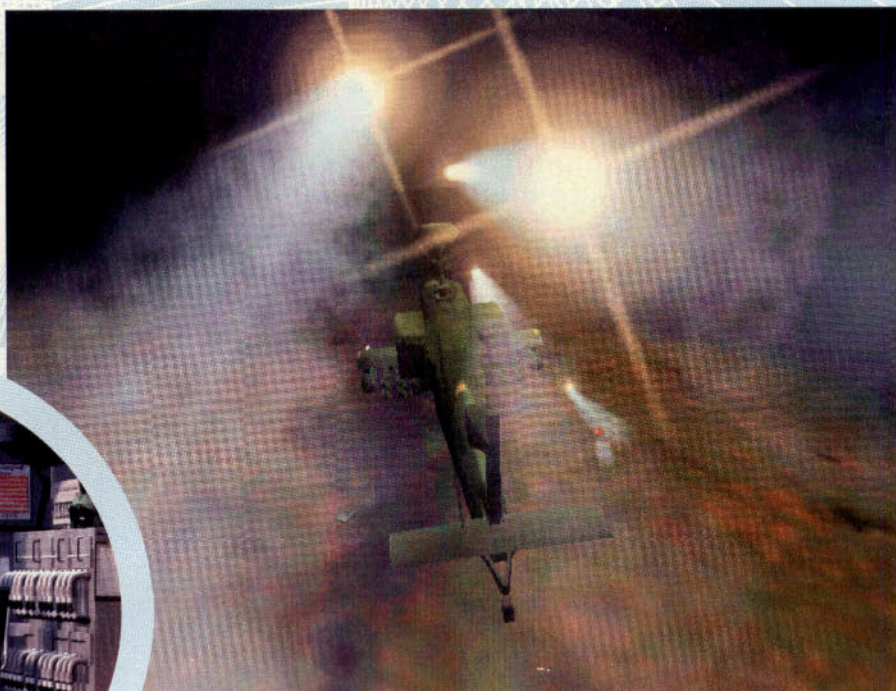
AH: Very... provided you know who to talk to and have made an effort to develop relationships. You must remember that any time spent co-operating with a developer is time away from the job at hand – defending our country. But because these guys are proud of both their organisations and their equipment, they find a way to make time for us. It's a win-win situation for everyone involved.

PCZ: Do you fly yourself?

AH: No, I'm not a helicopter pilot, although I have taken the controls of one for long enough to understand the basics of flight dynamics. One aspect in particular that's impossible to convey to the player of a computer sim is the sense of balance in your stomach that you get when trying to hover



(Above) You may notice an inordinate amount of night-flying missions so that Origin can show off their dynamic lighting routines. Lens flares ahoy! (Right) Now, what else can I say about the scenery...



the aircraft. Real pilots use a lot of seat-of-the-pants cues to help guide them in their flying, whereas computer players have to rely on limited visuals, audio and 'chasing the dials'. In some ways, the sim can actually be harder to fly than the real thing. **PCZ: Do you think that having a pilot's licence would improve your chances with women?**

AH: Uhhh... no comment.

PCZ: No matter, I had to ask. So can you explain a little about the 'dynamic campaign' engine?

AH: The goal of the system is to provide a compelling and dramatic play experience outside of the missions themselves, and to do so in a way that's different for each new campaign played. To accomplish this, we simulate the ebb and flow of the ground battle itself, which is what controls territory. Control over all the enemy's territory is ultimately the way to win. All the ground units are actually fighting and as time progresses, the success or failure of their attack or defence will determine control of areas. In this way, the front line actually moves around throughout the campaign.

PCZ: Is the 'unhinged' training bloke back? Who is he in real life, and is he really that unstable?

(Above left) Innit serene and peaceful? (Above) A miscalculation in ratio sizes meant that early Apaches were prone to being caught in the headlights of oncoming juggernauts. (Left) Oh sure, F-16 pilots get entire airfields, F-14 jocks get aircraft carriers. But Apache pilots, a bloody truck in the middle of a field.



(Top) I should've known that pre-mission vinaloo wasn't a good idea. (Above) Well, I don't think this 3Dfx thing looks much cop (it's a wireframe mock-up, you tit - Ed)

AH: Yup. It's the same guy. I can't tell you who he really is, 'cos then I'd have no alternative but to kill ya...

PCZ: Why do you prefer the textured look to the cleaner polygon seen in games such as Hind or Apache Longbow?

AH: It isn't a matter of personal preference per se; eventually we'll all be striving to achieve the same look - this is only our method for getting there. Neither approach is perfect just yet, and in the end we'll all be doing it the same way. Right now, given the excellent technology of our 3D engine, texturing gives us the best look without too much of a frame rate hit. Given the proliferation of 3D cards, this will become even more important in terms of moving forward.

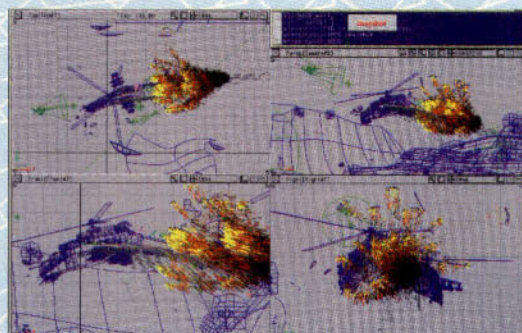
PCZ: So how are you making use of the current batch of 3D accelerator cards?

AH: We have included real-time light sourcing, multiple point light sources for dramatic night illumination effects, special 'Pilot Night Vision System' effects, particle-based explosions and dirt tracks from wheeled vehicles, fog, smoke trails and so on.

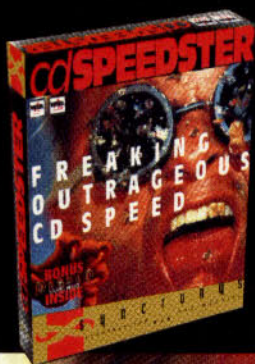
PCZ: So just how much more realistic can graphics in flight sims get?

AH: Lots. Simulating an organic scene with trees and rivers and hills and valleys and rocks and sand is very non-trivial, and then adding in all the complexity and variety of man-made items such as buildings and cities and bridges and vehicles makes it a never-ending challenge. Oh yeah, and then there's people...

PCZ: Eep. Time to upgrade again.



Hey, is this something someone's kids knocked up courtesy of the Crayolas? Oh no, I get it - it's another one of those wireframe mock-ups again, isn't it? Duh.



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SCREAMER RALLY



Patrick McCarthy heard a joke once that was a bit of a screamer. He also scored a goal that was a bit of a screamer. And an ex-girlfriend was known as a bit of...

*(I think that's enough
Screamers – Ed)*

R

ALLYING SEEMS TO BE RIGHT UP THERE on the Things To Do For Developers list at the moment – the new version of RAC Rally, International Rally Championship, is on its way soon, the much-hyped V-Rally has appeared on the PlayStation to much applause (and the odd stifled scream at the handling), and now we have another version of Screamer – and it too has gone all-out for the rallying angle. Those who remember the first version will realise that this completes the gradual



(Above) Luckily, Jeremy had souped up his car with a James Bond-style smoke screen add-on. Hah, his mate Quentin didn't know what was coming out of his backside.

evolution from the first Ridge Racer-style game to a Sega Rally-type offering – which for most people is still the definitive rally game (in its Saturn version, at least).

All change?

Although it's very much a rally game, there won't be any of that stage-based stuff that made RAC Rally so popular. It's still unashamedly an arcade game, with time limits, and raced around a circuit rather than down winding cart-tracks. So, no change there then. And although you might assume that Italian developers Milestone are a new name to the business, they're actually the old Screamer developers Graffiti, except with a different monicker. They even have exactly the same team working on it. So if all this is the same, what's new?

Everything must go

Everything else, basically. There's hardware support for 3Dfx, the Matrox Mystique and the 3D Blaster, which means that all the cars look a lot more like the real thing than they used

"The backgrounds are more varied, and the trackside banks are individually created and unique."



to. It also means Milestone can go a bit mental with the backgrounds and the courses, which in turn means the tracks are more varied. "In previous versions, although perhaps less than in most of the other games out there," says producer Marcus Iremonger, "there was an element of Scalextric about the track design, where sections of track are strung together to form a circuit; all the barriers at the side of the road are the same height; and so on. This new version does away with all that – there's a lot more rise and fall to the tracks, the backgrounds are more varied, and the trackside banks are individually created and unique." This has an inherent effect on the racing itself, with a lot of nasty lumps, dips and mounds dotted



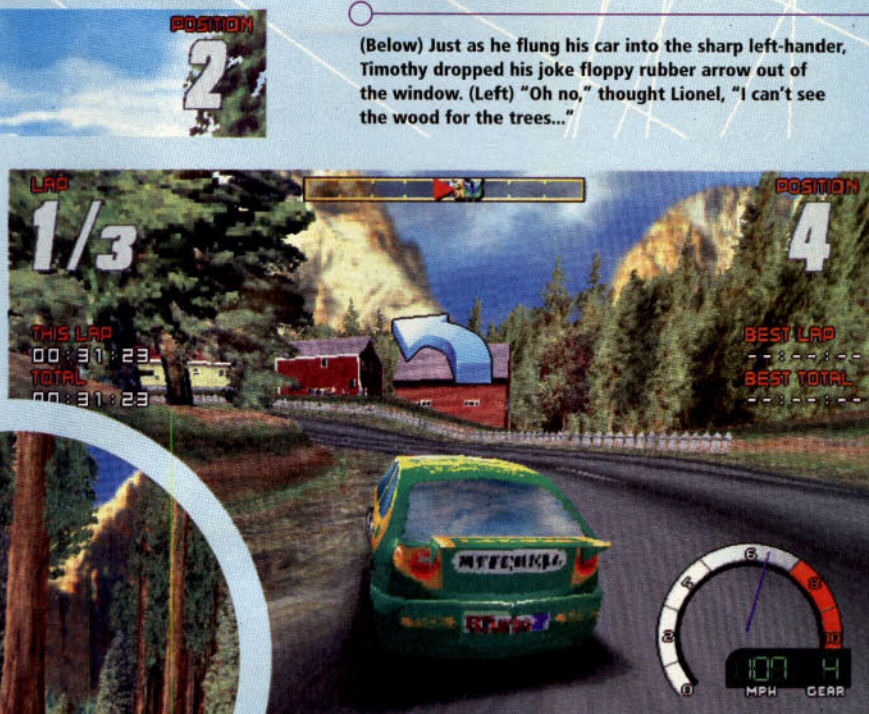
about the place – usually in the bits you don't want them. Get things slightly wrong and you'll be somersaulting off down the road like an audition for the new ITV police-camera car crash-based series, 'Ho Ho Look He's Dead'.

"You'll work out pretty quickly where the ideal racing line is," says assistant producer Tony Hinds, "because it's the bit without the bumps. Anyone outside that line will be in trouble and just bouncing around. This will make multi-player games very interesting, because you'll all be fighting for what is in effect a small area of the road." And giving the game its own version of 'Road Rage'.

"The AI's been tweaked, too," adds Iremonger, "so you'll find that in the one-player game the cars will be less bunched together – there are now drivers of differing ability and they're by no means perfect, so you're more likely to be able to capitalise on their mistakes."



(Top) Oh, look. Some Spanish people have constructed a goat-throwing tower. (Bottom) Hmmm, a Baden Baden style bed and breakfast.



(Below) Just as he flung his car into the sharp left-hander, Timothy dropped his joke floppy rubber arrow out of the window. (Left) "Oh no," thought Lionel, "I can't see the wood for the trees..."

But wait, there's more

The tracks are also a lot more varied in the surfaces you'll be racing on – one track might have tarmac, dirt and even ice. "Each surface behaves differently too," says Iremonger, "so you'll have to keep your wits about you." And there are more courses to play with. Just as this year's real World Rally Championship has gone to China for the first time,

The car's the star

There were only four cars in the last version, and the number has since been increased. At the moment there's four cars plus a secret one that you get once you've won everything there is to win. (I've always wondered why people do that in arcade games. After all, it's the crap ones who can't win anything that need the extra fast car.) Ah well, here you go, anyway...

RENAULT MAXI MEGANE

Despite the Maxi bit, this is a small car. A small round car actually, popular with up and coming meeja types and anyone who can't afford a proper sports car and thinks a 'coop' is the next best thing. Fast, manoeuvrable, sexy, French. Rather like Gerard Depardieu... erm, apart from the fast, manoeuvrable and sexy bits, that is.

TOYOTA CELICA

The Toyota Celica has gone through several appearance changes in its long and interesting life, from fast but ugly chunky northern chip-shaped type thing, to fast and sexy potato wedge laid on end type thing. Fortunately, this being a game, you get the latest version. (Although Used Car Rally might certainly be an angle worth exploring in the future).

ESCORT RS COSWORTH

What can be said about the Escort RS that hasn't been said before? Essex man's favourite motah; boy racer's dream machine; vehicle of choice for 95 per cent of all road rage criminals... etc. You get the rally version, of course, which has the advantage of looking nothing like the road version whatsoever, and being even faster.

PEUGEOT 306 MAXI

Unlike the Renault, the Peugeot 306 is actually quite big. But not as big as the Maxi tag might imply. Almost as big as the very beautiful Austin Maxi, though. (*I think you've got the wrong end of the Maxi stick. It means they go faster – Ed*) Ah. In that case, make that "almost as fast as the very beautiful Austin Maxi" then.

MYSTERY CAR

The mystery car is, as its name suggests, a mystery. You won't know what it is until you've won it, and we don't know because the producers refuse to tell us. "Is it a Subaru Impreza?" we asked. "Oh no, not that," they chuckled. "Is it a Porsche then?" "Er, huh-huh," they said, smiling. Is it any wonder people complain that our previews are lacking in information? I suspect it's a Fiat 500. And about time, too.



"The Man With The Golden Gun has a lot to answer for," thought Neil grimly, as his driver tried to get onto two wheels yet again.

under-mining the nervous systems of peasants in paddy fields by thundering past at 150mph and crashing headlong into their oxen, so you too will be able to visit hitherto unvisited areas of the world (see box). There will also be another range of indigenous animals to stare at as you zoom past, running over their offspring in the process.

Alright, so it's another sequel. But when you add more, better and harder tracks, nicer-looking cars and impressive background graphics to new sound and music, serial and network multi-play options and secret cars, you end up with a slick, challenging, and different game – even if you can't say that it's breaking totally new ground. **Z**



I don't believe it! Another god-forsaken bouncy castle section...

Product details

Developer: Milestone

Publisher: Virgin Interactive

Website: www.vie.com

Release Date: November

New courses in full

As well as new versions of the England and Colombian courses, there will be these new splendid places to visit and crash in. There's also a secret course. In a secret location. But they wouldn't tell us where it is. It's a secret.

CHINA

Ha-hah! Your chance to do to small Chinese villages what the Chinese are planning to do to Hong Kong. (*Very topical – Ed*) Actually, the circuit's based on a race around the side of the Great Wall Of China. Depending on which side you're on, that either makes you a civilised member of Chinese society, or a Mongol horde. I know which I'd rather be.

TUSCANY

You too can be a member of the chattering classes, a holiday in Tuscany, and wittering on about "...the exquisite wine we drank from the actual vineyard where we actually stayed, five cases of which we brought back and no, you can't have any of that, we're saving it, have some Tesco's Chilean – it's just as good for the likes of you." Sorry about that. Er, this bit's in a small Italian town, with cobblestones etc.

SNOWY GRAND CANYON

That's not 'Snowy's Grand Canyon' – sorry to disappoint, but you won't be driving around inside Tintin's dog's arse. It's that big hole in the middle of America, where you have to stand on the edge and say "Wow". And it's in the winter, which means there's snow all over the place. And rocks, and cacti, and snakes and prospectors in wide floppy hats with sores on their thighs.

CANADA

Remember that old ad for Canada that showed the woman diver's buttocks wobbling in slow motion as she plunged towards the sea far below? That was my mum. So this course is of particular significance to me because its log cabins, dirt tracks and big trains on overpasses remind me of the fact that she abandoned me as a child to pursue her international diving career.

ENGLAND & COLOMBIA

Yes, we know there was a course in Colombia and England in the last version, but apparently they were very popular. This year's England course promises to be even more popular, as it goes right past the beauty salon where the Spice Girls get the tops of their toes and shoulderblades plucked. We can't really tell you what the Colombian course involves, because it still is shrouded in secrecy.



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STAR TREK: STARFLEET ACADEMY



(Above) The Starfleet Academy. Well, it's nicer than Lewisham Polytechnic at any rate. (Far right) Negotiations with the Klingons were going well.



Since **Paul Presley** hasn't any formal qualifications whatsoever, we thought we'd give him the chance to prove himself in the virtual world by sending him to the only learning facility left open to him.



THE ADVENTURE, AS I BELIEVE THE MUCH over-used Star Trek cliché has it, continues. Like a mighty juggernaut, driverless and careening downhill, Paramount's most healthy of cash cows has once again given us its milk (One sentence in and you're already mixing metaphors. Surely a new record? – Ed) Starfleet Academy is the sixth 'official' game to bear

the mark of Cain... er, Roddenberry's twisted genius. (I think... If you know otherwise feel free to write, fax, e-mail or carrier pigeon in with the correct number.)

The twist this time is that it isn't an adventure (whether point-and-click or first-person style) but an all-out action-fest. A simulation of life in big Jim's command chair as a virtual Captain in the comfort of your own home – and not just flying the recesses of a tortured mind.

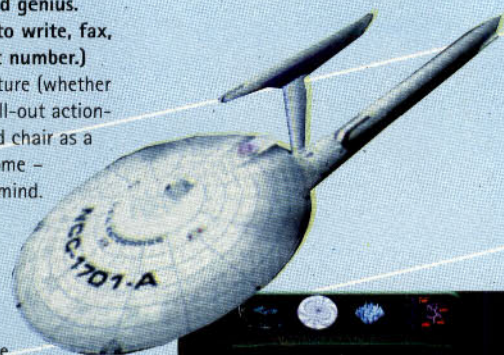
To baldly go...

Academy takes us away from the world of bald-headed captains and chesty counsellors and back to the days of, er, bald-headed captains and pointy-eared science officers. The original *Star Trek* is the setting, or at least the *Trek* of the movie era as opposed to the camp '60s version. You are a young Starfleet cadet, undergoing your basic training and hoping to one day captain your own ship through a weekly series of improbable sci-fi clichés.

Essentially the game revolves around the complex starship simulator seen being blown apart by Kirstie Alley in the second film. You are given a series of increasingly trickier missions to perform, starting with a simple mine-clearing exercise and leading up to and beyond the infamous Kobayashi Maru. Each mission is separated by high-quality FMV sequences during which you are briefed on the ways



Apparently Kirk typed GODMODE 1 into the science console to gain infinite shields. The engines canna take it!



Everything is simulated. Right down to the nonsensical whirling sensor thing that no one could work out in the series.



of being a Starfleet officer from such luminaries as Kirk, Chekov and Sulu (all obviously adding to the saleability of the game).

Take it to the bridge

The simulator itself is a comprehensive affair, taking in every aspect of your ship's bridge, with all the stations accessible to you and just about every button clickable (sort of). Most of the ship's functions can be accessed via hotkeys, which makes it easier to issue orders in the heat of battle, with everything having been designed to be as faithful to the *Trek* universe as possible.

Targets can be scanned for information and specific ship systems of enemies can be targeted by your phasers, items and personnel can be beamed from one place to another, courses can be plotted and warp speeds set – basically everything you could expect to do on the bridge of a starship is possible within the game.

Combat is in the *Wing Commander* mould. You control the ship's movement via a joystick or cursor keys, which I have to admit threw me at first. I'd always pictured starship combat as a tense, strategic affair like the combat sequence in the second film with Kirk and crew playing cat and mouse with the villainous Ricardo Montalban in a gaseous nebula. No such subtlety here – action is fast and furious and calls for all of your joystick-wrenching skills and more.

So much for models

Graphics is an area that is fraught with peril for a *Trek* game. When you consider the amount of money and computer hardware available for the grander enterprises of the film and TV chapters, *Academy* isn't too shabby. The aforementioned FMV sequences are of very high quality indeed and in-game graphics are lavishly detailed, especially the various ships on offer. And although I feel that the Federation space stations are a bit on the small side, the addition of a 3D accelerator card is accompanied by all manner of de rigueur lens flares and light sourcing – the graphical equivalent of de-cloaking.

The music is very recognisable too, working in a similar manner to that seen in LucasArts' nearest rival, *X-Wing Vs TIE Fighter*. The classic tunes that we've hummed and loved creep in at appropriate moments in the action, hopefully adding to the tension and dramatic pace that the rest of the game is trying to achieve, which the recent TV shows have so spectacularly failed to do.

I thought you liked *Star Trek*?

I do. Or at least I used to. A couple of paltry, uninspired spin-off series didn't help matters much, neither did a world of cheap and shoddy merchandising. And, of course, neither did *Star Wars*. You see the *Trek* warp bubble has burst. (Terrible – Ed) A year or so ago it was all the rage to be 'into' *Star Trek*. Trekkies were coming out of the closet faster than B-list celebrities looking for publicity. *The Next Generation* was at its creative zenith, the sixth film in the series had turned out to be better than people were expecting. *Star Trek* was 'cool'.

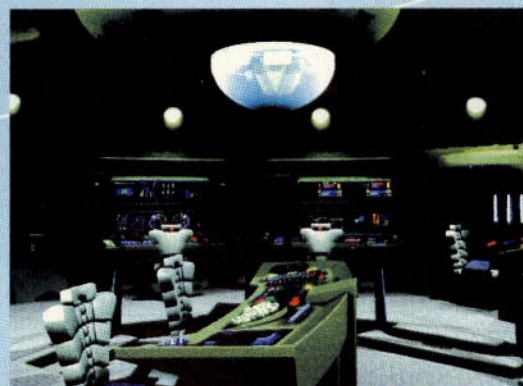
(Left) The student lounge, inexplicably devoid of cigarettes, pool tables and bottles of half-empty Budweisers. (Below) Faced with impossible odds, the crew legged it from the bridge, leaving the captain alone with the Romulan threat.



It's a different story now, though. Chewbacca's return to form (not to mention his Lifetime Achievement gong at the MTV Awards) has turned everyone's interest in the opposite direction. People now cry, "You're all clear kid, now let's blow this thing and go home!" instead of, "Warp speed... NOW!" A never-ending run of repeats on the demon Murdoch's Sky TV service has weakened even the hardest of science fiction resolves and people are turning off in droves. *Trek*'s popularity is in a cultural nadir and *Starfleet Academy* is arriving slap bang in the middle of it.

No one can argue with the technological prowess of the game. Fiercely loyal *Trek*heads will no doubt question the way the game treats control over the mighty starships as if they were some kind of one-man fighter jet (all banking and swooping and rolling, etc) instead of the more realistic strategic nature of space combat – akin to submarine warfare. But to be fair to Interplay, that's not the kind of game they're trying to make here. The emphasis is on action, not thought. (Of course, fiercely loyal *Trek*heads will rush out and buy the game regardless, in their strange desire to own everything with a Paramount-endorsed logo stuck to it.)

Interplay may also be taking heart from the fact that the last *Trek* game, *Generations*, was about as pitiful as any *Trek* game has ever managed to be (with the one shining exception of the astonishingly awful *Deep Space Nine: Harbinger*) and so anything that comes along next can't help but improve upon things. Let's hope so. *Star Trek* could do with a kick in the creative posterior. *Academy* might just be the game to do it. **Z**



(Above) It's rumoured that newer starship models came equipped with seatbelts on the chairs to stop people flying over the consoles when hit by a torpedo. (Above right) Of course, the Klingons were reckoning without the Enterprise's secret weapon – the Plot Device™ 2000!

Product details

Developer: Interplay Productions

Publisher: Interplay

Website: www.interplay.com

Release Date: October



It's a little-known secret that most captains relax between battles with an on-line game of *Name That Tune*.



TOCA TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP

First they gave us *Micro Machines*. More recently came *Pete Sampras Tennis*. Now Codemasters are hard at work on a heady concoction of ultra-convincing physics, brutal ballsy driving skills, and lucid game design. It's called *TOCA Touring Car Championship*, and **Charlie Brooker**, map in hand, went along to check it out...

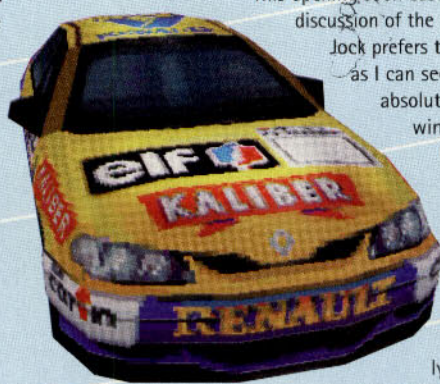


7

T'S 1.57 IN THE AFTERNOON AND I HAVE decided that I don't like Coventry. Never really seen the place mind, but I just don't like the idea of it. Almost every building in the area was blown to bits during WWII, giving

the architects of the '50s and '60s ample opportunity to further depress an already despairing population by transforming the city into a joyless world of piss-stained concrete boxes. The people milling round wear faces that say they'd rather be dead than alive but aren't entirely sure which category they fall into, and I imagine going on a crazed gun rampage only to find myself confronted by willing and relieved victims, shrugging their shoulders and shambling nonchalantly towards my blazing pistols. The thought makes me uneasy, so I walk outside and call Richard Eddy at Codemasters. I want a lift to their HQ as soon as possible. I want to be taken away from here. I'm standing outside the station with a finger in one ear and an unreliable mobile pressed against the other.

"There's someone waiting to pick you up already," says my saviour Richard. "His name's Jock. He's Scottish and he's got silvery hair. And he's an absolute nutter." Oh.



"The frame rate is blissful, and the action utterly convincing."

2.10pm

Have located Jock and he is now driving me to Codemasters' premises in nearby Stoneythorpe. He genially strikes up a conversation by asking me how the weather is in London.

This opening soon eases us into a light yet enjoyable discussion of the merits of London life in general.

Jock prefers the rural environment, and as far as I can see, he doesn't appear to be an absolute nutter at all (was someone winding me up, perhaps?). Before long we've thankfully left

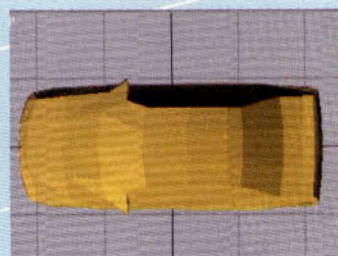
Coventry well behind us and are cruising at speed through the countryside. Suddenly I notice a large, dead animal lying in the road before us. It's been burst wide open by the wheels of a preceding vehicle and is lying splayed across the centre of

our lane, a vivid flower of fur, skin and pink-red innards. Repelled, I instinctively push my foot against an imaginary brake pedal, but Jock merely stares serenely at the horizon and carries on driving. A part of the animal – possibly a hind leg – thunks against the underside of our car as we pass over the mangled mess.

"Fox," says Jock.

2.36pm

Codemasters' HQ, a converted farmhouse tucked away from the main road, looks like a tranquil place to work. The old haybarns beside the main building now provide shelter for a large number of staff cars, several of which are notably exotic. It all feels very secure and homely. On a rainy day, you could probably imagine a group of startled intruders gunning down a newspaper delivery boy on the gravel driveway, but that's as grim as it gets.



(Above) Every single vehicle in the game has been laser-scanned from the genuine article. By Blofeld off the *James Bond* films.

Head to head to...

TOCA is all set to feature a multi-player split-screen mode, allowing up to four players to race each other silly on a solitary PC. A network play mode is also to be available – but modem play won't. Why? Because thanks to the large amount of data generated by the real-world physics, it simply isn't a feasible option. Best head down to Shoot n Surf, then.



(Above left) The action is almost photorealistic in places. Any more realistic and you might as well go out and drive a real car. (Above right) Look, glowing tail-lights and everything. The game really benefits from a 3D accelerator card. Don't they all?

2.47pm

Accompanied by Richard, I walk into the room which houses the *TOCA Touring Car* development team. One member of the team is fiddling with a PC steering wheel which isn't functioning as it should. I'm introduced to project leader Gavin Raeburn, whom I recognise from last year when I came to preview *Pete Sampras Tennis*. He looks vaguely like Jan Michael Vincent, of *Airwolf* fame, although obviously I don't mention this out loud.

2.51pm

The team are demonstrating the game. Running on a beefy PC equipped with a Power VR card, it looks excellent. The degree of accuracy is almost overwhelming. Each car's model has actually been *laser-scanned* in all three dimensions from the genuine article by a third party. The courses have been painstakingly constructed using Ordnance Survey data, leaving a set of 16 virtual tracks accurate to within 80mm of their real-world counterparts. To complete the illusion, the team visited each track and shot footage from every conceivable angle to ensure that every trackside object, from the fir trees to Firestone ads, appears in the correct place.

Details are everywhere. The brake-lights glow convincingly. The in-car view bobs and judders just as your own viewpoint would, and there's even a set of animated polygonal arms manipulating the steering wheel; now and then, one leaves the wheel to change gear. Damage is visibly apparent, from dents and scrapes to full-blown bonnet-wrenching crumples. The way in which each car handles is also ultra-realistic; a whirlwind of on-the-fly high-end applied mathematics promises perhaps the most authentic physical simulation yet. The characteristics for all four wheels are calculated individually. And as for the collisions...

It's good to talk

On-screen, Bryan Black, the team's AI guru, demonstrates a violent full-frontal crash. It's sickening yet somehow mesmerizing. Gavin shudders.

Gavin Raeburn: Every time I see *that* bit I feel like jumping. I've been in a head-on and I know what they're like.

PC Zone: You've been in a head-on crash?

GR: Yeah, though not in the name of research, I hasten to add.

PCZ: It must be handy though, knowing what it's like in real life and working on a game like this.

GR: Yeah. When you have a head-on, your whole vision just goes *white*. I'd like to get that into the game, the way it all just washes out for a moment.

PCZ: But what are you going to do when the simulation can't get any more realistic? You're certainly heading that way.

GR: That's when you want to get the pain element in.

Bryan Black: What about pins in gloves, so you actually feel pain when you crash.

PCZ: How about a special trick to make the monitor explode and hurl glass into your eyes when you do have a head-on?

GR: There are lots of ways to make them more realistic – force-feedback controllers and all that – but I think what's missing from a lot of games – and especially some of the

latest Japanese arcade racers – is that they're no fun to play. They're just technological showcases. To my mind, there hasn't really been a game to beat *Sega Rally*, even though it's really old now. It's just so playable.

3:56pm

Only an idiot would doubt Codemasters' devotion to solid, balls-out gameplay. After all, they gave us the insanely playable *Micro Machines* and the supreme PC version of *Pete Sampras*. With *TOCA Touring Car*, they're hoping to marry their trademark playability with breathtaking, state of the art visuals. This demo version has yet to be fully optimised, but the frame rate is blissful, the action utterly convincing, and the controls easy to grasp. Judging by what I've seen and played so far, the team would have to start deleting huge sections of code to prevent it being anything less than a right royal laugh. It's due out in November, and we'll review it as soon as we possibly can.

4:28pm

Jock is driving me back to the station. "So did you like the look of the game?" he asks.


"Yeah, from what I've seen," I reply.

He then explains that he drove the team around each of the real-life tracks while they were shooting the footage for the trackside objects. Sixteen courses, from Silverstone to Brands Hatch, Jock drove them all. I remember the visceral reality of the in-game head-on crashes, and I pray that Jock's perception of reality remains intact.

Suddenly I notice what appears to be a large dog, dead and squashed in the opposite lane.

"Ergh," I say, disgusted by the sight, "a dead dog!"

"No," says Jock. "It's that fox again."

But I'm not so sure. I still think it's a dog. Oh hum. 

Product details

Developer: Codemasters

Publisher: Codemasters

Website: www.codemasters.com

Release date: November



(Top) A car sniffing another car's bottom.

(Above) A car doing a big fart.

Get into the car

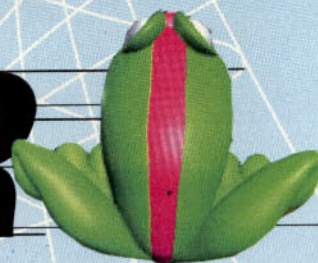
"Here in my car, I feel safest of all," Gary Numan once sang with his trademark nasal whine. Presumably that's because it's pretty difficult to land your car on a set of live power lines, eh Gaz? Still, *TOCA Touring Car Championship* should make Gary feel 16 times safer than usual, because that's the number of cars it features – including sauced-up versions of the following:



- Peugeot 406
- Audi A4
- Ford Mondeo
- Volvo S40
- Renault Laguna
- Honda Accord
- Vauxhall Vectra
- Nissan Primera

At the time of writing, I'm not sure whether or not the Fiat Brava and Fiat Bravo put in an appearance. But I would like to see them because they're two different cars built around one vision: a choice, not a compromise. And the Renault Megane would be nice, because it's the car that talks your language. And which is the one that that Latin-American girl drives maniacally round the forecourt, narrowly avoiding all her ugly-bug boyfriend's treasured belongings? I'd like one of those too.

FROGGER



(Left) Lily pads... spiders... frogs... why, it's one of those *Frogger* grabs. (Above) Takes you back, doesn't it? And yet, at the same time, it launches you forward into a bold new future...

Patrick McCarthy has much in common with the average frog: webbed feet, sticky fingers and a tongue that he'll put anywhere.

T

HERE'S NOTHING MORE BORING than people getting all misty-eyed and wittering on about the great old games of the past, back in the days when gameplay was all and 'Captain Bubo's Bulbous Buttock Boat' (or whatever) ruled supreme on the Spectrum. Especially when, thanks to the wonders of the six million emulators now around, you finally see the games they're getting all tearful about. But even though it pains me as much as it's going to pain you to read it, I'm going to have to go into misty-eyed mode for a minute. The first games I ever played – on

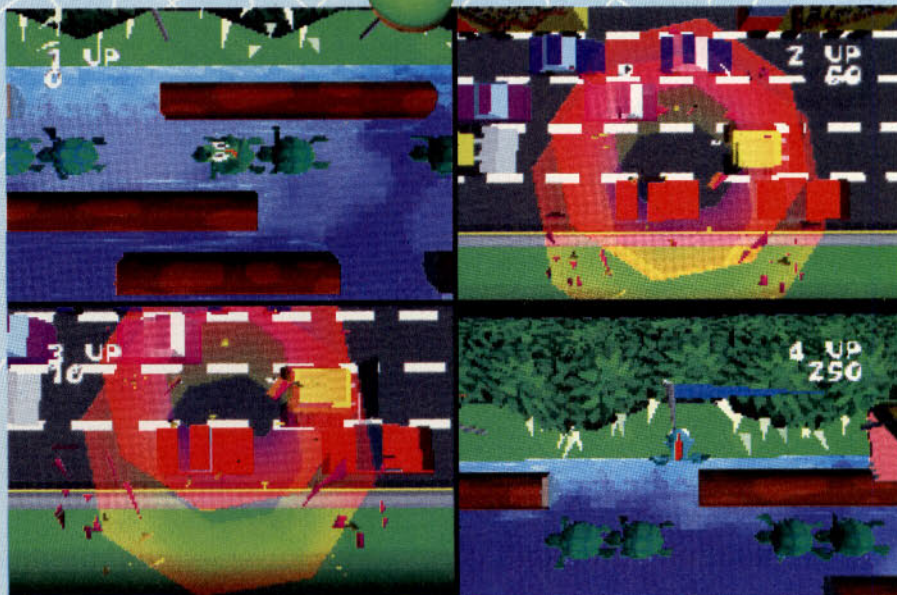


It's back

Frogger's back. But whereas most manufacturers cashing in on the retro trend are content with just rehashing 'arcade perfect' versions of the original, Millennium, the developers of *Frogger* nouveau, have actually put some thought into things. In fact, they've made it into a kind of platform game. And like every other platform game that takes itself remotely seriously, it's gone 3D on us. You probably don't find this news particularly surprising. What you may find surprising is that it looks like it might be an absolute hoot.



(Above) Four-player split-screen action on the traditional level... (Right) Unfortunately, you don't get to shag girlie frogs when you get to the other side in this one...





(Above) Jumping over streams of boiling lava? They never did that in the original. (Right) Ah, the heat-seeking tongue in all its glory...



And the point is...?

The point is, as you'd expect if you've been following, to seek out and 'save' every frog who's dotted about the levels (none of that dirty stuff that used to go on in the original). Once you've saved them all on the 40-odd levels, you'll be able to free the Princess who's been captured and shoved behind a temple gate. First though, you'll have to get through a final level which, as Culture once said, is harder than the rest. There are secret levels chucked in there somewhere, too. To help you in your task you'll have your heat-seeking tongue (I think most of us already have one of those), which plucks useful – and no doubt very tasty – insects from the air at the press of a button. There's

also a super-jump, which will sometimes help

you avoid things a normal jump wouldn't, and a number of power-ups. (I told you it was like a platform game, but did you believe me?) One really nice touch is your ability to croak – not because it sounds good, but because an answering croak will come from the direction in which the nearest frog is waiting to be saved. Obviously, stereo speakers help.

Littered around the levels are objects that will make life easier, such as a radioactive waste barrel that explodes as you land on it, launching you across wide gaps (we'll ignore the subsequent decimation to the local eco-system). But there are also things that will make life harder, such as slimy

Product details

Developer: Millennium

Publisher: Hasbro

Website: www.hasbro.com

Release Date: Late Autumn



(Above) One of the desert levels: simply jump on seagulls' backs to get to the lower sections.

Flipping hell

What they've done is to combine the old game's basic principle – which, in case you don't know, involved hopping across treacherous roads and rivers, avoiding traffic, alligators and snakes and jumping on female frogs on the other side – with a platform game approach that makes use of a number of inventive 3D game area layouts. A mix of the old and the new.

So, for example, although you get the original 'classic' level with the roads, river, traffic, crocs, etc, you also get a number of other, increasingly bizarre but extremely imaginative levels to make your way around. The nice thing about it all is that they seem to have managed to retain the flavour of the original in doing so. Shall I give you an example?

Oh, go on then, but be quick


Well, there's a desert level in which you have to avoid scarab beetles, diving buzzards and rolling boulders. It's one of many levels that are split over two heights. You can jump on seagulls' backs to hitch a ride down to the lower levels. Another has you dashing about in the woods, avoiding killer bees, which you can either attempt to outrun (or out-hop) or hide from.

One distinctly *Mario 64*-like level, Looney Balloons, has you hopping from cloud to cloud, high in the sky. Party balloons sink when you jump on them, helium balloons rise, there are more birds to ride about on, and so on. An underground one has you eating glow-worms to see where you're going, as you tentatively navigate your way through the dark. And so on.

“You have a heat-seeking tongue (I think most of us already have one of those) to help you in your task.”

poles that you can't stop moving up and down on once you're on them. I'm sure you can make your own joke up here.

Multi-frogger

There are also network and split-screen multi-player modes for up to four people at once, which break down into two different games: either you'll have to race each other around a level to find a flag, or you'll have a traditional frog-saving level to complete before everyone else. A nice touch is that you can jump on the backs of competitor frogs, immobilising them until you decide to move – useful for leaving them helpless beneath the tyres of a 16-wheeler truck. That's about it, really. It's *Frogger*, Jim – but not as we know it. 

Power corrupts

Throughout the levels are traditional platform-style power-ups, which you pick up by flicking out your unfeasibly long, but oh-so-sexy, tongue. For example, a fly might give you extra points or extra time to complete the level, a worm makes your tongue so long you can virtually lick the entire screen clean in one go, a blue snail will cause everything on the level to stop moving, a cockroach makes you invincible (if you can bring yourself to eat one of the little bastards), hover flies let you walk on water and be unharmed after a long fall... and there are loads more. You'll just have to wait for the review.



(Above) That's you on the seagull. Didn't anyone ever tell you miscegenation is evil and ungodly?



F1

Yet another Formula One racing game is on the way. **Paul Presley** gets on the grid to look at the latest challenger from Eidos.



HI, THE THRILL OF THE RACE. THE RUBBER squealing on the tarmac. The petrol fumes filling one's nostrils. The spins, shunts and shimmies of the drivers as they approach a hairpin bend at 7,000mph. The humorous multiple pile-ups with bodies afire. Murray Walker having an epileptic fit as a British driver proves quite adequate at a job for which he's (over)paid millions per race. There's nothing in this wide, wide world of sports quite like Formula One. Except perhaps, pro-celebrity camel racing. But sadly that no longer gets the coverage it deserves, thanks to the great hump-stuffing scandal at the 1974 final in Dubai.

Previous attempts at simulating this most noble of pursuits have tended to slam into one of two tyre barriers. The harsh, cruel, unforgiving Goodyears of simulation. Or the flexible, flimsy, undemanding Bridgestones of arcade.

So which is this?

A bit of both, if I was to be more accurate than a man who thinks Simon Dee is a great loss to Radio 2. *F1* simulates all the races, tracks, practice and qualifying sessions and even the cigarette sponsorship decals that adorn the various cars and incite fury from French television companies. But the focus of the game is geared towards the less petrol-headed gamer, the kind of chap for whom the language of blown gaskets or gearbox adjustment ratios is as alien as ancient Urdu and just as hard to decipher.

That's not to say you can't get oily if that is your particular wont. The garage sections of the game (available before each race, practice or qualifying session) allow you to live out your pit lane fantasies (except those involving a petrol can and Noel Edmonds), by letting you adjust tyre types, fuel loads and the angle of your front and rear wings. You can even map out some kind of pit stop strategy.

Now I confess, it's only over the past two years that I've even heard of such a thing. Murray Walker first started



"Each driver has his own traits – cautious like David Coulthard or arrogant like Gerhard Berger."

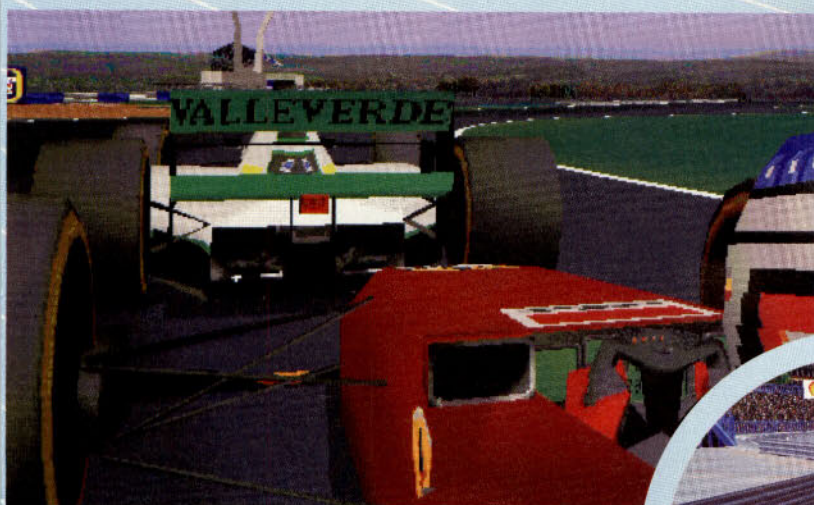
shouting about pit stop strategies when the BBC feared it would lose its coverage rights to Sky, and so they started trying to liven up the broadcasts and make them more detailed. (And it worked – they lost the rights to ITV instead.) So we started hearing about Schumacher going for a two-stop plan and whether that would affect Damon's chances with a three-stop. Well now you can relive this 'excitement' yourself by planning out your own pit stops. Naturally, this is only really useful should you be engaging upon a prolonged race day (60 laps or so). If you've reduced the number to about ten, the only pit stops you need to worry about are dictated by your own bladder and the amount of alcopops you imbibed at the local discotheque earlier.

I feel like a cigarette

As you can see from the various screenshots, *F1* looks, as I believe the saying goes, like the dog's business. No effort has



(Far left) The joys of narrow straights, tight corners and absolutely no overtaking possibilities whatsoever. Why anyone ever thought this would make for a decent circuit is beyond me. (Left) As usual, Schumacher makes life hard for everyone else. The git.



(Far Left) The sign on the back of the car said: "If you can read this, you're either too close or Michael Schumacher." (Left) Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to Spot The Gratuitous Petrol Advert! (Cue applause.) Ah, Monaco.

Product details

Developer: Lankhor

Publisher: Eidos Interactive

Website: www.eidosinteractive.com

Release Date: October



been spared to get the graphic detail as close to real life as possible. All the billboards are in the right places and carry the correct advertising (whether Eidos make money from this or not is a closely-guarded secret... their PR department wouldn't say). Every tree, crane and road marking is correct. All the cars are the right shapes, with subtle differences from one team to the next. Even the drivers' heads move about like spasmodic chickens inside the cockpits as you hare around the various twists and turns.

And that's just the software version. The great beast known as 3Dfx hasn't been overlooked and owners of such a card are in for a visual treat. Don't think this means Lankhor are short-changing all you non-enhanced folk though. By way of an example, look at the pictures on these pages and try to spot those that are 3Dfx and those that hail from the regular software version of the game. Think of it as a little quiz. There's nothing like reader interaction, is there? (And that was nothing like etc, etc - Ed)

The driver's mind

Now you and I both know that for all their frippery and finery, previous games in the Formula One genre have tended to suffer in the old driver intelligence department. For all the wondrous nature of the track and car mechanics, you'd often feel as though you were driving against a pack of automatons or Ukko Katyamas. But *F1*'s drivers have a little more in the way of brainpower, with each being assigned characteristics

that determine the sort of driver they will be.

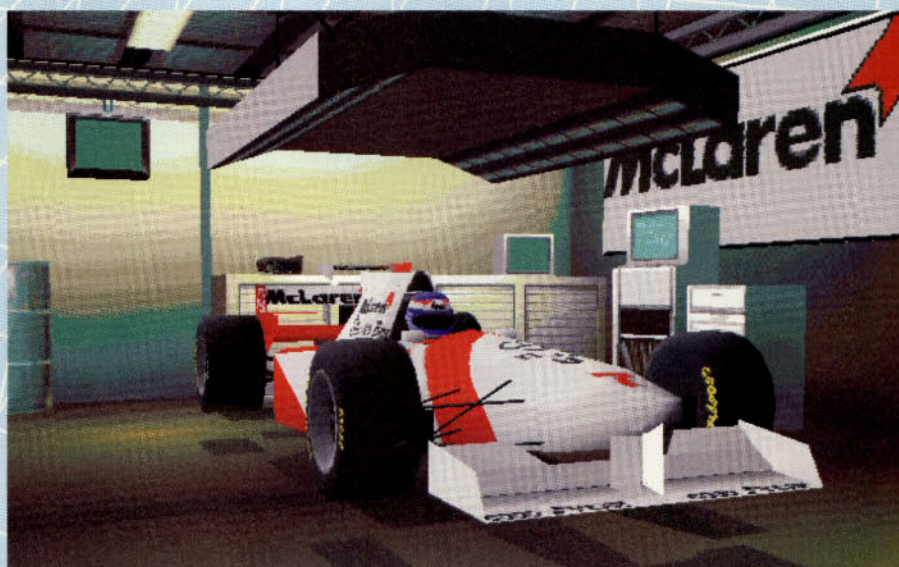
Aggressive and uncaring

like Eddie Irving, cautious and conservative like Gerhard Berger, or arrogant and filled with the devil's own seed like Michael Schumacher.

What this determines is essentially how willing they are to try to overtake. Factors, such as the speed of the cars, the drivers' individual characters and the position on the track (whether there's enough of a straight left, etc) all come into play and hopefully make things feel more like a real race.

And that's all you can really ask for. The feel of a game is as important as the look, and the dear people at Lankhor seem to have taken this motto to their very hearts. One of the few rivals on the track is of course Geoff Crammond's, as yet unannounced, *F1GP3*.

However, Eidos may yet get the jump on this forthcoming meister-work as there will probably be quite a gap between the games, and they are hoping that *F1* will be sufficiently complete that you'll question the need for two different racing titles. We shall see. **Z**



(Above) McLaren were thought to be pushing things a bit with the advent of their hover car. (Top Left) Round about then, Schumacher got the horrible feeling that the other drivers had gone home. (Left) Frustrated by his lack of success, Damon Hill takes to rather extreme measures to win a race.

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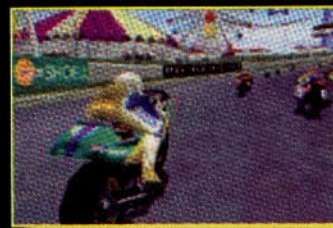
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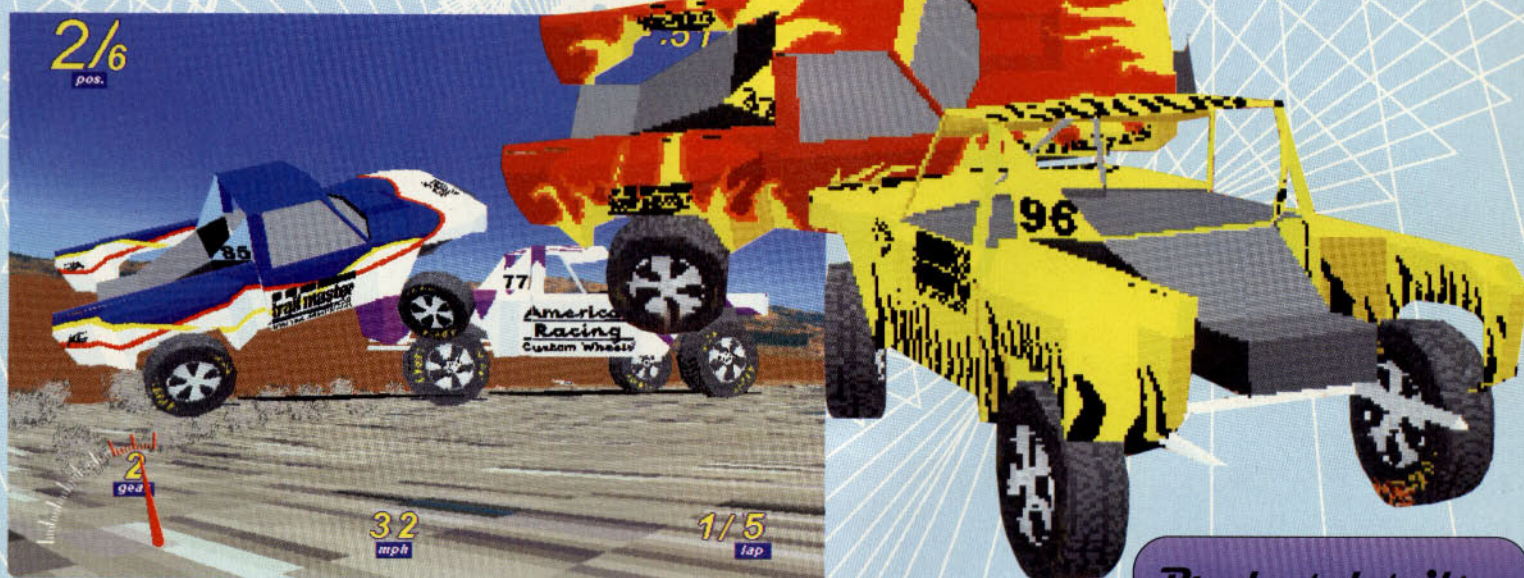
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GRIPPED



Steve Hill has already made his feelings clear concerning these monster trucks.

F

FOLLOWING LAST MONTH'S **HARDCORE** 4x4, Sierra are travelling down a similar route with **Grippid**, another off-road racer featuring ludicrously proportioned vehicles. Co-developed by Papyrus – the team behind **Nascar** and **IndyCar** – it is modelled after the **SODA** (Short Course Off-Road Drivers' Association) World Series of Off-Road Racing. We spoke to Cindy Kendall, the game designer at Software Allies/Papyrus.

PC Zone: So Cindy, why an off-road game?

Cindy Kendall: Because we were dealing with Papyrus, it was fairly certain that the game would be related to motor sports. Off-road racing seemed the most interesting style of racing to us due to the extra challenge of developing realistic 3D physics. Many types of racing can be simulated to a certain extent without extending to 3D physics, but the jumps, bumps, crashes and flips of off-road racing definitely called out for a real-time simulation. The co-founders of the

company have both a physics and computer simulation background, so off-road racing seemed a natural fit.

PCZ: Are you off-road racing fanatics?

CK: Admitting such a problem is halfway to recovery. We definitely enjoy watching **SODA** Racing events on **ESPN2**. Even before we got through the script phase of this project we were familiar with most of the drivers and TV announcers in **SODA**, and we had taped and watched nearly all the televised races several times. Sometimes it seems that we are **SODA** evangelists. We would have to rank **SODA** racing with our other favourite forms of racing, right up there with **Formula 1**, **NASCAR** and **NHRA** drag racing. The off-road events are really exciting and action packed, usually involving flips, maybe a car fire and lots of air.

PCZ: Very useful thing, air. Has this influenced the game?

CK: While watching the **SODA** races we couldn't help but be awed at how the suspension moved so much. Some off-road racing trucks have 21-inches of travel in their front suspensions! We knew we had to model this. We just recently implemented moving suspension parts into the game and we are still amazed just to watch it.

PCZ: What is so special about **Grippid**?

CK: The biggest attraction to us is the realistic physics. Before seeing a **SODA** race some people thought our game was cool. After watching a **SODA** race, the same people could not believe how closely the game modelled the real thing. Spin out on mud, catch air on jumps, knock a wheel off, flip when taking an off-camber turn too fast – it's all in the game. We are not aware of any off-road racing game on any platform that attempts to stray from arcade physics and models the real thing and actually pulls it off.

Monster stuff

So there you have it. **Grippid** will feature two racing classes – 800HP trucks and 150HP buggies – and will also offer a choice of arcade or simulation mode. There will be 12 races on six tracks in three environments. Complete freedom of movement is promised, as well as an option to design and customise tracks. With multi-player racing and an Internet Worldwide Ranking System, **Grippid** should be one to watch out for. If you like monster trucks. **7**

Product details

Developer: Software Allies/Papyrus

Publisher: Sierra

Website: www.sierra.com

Release Date: October 1997



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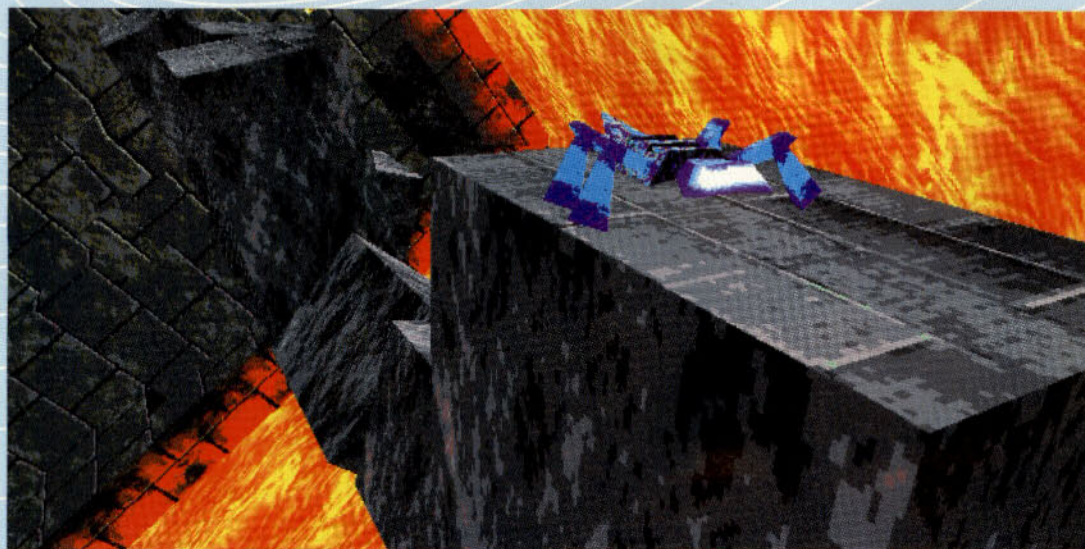
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GALAPAGOS



Product details

Developer: Anark

Publisher: Electronic Arts

Website: www.ea.com

Release date: November



(Above left) Another day, another mind-blowing collection of moving platforms. (Above) He even has his own X-Wing...

It's a game about artificial life. And who better to tell you about it than **Patrick McCarthy**, whose underwear is Bri-nylon, whose shoes are plastic, and who leads a fairly artificial life himself?

T HE PR PEOPLE ARE PROMOTING GALAPAGOS as a genre-busting title. It's certainly a handy term, because we can't decide what to call it, and neither can EA or the game's developers Anark. We thought of life 'em up, but that sounds too much like something the West Midlands police used to do to Irish passers-by. So let's forget it, and tell you what makes the game so odd instead. First of all, there's the artificial life angle.

What's it all about then?

Let me guess your train of thought here: "Another *Creatures*," you're thinking, "Bloody irritating squeaky things that pretend to be a new artificial lifeform but turn out to be boring, pain in the arse, bullshit." Just be patient. (And do please refrain from using bad language. Some of our readers don't like it.) *Galapagos* isn't like that at all. Instead of nurturing ugly little freaks through a two-dimensional existence that soon gets on your nerves (or being a parent, as it's known), you are guiding an emergent intelligence through a hostile, tricky to negotiate environment. The thing you're guiding is called Mendel.

"He's a simulated robot," says Anark's Stephen Collins, "A

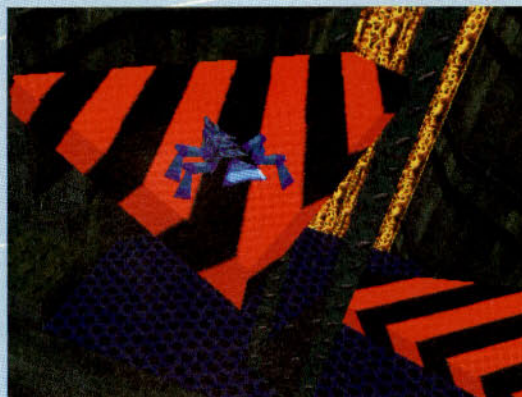
synthetic organism with simulated servo-motors that allow him to move,

infra-red sensors that allow him to see, and an adaptive controller for a brain, which allows him to adapt to his environment independently of the player." Oh, and in case you're interested, he looks like a spider.

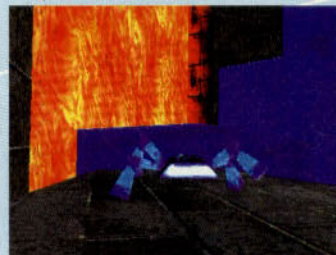
A web of intrigue

And it's the word "independently" that is the key to the second element which makes the game unique – you don't actually control what he does. Instead, you control the environment, clicking on moving platforms to synchronise their movements in a way that encourages Mendel to head in the direction you want. There are hostile elements and objects designed to hamper your progress, as well as puzzles to work out and solve, all in a three-dimensional platform environment in which there's no up or down. The best way to describe it would be a hybrid of *Mario 64* meets Escher.

From what we've seen, some of the later levels would be decidedly tricky if you were playing a traditional platform game where the main character's movement is under your direct control. And it's here that the learning/artificial life/AI element comes into its own. Basically, when you first get a (default) Mendel to play with, he'll be a mere seven hours old and reasonably responsive to his environment. But his development will be entirely down to you.



(Above) You'd feel hard-pressed going across stuff like this with full control of the character... (Top right) He may not look like much, but believe me, you'll grow to love him. (He's facing you by the way.)

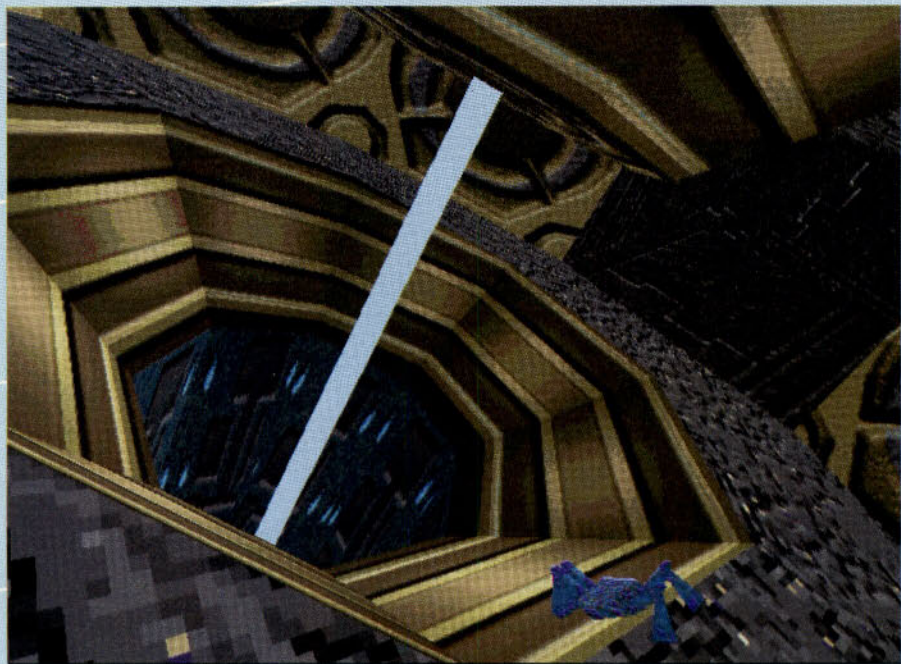


by laser cannon,
he'll start to mistrust
both you and his
environment, and
be more hesitant as a
result. (Given the speed
you'll be forced to work
at if he does get too

Strangely, for a creature who isn't by any means what you'd call conventionally cute, Mendel seems to draw people to him. Certainly, we were shown a particularly nightmarish level, and whenever he fell off a platform, without fail he always drew an "Aaaww" from the crowd. (It's just occurred to me that they could've been calling him a whore... Nah.)

Congratulations on your new baby

If you want to make life more difficult for yourself, you don't even have to start with a seven hour old Mendel, as there are settings which allow you to choose a one, two or four hour old model, or even a complete newborn. This version spends its formative minutes discovering itself. At first it just shakes its legs to see if they work, and then after a while it'll start staggering about in random directions, trying out limbs that



(Above left) House plagued by irritating spidery forms? You need new Laser-Pit-O, the household arachnid discourager that really works! (Music)
(Above, right) Sophisticated intelligence routines require sophisticated multi-window design tools.



(Top) Scary chess-type level thing ahoj.
(Above) Look, he's smiling at you.

seem scarcely able to support it. Opinion is divided in the office as to whether it's more like watching a baby giraffe in a nature film, or our Chris trying to get home from the pub.

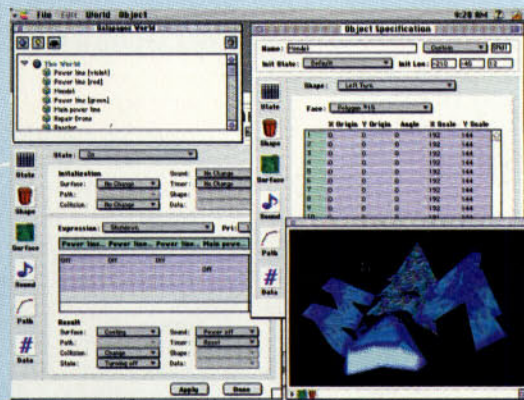
At first, Mendel will almost always start making his way around backwards, which usually results in him backing into something painful, or falling off the edge of a platform to his doom. Fortunately though, he does benefit from these harrowing experiences. "After a while," says Collins, "he'll learn that he can reduce the amount of pain in his life by walking forwards and using his sensors."

It's intriguing and absorbing stuff, and it sounds very complicated – it is – but it's extremely intuitive. Collins expands further: "We've set the game up for people without telling them anything about it except that it's controlled by

“Mendel’s behaviour is what’s called emergent, in that you can never tell exactly how he’ll turn out.”

the mouse. We just said, 'There you go, play that,' and when we went back into the room they'd be happily playing away."

It can also be incredibly frustrating when he doesn't do what you want. The game should probably have a "Liable To Provoke Savage And Obscene Language Among Monks" sticker slapped on the box. From the short time we've played it, it's clear that although Mendel looks like a spider made out of old cornflakes packets, there are times when you will love him. It's equally clear that there are times when you'll want to take him aside and smack the shit out of him with a sledgehammer. Before long we'll be crying into our keyboards, and once we've dried our tears we'll be giving you the full lowdown. If we haven't smashed our PCs first, that is. **Z**



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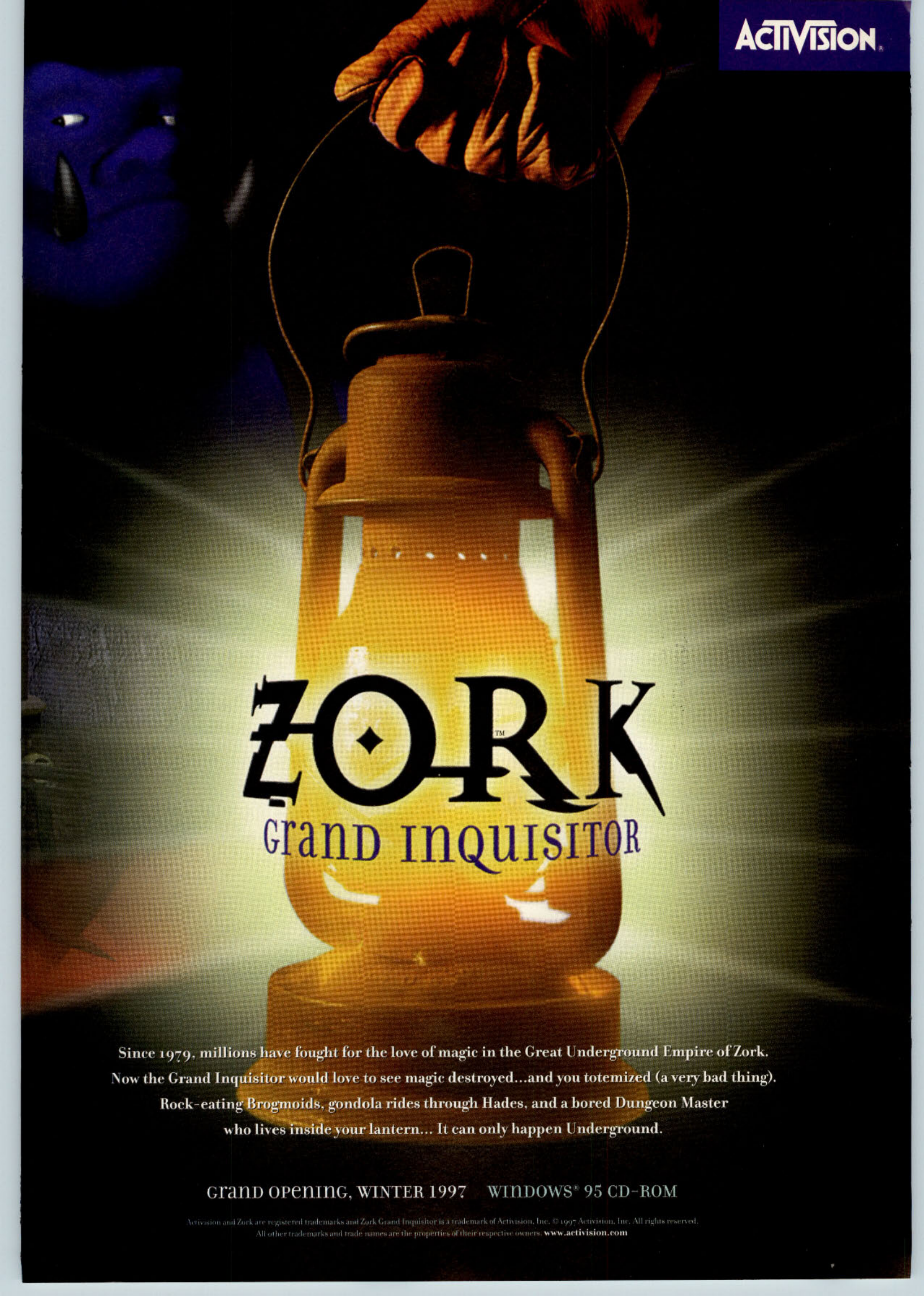
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Review ZONE

This month

Summer is well and truly over, your holiday tan has faded and most games companies are already starting to release games ready for the run up to the Christmas season. Start counting the days...



IT'S THE OCTOBER ISSUE AND THE GAMES MARKET IS STARTING TO GO INTO overdrive as developers and publishers gear up for their most profitable time of the year. More games will be sold in the next three month period than in the rest of the year and as a result everyone's deadline is the first week of December. Basically, if a game ain't out on the shelves by the time you've opened the first couple of windows on your Advent calendar, it will more often than not be held over by the marketing people until Easter, the second most profitable time to release a game. While this can be beneficial, as developers get an extra couple of months to tweak and polish their games, the downside is that many games will simply be lost in the run up to Christmas because there are just too many releases competing for space on the shelves come December. The October 1996 issue of *PC Zone* carried ten full reviews. If you glance to the panel on the right, you'll see that this time round there are substantially more. Thankfully, some publishers have attempted to pull some of their games forward in an effort to raise their market share and ease the congestion, and as a result this month has been a busy one for new releases.

LucasArts' *Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II*, the second big 'Quake Killer' (after last month's *Hexen II*) is finally ready for release and thankfully it's everything we always hoped it would be. Although not as immediate as the big 'Q', it's heaped in atmosphere and is very much geared towards the single player as well as sporting innovative multi-player features. Everyone who's played it has been captivated, although unlike *Hexen II* which looks nice enough running under software, it's pretty obvious that you're going to need a 3D accelerator card if you want to play *Jedi* the way the developers intended. Start saving for that 3Dfx card now. Elsewhere, *Constructor* from Acclaim, *The Tone Rebellion* from The Logic Factory and *Flight Sim 98* from Microsoft all did as well as expected, securing either 'Classic' or 'Recommended' status. News Ed Paul surprised everyone (including himself) by getting quite hooked on *Warlords III*, while new boy Richie became quite smitten with *Ignition*, a compulsive top-down racer from Virgin. It may not look that exciting, but in two-player split-screen mode it tempted almost every passer-by to stop and take up our new Staff Writer's challenge. Some of them even engaged in conversation. Sadly, *Gutz 'N' Garters*, *World Wide Soccer* and *Legacy Of Kain* all failed to live up to expectations. Next month will see even more games crammed into these pages, fighting for attention. Rest assured we'll do our best to cover every new release as soon as we get our hands on reviewable code. ☺

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Scoring system

90+ CLASSIC



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

80-89 RECOMMENDED



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

70-79

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

50-69

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

40-49

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

21-39

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

20 AND BELOW PANTS



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

In Perspective

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

Game 1



Game 2



ATI 3D
Native Version
Available



3DBLASTER
Native Version
Available



3DFX
Native Version
Available



DIAMOND STEALTH
Native Version
Available



MATROX MYSTIQUE
Native Version
Available



POWERVR
Native Version
Available



The software is
designed to take
advantage of **D3D**



The software is
designed to take
advantage of **MMX**



This software will
only run under
WINDOWS 95



The software may
run slowly, especially
in hi-res mode



The software
supports **MICROSOFT
DIRECTINPUT**



The software
supports **MICROSOFT
DIRECTPLAY**



The software
supports
INTERNET PLAY



The software will
run acceptably on a
486DX2/66

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THANKS THIS ISSUE TO:

Tuffy - for holding our hands

Tim MacDonald - for being a quick learner

Lee Hyde - for getting on with it

Macca - for getting away with it

LucasArts & VIE

Damon Le Geyt @ The Design League

Susie @ Core Design

Text 100 & Microsoft

Matt @ BlueByte

Cool games

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



Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II

◀ **Hexen II**

Age Of Empires

Constructor

Flight Sim 98

Crap games

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



Super Puzzle Fighter 2 Turbo

Gutz 'N' Garters

◀ **World Wide Soccer**

Counteraction

Ten Pin Alley

(Right) Dual Jedi bum-chums, Gore and Pic. (Below) Baron's Hed: The Defeated city. Plenty of innocent civilians for the chopping.



PC
ZONE
Classic

"Avail yourself of the third-person view, where you can see Kyle dancing about, crouching, leaping and poncing around like Wayne Sleep."



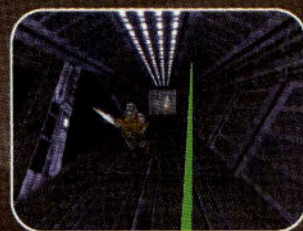
Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II

"Let me look on you with my own eyes," says **David McCandless** as he finally unwraps his spooage-encrusted copy of *Dark Forces II*.

T

TAKE IT, YOUNG JEDI, AND YOUR JOURNEY TO THE DARK SIDE WILL BE complete!" So said the handsome Emperor Palpatine in the little known 1985 hit film, *Return Of The Jedi*, the third part of a trilogy headlined *Star Wars*. The 'Jedi' bit referred to an ancient class of warriors capable of mastering a magical power called The Force. This force bound together a hokey sci-fi universe, populated with B-list stars – Peter Cushing, David Prowse (the Green Cross Code man for Chrissakes), and a cast of unknowns – who bounced around the galaxy, trying to save it from the evil Empire. They should've tried saving it from a badly written script which featured a lead character called Luke Skywalker, a seven-foot furry ape, a shiny, camp robot, a princess, and an interminably dull army of cute teddy bears. Marketed as a space opera, its theme tune was unmemorable, its visuals bleak, and its special effects derivative. Despite the fact that the film did quite well in Indonesia, its bearded director, George Lucas, retired into obscurity. It failed to acquire cult status, and only one of the cast – Kenny Baker, who played robot R2D2 – went on to any notable success. He's starring with Cheryl Baker ▶

(Top) The piggy Gamorrean's puny skill are "no match for the power of the Dark Side". (Middle) Coruscant, the Imperial capital. (Below) Come on then, Jedi-Quentin.



in Jack & The Bean Stalk at the Cambridge Corn Exchange this Christmas.

It's strange then that such an obscure film should father a host of computer game titles. And some of them were pretty good. One in particular, *Dark Forces*, threatened to out-*Doom Doom* with its accurate recreations of the film's *Blue Peter* special effects and involving storyline. Now, two years later, its sequel, *Jedi Knight*, has finally materialised, sporting a clever 3D engine, fully polygonal characters, those ludicrous light sabres from the films, and much guffing about The Force. Hah, maybe Mr Lucas will make enough money from these game spin-offs to film more of those *Star Wars* epics. Not bloody likely. (*Er, are you sure about all this?* - Ed)

So, you have accepted the truth

In the first game, Kyle Katarn was a good-for-nothing scoundrel, eager only for money and adventure, hired by the Rebels to infiltrate the Empire and their dastardly plot to create Dark Troopers. This time, Kyle discovers he has the Force gene and decides to follow the way of the Jedi. As the



(Above) It's Gore, dark Jedi and party animal. He may be dumb but he does a great trick with three AA batteries, an onion and his light saber.

The levels

NARSHADDA: THE LOST DISK



After a warm-up on the first tutor level, you finally embark on a bit of architectural argy-bargy on level two. Huge abysses, weird curving tunnels and graffiti-painted walls are the hallmarks here. Gammorian Guards saunter about the place, and huge machines clank and groan in the background. Your aim is to find your father's disk.

TIE BOMBER



Once you've chopped up your first Dark Jedi, you must escape from Jerec's palace - no easy task when a full-sized TIE Bomber is strafing the scenery with ion bombs. With liberal use of force jumps and much pixel-perfect manoeuvring over narrow struts, you find yourself deep inside an Imperial complex.

AQUEDUCT LEVEL



Top map this. It starts off relatively innocently. There's nice big flood barriers which have to be deactivated and then a leisurely paddle into - yeargh! - a sky-high, pencil-thin toboggan run with troops posted on every corner. Then comes a huge bath which must be flooded. Long, exciting, and very scary.

YOUR FATHER'S GAFF



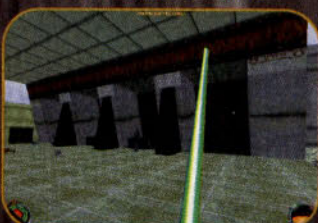
This is a nice grassy contrast to the previous 'mech' level. You start outside, being assailed by nasty Bowcaster-wielding soldiers. You're forced to explore the ruined interior - overturned chairs and tables, broken floors and collapsing ceilings. After a quick turn in this labyrinth, and a bout in a big water puzzle, you'll be knee high in the 'space sewers'.

COLLAPSING SHIP



This is the pièce de résistance - a furious dash through a gravitationally-challenged ship. Storm Troopers and Threepios scabble about madly in panic. Explosions go off. Lights fail. A male-voiced countdown calmly chimes: "Three... two... one..." And then there's a massive 'puzzle door' puzzle to get to your ship. Aaaarggggeeee, but it's exciting.

THE FALLEN CITY



If the dark side has been itching at your conscience, now's your chance to finally choose your destiny. In a whole town packed with innocent civilians, shopping, talking and making a din, either use your marksmanship to pick off the baddies from a group of bystanders, or just blow the whole lot up with a single rocket. Your choice.

(Below) Some of the stunning architecture of *Jedi*. A rather deep pit. (Middle) Inside the bowels of a crashing cruiser. (Bottom) Take it out on an R2 unit if you're pissed.



story unfolds, we find that a band of Dark Jedi, led by balding, snarling Jerec, are searching for the mystical tomb of the Jedi, wherein lies much power and few parties. Unfortunately, Kyle's father holds the key to the location of the tomb, so he is soon bumped off – cue weepy John Williams death tune – leaving Kyle to cavort around the galaxy, chasing and attempting to eliminate the Darkies before they get all the glory.

The 30 or so levels follow the plot, with cut-scenes popping up instead of mission briefings to flesh out your mission in the next map. You start off in Coruscant, the imperial capital, journey via Baron's Hed: The Fallen City, through various inside and outside locales, and through Storm Trooper laden fortresses. Typically, apart from chopping people up and getting lost, you have a few tasks to perform in each section. You retrieve the disk, blow the generator, flood the level, and so on. Every eight levels or so you get to face a Dark Jedi or two in combat, preparing you for the ultimate confrontation with the mighty Jerec.

On the face of it, *Jedi Knight is Dark Forces I*, recast in true 3D. It has almost exactly the same feel – which is good. You get into the same scrabbling blaster fights and pick off the same Storm Troopers from miles away – which is good. It has the same head-up display map and intensely spacious architecture – which is good. But, of course, it introduces a bunch of incredibly cool new stuff to bring it in line with the *Quakes*, the *Hexen IIs*, and the *Tomb Raiders*. Which is, you know, good.

I have felt him, my master

First off, on the big innovation front, are the visuals. They are all 3D, all perspective-correcting, all dynamically lit, and all texture-mapped to buggery. Bitmaps have been replaced with fully-animating polygonal characters. The once stiff looking up and down is now a smoothly panoramic, mouse-controlled experience. And there's even a Lara Croft-esque, third-person perspective view for those who would like to ogle Kyle's botty, deal with multiple assassins in a light sabre fight, or swim Mario-like through tunnels.

Next is character development. Unlike the faceless marine in *Quake* or the strapping young Troll (or whatever) in *Hexen*, *Jedi* gives you a character you can work on. Okay, he has a beard and vaguely resembles Mark Hamill, but it's a start. Apart from a few spoken in-game asides – 'Long live the Rebellion!' and 'Locked' – most of the personality building revolves around the Force powers. At the end of each level you are awarded stars for your performance – finding secrets, weapons accuracy, good deeds, and your restraint in not saying "Your powers are weak, old man" every time you slay somebody with the light sabre. Particularly swotty players may earn four or five stars a level which they can then stick to their swot chart of Force powers, on either the Neutral, Light, or Dark sides.

The bad guys

Ye gods, but *Jedi* is packed with monsters. Every conceivable alien supporting cast member and Mos Isley canteena denizen seems to have rendered and jammed into the crannies of the levels. The first few maps are packed with Three-Eyes. They're ugly but basically unarmed, coming at you with fists. There's the odd Greedo kicking about as well, but they're as easy to dispatch as they were in the film. Later on, the rather cool Gamorrian Guards materialise out of the shadow, grunting and waving their little piggy arms. But they're very susceptible to 'The Grip' (Dark Side Force power only).

Later on, more familiar foes appear – namely our friends and yours, StormTroopers and Imperial Guards. Top fodder for your blaster and as inaccurate and crap as always.

Every eight levels or so, you get to tête-a-tête with a Dark Jedi, one of the Jerec's posse. The first one, Yun, is pretty much a munchkin in the scheme of things – young and impressionable. He goes immediately invisible but you can follow his little dancing lights and chop him up. Maw, chopped in half by your former master, is a little more tricky. He's prone to flying around and battering you with Emperor-style thunderbolts. The real pain, however, is

when you face Gore and Pic, the Little and Large of the Jedi world, and just as funny. They work together, assailing you as a team, or bouncing off in all sorts of directions and attacking you from all angles. Your best bet is separate them, loosen them up with a few missile attacks, and then chop them up stylishly in close combat. Before your ultimate showdown with Jerec, you get to deal with his right-hand woman – Shariss. Apart from being exceedingly athletic, she is a dab hand at 'The Grip' and spends most of her time throttling you from afar. Not to be toyed with as you would most women.

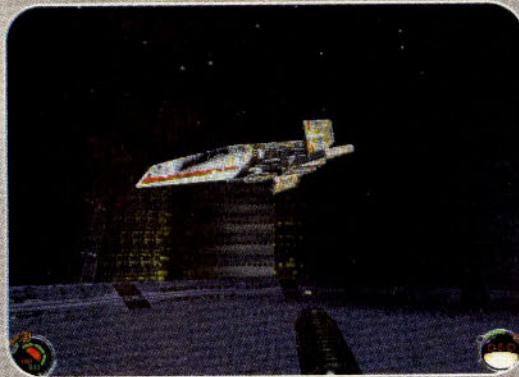
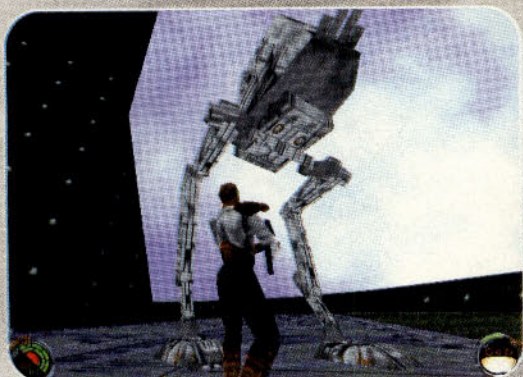


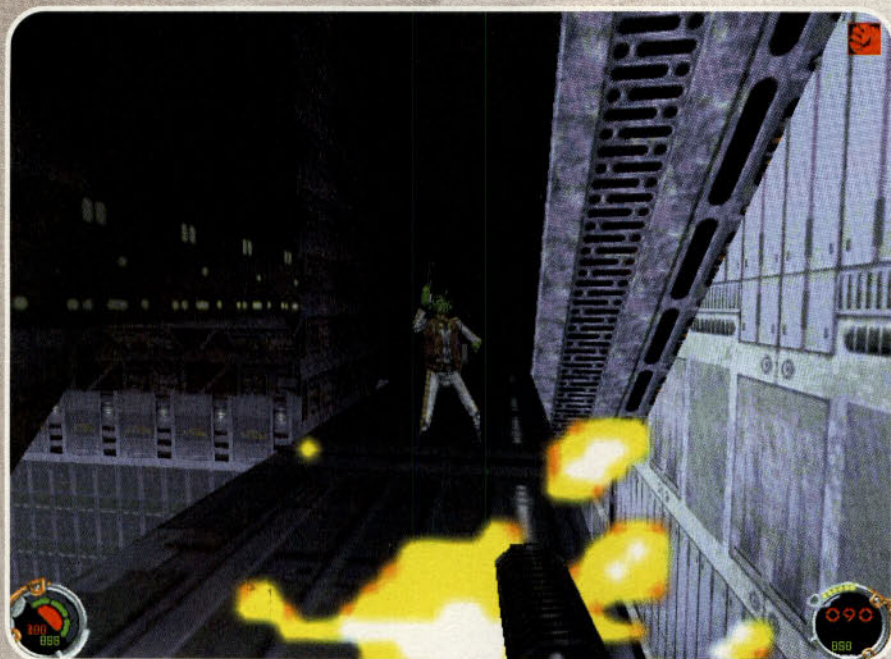
(Above) It's wrong to bash handicapped people about but half-Jedi, Maw, deserves it. He killed your father and will quite happily do the same to you.

Neutral is mainly acrobatic, with big jumps and extra running speed. You can 'pull' (to grab far away opponents' weapons) and 'see' (to clock nearby secrets and monsters). The Light Side's powers, as you would expect from Yoda's rather pious attitude to life, are boring and defensive. 'Health', 'Absorb' and 'Protection' are all self-explanatory. 'Persuasion' makes people your friends and drone-like slaves (oh to have had that at the school disco), while 'blinding' makes your opponents stumble, hands-scrabbling, into blunt objects (especially useful during *Careless Whisper*).



(Left) Scrap hand-to-hand with an AT-AT. (Middle) Your beloved ship – great looking bird. (Right) Haven't you always wanted to do this?





◀ The Dark Side, of course, is mondo cool. 'Throw' bungs your opponents into orbit. 'ThunderBolt' chucks a flaming explosive bolt of the type masturbated over by Jeffrey Dahmer. 'Destruction' is just sheer death. And 'Deadly Sight' is a more painful version of blinding. To stop you going overboard and rampaging around the galaxy, all the powers are limited by a well of strength (ie an energy bar).

You can stick your stars anywhere – Vader-wards or to Kenobisville. But be warned, Jedi you are not. Too many points on the Dark Side and you may develop a speech impediment (as in 'Rebel friendssssss'). Then, towards the end of the game, you are faced with a choice: kill your voluptuous, but irritatingly captured sidekick, or attempt to save her – and so choose your dessssssstiny.

He's holding a thermal detonator

When not farting around with The Force, you naturally use a range of high-class laser weaponry. Starting off with the Bryar pistol (slow firing rate, but accurate), you swiftly upgrade to the Storm Trooper pistol (fast firing but inaccurate) while collecting a few egg-boxes of Thermal Detonators (grenades to you). Beyond that, there is the Repeater, a pellet-based machine gun with a three-barrelled alternate fire. The BowCaster, as sported by Chewie in the films, is deadly at close range, but tricky to aim. The Concussion Rifle, as carried by bounty hunter Bosk, lets rip



(Above) Deathmatch action in the skies. (Top Right) "Stop Rebel scum!" says the Stormtrooper. "Eat blaster!" you wittily retort. (Right) Yun and Kyle battle it out in a full-on Samurai stylee.



(Top) Greedo gives you some argy-bargy. (Above) Cut-scene Kyle gets his blade wet and shiny.



Deathmatch



Jedi deathmatch is interesting but it takes a while to warm to. When we looked at it, it was happily supporting eight players and was planning to support more. There's also a load of Internet TCP/IP stuff (no word on the exact number of players possible here). You can opt for straight deathmatch, Capture The Flag, or Jedi TeamPlay if you want a big sword fight. It has a very similar feel to *Duke Nukem* network play – lots of very fast running characters, big juicy weaponry, and much picking people off from miles away across the level. We'll return to Jedi deathmatch at a later date in the *On-Line* section of the mag, once we've finished spooping over the single-player incarnation and LucasArts have got everything fully implemented.

its own little mushroom cloud. Then, on the pyrotechnic side, you can toy with IM Mines, proximity or timed, and a devastating rocket launcher. And then, three levels into the game, you will finally receive your (cliché) father's light sabre.

LucasArts have obviously spent a while pondering how to make the sabre a useful tool in a game so packed with blasters. Fear not, the control system is cool. You repeatedly press fire, waggle the mouse in an obvious direction, and the sabre will perform an appropriate move – be it chop, parry or thrust. Most opponents will be felled by a couple of swipes from the old green lolly. And if they're distant, and depending on your Force well and star rating, old Kyle will automatically intercept and repel blaster bolts. The best deal here is to step outside your body and avail yourself of the third-person view, where you can see Kyle dancing about, crouching, leaping and poncing around like Wayne Sleep. With fire pressed down, up and down mouse movements intuitively shift the camera around so you can see the action and deliberate your next move from a canny camera angle.

The sabre is pretty much rooted in your hands. You can't throw it, Vader-style, as was rumoured in some previews. But you can use it to light your way.

In time, you will call me master

The Jedi engine is impressive. It handles most of the stuff that *Quake* can. It has dynamic lighting, so projectiles and explosions illuminate their surroundings. It has transparent water, which is hilarious when watching your opponents being dragged helplessly by the current to their doom. It's fully texture-mapping and perspective-correcting, so your view doesn't shear and distort when you look up and down (à la *Duke Nukem*). It doesn't have the level of detail which

Quake architecture can achieve. You find very few of the archways, balustrades, dappled shadows, ribbed walls and little touches which make a *Quake* level. Instead, the *Jedi* maps are very much in the style of *Dark Forces* – huge, boxy, and meandering.

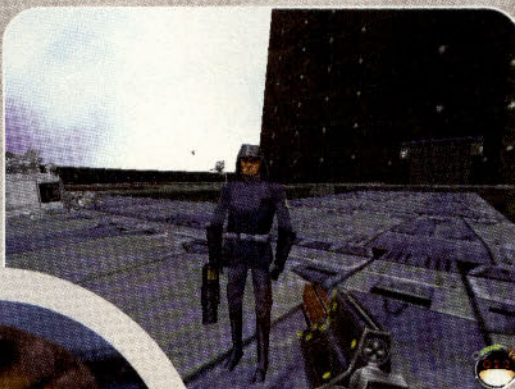
Some may find the wide open spaces a little agoraphobic after being closeted by *Quake*. Gameplay can become a tad repetitive as you wander around the mostly vast, empty sets collecting shield upgrades and health, operating the odd huge piece of machinery, and scrapping two or three baddies. But the levels are *really* huge. They delve up and down and across acres of territory *Quake* would be unable to provide. And, more endearingly, they bounce into real-life locales – market places, factories, aqueducts, palaces and cruiser ships – which any *Quake*-powered game would be hard-pushed to emulate.

The sense of scale and distance is great. Peek over the edge of a skyscraper in Coruscant, the imperial city, and you may feel vomit rise in your throat and go all swoony in the head. If you're a ponce. Normal people will just be impressed by the sheer height and even more impressed when a filthy Greedo they've just shot on the other side of the abyss goes tumbling a zillion miles to the bottom and clunks satisfyingly on the pavement. There's no welter of brain matter or rivulets of arterial blood seeping into the gutter, but this is a LucasArts game after all.

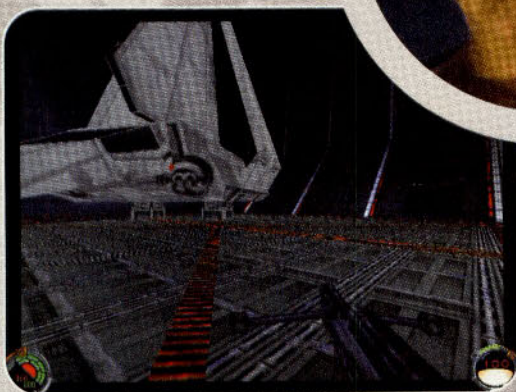
You can never quite predict where you're going to end up either. A level may start you off in an industrial complex, then drag you through a rocky mountain pass to a high-rise aqueduct system, and then to a warren of rooms inside a palace. It's like having four *Quake* levels sellotaped into one. And then a lot of the cool touches which made *Dark Forces* so memorable pop up to disrupt the rhythm. There's a roof-top map, for instance, where

The artwork is great. The animation is fantastic. If you get bored wandering around you can take a pop at an R2 unit or power droid, which keel over most satisfyingly after several blaster hits. The Three-Eyes, Gammarian Guards, Bosks and Gredos all have multiple death animations, and clutch excellently at their perforated bodies as they sink to the floor. Storm Troopers and Imperial Guards all crumple nicely, dropping their weapons properly, so they either skid across the floor or fall out of their hands as they sink to their knees.

There are problems, however. Some of your opponents are pretty dumb. They will quite happily tumble off a precipice trying to get to you. You can also pick one guy off and the one right next to him may not react as you might expect him to. Light sabres, although a canny addition to the armoury, are a bit too automatic. Sword fights often boil down to mad, swiping affairs. And you can tell the cut-scenes haven't been



(Above) Imperial Guard as stropky as ever. (Middle) Maw close up. Cornish Pasty anyone? (Bottom) "It's an old code, sire, but it checks out".



you're bombed repeatedly by a fully-rendered TIE Bomber. It swoops over the area, dumping napalm on you, while you scurry around looking for a way out. Then there's a superb map set inside a crashing Corellian cruiser. You have to race through the labyrinthine interior, desperately searching for the escape pod before it hits the surface of a planet. But the ship is rotating as it falls, so the ceiling becomes the floor and the nice little tunnel you're traversing can suddenly turn into a 700-metre fall. It's worth just stopping to watch panicking R2 units sliding around squealing.

Take it and strike me down

The gameplay is exciting. There are tons of atmospheric touches and the sound is fantastic, ripped straight from the film. The Gammarian Guards squeal when they die. The light sabre hums and distorts accurately when you wave it in the air. The blasters, er, make *that* blaster noise. And of course, you have the dynamic *Star Wars* theme streaming off your CD-drive to add to the wraparound *Jedi* fantasy.

directed by George Lucas. They look fantastic – simmering in true DirectX 5-o-vision – but they are pretty averagely edited and blue-screened against a bunch of snoozy backdrops.

The environments lack interactivity. Sure you can blow up the odd box, chop at grills with the light sabre, and push buttons to open doors and operate machinery. But *Jedi* lacks the interactivity of, say, *Duke Nukem*. Sure there are non-player characters floating about you can talk to, but all they seem to say is "leave me alone" and "no blasters" (which is obviously a Light Side Force test to see if you can stop yourself whipping them about the head and shoulders with your sabre). *Jedi* also lacks some of the mod cons of its 3D contemporaries – namely *Hexen II* and the forthcoming *Quake II*. Particle effects, for instance, are at a minimum. And some of the weapons feel upsettingly weak.

But then it boils down to a style issue. *Jedi* keeps its head above water in a sea of *Quake*-powered, *Quake*-style games. Just because X and Y have blow-up-able walls and object location puzzles doesn't mean *Jedi* has to. LucasArts have cleverly opted for a particular style and feel, taking the positive elements from *Dark Forces*. You can explore, run around, marvel at the architecture, and feel immersed in a story's style. They have obviously looked long and hard at *Tomb Raider* too. And it's worked. Above all, *Jedi* feels refreshing to play. It's not just another *Quake* clone and the fact that LucasArts have developed their own 3D engine obviously has a lot to do with this.

With a gradual accumulation of Force power, achingly huge levels, some incredible theme levels and spot effects, death-match, a spankily true 3D engine, and wall-to-wall *Star Wars*-iness, *Jedi Knight* is everything we want. No, it's not *Quake*. It's *Dark Forces*, in a brilliant little genre of its own. **Z**

In Perspective

One big obvious comparison here is *Quake*, which *Jedi* beats hands down as a single-player game. It also has stuff in common with *Hexen II* and, of course, *Dark Forces*.

Jedi Knight

Quake

Hexen II

Dark Forces

Tech Specs

Memory: 16Mb

Processor: Pentium

Graphics: VGA, SVGA, 3Dfx

Sound: All major soundcards

Controls: Mouse, joystick, keyboard

Note: Supports Direct3D so most modern 3D accelerators are Jedi-ready.



Score

Impressive, most impressive.



Price: £44.95

Release date: November

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The Tone Rebellion



"Bloody hell, this is weird," said Paul Presley in last month's preview of *The Tone Rebellion*. "Bloody hell, this is weird," says Chris Anderson in this month's review. You can take it, then, that it's probably a bit weird.

W

here some games are deceptively simple, others are deceptively confusing. The *Tone Rebellion*, as you may have gathered, falls firmly into the latter category. There are several reasons for this. It looks weird for a start. Take a quick look at the in-game shots and you'll see all manner of strange creatures and artefacts. This will be something of a culture shock to strategy enthusiasts brought up on a diet of *Red Alert*, *Civilization*, or even *Ascendancy*, the last game from the Logic Factory (creators of *The Tone Rebellion*).

There's nothing immediately identifiable about *Tone Rebellion*. The others have recognisable soldiers (*Red Alert*), or historical races (*Civ*), or even spaceships (*Ascendancy*).



(Top) Here's a high-level floater giving a Leviathan a piece of his mind. Literally. (Above) Collect artefacts, put them in glyphs, and you'll see pretty pictures like this one.



"The Tone Rebellion is not the greatest strategy game of all time, but it's an absorbing diversion."

So it was then that Paul Presley spent some considerable time last month pacing up and down the office in a rather confused state, wondering exactly why he couldn't figure out the basics of *Tone Rebellion* from the early preview version he had. Having played the game for days on end, I can see exactly what his problem was. The first few hours I spent with *Tone Rebellion* were very disorientating. The interface looked clumsy and confusing (although it isn't, bear with me) and there was a strange-looking dial at the left of the screen which supposedly reflected how powerful your chosen race in the game was compared to all your opponents, although it didn't seem to have any bearing on the actual gameplay while I was playing. Then suddenly, the penny dropped.

The wood for the trees

The Tone Rebellion is simplicity itself once you get to grips with it. The general gist of it is this. At the start of the game you choose a race to play from one of four different tribes (or 'floaters' as they're more commonly known). You start on a single island, which you must conquer in the face of opposition from the Leviathan. The Leviathan are, of course, the baddies in the game. They are heavy-duty baddies and there are, as you would expect, many of them.

Unlike most real-time strategy games, *Tone Rebellion* gives you plenty of time to think at the beginning of each level before you take on the Leviathan. This is where you get to practice your advanced skills of resource management before taking on the nasties. At this point you'll be needing a Structure Tone Generator, which provides the materials



(Top) As you progress through the game, all the islands will open up to you. (Above) This is your 'chosen' floater. Only he can unlock the key to the Leviathan's lair.



Choose your tribe at the start of the game. I recommend the Dyla, but hey, what do I know? (Not very much we have to concede - Ed)

you need to build structures with, and a Crystal Tone Generator, which supplies energy for all your floaters. The next building you'll need is a Tone Generator. This allows you to 'spread' your supply of Tone to the next screen, thereby giving you more room to build things. So what's all this Tone stuff about then? Well, I'll tell you, shall I?

The Tone is everything

And everything is the Tone. Or something. Anyway, the Tone supplies energy to all things in the game. Every time you build a Tone Generator, your 'Tone influence' spreads further, allowing you to see more of the level you're on. On the first level, as soon as you build a few Tone Generators, you'll explore enough of the level to come across the Leviathans and so find yourself in a bit of a fight. This is more or less what you'll be doing in all the levels. Lay down a Tone Generator, explore the level, fight the Leviathans and so on, until eventually you finish the game.

This could have become very boring very quickly if it wasn't for the fact that your creatures develop

the further you get into the game. You'll start off with fairly useless troops, but then you build new structures that breed stronger, better troops, and even magic users that have a variety of spells at their disposal. If you keep the same attack floaters alive from one level to the next, their experience points will go up, and eventually they'll go up an experience level giving them new powers and better attack abilities. Additionally, there is an artefact on each island which is activated when you insert the correct items. You need to activate all the artefacts on each island before you can finally confront the Leviathan in their own lair.

The Tone Rebellion is not the greatest strategy game of all time, but it's an extremely absorbing diversion if you're prepared to spend a little time getting used to how everything works. The graphics are fab, too, and the obligatory multi-player options are well catered for. I'm also told the realms 'thing' really comes into

play on the more difficult levels, so if you finish the game you can go back and try it again with the 'weirdy' factor turned up to maximum. **Z**



Realms and unreality

The four tribes in the game exist in four realms. They're not really realms, more like states of awareness - different levels on which the tribes perceive the world. All the tribes exist on all realms, but are more comfortable with their awareness on their own realm. Which brings me back to that little diagram on the left of the screen I was talking about earlier. See that dial? This shows

you the flow of Energy and force between the realms. The direction of the flow determines how one realm affects another. Each tribe of floaters has different



attributes in relation to the realms, either physical, natural, supernatural or ethereal. Still with me? Good. The tribe of floaters you're controlling, the attributes they have, and the way the energy is flowing according to the dial determines how powerful you are in relation to the other tribes in the game. Confused? So was I. But don't worry. I completed the entire game

without paying attention to any of this nonsense and still had a fab time into the bargain. So don't you worry your little head about it.

In Perspective

It's only now that I've come to the 'In Perspective' box that I realise there aren't many games you can compare *The Tone Rebellion* with, which makes it quite original. Suffice to say, it shares gameplay elements with the other titles here, while at the same time being truly in a world of its own.

Gene Wars

The Tone Rebellion

Afterlife

Red Alert

Masters Of Orion 2

Tech Specs

Memory: 16Mb

Processor: P90

Graphics: SVGA

Sound: SoundBlaster and compatibles

Controls: Mouse



Score

Some games are worth persevering with. This is one of them.



Price: £39.99

Release date: September

Publisher: Virgin

Telephone : 0171 368 2255

Web site: www.vie.com

dan The People's Choice
Personal Computers

Waterworld

If anyone can remember as far back as Issue 32, Chris Anderson went to the offices of Intelligent Games to see how *Waterworld* was coming along. "Did I?" he says, obviously in denial. Well, two years later it plops onto new guy, **Richie Shoemaker's** desk. After playing the game to within an inch of his sanity, he now tells you just what he thinks.

Based in the same waterlogged world as the most expensively mediocre film ever made, *Waterworld* the game is an isometric, top-down, squad-level shoot 'em up. As the War Chief, you must guide your handful of men over 21 missions in the hope of finding either resources, prisoners or both. Some missions will have you defending your own floating home from the various raiders who try to take you on. Controlling your troops is essentially the same as in *Red Alert*. You drag a box around them, assign control keys and send them off around the map. As you complete each mission you'll get to exchange resources for better weapons and armour, survivors will gain valuable experience, and you'll be able to watch specially shot footage featuring actors from the original film. Lucky you.

Die Toten Hosen

After 30 seconds, when you get to level two, you'll not only realise that the enemy lose their trousers when they die, but also how samey everything looks. Essentially, the developers have taken one scene from a hyped up, now tremendously out of date and mediocre film, and stretched it over 20-odd levels. Having to play on atolls doesn't make for many new and exciting twists in level design either. Everything is grey and flat, and consists mainly of



Could this scene be taken from any level in the game? Answers on the back of a jar of recycled urine, please.



There are a fair number of weapons available as the game progresses, but mallets are far and away the best for doing a spot of aggressive DIY.

platforms of varying thickness where you can walk and engage in combat. As well as being very similar, the levels lack any kind of atmosphere or inventiveness. The sea may lap the sides of the atoll, but there is no feel of how flimsy they are in the film. On the plus side, the soldiers are well animated, and the number of weapons and resources is adequate. But the range of bad guys is limited, and you can't help wishing that jet skis and mutant fishes would make an appearance to liven things up a little. This may not be completely in keeping with the movie plot, but that was two years ago. Once you've seen one bad guy going through the motions you've seen them all. If there was any advanced method in the bad guys' madness, I never noticed it. The AI isn't bad, but it isn't good either. A lot of the nasties will quite happily walk into a hail of bullets. While some may hold back, you soon grasp their IQ. If you keep your boys numerous and in the right places to pick up enough resources, it won't be long before you've played the game through without too much trouble. Rest assured, you'll never have to play it again.

Time to suck

This game was over two years in development, so you would've thought we'd be getting something special. Not so. Don't expect another *Dungeon Keeper*. This is essentially the same game Chris went to see back in 1995. If anything, it contains fewer features. It seems to me that the resource management side that was promised has been ditched, leaving only simplistic between-level trading. What really sucks big ostrich eggs are the 'time-to-rock' 'go-get-'em' voices from your men as you play. At first you laugh at them but after just a few minutes, you will want to strangle somebody.

Burning footage

While it doesn't deserve to burn to a crisp in hell, burning the soles of its feet with lighted cigarettes should prove a suitable punishment. It's almost as if the licence has held back any attempts on the developer's part to inject any depth or gameplay. Although there was plenty of scope in the storyline of the film to include more features, you can't help but feel that the programmers decided to cut their losses and get the game out. The end result is rather like the film: enjoyable enough at the time, but instantly forgettable. **Z**

In Perspective

If the game followed the plot of the truly unremarkable film, you would be able to control a guppy Kevin Costner against hordes of jet-skiing pikeys in the search for Dryland. It was a bad movie, a very bad movie. But it could have possibly been a good game – if more effort had been expended in developing the gameplay rather than concentrating on the dull story. We'll never know. Oh, by the way, Kev actually manages to find Dryland and kill all the bad guys. Did we ruin it for you? Shame.

Waterworld

Cannon Fodder II

C&C: Red Alert

Warcraft II

KKND

Tech Specs

Memory: 16Mb

Processor: P90 recommended

Graphics: SVGA

Sound: All major cards supported

Controls: Mouse, keyboard

Note: 65Mb hard drive required

Score

Still searching for dry land.



Price: £44.99

Release date: Out now

Publisher: Interplay

Telephone: 01628 423666

Website: www.interplay.com

dan The People's Choice
Personal Computers

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Take No Prisoners



If your friends look down on computer games, why not buy them a copy of *Take No Prisoners*? After all, it's all viewed from an overhead perspective. Shame the lead character doesn't have cleavage. **Charlie Brooker's** worried that his girlfriend might read this...



KAY, WE ALL LOVED GAUNTLET, RIGHT? Without getting too misty-eyed, it's fair to say that it was one of the most innovative multi-player games ever created. I personally

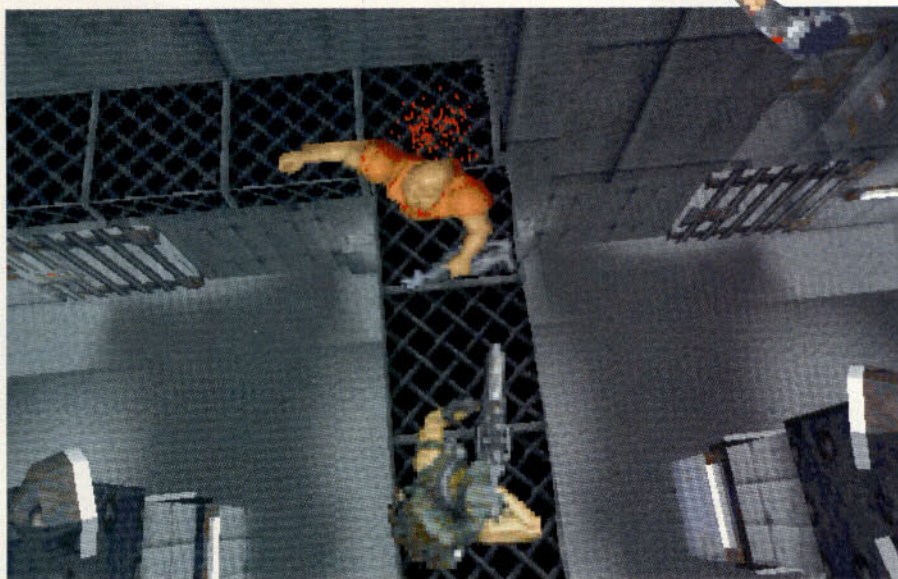
spent many a night huddled around the keyboard of my Acorn Electron in the company of three close friends (well, they had to be), scurrying around the levels of a Gauntlet hybrid, hurling axes at all and sundry, stopping only to take swigs of lemonade, stuff some Monster Munch into our mouths and stretch our aching limbs. The long winter evenings just flew by.

Then came *Alien Breed* on the Amiga. Another classic. This time two-player only, but what a game. And at least we didn't have to sit so close to each other around the keyboard. Yeah, it was simple, but it was just so playable, with a learning curve that was exactly right. Then we had

We want Woody

It helps if you can empathise with the 'hero' you're controlling in an action game. Not too much admittedly, but just a little. Pity then, that the star of *Take No Prisoners*, Slade, is such a hateful git. He's "a mercenary hired to do a job that no one else would have the capabilities to do", a "one-man war effort" who "lives alone, works alone, fights alone". And probably sleeps alone too, if there's any justice in the world.

Here's what we'd like to see: a gore-packed action game starring none other than *Sleeper*-era Woody Allen. Each time an enemy explodes in a shower of blood and bone, he'd say, "Ohhhh, Jesus" or, "Oh my, that's making me nauseous" in that wavering nasal whine of his, before collapsing in the corner for an hour of neurotic introspection. Hey! At least it'd be *different*.



"Compare it to the likes of Quake, and it's lost and flailing, like an epileptic giraffe at an ice rink."

Loaded from Gremlin, which looked great but was a bit limited, followed by *Re-Loaded*, which looked better but was still a bit limited. And now there's *Take No Prisoners*, which looks very similar to the very soon-to-be-released *Mage Slayer* (also from Raven) but sadly, like *Loaded*, still doesn't look like adding any kind of innovative ideas or originality to the genre.

Run the Gauntlet

Still, it's from Raven, who recently brought us the wholly wonderful *Hexen II*, so we'll give it the benefit of the doubt shall we? Er, then again, maybe we won't. You see, *Take No Prisoners* is, to all intents and purposes, an ever-so-slightly highbrow version of *Loaded* and not a lot more. According to the publishers the game uses "a unique overhead perspective", although according to my dictionary, the word 'unique' means "sole, without a like", so presumably *Mage Slayer* doesn't actually exist at the moment – who knows?

As previous top-down games have shown, it's the simple ones that work best: *Smash TV*, for example, is basically a single-screen affair in which countless enemies swarm toward you, ripe for blasting. Fun for a quick, 15-minute shoot-out, but not much more. The aforementioned *Loaded* was slightly more complex, requiring the player to run around a series of sprawling maps in search of keys and secret passageways and, as a result, the gameplay soon became



(Top) Slade – 'a one man war effort'. We reckon he's a Quentin. (Bottom) Some more gore and some exploding things... Sigh.



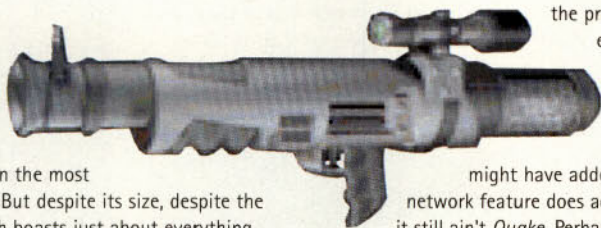
Life only becomes complete in this drab, sci-fi *Gauntlet*-clone when you finally get hold of the most impressive flamethrower.

tedious. Well, *Take No Prisoners* takes *Loaded*, spruces up the 3D elements, adds a few adventure game conceits (such as the inventory), and is therefore more elaborate and more enjoyable than *Loaded*. But not much more and so it still has the ability to get a bit tedious.

It's certainly a big game – there are 20 hulking levels, which can be tackled in a non-linear fashion if that's your fancy – and the level of challenge on offer should test the nerves of even the most seasoned twitch game freak. But despite its size, despite the comprehensive arsenal (which boasts just about everything from light-sabre-alikes to shurikens to rocket launchers), and despite the genuinely innovative features (such as the use of

a 'real' 3D environment which ensures multi-tiered levels and plenty of cavernous plunges, or the aforementioned adventuring elements), it's hindered by awkward controls, repetitive action, and an uninspiring storyline.

The amount of effort involved in the production is very much in evidence – so it's annoying that the ultimate end product is simply not a lot of fun to play. A split-screen multi-player option



might have added to the fun, although the network feature does add an extra dimension, but it still ain't *Quake*. Perhaps Raven should stick to what they're good at – and leave the entire *Gauntlet* genre in the digital graveyard, where it belongs. **Z**

Putting things in perspective

Okay, so top-down action games were cool – once. Before *Doom*. Before *Hexen*. Before *Quake*. It might work for RPGs, but when the emphasis is on shooting, you just can't beat the first-person perspective for control, immersion and well, just aiming at your foes. The publishers have tried to put forward some arguments as to why a top down perspective is 'kewl' – here are their arguments and a few choice responses that were bounced around the office after we'd all played *Take No Prisoners*...

1. It "provides a greater field of vision"

True. You can see around and behind you. Can't argue with that. Of course, you can hardly see very far in front, which is where you want to be looking, but we'll let that pass for now...

2. It makes it "easier to plan attack or defence strategies"

Come again? The combat consists of either shooting, hiding behind things, or running away – actions which can be far more intuitively performed in first-person 3D shooters, when you can see what you're doing from ground level.



3. It allows you to "attack enemies above or below you"

Yes, folks, unusually for a game of this type, you can aim up or down. But believe you me, until you've played it, you have no idea how unwieldy and annoying this is, especially when you inevitably find yourself pointing the gun at the floor while someone repeatedly shoots

you in the chest. Worse still, it's almost impossible to aim unless you're keeping the gun level.

4. It's "a better way of identifying yourself during combat"

Beg pardon? Come again? Better than a first-person perspective view, then? Let's take a vote on it shall we? Hands up anyone who's confused themselves with an opponent during a game of multi-player *Quake*? No? Single-player then? Anyone? No? Funny that.

5. It "allows players to control the timing and force of attacks from various directions"

Er, yes, but doesn't any game with a set of direction controls and a fire button fulfil those criteria more or less automatically? Huh?

In Perspective

Take No Prisoners bills itself as a "hardcore action game", so against other hardcore action games it shall be judged. Compared to other top down-shooters it doesn't fare too badly, but compare it to the likes of *Quake* and it's lost and flailing, like an epileptic giraffe at an ice rink.

Loaded (PSX)

Gauntlet (Arcade)

Smash TV (Arcade)

Take No Prisoners

Tech Specs

Memory: 16Mb

Processor: P90

Graphics: VGA/SVGA

Sound: All major sound cards

Controls: Keyboard, joypad



Score

It tries hard, but it's still rather limited.



Price: ETBA

Release date: October

Publisher: Red Orb

Telephone: 01784 486918

Web site: www.redorb.com

dan The People's Choice
Personal Computers

Warlords III: Reign Of Heroes



Paul Mallinson reckons that this scorching new game from Red Orb Entertainment could go on to become one of his all-time favourites.

ARGH! YOU KNOW HOW it is when you become hopelessly addicted to a new game – the dirty washing begins to pile up, you surround yourself with smeg-encrusted dinner plates (not to mention the house collection of coffee mugs), the bills go unpaid and your wife and children leave because you've stopped talking to them. Okay then, maybe not the last one (not in my case, anyway), but the rest are definitely applicable to the time I spent reviewing Warlords III – a game that could easily be dismissed (pre-judged even) as another one of those bleedin' 'no frills' hex-based fighting fantasy strategy games with titchy graphics and a high degree of unoriginality. However, those who've taken the time to explore further into the highly organised workings of the game itself, will know that this definitely isn't the case.

Don't turn the page

Top-down, turn-based, wizards, goblins, elves... most people would have turned the page by now, but after seeing the 90 per cent score, you no doubt want to know what the hell this is all about.

Well the aim of Warlords III is simple: build up an army of thugs, mercenaries, mutants and rednecks, destroy the opposition and assimilate their resources as your own. Easy. This game is stat-heavy to say the least, with lots of combat, spellcasting, dabbling with magical items, and looking up maiden's gowns. (Ooh er – Ed)

The beauty of Warlords III is that it's such an easy game to get into. Absolutely everything, right from the brilliantly structured Report Menu (which details every single detail of the current state of play), to the hyper-fast load/save

facility has been created with the gamer firmly in mind. The interface is a breeze to get used to (holding down the right mouse button on any object reveals more), there's an excellent tutorial, and in no time at all you've got thousands of armies yomping about a D&D-style landscape hacking each other to bits with magical swords.

Up to eight players can participate in any of the 12 one-off scenarios, or in one of the infinite number of randomly generated maps, using DirectInput to support TCP/IP Internet play through Broderbund's Red Orb Zone, plus of course all the inevitable network/modem/two-players-at-one-machine malarkey. Thanks to a user-friendly pre-game set-up screen, this is an absolute doddle to get up and running – which is good because Warlords III was just made to be played multi-player.



Warlords III's AI is excellent – allied forces come to your aid if necessary and enemy units are not afraid to run away if outnumbered.

If you don't have the right set-up to play Warlords III over the wire, then DO NOT WORRY because the single-player game is a 'stunna' in its own right too – thanks in the main to the inclusion of the scenarios and an excellent multi-part campaign mode. It's a pity Red Orb didn't include a comprehensive map editor with the package, but there is some compensation in the form of a random map generator and some tremendous computer-controlled AI.

Red letter from the LEB

Warlords III has pretty much everything you could want from a game of this type. It isn't without its faults (castles are hard to select when full of troops, and waiting for enemies hidden behind the optional 'fog of war' is tedious to say the least), but they're easily dismissed in light of the sheer addictive qualities of the gameplay. I'm completely hooked – and I think you will be too.

The compulsion arises from wanting to see what happens next. Once your armies have been placed out, you want to find out if your strategies have worked out as planned – so you click 'end turn', check around, end up moving your armies around again, and... well, never get to bed. Or get the washing done. Or the bills paid. **Z**

In Perspective

Our man Chris wouldn't hesitate in battering me stupid if I so much as dared to rate Warlords III above XCOM or Age Of Empires, so erring on the side of prudence, I'll leave it at that. Heroes Of Might & Magic II and Cave Wars, however, don't quite match up to the high standard of Warlords III, even though they both stand up as good games in their own right.

XCOM Apocalypse

Age Of Empires

Heroes Of Might & Magic II

Cave Wars

Warlords III: Reign Of Heroes

Tech Specs

Memory: 16Mb RAM

Processor: Pentium 75

Graphics: VGA/SVGA

Sound: All major sound cards

Controls: Mouse, keyboard



Score

Utterly compulsive with tremendous longevity.

90

Price: £39.99

Release date: August

Publisher: Red Orb Entertainment

Telephone: 01429 855000

Website: www.warlords3.com

dan The People's Choice
Personal Computers



The key to success, Warlords III's heroes and heroines increase in power as they progress through the game. What an organised way in which to relay such gruesome information, dontcha think?



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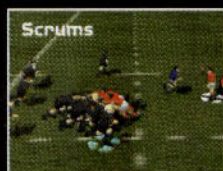


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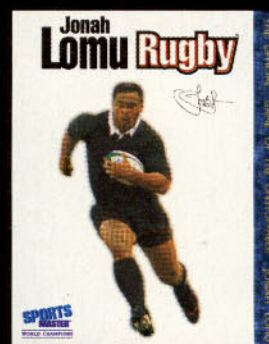
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Dark Earth



This is Kalhi, your girlfriend. Don't give her a chance to open her mouth, whatever you do! She'll only start moaning about all the washing up you left last night.

It's French, it's weird and it has a serious aversion to light. Just like **Chris Anderson** (bar for the French bit).

WHILE ADELIN HAVE BEEN putting the finishing touches to their adventure classic Little Big Adventure 2, and Delphine have been pottering away in the background getting Heart Of Darkness ready to finally face the music (you never know, it might actually appear some day), fellow French persons Kalisto have been working day and night to produce something completely different, namely Dark Earth.

Not that there haven't been games that combine adventure and beat 'em up elements on the PC before – *Alone In The Dark* and *Bioforge* are two notable examples. There's nothing particularly unique about that. What is rather unique, though, is that Kalisto have attempted to produce an adventure with a very strong compelling storyline and then sort of based the other game elements very loosely around that.

Le futur est noir

The game is set in the far future at a time when the Earth, as you may have guessed, has gone completely dark. This unfortunate state of affairs apparently came to being following a massive collision of asteroids. Most of the world is wiped out, and the ones who have survived live in small villages or Stallites scattered hither and thither. Presumably, in an attempt to make the best of a bad situation, the survivors decide to keep themselves amused by forming various religions devoted to sun worship. You take the role of



Arkhan, an occupant of Stallite Sparta, whose duties as a Guardian of Fire include keeping law and order around the Stallite. While investigating an 'incident' one day, Arkhan is overcome by a doer of bad things and infected with a disease which deforms him and begins to drain away his life force. So begins your task in the game – to find out who attacked you and somehow put a stop to the horrible disease that threatens your very existence. Cue interesting mix of puzzling and punching of foes...

Les splendiferous graphiques

As it happens, you don't actually spend much of the game 'beating 'em up' as it were. You don't spend any

"The graphics are exceptional, despite the absence of support for 3D accelerator cards."



◀ considerable time taxing your brains on the puzzle elements either (although some of them are very weird and require some strange application of logic indeed). Most of your time in *Dark Earth* will be spent talking to, and listening to, the many inhabitants of the eponymous game universe. In this sense, *Dark Earth* is more of an interactive cinematic experience than a fully-fledged adventure game. This is no bad thing. The storyline is very convincing and unfolds seamlessly, with cut-scenes popping up at appropriate points in the proceedings to help everything along. The graphics are exceptional, despite the absence of support for 3D accelerator cards and the combat scenes, while few and far between, are well executed with Arkhan having a reasonably varied catalogue of moves at his disposal.

Of course, this sort of thing is not for everyone. Hard-core adventure fans expecting the kind of challenge presented by games like *Alone In The Dark* will probably find *Dark Earth*'s mixture of very easy puzzles and downright strange ones a little irritating. Similarly, *Bioforge* devotees may be a little non-plussed at the comparative lack of in-your-face beat 'em up action. To be fair though, Kalisto have obviously set

out to reach a compromise between these two gameplay elements in order to make the transition from one part of the storyline to the next as smooth as possible, and to a large extent they have succeeded. You'll never find yourself wandering aimlessly around the environment wondering what to do next, as you'll always come across someone who'll point you in the right direction of your next quest. Indeed, many of the characters berate you for hanging around when you should be doing more important things (ie saving the world).

Having said that, *Dark Earth* is not without its share of annoying idiosyncrasies. Waiting while the game loads up the next part of the screen from the CD can often be tedious, for example. Not so much annoying as downright strange is Kalisto's decision to use 3D polygon character models with pre-rendered scenery backdrops. This makes the characters in the game look somewhat at odds with their environment, so the player never really gets the impression their character is in any way a 'real' part of the *Dark Earth* universe. Additionally, some of the characters are just plain unbelievable due to some extremely embarrassing voice-overs (the main offender being Arkhan's girlfriend Kalhi whose pathetic twee whimpers will grate on you more and more as you play through the game). It's a shame that production issues such as these are the main reason *Dark Earth* falls soundly into 'well worth a look' territory as opposed to being an essential purchase. That's not to say that it isn't worthy of the attention of prospective adventurers – the rich storyline alone will be enough to keep most people happy, and with the added diversions of hand-to-hand fisticuffs and puzzle-solving elements, *Dark Earth* offers a well-rounded gameplay experience that should appeal to many gamers who wouldn't normally be attracted to the adventure genre too. 7



Jesus! Wish I'd never had those bloody brussels...

In Perspective

Dark Earth is neither as intellectually challenging as *Alone In The Dark*, or as heavy on pure beat 'em up action as *Bioforge*, although it does combine elements from both of them rather well. If you're wondering which one to go for, it's basically going to come down to what you want most from an adventure game. *Alone In The Dark* is probably the closest you'll get to traditional adventure gaming, while *Bioforge* more or less ignores plot-building in favour of simplistic puzzles and intense combat action. *Dark Earth* is very strong on plot, very pretty but not particularly taxing. The choice, however, is yours.

Bioforge

Alone In The Dark

Dark Earth

Tech Specs

Memory: 8Mb

Processor: P75

Graphics: SVGA

Sound: All major sound cards

Controls: Mouse, keyboard



Mixing it up

Combat in *Dark Earth* is pretty straightforward. Hold down the control key and press one of the directional arrows and you'll be clobbering baddies in no time – although it can get confusing when you're taking on more than one opponent at once. Have a go at one of them and you'll find you're facing exactly the wrong direction to take on his mate. Arkhan can't move very quickly (he sort of lurches round the place), so you'll just have to put up with being whacked repeatedly on the head by one guy while you take out the other. This is not a major problem though, as Arkhan can take quite a lot of punishment before finally giving up the ghost.



Score

A good story well told.

82

Price: ETBC

Release date: October

Developer: Kalisto

Telephone: 01435 862212

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Personal Computers

The People's
Choice

HEXEN II



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Jonah Lomu Rugby

He played rugby at school, but **Richie Shoemaker** won't let that cloud his judgement on the latest sports offering from Codemasters.



UGBY HAS TO BE THE ONLY sport in which players who are openly hostile to anyone resembling a teapot are actively

encouraged to cup the plums of team mates and plant their head between the nearest pair of greased-up thighs. While forwards get stuck in, the backs run like the proverbial wind, dodging anything that could break a fingernail. It is, of course, a funny old game and it may surprise you to know that it holds a small and perfectly formed place in my heart.



(Above) Run, run like the wind.
(Left) Don't mess with this guy, he's got a tongue like an electric eel.

various camera angles help scoot the action along without getting in the way, and the stadium and crowd detailing is excellent, with supporters for each team waving flags from the stands. Low-res mode is messy however, and like warm beer, should be avoided at all costs.

Take your partners by the...

I may be scrumming down on the wrong side of half-time, but *Jonah Lomu Rugby* is a fair old stab at what has already proved to be a difficult game to get right. The developers have obviously looked at what was wrong with other rugby games and strived to put things right. As a result, all the mauls and scrums are handled without the need for manic wrist exercises and the confusion of looking for the ball in messy rucks is kept to a minimum. Unlike in other games, the ball pops out of the human debris, moving the game along pretty quickly considering the stop-start nature of the real thing.

A word of warning though, you will need a joystick. Do not even attempt to play using the keyboard unless you have compound eyes and a couple of extra fingers. Even with a joystick it still takes a while to get to grips with the control system. The flip side of this is that you have a sports game with longevity. A year on, once you've mastered advanced moves such as hand-offs and side-stepping, you should be able to take Japan all the way to the World Cup Final. Maybe.

Graphics-wise, the polygon players are quite detailed and well animated without being jaw-droppingly incredible, though this obviously helps keep the frame rate up. The

Wild at carp

Commentary is provided by Bill McLaren and Bill Beaumont, and like a lot of sports games, it often seems a bit out of place. All the great lines are in there, such as "Going in like a wild carp", but after a while it gets a bit repetitive and I had to turn it off to prevent the game chugging at choice intervals.

That aside, all the 'oophs' and 'arghs' you'd associate with each bone-crunching tackle are present, along with all the crowd noises, making for a pretty atmospheric overall effect.

All the usual tournament options are there, such as The Five Nations and The World Cup, as well as the opportunity to play in some of the classic matches of all time. Thirty-two international teams have been incorporated, each with their own strengths and weaknesses. Weather conditions can be selected and you even have the opportunity to play in a lightning storm. A network option for up to four players can be installed from the one CD, but only for friendly matches.

If you like sports games, this is definitely worth a look. If you like rugby, it's a must. This is the best rugby game on the PC - and if you're patient, you'll get a lot out of it. **Z**



(Left) The Big Man scores his first try against the Canadians, who fail to grasp the concept of passing backwards.
(Right) After regrouping, the Canadians decide to bring on the Mounties, as soon as they've had their half-time oranges.



In Perspective

Not much competition exists against which to judge *Jonah Lomu Rugby*. What's around is comfortably mopped up by the Big Man's trusty supermop. Just for the record, Jonah stands a mighty six feet four inches and can run 100 metres in 10.8 seconds. Sadly, he can't swim very well and had an interesting adventure inside a whale.

Jonah Lomu Rugby

Super League Pro Rugby

World Class Rugby 95 (ST)

International Rugby League

Tech Specs

Memory: 8Mb RAM

Processor: 486/DX2 66

Graphics: VGA/SVGA

Sound: All major cards

Controls: Gamepad essential!

Note: 12Mb hard drive required



Score

Hard work but worthwhile.



Price: £29.99

Release date: Out now

Publisher: Codemasters

Telephone: 01926 814132

Website: www.codemasters.com

dan The People's Choice
Personal Computers

Au revoir,
Papa. I've just
got a faster set
of wheels.
Love Nicole

XX



Flight Simulator 98



While he's not exactly magnificent, most people round here reckon that **Dave Mathieson** is a man. And he's been in a flying machine. Which makes him ideally suited to review Microsoft's latest version of *Flight Simulator*.



LIGHT SIMS TEND TO COME IN ONE OF three main varieties: modern military jobs with big, butch names like "F-37 Thruster", featuring loads of missiles, 14 different radar modes and MiGs galore; historical efforts with lots of planes from one of the two World Wars, and Microsoft Flight Simulator.

The reason why *MS Flight Sim* deserves to be put in its own category is that it's just about the only one where you don't get to shoot anything (apart from *Flight Unlimited*, that is), and that while other sims aspire to realism, Microsoft have managed to take it a stage further than most.

MS Flight Sim was the first game to appear on the PC (probably) and it was certainly the first flight sim. Since they ran on PCs with an 086 CPU, it's not really surprising that the graphics were a bit poor by today's standards. Graphical loveliness was replaced by simple shaded polygons running in 16 colours, and the only sounds were bleeps and squawks from the PC speaker. Despite this, there was plenty of realism, and the way the planes handled, as well as all the controls and dials were all good representations of the real thing.

Flight Sim 5 was the first version to use texture maps and Gouraud shading and all those other things that we now take



"The Learjet 45 is just the ticket for ferrying coke-addled rock stars from one gig to another."

for granted. And Microsoft were one of the first companies to do this in a flight sim. There's been *Flight Sim 95* in the meantime, but with the first 3D accelerated sims now on the market, the release of *FS98* has brought the game bang up to date. As well as support for 3D hardware, this version has loads more airports and scenery, Internet play and, even better, some new planes to fly.

A spreadsheet with wings?

The in-game interface will be pretty familiar to fans of earlier versions. Basically, being from Microsoft, *FS98* is treated like any other application, with menus and everything. This means that anyone who's used programs like Excel and Word shouldn't have any problems. But if you prefer the nice chunky interfaces that you get on 'proper' games, *FS98* might seem a bit boring. Still, at least you can find things with this interface, rather than having to delve through loads of stupidly animated screens just to find out how to calibrate the joystick.

The game itself has all the wealth of options that fans of earlier versions will know and love. You can set difficulty levels, which comes in handy when flying the helicopter at first. And, most importantly, there are loads of different graphics detail settings.



(Above left) Why 'tis the houses of Parliament where the glorious, saintly Tony Blair lives.
(Above right) More satellite terrain, this time in the guise of Northern California.





(Left) Recreate the Battle Of Britain with a squadron of Cessnas. (Below) The new-look undulating terrain, all fractally generated, all accurate to the nearest pebble.



The reason that these are so important is that *Flight Sim 98*'s graphical splendour comes at the usual price of needing a very fast PC if you don't want to suffer poor frame rates. You can turn the sky, change the viewing distance of ground objects and switch to lower resolutions to help take the strain of the processor. However, help is on hand in the form of the 3D card support, via Microsoft's own Direct3D. Just select the driver from the menu and it's "hello decent frame rate".

Frame rate stuff

The extra work that's been put into this version pays off and the in-game graphics in *FS98* are undoubtedly gorgeous. The software-only version employs some of the same techniques used by 3D cards to smooth the images. Previous versions tended to get a bit jaggy as you looked towards the horizon. The graphics in *FS98* are a lot smoother, though. By smoother, I mean the image quality is better. The other type of smooth, the one that is the complete opposite of 'jerky as buggery', isn't increased with this version, however. Without a 3D card, you'll probably need at least a 200MHz Pentium to play with a decent level of detail. With a 3Dfx card, though, a P150 is pretty good.

Right. That's enough ranting on about graphics. The other improvements all add directly to the gameplay. For starters, there are three new aircraft to fly. Note my use of the slightly old-man word 'aircraft' as opposed to the much chattier 'planes'. This is because *FS98* has a rather nice chopper to fly, which is a first for Microsoft. I mean 'fly' in the loosest sense of the word, though, because they've opted for realism rather than accessibility. This means no easy cruising along at a constant altitude, but lots of hopeless wobbling about and swearing. Still, it makes a nice change from endless passenger cruisers and the interminable Cessna.



Oh look, it's a little helicopter soaring above the pretty skyline of er, er, San Francisco (maybe). In *Flight Sim 98*, you can be just like TC in *Magnum* and use your 'copter to prang the shirt collars of criminals and carry them into the air. Perhaps.

What, more planes?

The other two extra aircraft are both of the fixed-wing variety. The Cessna Skylane 182S is a rather natty little runaround, while the Learjet 45 is great for ferrying coke-addled rock stars from one gig to another.

Since there's nothing to shoot at (or with, for that matter), Microsoft have placed lots of emphasis on having plenty to look at. For starters, there's 3000 airports all over the world, which is ten times more than previous versions, and there are improved graphics for other areas. Hong Kong, in particular, looks lovely, and the ground detail has been improved. This is always a problem with sims with 'photo-realistic' scenery – it looks great from 10,000 feet, but get in close and the ground turns into a giant patchwork quilt. The more detailed sections of *FS98* give a lot better impression of speed down low, but more detail would be even better. I guess I'll have to wait until *Flight Sim 2006*, when the game will have the whole world with everyone's houses in it until I'm truly satisfied.

Now, you'll be wanting to know whether to buy *FS98* or not, won't you? The answer to this is fairly predictable, really. If you liked earlier versions and have got a decent PC, ideally fitted with a 3Dfx card, you'll think *FS98* is the greatest. On the other hand, if you're a die-hard combat nut you might find it all very pretty, but a bit staid. On the third hand, *Flight Sim 98* is the most realistic sim around of any type, and the sheer size of this version, combined with lovely graphics, make it a bit of a must for anyone even remotely interested in flying planes. 2

In Perspective

The obvious comparison for *FS98* is *Flight Sim 95*, the seminal Microsoft release. But, naturally, *EF2000* and *Flight Unlimited* must also have their say.

Flight Sim 98

Flight Sim 95

Flight Unlimited

EF2000

Tech Specs

Memory: 16Mb

Processor: P90

Graphics: VGA, SVGA

Sound: All major soundcards

Controls: Joystick essential

Note: Uses DirectX version 5 and Direct 3D to work with popular 3D accelerator cards, including 3Dfx



Score

A heavily improved version of Microsoft's classic. A bit of a must.



Price: ETBA

Release date: End of September

Publisher: Microsoft

Telephone: 0345 002000

Website: www.microsoft.com

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...flight 98... talk to me...

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Constructor



A game which provides a team of burly, strapping builders, all of whom must obey your every command? A dream come true for pseudo handyman

Charlie Brooker.

ACCORDING TO THE WEEK, A FINE DENNIS publication that you really ought to be reading instead of all this childish garbage about computer games, the traditional image of the hairy-clefted, wolf-whistling builder is under threat – from the building industry itself. The Construction Industry Board has recently established something called the 'Considerate Constructor's Scheme', designed to encourage labourers to keep the bum cleavage under wraps and the leery yodelling to a minimum. A spokesman said: "It would not be tolerated in any other industry, so why should it be tolerated in construction?"

Quite. Perhaps System 3 had this in mind while creating *Constructor*, which features hundreds of builders but, as far as we can ascertain, no arsecrack peek-a-boo or sexually indelicate hollering whatsoever. Which is a surprise, because it's got just about everything else. Welcome to a new direction in gaming: the biting social satire 'em up.

Smack my bricks up

Simulations aside, it seems every other game that passes under the PC Zone Electron Microscope o' Criticism™ these days represents a jumble of previously unconnected genres.



"Build a commune, for instance, and it won't be long until a dope-addled hippy takes up residence there."



(Above) Hmm, we can't tell if these two are boys or girls. And they're probably neither.

This is a good thing. Check out the roll-call: *Hexen II*, *Dungeon Keeper*, *Tomb Raider*, *X-COM Apocalypse*... all of them borrow elements from an array of preceding titles.

Constructor performs much the same trick: it represents a kind of head-on car crash between *SimCity 2000* and *Command & Conquer*. Except, unlike a real-life car crash, it isn't a tragic and shocking eruption of twisted steel, flaying skin and great big gobs of bloodied flesh flying around in the air like gooey chunks of watermelon shrapnel. No. It's fun.

The basic object of the game is to create and then nurture a thriving neighbourhood. Building from scratch with a crew of knuckle-dragging workmen, the player is initially limited to constructing basic wooden shacks ready to house those at the bottom of the social ladder. But as progress is made, more complex structures (everything from police stations to

Tenants extra

To survive in *Constructor*, it's essential to keep the poor saps who inhabit your houses happy and content. Which is easier said than done. It doesn't take much to raise their hackles, although the things that irk them differ according to social status (the middle and upper classes tend to be more picky than the lowly oiks, who are merely troublesome thugs). However, some complaints do transcend all barriers of class: keep a team of workers labouring away in a factory for too long, for example, and the nearby residents will start going ballistic until you install



double-glazing to keep the noise down. In *Constructor*, tenants are only good for two things: spending and screwing. Each household represents a nail-gnawing choice. You can either collect rent from the inhabitants or encourage them to breed – but not both. The former helps fund future development, the latter is your only means of receiving new tenants, workers, policemen or mafia gangsters. Both are utter essentials, so a careful juggling act is required on your part. Though not literally, obviously.



(Above) You'll need plenty of fore-sight to succeed in this game. Geddit? Heh? Laugh or I'll cut ye.

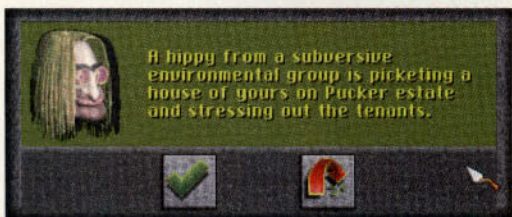


(Above) Just a few of the reprehensible social misfits you'll be slum-lording it over in the game.

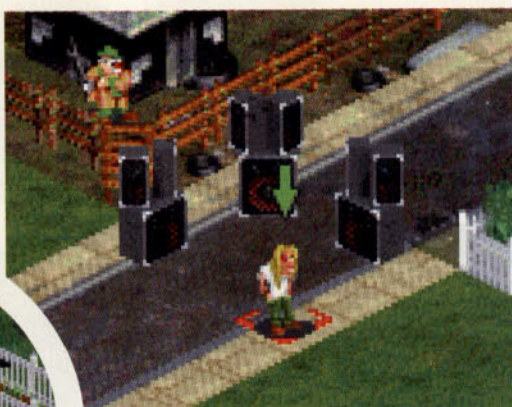
mock Tudor houses) rapidly become available, bringing an influx of increasingly posh types with them. Sustaining a blooming, cosmopolitan community is a matter of carefully balancing the needs of your tenants and the realities of resource management, using whatever tatty organisational skills you have. So that's the *SimCity* side of things dealt with.

The *Command & Conquer* aspect is where most of the fun comes in. You're not alone on the playing field: up to four players (or computer-controlled drones) can compete at once. And it's essential that you stick it to the opposition as violently and frequently as possible. To this end, there are numerous dirty tricks waiting to be played, most of them revolving around the manipulation of 'undesirable' tenants. Build a commune, for instance, and it won't be long before a dope-addled hippy takes up residence there. The hippy can then be called upon to harass the opposition's tenants – by holding an impromptu rave in the middle of his most well-to-do district, for example. (And by the way, he is depicted skinning up in a little animation, with Rizla and tobacco in his lap – surely a videogaming first, and something that would be well worth the price of admission alone, were it possible to be 'admitted' to computer games in the first place. Which it isn't. But you see my point.)

The dirty tricks brigade becomes more deranged as the game marches on. Before long there are serial killers (two flavours: leather-masked biker or scary malevolent clown) and paranormal deviants (ghosts, poltergeists, shambling hordes of undead zombies) at your disposal. In no time at all, what started out as a relatively soothing exercise in urban planning inevitably descends into a



(Top) A gang of yobs wrecking the neighbour's garden. (Above) Send in the heavies to sort him out, sharpish.



(Top) It's a happening street party. With one guest. (In circle) Insert fart-lighting gag here. If you must.

surreal and ruthless all-out fight to the death, with the British suburb as its battleground. It's like a cosy sitcom re-enactment of the Vietnam war.

All human life is here

Sounds good, doesn't it? Well, it gets better. It's funny as well. *Constructor's* social vision is agreeably cynical and merciless. Almost every character is represented by a gross caricature that's as true to life as it is unfair. The working classes are all string vests, poor grammar, bruises and stubble (and – ho ho! – that's just the women). The middle classes are grey, parsimonious, loveless-marriage types, who read the *Daily Mail* and spend their days spying on the neighbours or griping about the smallest inconvenience to themselves. The fortunate few who perch atop the social minaret are depicted as being similarly selfish, although their main vices are tiresome eccentricity and high-end corruption. And let's not forget all the incidental sideswipes at skinhead yobs, bikers, burglars, eco-conscious dope-smokers, and even serial killers that crop up along the way. Even the babies are ugly – they wouldn't look out of place on the cover of a Stephen King novel. Furthermore, there's a world-weary logic to many of the game design's most integral principles. For instance, in order to receive new workmen, it's necessary to encourage the lower classes to breed. If you want a gang of skinhead bastards with which to torment your opponent(s), you'll have to erect a depressing concrete tower block or two. And so on.

There isn't enough space to jaw on about all the neat little touches, such as the good-enough-to-eat cartoon simplicity of the in-game graphics, or the inexhaustible supply of mini FMV sequences that endlessly spool into the top right corner of the screen, or the superb sound effects. There isn't even room to expand upon the barest of criticisms – such as the doggedly unintuitive interface or the somewhat ropey AI – but there is just enough time to say this: *Constructor* is perhaps the most quirky and original game we've seen this year, and if it didn't say System 3 on the box, you'd swear it had come from Bullfrog. Buy it. 2

In Perspective

Constructor is a kind of 12-inch megamix of *SimCity* and *C&C*, with stuttering samples and cheesy orchestral stabs. Closest in gameplay to *Theme Hospital*, yet it leads in the belly laugh stakes. Let's come over all mathematical and lay out our thoughts in an easy-to-digest chart.

Constructor

Theme Park

Theme Hospital

Gene Wars

C&C: Red Alert

Tech Specs

Memory: 8Mb

Processor: 486DX/66

Graphics: SVGA

Sound: SoundBlaster

Controls: Mouse, keyboard

Note: Recommended spec is a fairly slim P90 with a four-speed CD drive.



Score

Terry And June meets Apocalypse Now.

92

Price: £39.99

Release date: Out now

Publisher: System 3/Acclaim

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Review ZONE Extra!

After a relatively quiet summer, the new releases are coming thick and fast. Here's the best of the rest reviewed and rated.



(Top) No, this isn't me being brave. This is me getting too close to my wingman. (Above) And you thought your Nissan was too complicated.

F/A-18 HORNET 3.0

OK, so F/A-18 *Hornet* 3.0 might not sport lush texture-mapped graphics, but trust me, it still has a lot going for it under the hood: accurate dynamics and detailed avionics, accurately reproduced flight systems, sophisticated enemy pilot intelligence, a variety of combat and training missions, network play, missiles, explosions, death. Every feature you've come to expect from a modern-day flight sim.

The polygon engine is refined and smooth; the missions, although few

in number and badly documented, are engaging; the aircraft itself is easy to control and comes with all the usual game gimmicks, such as multiple cameras and video replays. Thanks to the minimalist graphical style everything looks a little 'sparse' when compared to other sims on the shelf, but this means that *Hornet* pulls an impressive frame rate even on low-end Pentiums (although this perhaps has more to do with the desolate nature of the Kuwaiti theatre than clever coding). If you haven't flown an advanced jet-powered fighter before, you'll also find that the step-by-step tutorials are first rate.

On the down side, *Hornet* doesn't really offer anything new and is therefore very much a clone of the competition. In fact, if you're not a flight sim aficionado, there's little to distinguish it from every other flight sim out there.

There's nothing particularly wrong with it, and if you're a fan of the genre and enjoyed *Su-27*, *A-10 Cuba!* and all the other 'mature' flight sims on the market, *Hornet* won't disappoint. It just won't surprise you either.

Jamie Cunningham

Publisher: Empire Interactive
Price: £29.99
Tel: 0181 343 7337

78

SU-27 FLANKER 1.5

A whole jar of new missions, lashings of multi-player, a dash of Gouraud, and what have you got? A mid-life modernisation of a two year old flight sim.

Su-27 Flanker 1.5 is an upgrade to keep current Flankers happy while they dream about the forthcoming attractions of version 2.0. It includes 156 missions, Gouraud-shaded graphics, new camouflage schemes, 16-player LAN networking, head-to-head play over the Internet, a random mission generator, an extended mission editor, a new AWACS view for budding Schwarzkopfs, improved artificial intelligence, and a campaign shell generator.

But wait. There are no new theatres, no new terrains and no new planes or objects. The Gouraud shading will bring anything less than a Pentium 200 to its knees and, importantly, isn't available when looking out of the cockpit. There is no support for DirectX or Direct3D, and with delicious preview shots of version 2.0 up on the SSI Website for all to see, one wonders if anyone will salivate over the still-a-bit-old-looking 1.5.

On the subject of the game's much-vaunted realism, my computer foes appeared to have unlimited fuel, infinite ammunition, were seemingly invulnerable to each other, and were



able to pass right through buildings. Call me a realist, but surely this only happens somewhere near Bermuda.

When lost in the vastness of the game, such issues are not all that intrusive. *Su-27 Flanker* remains entertaining, is based on an aircraft that holds 27 world records, and is one of only a handful of Windows games that appear to have a proper measure of the Windows interface. It's also easy to get to grips with. Then again, you had all that with version 1.0. So do you really need this upgrade?

Jamie Cunningham

Publisher: Mindscape/SSI

Price: £19.99

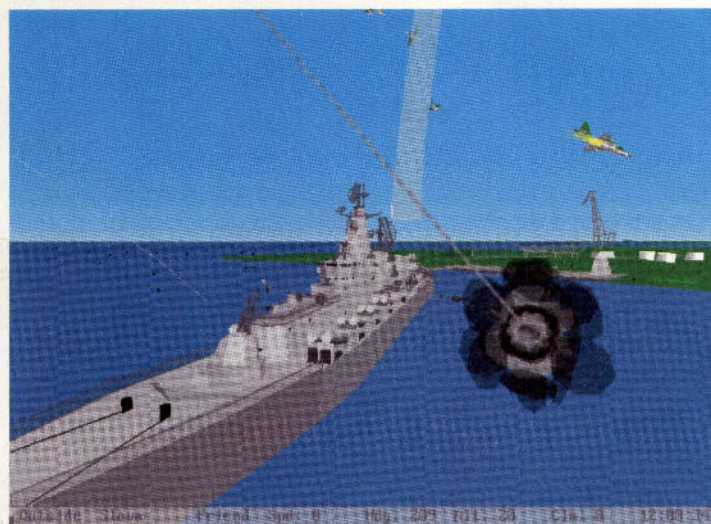
Tel: 01444 246333

80

SUPER PUZZLE FIGHTER 2 TURBO

Is it *StreetFighter*? Is it *Tetris*? No, it's *Super Puzzle Fighter 2 Turbo* – a *Tetris* clone for six year olds. To all intents and purposes, it's a simple state of affairs. Match the coloured gems falling from above, bust 'em up with the power gems and send counter gems over to your human or computer opponents, filling up their screen and sending them running home to mummy.

The graphics do the job, but they're horribly dated, blocky, and in hi-res



(Top) Fun a-plenty, if you know what you're doing. (Above) From Russia with love. Kaboom! (Above right) A preview of *Su-27 Flanker 2.0*, but you'll have to wait...

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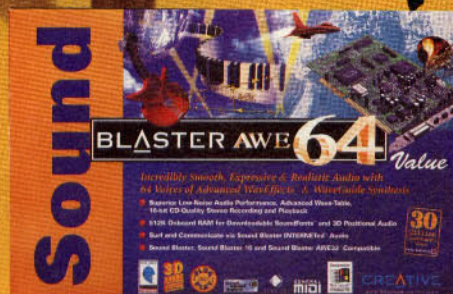
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Come and have a go if you think you're hard enough.

seem to slow down the whole game. The *Street Fighter* element is seemingly purely cosmetic: you don't really control the characters in the middle, in fact you don't even have time to appreciate their martial non-artistry, because you're too busy matching gems. The plinky-plonk music is grating and the giggly twee sound effects send shivers down the spine and out through the back passage. If you want a *Tetris*-style game, then go and play *Tetris*. If you want a beat 'em up, go play *Street Fighter*.

Richie Shoemaker

Publisher: VIE
Price: £29.99
Tel: 0171 368 2255

37

BLOOD OMEN: LEGACY OF KAIN

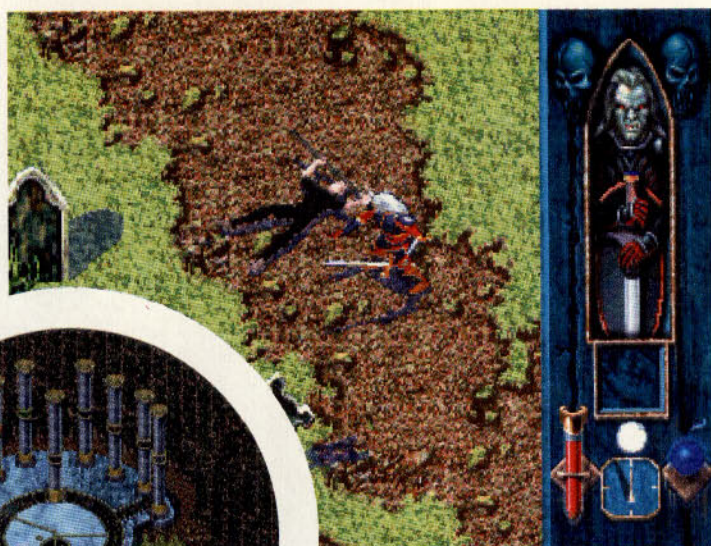
In this game you start off alive, die seconds later, become reconstituted at the hands of a friendly necromancer and then set about avenging your own death as a blood-sucking vampire. Like it so far? Then let's continue.

In this top-down action adventure ported over from the massive PlayStation hit, you control Kain as he travels through the land of Nosgoth, chopping into mince anything that moves and picking up everything else that isn't part of the scenery.

Apart from the obvious hack and slash fun to be had, the coolest thing in this game is that to stay 'alive' you have to drink the blood of all and sundry. Whether they're dying foe, wandering villagers or ex-Tory MPs chained up against dungeon walls, they're all fair game. However, take care whom you suck on. Some characters have bodily fluids with magical properties, while others can have poisonous side effects. Nobody ever said being undead was easy.

As you progress you'll assume the ability to morph into a wolf, a bat or even a... er, cloud of mist. While this adds an extra element, you soon discover that these abilities don't actually add to the gameplay, but merely act as distractions that allow you to progress further through what is in essence a very linear game, in which level design, character control and interaction are limited.

Intelligence-wise, it's not so much artificial as non-existent. The baddies start off in set places and they move towards you or follow their set pattern. Moreover, if your haemoglobin levels are topped out, you can just run past them into the next section,



(Above) Another one bites the dust. (Left) The pillars of Nosgoth, where people come from miles around.

which makes it all a bit farcical.

Despite various distractions (new weapons, magic, monsters, and so on), after a while the whole thing becomes a bit of a chore – if you can't find that one elusive switch you can't really get any further – which leaves you feeling frustrated rather than challenged. The fact that you can only save the game at certain points also proves annoying.

Legacy Of Kain probably did so well on the PlayStation because there isn't really anything else like it available. On the PC, however, you're spoilt for choice when it comes to

games of this ilk, so the stakes (no pun intended) are that much higher. If you really want to wander around dungeons slaying monsters, buy *Diablo*. It's heaps better.

Richie Shoemaker

Publisher: Activision
Price: £39.99
Tel: 01895 456700

53

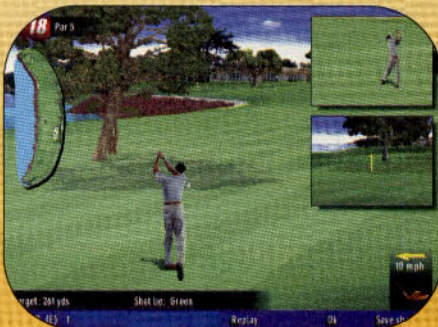
GUTZ 'N' GARTERS

This could have been a lot of fun. A sort of *Virtua Cop* meets *Diablo*, you lead your gun-crazy commando around an island, blowing up everything and

PC Zone recommends

PGA TOUR PRO

The latest version of PGA (Windows 95 only) has been treated to a major overhaul. The graphics have an altogether more 3D feel, so now, when you hit the ball, it hangs more realistically in the air, rather than plunging to earth after a couple of seconds like condor crap – as in past releases. There are a number of new additions too, including

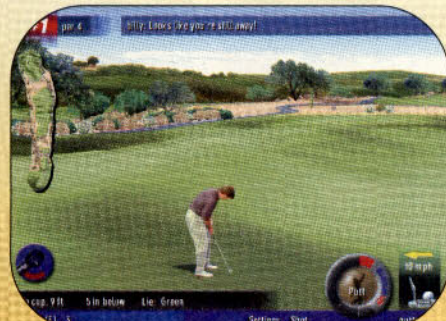


TV-style multiple camera views of your shots. There's also a new risk meter which calculates the amount of danger in your shot – presumably they're worried someone will hit a bad 'un and sue them for emotional trauma. Oh, and you can 'do a Faldo' and walk the course in real time to check out every angle of every shot before you play it, pissing everyone else off no end.

The big new thing, though, is the Internet play facility which enables up to 80 players to compete at once, although you'll mostly find yourself playing in small groups.

It's well worked out and very easy to set up once you're into EA's dedicated site. Racy names are blocked, so I had to content myself with signing on as Ian Baker-Felch, confusing all the Americans. It's a great way to play, and if you find yourself stuck with arseholes, you only have to start typing to send niggling messages. Those with microphones can also enjoy the pleasures of a brilliant seven-second spoken message facility, which helps.

In the big golf game stakes, *PGA Tour Pro* has just



leapfrogged over *Links* to be the best thing on the PC – although *Links 98* is on its way soon.

Patrick McCarthy

Publisher: Electronic Arts
Price: £34.99
Tel: 01753 549442

94

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EXCALIBURTM

2555 AD

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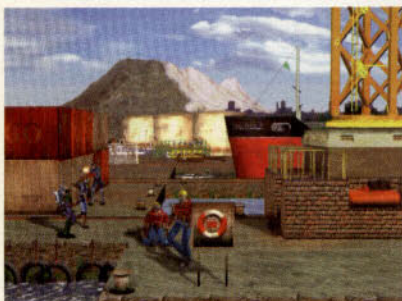
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Gutz 'N' Garters: big, meaty graphics, but simple and tragically limited gameplay.



iF-22

The main problem with this latest in a long line of F-22 sims is that its one USP doesn't work. Sure, the graphics in *iF-22* look lovely at 30,000ft, but as soon as you dip towards the ground, any semblance of detail is lost in a mass of pixels. There's also a general feeling of a lack of care throughout the product.

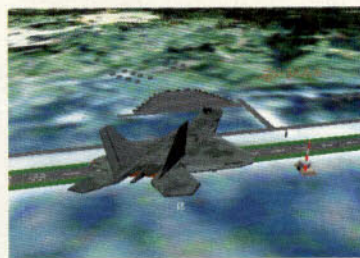
I'm sure the designers have laboured long and hard, but everything just feels so lethargically put together. The



iF22: A nice-looking flight sim, if you stay above the clouds.

front end is very unfriendly, there's no clear path for you to take into the game start, the manual is badly put together with no real structure, and you're left feeling just a little frustrated. Flight sims are complicated enough as it is.

On the plus side, there's a nice sense of 'things going on' when you fly a campaign. The world feels real enough, even if it looks like something your grandmother knitted. Ultimately though, it just doesn't do enough to warrant much attention. There are better flight sims available, and



better F-22 sims. *iF-22* is unfortunately just another pretty example.

Paul Presley

Publisher: Interactive Magic

Price: £19.99

Tel: 01344 409399

75

TRASH IT!

Rage Software's new release *Trash It!* is an original and addictive game that's extremely difficult to pigeon-hole. Although basically a left-to-right,

everyone who might get in your way. The big problem is the control system. Using the mouse to blast away at your foe is fine in itself, but moving around the layered, flick-screen environment proves a real bind.

Your character moves so slowly and takes so long to walk into or out of the screen that sadly it all becomes a bit of a chore, rather than a fast-paced blast fest. Moving from screen to screen isn't too clever either: arrows pop up to show you where to exit, but it seems more a matter of luck than judgement to get your character to walk off the screen.

Sure enough, the graphics look nice, but set off a big explosion and the whole shebang starts to crawl, even on a P133 (and this is a sprite-based game, folks); there's no blood; your enemies belt around the screen far too quickly compared with your good self; and it hates Windows 95 (but then, so do I, so I'll let it off on that one).

When it comes down to it, the actual gameplay isn't all that bad, but it's a shade too simplistic to offer lasting appeal. More depth, and a better control system would do it the world of good, so hopefully the side-scrolling sequel that's currently in development will fare a bit better.

Tim Wright

Publisher: Ocean
Price: £29.99
Tel: 0161 832 6633

57

PC Zone recommends

IGNITION

Racing games are almost thruppence ha'penny a dozen these days, but that hasn't deterred Swedish developers UDS from trying to seize a late place on the starting grid with *Ignition*, their first PC-based release. And basically, what you get for your hard-earned dosh is a decent top-down racer with a zippy overhead chase-style engine, some cleverly designed courses and a wry assortment of comedy vehicles to tool around in.

It only takes five minutes to realise what a little gold nugget *Ignition* is. The viewpoint seems a bit odd at first, but as you get used to the lay of the land you'll be zipping around in no time. Play the game in a swivel chair with a gamepad and you'll appreciate the view. Various obstacles strewn through the seven tracks add to the excitement, with falling boulders and inconsiderate farmers in tractors waiting to fondle your fender.

Single players won't be disappointed with the challenge this game offers. A few more tracks would've been nice, but then you can never have enough in any racing game. Split-screen mode is superb if you can't take advantage of the wealth of other multi-player options. If you don't have a friend to play with, borrow one. After playing this, they'll be your mate for life.

Where this game fails, and this won't surprise you, is in the depth and originality arena. Just like the amazingly similar *Speedster* from Psygnosis (reviewed in issue 52), it doesn't really offer anything new to the racing genre,



though it does prove quite addictive all the same.

The high viewpoint looks nice, and the 3D environment gives a good sensation of depth, but because you're so far from the action you never get a real sense of speed. Consequently, it's nowhere near as intense or compelling as the excellent *Screamer 2* or *Network Q Rally* and there's less going on than in *Micro Machines*.

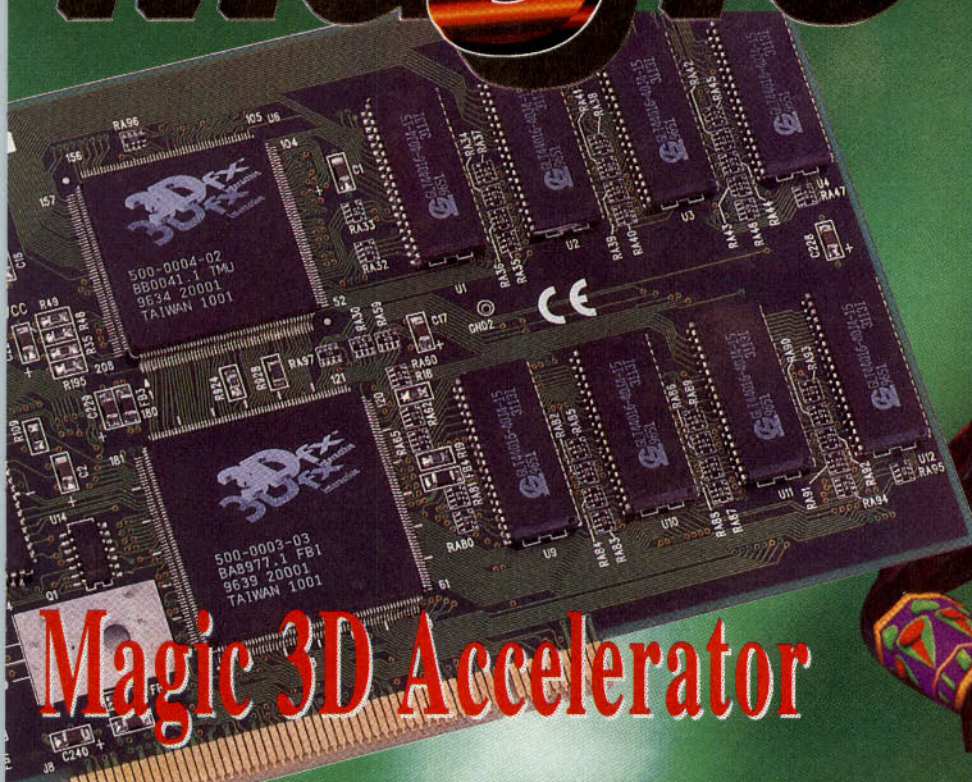
Ultimately, *Ignition* won't keep you up until five in the morning. But it's still a fine game with addictive gameplay that proves its worth in two-player split-screen mode.

John Houlihan

Publisher: VIE
Price: £29.99
Tel: 0171 368 2255

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Magic 3D



Magic 3D Accelerator

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- F. Linear frame buffer access
- G. 24-bit internal, 16 bit dithered RGB frame buffer
- H. Multiple format texture buffer (8-bit and 16-bit)
- I. Anti-aliasing, Depth buffering (16-bit), Alpha blending
- J. PCI bus 2.1 compliant
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Trash It! is far more puzzle-based than your average platform game.

◀ parallax scrolling affair, *Trash It!* is far more puzzle-based than the traditional 'run around, collect, kill' platformer.

The game is set in 'Timmie World', a topsy-turvy place where instead of buildings being overrun by flora, the vegetation gets suffocated by wild construction sites, and household appliances spring up like three-piece suites at Easter. This growth is kept down by 'Timmies', small mallet-like creatures whose job is to bash the living daylight out of encroaching bidets.

As the intrepid hero Jack Hammer, your task is to smash your way through the detritus and leave the evil Dr Moonbeam's lab looking like the aftermath

of a Prodigy backstage party. Starting with a hammer, upgrades are available for the contents of your Hoover bag; Jack carries a powerful upright in his Y-fronts to store freed Timmies that have been trapped by Moonbeam.

The intriguing 'smash, hoover' gameplay is augmented by effective use of cannons, seesaws, teleporters and bombs as the levels progress, with clues available from 'dunce' levels on how to complete the next set of levels.

Multi-player support comes in two flavours, the co-operative Arcade mode, and Battle mode, where up to four players can play against each other. Battle mode is a lot of fun using linked gamepads, but needs a Pentium 75MHz or above to make the most of the game.

The graphics are attractive and colourful, albeit in standard 320x240

VGA mode. The low resolution doesn't affect the gameplay and is only really noticeable when you use the zoom mode to expand the field of view. Cartoon-like running and skidding sounds are mixed with heavier demolition noises to increase the overall feel of the game. Altogether, *Trash It!* is simple to play and a lot of fun, boasting a heavy dollop of originality and addictiveness. If you like your platform games, you'll love it.

Richard Brindley

Publisher: GT Interactive

Price: £34.99

Tel: 0171 258 3791

76

ROLAND GARROS 97

Roland Garros is known for marking the point in the year when the BBC think you should start being interested in tennis – they always show a bit of it as part of their build-up to Sodding Wimbledon Fortnight. Nobody cares who wins it, because (a) it takes place on mud so it's not proper tennis, and (b) it's French. And now there's a game based around it, with all the usual options: singles or doubles; clay, artificial turf or proper grass; three levels of difficulty; male and female players to select etc.

If you win the first three tournaments, you can play on cement; win that and you graduate to the 'Futuredome' bonus court where there are power-ups: a grenade which explodes after five seconds, and a hologram 'two balls on court' effect. One's real, the other explodes when you smack it. And you thought tennis was a nice quiet game.

There are two problems, however. The first is the court perspective. This is good – everyone was very happy when it was invented, but you can have too much of it. There are three camera views but the fixed view is awkwardly low, making it difficult to judge the ball – especially if you're down the far end. The other views have a perspective exaggerated to such an extent that the far end of the court is less than half the width of the near end. Judging the ball's flight takes some getting used to, and it might be worth the effort if the game played well, but when you find your player failing to hit a shot when you tell it to, you start to feel that you couldn't care less. Especially when you could be playing *Pete Sampras* instead.

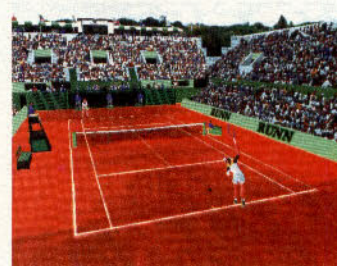
Patrick McCarthy

Publisher: Interplay

Price: £24.99

Tel: 01628 423666

61



"Look!" cried Ian. "My racket's bigger than your whole body! I'm going to win really easily!"

PC Zone recommends



688i HUNTER/KILLER

Jane's has a bit of a reputation for delivering class products when it comes to sims and this is no exception; it's just that the subject matter might put people off. Who, after all, wants to loll about at the bottom of the ocean when they can zip about the skies in a jetfighter?

Give *Hunter/Killer* time, and you'll probably be surprised. The amount of detail is impressive if

not overwhelming, and you get a lot of help from the two tutorials in the manual. The most important aspect of sub-warfare, the use of sonar to identify and locate potential targets, is covered in detail and the product, on the whole, is well polished.

So how does it play? Well, if you want a 3D graphics fest, look somewhere else. There is a 3D display, but it falls into the 'functional' category. Same goes for the sound, but let's face it, if you buy a sub sim expecting loads of great graphics, then you're a bit of a fool, aren't you?

You buy a sub sim for the tense game of cat and mouse you play with the opponent; the knowledge that your only real weapon is stealth and the poor sap that loses that advantage is the dead sap, regardless of how cool your boat might be.

Hunter/Killer captures this perfectly: the edgy silence while running deep; the quick rush as the broadband picks up a contact; followed by the tense minutes identifying the contact; the bowel emptying, pants-browning terror when you hear the words, "Torpedo in the water!" It's almost too much to bear.

Add to that campaigns, training missions and full multi-player facilities and you've got a potential

winner. But be warned, this is very much a sim, and not one for those brought up solely on a diet of *Quake*, *C&C* and *Tomb Raider*. Be patient with it, and you'll be rewarded.

Paul Ditta

Publisher: Electronic Arts

Price: £39.99

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(Top) *Worldwide Soccer*: it's raining, so don't expect to see Ryan Giggs. (Above) *Counteraction*: limited and ultimately rather tedious.

COUNTERACTION

The eastern front is the setting for this latest C&C-style wargame. What *Counteraction* offers over all the others of its ilk is the option to play the game as either Germans or Russians. Great – but what it doesn't have is any resource management or multi-player capability, so you start off with the basic infantry/tank combo and then move up to more kickin' hardware in later missions. You can't build any units so you have to look after them, which simplifies things considerably with the downside that it all becomes rather tedious.

Computer AI is fair; the enemy will attack in force and retreat when overwhelmed, but it's difficult to find much else to recommend this game – there's simply not enough going on or enough to do to hold your attention for long. The graphics are tiny and a little primitive, the sound is sparse, and although it'll run on a 486DX2/66, for the price you would be better off investing in three copies of *Dune 2* and giving two away.

Richie Shoemaker

Publisher: Mindscape
Price: £29.99
Tel: 01444 246333

40

SEGA WORLDWIDE SOCCER

Sega Worldwide Soccer offers the usual options to play one-off games, penalty shoot-outs and all the various tournaments that we punters have come to expect from sports games. Graphically, it's okay, and although the players have some nice moves, it's still not up to the standard of *Actua Soccer: Club Edition*. Similarly, the commentary hardly adds to the atmosphere and the AI leaves a lot to be desired, with players running all over the show. It wouldn't be so bad if the frame rate was better, but on a modest Pentium it's just too slow to be really playable. We recommend you wait for *Actua 2*.

Patrick McCarthy

Publisher: Sega
Tel: 0181 995 3399
Price: £34.99

50

BATTLEGROUND 8: RUSSIA

The battle of Borodino was the first to be labelled the mother of all battles and, if nothing else, it shows how big these *Battleground* games are getting. The normal installation runs to 170Mb, thanks to the sheer size of the battlefield, and this includes 21 scenarios based on and around Borodino.

If I've got one complaint, it's that it's just too big. If you've got a weekend to spare, great. If you want time out for a few pints and a kebab, forget it. The full battle scenario is 48 turns and involves zillions of units. And because this one is based on the *Waterloo* model rather than the *American Civil War* one, you've got skirmishers all over the place and countless cavalry squadrons too.

Why the game wasn't named *Battleground Borodino* is beyond me, because that's what it is. There are no skirmish scenarios for e-mail or head-to-head gamers to get their teeth into, either.

On the other hand, after so much negative campaigning, you've got the same brilliant *Battleground* system underneath and the graphics are as gorgeous and as clear as ever. If you're the kind of wargamer who pulls his meat over the sight of French infantry in line or a bunch of cuirassiers on the loose, you'll already have bought it.

Borodino, the battle that featured in Tolstoy's *War And Peace*, is probably the most exciting nil-nil draw ever, and a real challenge for head-to-head gamers. I can still remember playing the *Battlescape* version on an Atari ST and getting nowhere at all. This one might have e-mail, hot-seat and Internet play options but, in the end, I suspect Borodino will always be a draw, simply because it's too big. Please, Talonsoft, can we have some decent skirmish scenarios on the next one?

Andrew Wright

Publisher: Empire Interactive
Price: £39.99
Tel: 0181 343 7337

79

BEASTS & BUMPKINS

Command & Conquer meets *Carry On* in this medieval real-time strategy game. Set in the land of Lokyadore (geddit?), you as Lord Mildew (no stop it, you're killing me) must guide your cheery folk through 30 levels of hut building, in-breeding and monster twatting.

The first few levels introduce you to only a few different buildings and foot soldiers as you defend your fledgling village from giant wasps and wolves. As the game gets going, knights, priests and wizards come into play and more exploration is needed against a more organised foe. Some useful items and spells eventually spice things up, but what distinguishes this game from the

thousand and one other build 'em ups is the way in which your subjects go about their seasonal routine farting and shagging. The sound here is very good. Stomachs grumble when peasants are hungry and triumphant "wha-heys" abound when anything saucy happens, resulting in a final 'thwop' as children pop into existence.

While the game offers a fair amount of depth and variation, the gameplay suffers slightly from very basic combat. Because the attention is focused on resource management and empire building, the combat almost comes across as an afterthought and, as a result, it's somewhat limited. That said, the AI is adequate enough, while the graphics are generally detailed and colourful, with some nice touches such as moonlit water and crackling fires.

The computer offers worthwhile and varied opposition and, while there'll never be any huge pitched battles between massive forces, there should be enough going on elsewhere to keep interest levels up. With this in mind, if you consider that *Beasts & Bumpkins* is more of a resource management game than a war sim, you'll probably get quite a lot from it. If you can put up with the whimsical medieval theme, that is.

Richie Shoemaker

Publisher: Electronic Arts
Price: £34.99
Tel: 01753 549442

79



(Above) *Battleground 8 Russia* offers you the biggest battlefield yet to hide on. (Top right) *Beasts & Bumpkins*: fancy a bit of rough 'n' tumble?



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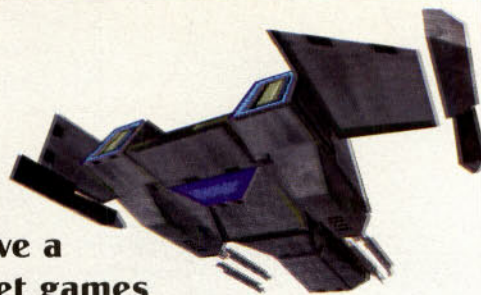
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Budget ZONE

Hey you! Are you poor? Do you blanch at the price of a new PC game? If so, you may be interested to learn that Sierra have a range of budget titles. The budget games are called Sierra Originals. Because they are all being released by Sierra. "Funny that..." says **Steve Hill**.



(Above and left) Although the graphical styles have changed, there's gameplay aplenty to be found in the company of Mr Knight.

GABRIEL KNIGHT: SINS OF THE FATHERS

A genre-buster at the time, 1993's original *Gabriel Knight* adventure naturally looks a bit skid when compared to the latest graphical extravaganzas. Nevertheless, it's still a sinister tale, scripted by horror writer Jane Jensen. For want of a better media-friendly soundbite, she has succeeded in creating a genuine neo-Gothic computer novel. The fancy-named titular character is the last in a long line of Shadow Hunters, whose fate is to fight the dark forces of the supernatural and haunted by an ancient voodoo curse. With voices by gaming stalwarts Tim Curry and Mark Hamill, *Gabriel Knight* has a truly macabre atmosphere.

Verdict: Spooky Voodoo.
Price: £9.99

GABRIEL KNIGHT: THE BEAST WITHIN

For the highly anticipated sequel, Sierra went for the contentious full-motion video approach, packing the game onto six CDs. It managed to hold its own though, and was still much fancied by enthusiasts of the first game. Gabriel again finds himself

involved in supernatural mither, as is his long-suffering sidekick Grace Nakimura. Dispatched to Munich to investigate a series of mutilations thought to be the work of werewolves, Gabriel confronts his own demons while Grace becomes embroiled in a historical mystery involving the demise of Mad King Ludwig II. The game was shot on location throughout Germany and is a visual feast.

Verdict: There are wolves after me.
Price: £14.99

CAESAR II

What have the Romans ever done for us? Roads, aqueducts, irrigation, education and sanitation are all factors in this extremely detailed simulation, which improved upon the first game with an easily manageable isometric view and some crisp, highly detailed SVGA graphics. Essentially, it's *SimCity* or *Colonization* set in Roman times and



(Above) *Caesar II*. The gameplay was always there, now it looks good too. (Above right) *Earthsiege 2*. The sequel sports improved AI, smarter graphics and a heap of new HERCs to run about in. As the saying goes, if you liked the first one...



(Above) The instantly accessible *Earthsiege*. It's really rather fab.

viewed up close. The main idea is to construct a majestic Roman city and ensure a harmonic existence for its citizens. *Caesar II* also considers the bigger picture, with the further option of conquering provinces, necessitating a bit of good old-fashioned warfare.

Verdict: Romans go home.
Price: £9.99

EARTHSIEGE

Big bad robot action is the order of the day here with this fairly well-respected 1994 release. Considered to be more accessible than the similar *Mechwarrior*, *Earthsiege* has you strapped into the cockpit for some very intense HERC battles with all manner of elaborate pyrotechnics thrown in for good measure. Before battle commences, the HERC can be

strategically configured with deadly weaponry, including EM Pulse Cannons, 300 gigawatt lasers and optically-guided or lock-on missiles. Forty-five missions spread over eight campaigns, randomly generated enemy tactics and battle conditions ensure that each game is different.

Verdict: Robots in disguise.
Price: £9.99

EARTHSIEGE 2

Surfacing some two years after the original, this second instalment boasted improved SVGA graphics and was generally a more polished affair. Having failed in their first attempt to invade Earth, the vast, destructive robots known as Cybrids have regrouped on the moon. As a human resistance fighter your task is again to pilot HERCs in an all-out guerrilla attack against the Cybrid forces. The game features over 50 missions and has nine customisable HERCs, not to mention a variety of terrain that encompasses moon, desert and city. The emphatic explosions are again in evidence and this is a must for robot fans everywhere.

Verdict: More robots in disguise.
Price: £9.99





(Above) USM2: The stats might not be quite up to date, but it's playable enough.

ULTIMATE SOCCER MANAGER 2

In the heady world of football management games, the *USM* series isn't generally thought of being up there with *Championship Manager* and *Premier Manager*. More of a battling mid-table side, it's still worth a few quid for one of the cups though, and is capable of pulling off a result. This second instalment saw a number of changes at all levels, featuring updated screens with 3D rendered SVGA graphics and animations. It has an enhanced team training schedule and the match action has been overhauled with a more aesthetic isometric view.

Verdict: For sure, like I say.

Price: £9.99

INDYCAR RACING II

The original was near legendary, but graphically it looked only slightly more impressive than *Chequered Flag* on the Spectrum. What fans wanted was an all-improved SVGA version, which is exactly what they got last year. *Indy II* features 15 tracks, from curvy, tight-cornered road courses to high-speed banked ovals, located all over America and Canada with an Australian track thrown in. The AI was given an overhaul, ensuring that opposing cars respond more realistically, with an infinite number of behaviour modes based on your driving reactions.

Verdict: Almost as good as Scalextric.

Price: £9.99



(Above and left) *IndyCar II* – please note that not all the tracks are ovals.

SPACE QUEST 6

In space, nobody can hear you clean. Arf, arf, arf. How we laughed at this sixth instalment of the seemingly



(Above) *Outpost* – one for the hardened strategy fan only. (Above right & top) *SQ6* – You either find these games hilariously funny, or just plain sad. You decide.

interminable series, featuring Roger Wilco, the hapless janitor turned space adventurer. This episode again finds Roger demoted to janitor, and as if things weren't bad enough, interstellar war breaks out, threatening the very future of the galaxy. To top it all, Roger's hi-tech food replicator breaks down. This is where the player takes over, and the gameplay becomes formulaic point-and-click, with heavy references to science fiction movies, television and games. Fans of the series will find much to enjoy in this latest instalment.

Verdict: It's zany. And wacky.

Price: £9.99

OUTPOST

An open-ended simulation of interstellar colonisation, your mission begins 50 years into the future, with the Earth rather unfortunately having been destroyed. In command of the latest in nuclear fusion space technology, you are charged with the responsibility of discovering new worlds and rebuilding human civilisation in nearby planetary systems. The game is allegedly based on NASA research into planetary science, robotics, terraforming (whatever that is) and interstellar spacecraft design. *Outpost* features hundreds of animated sequences and state of the art (for 1994) 3D rendered

graphics, which have stood the test of time. Incidentally, the long-awaited sequel is said to be nearing completion.

Verdict: Deep space strategy.

Price: £9.99

BETRAYAL AT KRONDOR

A somewhat underrated RPG, *Betrayal At Krondor* is based on the world of Raymond E Feist, a man with a big beard who writes books about goblins. His claims to fame include *Rise Of A Merchant Prince*, *Rage Of A Demon King*, and *Mistress Of The Empire*. *Betrayal* takes place in Feist's fantasy world of Midkemia and the graphics were great for the time. It also has a really good battle system, and fans of goblins and trolls could probably lose their minds for days on end, especially if they've read any of the books, though this isn't a prerequisite.

Verdict: Ahead of its time.

Price: £9.99

KING'S QUEST VII: THE PRINCESS BRIDE

Talking of interminable series, this seventh effort was the first to feature a female as the lead character, with Princess Rosella providing a lo-fi





(Above) *King's Quest VII*. Full of fluffy bunnies and cutesy wutesy cweatures.

◀ proto-Lara Croft. Said regal sort is lured into a magical pool which leads to an enchanted world, presumably by magic. When Rosella fails to come home for tea, her concerned mother, Queen Valanice, plunges into the aforementioned pool and the pair find themselves in a land beyond reality, the so-called Realm Of Eldritch. *King's Quest VII* was the first in the series to feature cartoon animation, and it verges on the Disneyesque. One of Sierra's best adventures to date.

Verdict: A land of make-believe.
Price: £9.99

SILENT THUNDER: A-10 TANK KILLER 2

Try saying that after eight pints of high-strength continental lager.
Silent

Thunder (as it will now be referred to) has nothing to do with improbably quiet weather but is instead a ground attack flight simulation. It only came out last year so the graphics are still pretty much up to scratch, with some startling pyrotechnic effects and explosions. Featuring ten different types of aircraft, *Silent Thunder* comes with 24 separate but continuous missions set in the Persian Gulf, Columbia and Korea, and boasts realistic terrain, such as canyons, rivers, valleys and buildings.

Verdict: Terrifying weapons. Beautiful scenery.
Price: £9.99

LEISURE SUIT LARRY 6: SHAPE UP OR SLIP OUT!

And while we're still on the subject of interminable series, this is a game that will happily use four exclamation



(Above) *Leisure Suit Larry* – Play this and you'll be a hit with girls. Promise.

marks where none will suffice. Having been invited to "Share Larry's Crazy Adventures!" the player is charged with the task of ensuring that the aforementioned Larry has sexual intercourse with a member of the opposite sex. Naturally, this isn't

directly mentioned in the game itself, as it prefers to rely instead on hilarious double entendres, some of which make *Carry On Up The Khyber* look like an arthouse film. We can only hope it comes in a brown paper bag over the counter, should anyone really want it.

Verdict: Big, long and hard. Ha ha ha ha ha.
Price: £9.99

CYBERSTORM

A strategic hex-based affair involving robots, *Cyberstorm* is based on the Earthsiege universe (although the robots are nowhere near as big, obviously). It's a bit like playing a small robot version of one of the XCOM games, except without the resource management. Or the aliens. Actually, it's not like XCOM at all really. Unusually attractive graphics though for this type of game. "Deep and addictive," opines our Chris...



(Above) *Cyberstorm* – command and conquer HERCs and bots.

Verdict: Good-looking and addictive. And deep.
Price: £9.99

Coming soon



Big budget game, now at budget price.

Also out on Sierra's budget label in a couple of months is *Phantasmagoria*. Roberta Williams' twisted adventure raised eyebrows at the time due to its excessive blood and gore, not to mention a rape scene. It's due for a November release, as is *Lighthouse*, a strange French adventure featuring the perennial parallel universe and bizarre happenings. Set

for January is *Lords Of The Realm II*, a fantasy strategy game which puts you in the role of a medieval lord and tasks you with conquering several realms. You'd never have guessed that from the title, eh? Anyway, it's dead good. All these titles will be around the £9.99 mark. For more details, contact Sierra on 0118 920 9100.



(Above) The graphically lush *Silent Thunder* – Whatta bargain at under a tenner.

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Tech

ZONE

3D wars: The battle continues...

As far as many people in this industry are concerned, the battle for 3D supremacy is almost over, with 3Dfx emerging as the clear winner. Closer scrutiny of the situation, however, suggests that the on-going battle between 3Dfx and its closest rival, PowerVR, has only just begun.

3DFX APPEARS TO BE STEAMING AHEAD of PowerVR in the 3D war. The recent E3 show in Atlanta was host to countless PC titles with support for 3Dfx, while the PowerVR stable was reasonably quiet in comparison. You could be forgiven for thinking that the 3Dfx chipset has emerged as the industry standard for 3D cards. To correctly assess whether or not this is the case, you need to cast your mind back to the beginning of last year when the 3D power struggle first became evident.

3Dfx gained a tremendous advantage over PowerVR by presenting their hardware first to software publishers, thus guaranteeing 3Dfx support for many big titles. VideoLogic have been struggling ever since to get the support they feel their PowerVR hardware deserves, and this was made worse by the fact that the first version of the card did not support bilinear filtering (a major criticism at the time which they rectified with later versions of the card). In fact, this latest version of the card is the very reason we believe it's way too early to discount PowerVR. More and more people are finding that the new Apocalypse 3Dx is actually faster under Direct3D than any of the 3Dfx cards. This is particularly noticeable on high-end machines. There are two things to consider here: firstly, in about six months time, both P166 and P200 machines will be approaching entry-level territory, thereby



making PowerVR a more viable proposition. Secondly, Microsoft's Direct3D libraries are improving massively with every release, so D3D performance will be of paramount importance towards the end of the year.

We're not saying PowerVR is better



PowerVR vs 3Dfx: read the final verdict next issue!

than 3Dfx. We're not saying 3Dfx is better than PowerVR. What we're saying is that the struggle for 3D supremacy is far from over. Read the Christmas issue of *PC Zone* for an authoritative guide to every 3D card available, and the announcement of a clear and hopefully undisputed winner!

All together now

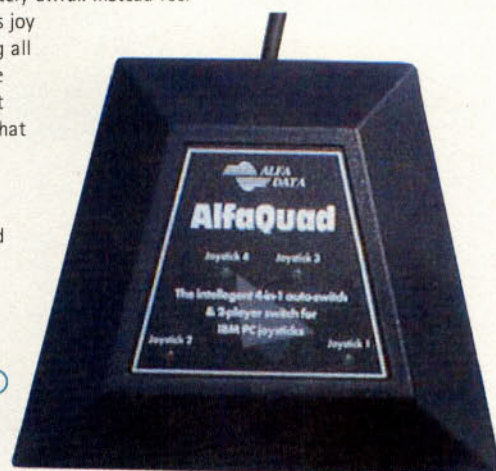


THE ALFAQUAD IS A JOYSTICK SWITCH WHICH ACCOMMODATES up to four gamepads or joysticks – handy if you've got a few mates round and fancy some multi-player action (if you know what we mean). Don't be too put off by the fact that it looks absolutely awful. Instead feel

wondrous joy

at the thought of hooking all your joysticks up with the minimum of fuss, without arsing about with cards that take up a free expansion slot and invariably don't work anyway (in our experience). The AlfaQuad will set you back £30. For more info call Golden Image on 0181 900 9291.

The AlfaQuad – it looks absolutely arse, but isn't (honest!).



New kid on the block

ORCHID AND DIAMOND'S MONOPOLY IN THE 3DFX CARD SECTOR IS about to come to an end. The new Gamer 3Dfx card has a recommended street price of £99.95, making it the first card with Voodoo's revolutionary chipset to retail at less than £100 (just). Unlike the Orchid and Diamond cards, the Gamer 3Dfx is not bundled with any games. But seeing as most games now support 3Dfx when they're released, and the entire back catalogue of 3Dfx patches is sitting on this month's 3D Zone CD, we don't see this as a problem. If you're after a 3Dfx card, the Gamer 3Dfx is the one we recommend. Interested parties should contact Maxi on 0181 944 9000 for more information.



Buy a Gamer 3Dfx and play *Quake 2* with incredible graphics. A bit like this, in fact!

F1 Sim steering wheel



The F1 Sim is the wheel of choice for armchair racing enthusiasts.



LIVING WHEELS FOR the PC seem to fall into one of two camps: you've got the cheap, tacky plastic nightmares that give you fairly limited control over your chosen virtual vehicle and then break after a week or two, and you've got the incredibly expensive ones that burn a hole in your pocket but look nice and offer varying degrees of realism, depending on how much you want to pay. We reviewed the GP500 as part of a round-up a few months back and gave it the *PC Zone Classic* award, which means it's a bit good. Well, here it is again, with a brand new name, a shiny new coating, improved performance

and a lower price tag.

We tested the F1 Sim wheel with *Network Q Rally*, *F1 from*

Psygnosis, and *Ignition*, a tasty arcade racer from Virgin. As expected, it performed admirably with all the games on test, and we got it up and running with the minimum of fuss.

The thing that really stands out about the F1 Sim, though, is the build quality. This was the biggest criticism



of most of the wheels we tested in our round-up (shoddy architecture, flimsy build, etc), but the F1 Sim feels rugged and strong and is guaranteed to last you many months as opposed to a couple of weeks. You may think £180 is a lot of money to splash out on a steering wheel, but considering the same wheel in an inferior incarnation costs £250, and the F1 Sim really is head and shoulders above the rest of the pack, we feel it's the best investment armchair Formula One fans can possibly make.

There are lots of wheels around for the PC, but only one of this quality. You pays your money, you makes your choice.

Manufacturer: Zye Technology

Price: £179

Tel: 01293 538 666

Release date: Out now



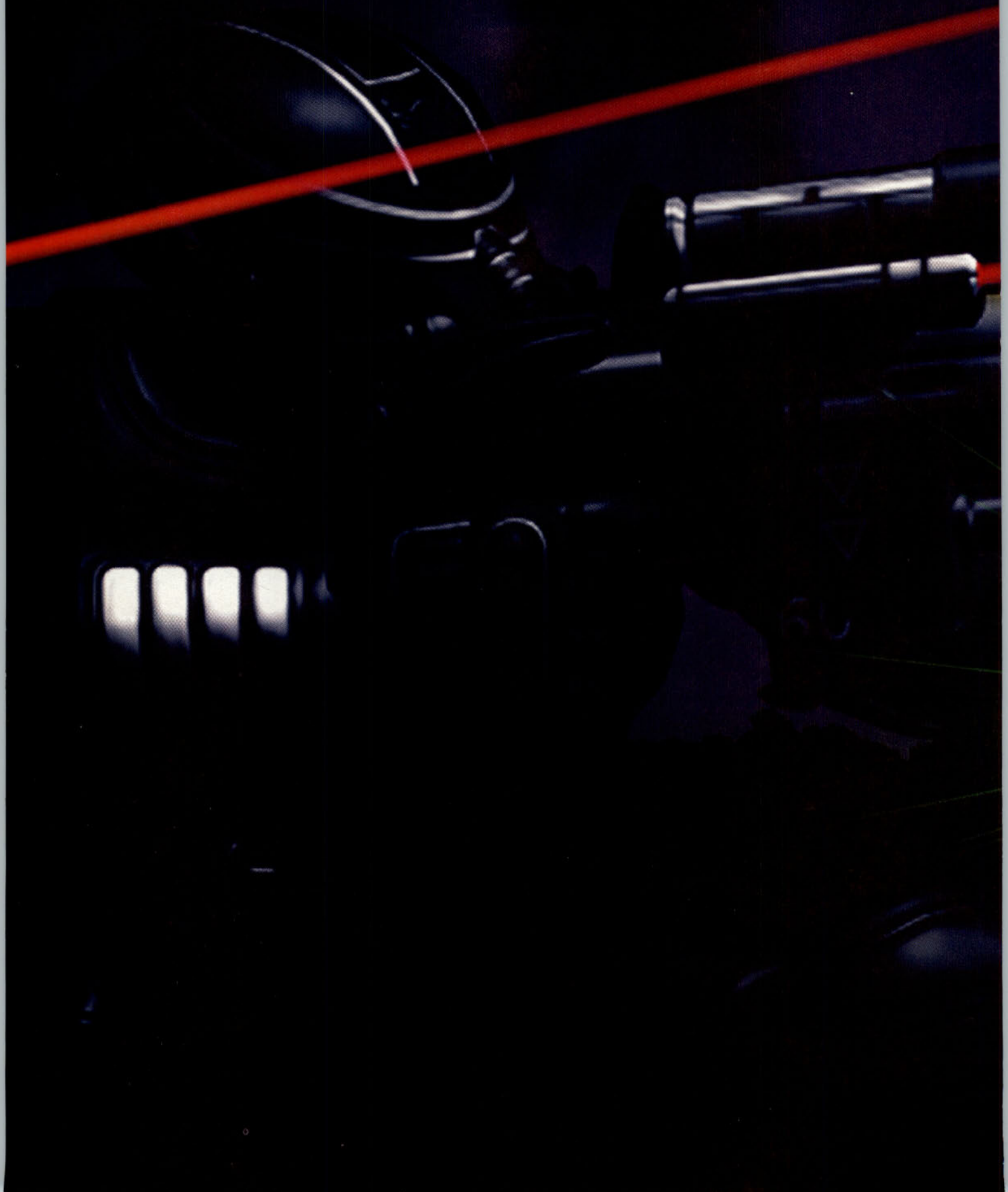
Forces fight it out

MICROSOFT AND CH PRODUCTS ARE BOTH RELEASING THEIR OWN FORCE feedback joysticks. These wonderful devices are said to bring 'unparalleled realism' to any games that support them. Flight sims that support the sticks will send messages to the devices through software, so players will actually feel the sticks vibrate during take off and landing, and the sticks will refuse to move as advertised when the plane gets damaged or the game decides the virtual pilot has blacked out.

Action games too will reap the benefits of force feedback products, with players being punched in the eye by said joysticks during beat 'em ups, and actually shot to death by the sticks during 3D shoot 'em ups, although both these last two features have yet to be confirmed. Unfortunately for all concerned, both of these products landed on our laps far too late in our schedule to be given a proper hands-on test. However, next month the entire office will be taking part in possibly the most thorough evaluation of these sticks ever! By then we'll have oodles of titles that support both of these beasts, so we'll be in prime position to give them a bloody good testing. Don't miss it folks.



The Salvation Army





My name is Legion: for we are many. Mark 5:9

7TH LEGION

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"Intelligent & funny" - *Wired*



Music, films, computer games reviews

In this issue...

- Star Wars vs Star Trek - all is revealed in the interactive showdown to see which sega rules. Also check out the interview with Patrick Stewart.
- Blender offers the guide to Rock 'n' Roll band names.
- Check out the profiles of Christina Ricca from the Addams Family, Kai Krause, Dr Katz, Tricky and Poe.
- Go to the Movies with the Blender reviewers - hear their views on five new film releases including Evita, The People vs Larry Flynt and Dangerous Ground.
- PLUS: Loads of reviews - music and computer games, including Time Lapse, Noir, The Neverhood and Tomb Raider.

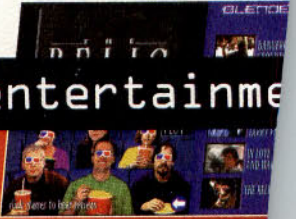
SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS:

Windows

MCP2 strongly recommended
Windows 3.1 (or later) with DOS 6.2 (or later)
486 or Pentium PC required
4 Megabytes FREE RAM (6 recommended)
Sound Card (Most modules)
13" VGA or SVGA monitor
Quicktime 2.02 for Windows (supplied)
CD-ROM drive (double speed or better recommended)

Macintosh

Macintosh System 7
68030 processor required
60040 or better strongly recommended
4 Megabytes FREE RAM (6 recommended)
13" colour screen (256 colour)
Quicktime 2.0 + Apple Multimedia Tuner (supplied)
CD-ROM drive (double speed or better recommended)



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ZONE

On-Line

Sword play

More juicy goss from the frontier of on-line gaming, plus a big spread on the most ambitious on-line role-playing game yet, *Ultima Online*.

IT'S A NIGHTMARE. EVERYTHING HAS COME FULL CIRCLE.

When I was younger – a lot younger – trolls, elves, feisty bearded dwarves, huge broadswords, rings and anvils all held a curious fascination for me. And it wasn't just me, but a huge slice of vaguely pale, slightly unwashed young males around the world. Under those god-forsaken letters, AD&D, we lost hours of valuable puberty pretending that a badly-drawn dungeon on a sheet of foolscap was an entire virtual world where our bronzed-warrior alter egos would excitingly combat poisonous jellies and goblins by rolling many-sided dice in real time. Woo.



Then computer games happened and we didn't have to bother with all that swords 'n' sorcery guff. No longer did we gather around the posh kid's drop-leaf table, with cans of Top Deck Lager 'n' Lime (the first alcopop), and fondle our lead figurines. We became solitary creatures, toying with sci-fi games, flight sims, and race 'em ups. We left all that AD&D behind.

And now, this very month, we're back to square one. The telecommunications revolution and über-powerful computers have conspired not to create a Utopian global village or to give the Third World some economic autonomy. No, great advances in technology have created one big, fat, oily, worldwide Dungeons & Dragons game – *Ultima Online*. I don't know whether to clap or to weep. It's a great game and, playing it, I'm sure I'm not alone in feeling those primeval stirrings for orcs, battleaxes and mithril helmets again.

God help us.

David McCandless



Those were the days my friends. Those days will never end. Shit, they have.

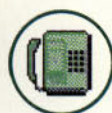
FROM THE FRONT

OUR REGULAR PERSONAL REPORT FROM THE ON LINE GAMING FRONTIER



ULTIMA Online

It's no secret that **Raza Toosy** has no life. Which is why we sent him into Lord British's fantasy world to try and



The development of Origin's epic fantasy world, *Ultima Online*, has so far clocked up an estimated \$6 million in expenses and is still only in the beta test

stage (a process being carried out by thousands of 'volunteers' around the world). Naturally, it has a lot of expectations to live up to. On paper it is a true Garriot-esque epic, a sprawling landscape of mixed character – all vying to make a name for themselves in a fantasy universe created by highly-experienced adventure designers.

Ever since the first *Ultima* game, players have wanted to be able to mix it up with other human-controlled characters in the world of Britannia. Now that it's here, the question is: how well does the long-awaited concept compare to the physical implementation?

More than any other game of this type, *Ultima Online* fits the description of a role-playing game. During your time on-line you really become your

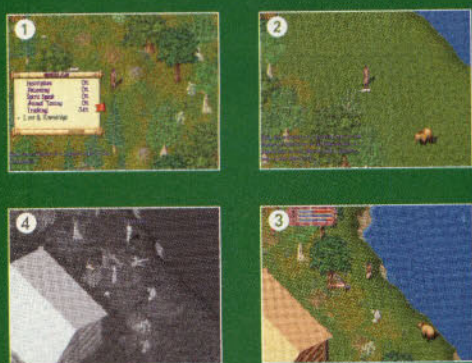
alter ego. Eating, sleeping, resting and working are all essential activities in this non-linear world. It's up to you to make the game.

Connecting...

With your Internet connection up and running, you are taken from the cold blue of Windows 95 into the oak-panelled splendour of *UO's* main screen. From here you can proceed to create a character, complete with statistics (strength, dexterity and intelligence), a character class (anything from warriors to wizards to shepherds) and an initial ballot of three skills.

Unlike previous RPGs, the idea of experience levels has been scrapped. *Ultima Online* gives your character skills to learn instead. There are 44 in total, all defined by percentage, which increase the more you use them or see them being used. For example, the more you camp, the more your camping skill improves. Just like *Quake* really. The skills vary from Cartography to Magery to

A BRIEF HISTORY OF TIME



Clockwise from top left: [1] Using my tracking skills to help hunt down animals in the forest. A bear is close by. [2] Through the thicket and around the corner... ah, there she is. It won't be long before I have my kill and with it, her valuable hide... [3] The hunter becomes the hunted and I am chased north-west across the coast line. Running low on health, I run for my life. [4] Death is swift. To add insult to injury, somebody comes and loots my body of all its worth. G. Luciano, your tarnished name has been immortalised forever.

◀ Swordsmanship, encompassing every aspect of the game. The idea is to create a rounded character. From here you choose your hair and skin colour and which town to start off in. Then it's on to Britannia itself for fame, fortune and, if you're lucky, a butt-spanking from Lord British himself.

This is all seamlessly integrated into Windows 95. The only way you know you are on the Internet is by your modem's flashing lights and the constant presence of annoying Americans.

I've been able to get an average ping time of 300ms to the US server (presently the only one available). This makes for a reasonably playable game with intermittent periods of lag. However, Origin have assured us that things will improve as the beta-testing period progresses.

The look of war

The first thing that strikes you on entering Britannia is the graphics. Origin have gone back to the classic look and feel of *Ultima VII* and *VIII* for this one. The human animations are impressive, although the same cannot be said for the monsters and animals. Also combat, at the moment, is erratic and unpredictable. First you have to switch your character from Peace to War mode and then double-click on the enemy. Only it's never too clear whether you're hitting anything or not.

Making your way

It's very daunting at the beginning as you spend the first few days wondering what to do and how to progress. You start off with next to nothing, just basic weapons and/or tools based upon which skills you chose when fashioning your character. For example, if you were a Ranger you would start off with a bow,



(Top) Cool, a mass gang bang. And you thought RPGs were dull. (Above) Hmm, human remains everywhere. Perhaps I'm missing something here?



A map of Britannia. Essential, as getting lost is very, very easy.

Product details

Game: *Ultima Online*
Version: Beta phase 2
Publisher: Origin
Max no of players: 1800 (last count)
Server: US
Price: TBA
Website: www.owo.com

50 arrows and a knife to skin your catch with. As with the real world, the driving force behind society is money, which you need to equip yourself with to stand a better chance in battle. For this you need to work, and work depends upon what you start the game with. A Ranger, for instance, would kill monsters, skin them and sell their hide and meat to shopkeepers.

The scale of Britannia is not as large as expected, and it can get quite populated in some areas, especially near towns. Although this adds to the community feel, you can find yourself tripping over other people's feet. Origin hope to address this by introducing more worlds to handle the extra load expected when the game is officially released.

The beta-test of *Ultima Online* doesn't provide you with any real goals besides the betterment of your character. The odd mission or task can be found but these are pretty one-dimensional (get me object A and I will give you reward B). Extended quests, scenarios and non-linear storylines have been promised by Origin, and a regular on-line newsletter outlining the goings on in Britannia is being planned.

Hello, my name is Kevin

Probably the most significant aspect of the game is the character interaction. Instead of roaming the land of Britannia and meeting boring computer-controlled bitmaps, you are roaming the land of Britannia and meeting boring human-controlled bitmaps. Okay, it's not that bad and at times can be good fun. Whether you're just saying hello or shouting out orders mid-battle, knowing that people are on the other end of the line adds something which artificial intelligence can't.

In a typical session, more time is probably spent conversing than adventuring and it is this, more than any other feature, that makes it so different. You dictate what happens in Britannia, not Origin. If you're after a long drawn-out storyline that tells you where to go, you might as well save your phone bill and play *Ultima VIII*.

But just chatting barely scratches the surface of human interaction. Killing other players, setting up guilds, engaging in politics, gaining notoriety, trading goods and equipment, and researching magic and alchemy are just some of the ways that human-controlled characters enrich the game's world.

The End

It will be interesting to see how Britannia develops as the beta-testing progresses. Origin have created a world within the boundaries of an economical, social and ecological environment. It will take time for them to set up a balanced gaming environment, just as it will take time for players to find their niche in this society. Only when the dust has settled and the game is finally released will we see if order springs from the chaos.



AS IT HAPPENS

For more information about the *Ultima Online* beta, have a look at any of the following sites:

Official *Ultima Online* Page:

<http://www.owo.com>

***Ultima Online* at Scorched.com:**

<http://ultima.scorched.com>

***Ultima Online* Vault:**

<http://151.196.77.212/mmeyer/uo.html>

***Ultima Online* Chat Zone:**

<http://www.usinternet.com/cgi-test/refresh.pl>

WARNING! WARNING!

When you first start playing the *Ultima Online* beta you'll no doubt spend many hours downloading update patches and suchlike. People with slower connections, beware – this tiresome process could put you out of action for the best part of a day!



ULTIMA ONLINE

**BEHIND
THE
SCENES**

So you know what we think of *Ultima Online* and how the game's shaping up, but it's been an arduous development process involving hundreds of designers and programmers. **John Houlihan** speaks to Richard Garriot about the world's biggest on-line role-playing adventure.



PCZ: What do you think of the current state of on-line gaming?

RG: I've played some of these other games, and although they're good, most of them are still primarily combat-orientated, which to my mind undersells the potential of the medium. I don't really believe in that type of 'naked' combat game. I think you've got to have a much more sophisticated level of interaction, through all different kinds of activities within a game.

PCZ: So how will *UO* refresh our jaded palates?

RG: Well, first of all it really is one of the first multi-player titles to come from a top publisher. It is a known property, if you know what I mean, so it already has real advantages in terms of backing, facilities, technology and, of course, the history behind the series.

PCZ: *Ultima* has attracted a dedicated following over the years. What will *UO* offer traditional fans of the Avatar?

RG: This is one of the critical foundations of *Ultima Online*. It



"We're trying to make a game that is a shared social experience."

isn't just an open-ended environment for people to make up their own plans and play god. This is an *Ultima*. It has to have a big idea, an epic kind of concept.

PCZ: So how will this fit in with the *Ultima* storyline?

RG: Well, in terms of the big picture, there are two characters: myself, Lord British, and my negative alter ego, Blackthorn, who is being played by Stuart Long (*The director of the project - Ed*), who are fighting over the shattered realms of Britannia. Hopefully these two characters will have the experience and motivation to drive other events and plotlines within the game.



Suck up to other players and hope for favours (left) or just say sod it and go on a killing spree (right).

PCZ: But how can everybody follow the same story thread?

RG: We want to strike a balance between the idea of the 'small' and the 'epic' scale. So we want to get players into the idea of activities, jobs to do and ways to get involved, early into the game – without too much thought for the big high concept. In *Ultima Online* you can literally do anything that you've ever been able to do in any other *Ultima*. For example, you can learn the skill of Weapon-Smithing. This involves collecting raw materials and forging weapons which are better than those sold by shopkeepers. People become reliant on you to make that equipment and, hey, you've found a role.

PCZ: What about actual adventuring, how will quests work?

RG: We have this idea of a 'world ecology'. For example, a dragon living in a cave will have to go out every day to forage for food. So if a player goes out hunting near where the dragon

ULTIMA ONLINE TECHNICAL ISSUES

Anoraks of the world rejoice. You have nothing to lose but your clipboard! Pencils at the ready techno fans, for these *Ultima Online* technical facts and snippets...

- Although *Ultima Online* will eventually be released over here, plans for a UK or European server are still officially "up in the air – much depends on the results of the current beta test", according to EA Europe. Which seems like a bit of a cop-out. We urge you all to storm the EA offices (or www.owo.com) and demand a UK server at sword point – it's the only language these people understand!
- Origin recommend a 'ping' time of under 300ms for optimum performance (in the office we've been averaging 150-200ms). Dial into *Ultima Online* before the US wakes up and you're laughing.
- The beta test has so far peaked with 1800 players on-line at once. When the finished games hit our screens over here, 2000+ eager beavers will be able to hack, slash and er, knit their way across Britannia – simultaneously.
- The 200 million square feet of 'virtual' world occupies a massive 35 gigabytes on Origin's home server system.
- Origin estimate it would take you ten hours to walk across the entire continent. And to see the whole world at once, on one PC, you'd require 38,000 17-inch monitors...



Whatever the weather the blue guy's on the case.

lives, they'll lower the local animal population and the dragon will be forced to go further and further, until eventually it hits a town. That automatically invokes a quest and the players involved can then either go out and hunt the dragon, or they must find other ways to earn a living.

So in *Online* there's this 'virtual ecology' of activity constantly at work. All the players gradually interweave themselves into the fabric of the game. Hopefully, everyone who plays will actually feel that they are part of the 'grand scheme of things', no matter what role they're actually playing.

PCZ: In other on-line RPGs, you no sooner log on than some ninja wizard vapourises your character into a million shards for a few cheap experience points. How do you intend to deal with that perennial problem: Player Killers?

RG: This is supposed to be a completely virtual world, so if people want to live the life of a bad guy, they should be able to. But we don't want them to prey on our new players and prevent them from having fun too.

Guards have been put in to 'police' the game. They are there to discourage anti-social behaviour and prevent players going on a 'newbie' killing spree. They should also stop people running around naked or cussing a lot...

PCZ: Even so, won't long-term players dominate the game?

RG: In *Ultima Online* there is no single way to become supremely powerful. Unlike other games which allow you to learn everything there is to know – to collect all the great artefacts and become very strong – *Online* presents the player with a huge variety of skills to be learnt by practising them or using them. Players will slowly advance certain skills rather than others, so no one will ever be able to create the 'best' wizard or the 'best' fighter or the 'best' thief. To adventure successfully, you'll almost be forced to travel in a group and co-operate.

PCZ: What do you hope to have achieved by the time the beta testing's finished and the game goes on-line?

RG: We're trying to make a game that is a shared social experience, with a high concept that can really compel an audience of experienced gamers. To participate will hopefully be to see just that.



A BRIEF HISTORY OF ULTIMA

Ultima I to III

The Beginning (1980), *Revenge Of The Enchantress* (1982), *Exodus* (1983)

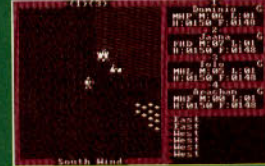
Puny as they may seem by today's exacting standards, these CGA marvels packed more RPG antics into just a few floppy disks than most games seem to manage on ten CD-ROMs. The task? A struggle against an unholy trinity of sorcerers. The prize? The Gem of Immortality.



The Beginning



Revenge Of The Enchantress



Exodus



Ultima IV to VI

Quest Of The Avatar (1985), *Warriors Of Destiny* (1987), *The False Prophet* (1990)

The second 'Trilogy of Virtue' saw *Ultima* come of age with the first outing of the now legendary Avatar. This middle trilogy also saw the introduction of Lord British (Garriot's alter ego and in-game character) and the mystic realm of Britannia.



Quest Of The Avatar



Warriors Of Destiny



The False Prophet



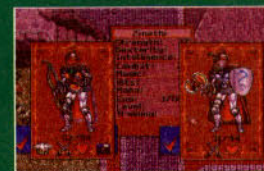
Ultima VII to VIII

The Black Gate (1992), *Serpent Isle* (1993), *Pagan* (1994)

The Guardian, conqueror of worlds and covert Quentin was your implacable foe in a trinity of moongates, magic and mayhem. *Pagan*, the last *Ultima* game released from Origin was the most graphically intensive title in the series.



The Black Gate



Serpent Isle



Pagan



Ultima Underworld I and II

The Stygian Abyss (1992), *Labyrinth Of Worlds* (1992)

Two offshoots of the epic, which introduced a new first-person perspective and were widely acclaimed as dazzling twin stars in the *Ultima* firmament.



The Stygian Abyss



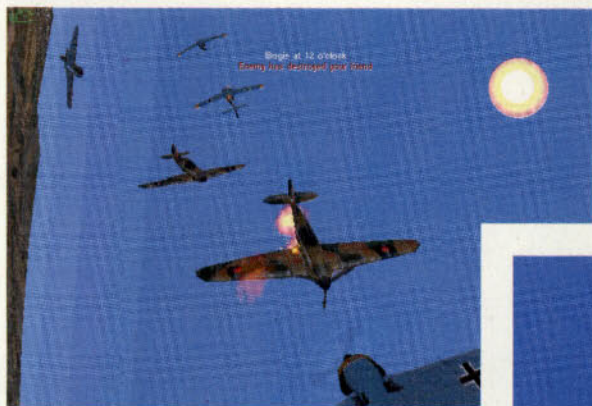
Labyrinth Of Worlds

NOTE: *Ultima I to VI* are available on the *Encore Ultima* CD-ROM from EA. *Ultima VIII* and *VIII* are available separately on EA's budget label, and *Underworld I* and *II* have been released in a limited edition CD-ROM box set, also from EA. Call them on 01753 549442 for further details.

On-Line News & Gossip

The page with its finger on the pulse of on-line gaming brings a deluge of new titles, new technology and shed-loads of coolissimo multi-player fun."

Fighter Ace: 'massively multi-player' air combat



Fighter Ace: How do you want to die today?™



DEVELOPED BY VR-1 AND PUBLISHED BY MICROSOFT, *FIGHTER ACE* IS A 'MASSIVELY MULTI-PLAYER' on-line air combat game that provides a realistic simulation of aircraft from Great Britain, the United States, Germany and Russia in a World War II theatre. Each flight arena supports a hundred individual players and features 12 different aircraft.

The 'massively multi-player' system is a smart comms engine that analyses the quality of the connection to provide data on bandwidth and latency for fast but smooth play, in not too dissimilar a fashion to IBM's technology recently adopted by *Red Storm* (see *Zone On-Line* 54).

At the recent E3 trade show in Atlanta, the booths of VR-1 and Microsoft were linked up for extensive *Fighter Ace* demonstrations – perhaps a rather incongruous choice, given that both companies were situated in the World Congress Center. We cringe to think what would have been going through the minds of neighbouring German exhibitors as they watched the industry's leading software publisher shriek and whoop in delight at the demise of Nazi Stukas.

Fighter Ace will be available exclusively on Microsoft's *Internet Gaming Zone*, where it will become one of the first 'pay to play' products. Price details have yet to be announced. Glean more information at <http://www.vr1.com>.

On-Line round-up

INTERACTIVE MAGIC recently unveiled their *MEGAvoice* technology, which allows people from around the world to speak to one another while playing Internet games. It will be incorporated into titles such as *War Birds*, *Fighter Ops* and *Planetary Raiders*.

IMPLAYER are planning to launch *WarSport*, a futuristic sports simulation where you either obliterate the opposition or score the most points.

VR-1 showcased five titles at the recent E3 show in Atlanta, including *Microsoft Fighter Ace* (q.v.), *The S.A.R.A.C. Project*, *Nomads Of Klanth*, *UltraCorps* and *VR-1 Crossroads*. Full details are available on the company's Website, and we'll also be reviewing their games in a forthcoming issue of *PC Zone*.

FORESIGHT have announced their new Internet soccer management game, *Net.soccer*. Football fans should form an unruly drunken queue at <http://www.netsoccer.com> for further details.



The thing with being on-line is you don't know who you're up against.

Kill all Websites

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ANY QUESTIONS?

And the 1997 Stupid Product Award goes to...

along and take aim with a loaded AK-47 or a well-aimed 'bum egg'.

Sega plan to release a whole string of desktop distractions throughout 1997, available on-line. *Web Vengeance* can be downloaded at <http://www.sega-soft.com/web-vengeance/GetIt.html>. Weapon expansion packs are available on the site for \$4.95 (UK prices to follow).

WEB VENGEANCE IS Sega's free desktop toy that allows you to blast away at irritating Websites or your own e-mail package without actually damaging anything.

Choose from a wide range of weapons that include rotten tomatoes, eggs, hand grenades and even a Stealth Bomber. Webmasters in the know can add HTML code to their sites. This initiates defences should anyone come

On-Line News & Gossip

Beta Call

Reckon you could pass on a few tasty tips to the gaming cognoscenti? Respond to the Beta Call and you can do just that.



- **Fire Team** is an impressive isometric actioner which is welcoming beta testers at www.fireteam.com.
- E-On's on-line RPG *Twilight Lands* is still in beta, and requests are still out for testers. <http://www.e-on.com> for more information.
- Wear your very own 'virtual stripy kecks' and play against others in the *Jack Nicklaus Online Golf Tour* at www.accolade.com/products/jnogti/index.htm.
- Gameworld are looking for beta testers for their new RPG *Realms Of GAIA*. Sign up at www.gameworld.com/gameworld/join.htm.
- I-Magic are still after beta testers for their *Elite*-style on-line space game *Planetary Raiders*. So if you're interested in getting involved, try www.icigames.com/pr/index.html.
- There's also an open beta test for *Tanarus* (formerly known as *Battlestation*), an up-and-coming on-line tank sim from Sony, at <http://battleground.station.sony.com>.
- And finally this month, the strangely named *Running With Scissors* are accepting beta test applications for *Postal*, which they bill as a "hyper-violent action thrash" at <http://www.runningwithscissors.com>.

You got a beta test of your latest game going on at the moment? You want us to tell our readers about it? You have? Then e-mail details to news_editor.pzone@dennis.co.uk and we'll investigate.

It's all out netWAR



"WHAT distinguishes *netWAR* from many other multi-player games is the rapid arcade-style action and superior graphics," says Mark Nieker of Headland Digital Media, the California-based digital publishing arm of Pearson PLC.

"No other current on-line game even comes close to *netWAR* based on those features alone."

netWAR is a top-down, three-quarter perspective DirectX arcade combat game that can be played against up to 30 other people. Players can assume one of four combat stereotypes including a soldier called Special Forces Dude and, bizarrely, a former postal worker called AK.

There's a large variety of weapons to choose from and ten vehicles to strap yourself into including jet packs, tanks, jeeps and choppers that shoot napalm. Winners and losers are ranked on a leaderboard.

The game offers four modes of play: Practice, where you can play without affecting the overall rankings; Mayhem, where adversaries are random for total anarchy; Team Battle, where players join forces with each other to meet mutual goals; and Death Match, which involves up to 16 players battling to the death. Details at <http://www.netwar.com>.



Soggy puttees and dead mates: just two reasons why war is best enjoyed on a computer.



Conquer & command the Internet

LOOKING AND PLAYING JUST A SMIDGEN BIT LIKE A CERTAIN WESTWOOD GAME, *STRATAGEM* is the latest arrival in the increasingly enticing E-On Gamesroom. Up to 32 players can battle it out in time-honoured top-down style, with the promise of zero lag and topissimo violent fun between opposing teams of humans and gobgoyles.

Although many would question the motives behind releasing another formulaic point-and-click battle game, it's clear that E-On are working hard to increase the diversity of their games, and *Stratagem* is but a slice of quiche from the whole buffet. Nevertheless, the game includes a fancy chat system, league tables, magical quests and a greater diversity of troops and tactics to arouse interest in what is without question a saturated genre.

Combine all this with the fact that they've dropped their subscription rate to just £1 for the entire summer, and it could be the time to whip out your wallet and pay a visit to <http://www.e-on.co.uk>.





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INCURBATION



THE BATTLE ISLE GAMES ARE SOMETHING OF A rarity in PC gaming circles. They're hex-based. They're turn-based. They're Germany-based. They've got more statistics per kilobyte than all of the Championship Manager games put together (they might even give Microsoft Excel a run for its money). They're not even particularly 'cool' in the way that games like Red Alert or Quake can sometimes appear to be to misguided gaming snobs. And earlier versions sported graphics that can only be described as minimalist.



Those pixels in the background will miraculously disappear in the native 3Dfx version the game ships with.



This game is already being referred to as Battle Isle 4 by many PC games journalists, despite claims by the game's designers that it's a total departure from previous Battle Isle affairs. **Chris Anderson** flew to Germany in search of the truth.

None of these potentially 'anorakistic' traits have stopped the series from gaining a very large, very loyal legion of fans who have snapped up and cherished each release of the game as soon as it hit the shops. No wonder then, that Blue Byte have decided to capitalise on the success of the *Battle Isle* games by producing another game which features the characters from the previous titles.

It's of paramount importance that you understand one thing and one thing only at this point. The similarity between *Incubation* and the previous games in the series ends there. Some of the characters make a re-appearance (one Commander plays a cameo role), but all the vehicles, all the ships, and even all the hexes have disappeared completely (gulp!). ▶



Classic 'shit hits fan' action. You can't tell from this screenshot but the free 3D camera will make scenes like this look even more dramatic.

PROTECT TO SURVIVE

Look after your marines and they'll look after you. Every time they kill an alien, they get experience points. These points can be 'spent' in the *Incubation* Weaponry Mall at the end of each level, allowing you to buy better weapons and expensive chick-pulling gadgets. *Incubation* is good like that, you know. We only played it for a few levels and already our marines were getting better armour, better machine guns, and more advanced equipment. This is in stark contrast to certain games, which shall remain nameless, that make you play forever before getting any new toys to play with. Additionally, if you manage to keep your men alive long enough, they will eventually go up a whole experience level, making them better at just about everything in general. For instance, they'll be able to travel further, they'll be able to fire more accurately, you know the kind of thing. So look after your *Incubation* buddies now, y'hear?



RELOAD TO REVIVE

Many of the levels in *Incubation* are absolutely massive. How will you feel then, when you've almost got to the end of one of these levels and your best marine suddenly eats alien excrement? You may well be slightly put out, no? Worry not, for the easier difficulty levels of the game allow you to 'undo' what you've just 'done' and miraculously bring your beloved marine back to life (ie cheat).



This option was included for very young persons, girls, and German football teams. (You sure about that? - Ed) Be warned though, that the higher difficulty levels are much less forgiving and will only let you save at the very end of



each mission. This is the most rewarding way to play the game, as you can't just 'undo' everything when things go wrong and so are forced to play a more thoughtful, strategic game. The choice is yours.



Your soldiers gain experience points every time they dispose of the alien scum. If they gain enough points, they go up a level and get new abilities.

What, no hexes?

Incubation is still turn-based, but this time you're controlling a squad of elite space marines (more on this later). The general idea of the game is that you take a troop of inexperienced and stupidly weak marines from one mission to the next, hopefully keeping them alive to gain experience points and update their weaponry. Of course, while all this is going on, aliens will be coming at you from every angle. You may think that this all sounds pretty straightforward, but once you've actually played the game, you'll see you have more potential problems to deal with at once than you could possibly imagine. To start with, the aliens come at you through holes in the ground. There are no set number of aliens programmed to attack you from these nightmare niches - they'll just keep coming at you 'til the end of time unless you either a) destroy the outlet they're coming from or b) leg it to the next part of the level, making sure you close the doors behind you as you go, thus sealing off the area.

What this all amounts to in each level is a race against time. Every area of the level is cordoned off, so you need to use a couple of marines to get through the doors while the others provide them with cover. Blast your way through the room you've just entered, find the entrance to the next one, and so on until you finally get to the exit for the level. There are other things to take into account while you're happily blasting your way from one room to the next, though. For example, most weapons your marines

Four green aliens, sitting on a wall, and if one green alien, should accidentally fall...



BATTLE ISLE, A History Of...



BATTLE ISLE

Battle Isle started life on the Atari ST, Amiga and PC Engine before it made its debut on PC. It sported many hexes and simple but addictive gameplay and won fans the world over. The first game didn't suffer too much from its stigmatic association with anorak-wearing hex fans, and gained a very wide audience.



BATTLE ISLE 2

Better graphics, more units and a better interface were the order of the day for the sequel to the first game. Much was made of the cut-scenes which were quite impressive then, but fairly tame compared to today's multimedia extravaganzas. Generally considered by all to be a fab follow-up to the original.



BATTLE ISLE 3

The big one. Even better graphics still, stunning cut-scenes which enacted all the high and low points of your battles and an all-new windows-based interface for easier play. *Battle Isle 3* was a gargantuan leap over the first two games in terms of graphics, ease of use, and of course, gameplay.



INCUBATION

Incubation bears little or no resemblance to the previous games except for the fact it features a few of the characters from the *Battle Isle* universe. Fans of the series in its previous form should take note of this fact. For more info on *Incubation* you could try reading the rest of this feature!

ALL EYES ON...

Wolfgang Walk, Producer of
the game known as **INCUBATION**

F

FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS INTERVIEW WE ARE GOING TO put Wolfgang Walk in a cold, damp room totally devoid of anything resembling comfortable furniture and lock the door. We are going to turn off all the lights and shine an annoyingly bright lamp into his face. We will ask him embarrassing questions pertaining to a certain World Cup Tournament circa 1966, and offer him an opportunity to explain his comrades' total and complete obliteration by a proud, brave and talented England team. We will ask him to explain his countrymen's uncanny ability to slot away one penalty after the next at the most inopportune of times (inopportune as far as we're all concerned, of course). Then again...

PCZ: Knowing me Chris Anderson, knowing you World Cup-losing, Euro 96 penalty-taking German person, aha.

Wolfgang: Aha.

PCZ: In what way does Incubation reach the parts that other turn-based strategy games don't reach?



happening all the time. And of course, Incubation is in full 3D. PCZ: Incubation is a dramatic departure from previous Battle Isle games. Did it start as a Battle Isle game and then change course? Wolfgang: No, we wanted to do a turn-based strategy game from the start, but with a lot more action in it. We felt we'd done as much as we could with the Battle Isle series and so we decided a strategic tactical game in 3D was the thing to do. The whole turn-based thing was

getting a bit dated and we felt the modern gamer wanted a bit more.

PCZ: You decided the turn-based thing was getting a bit dated, so you decided to do a turn-based strategy game??? And how come real-time action never entered into the equation?

Wolfgang: Well, the sort of turn-based gameplay you were used to in the early Battle Isle games is perhaps a little dated now, but we still wanted to keep the basic concept of turn-based gameplay, because this style of game requires you to think before you act. Take Command & Conquer as an example. You build things, you make some units, you drag a square around and send them into battle and hope that everything works out okay. With Incubation, you have to think about what you're doing before the action starts, there is no random element of luck dictating how events turn out.



"The plot for Incubation is unique because it's not just a battle between good and evil."

Wolfgang: Unlike other games of this type, Incubation has a strong role-playing element. Your marines get older. They evolve. They become stronger. You'll come to care about the characters you control in the game, as opposed to just sending them in and blasting away without caring whether they live or die. This will make you want to take your guys to the very end of the game, watching them grow stronger and better with every mission. Also, you'll find that it's easy to win a mission, but it's not easy to win a mission and keep all your marines alive. However, we've designed the game so that every mission can be completed without you losing any of your soldiers - you just have to figure out how to do it.

PCZ: People are already comparing Incubation to X-COM. Is this a fair comparison?

Wolfgang: Yes and no. The mood in the game is obviously different. Incubation is a much darker game with tons more atmosphere. Also, if you look at the aliens you shoot in X-COM and compare them to ours, you'll see that ours are much more realistic. The combat's different too. You won't have to wait a few turns for something to happen. In our game something's

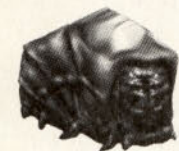
PCZ: So how important is the storyline for the game in the great scheme of things?

Wolfgang: Well, I wrote it, so it's obviously the most important part of the game, all that other stuff in the game is not very important at all. (Laughs.) But seriously, the plot is important because you need to make the player feel there is a reason for what he is doing. The plot for Incubation is unique in as much as it's not just a battle between good and evil. The aliens in the game are not evil, they're just victims of their environment, who happen to get in the way while you're trying to clear out all the cities. It's easy to shoot a monster in Quake, because it's just evil. It's easy to shoot a monster in Incubation too, but it's not evil, it just happens to be there. Because of this the player doesn't feel the need to shoot all the aliens he comes across. Players will see how the storyline develops through the mission briefings too, and there will be cut-scenes at key moments in the game to tell you what's going on.

PCZ: Thank you.



Great strategy games don't just make themselves you know. Meet the guys behind Incubation.



(Below) One dead alien, three live ones, and only one human soldier to take them all on. Top tip: run for your life.



(Above) There are many weapons in the game, some of which have dual functionality. To access the extra features on these weapons, you simply switch from primary mode to secondary mode. Most of the weapons you see here won't be available to you until your soldiers have increased their experience points sufficiently for you to buy them.

EQUIP TO ERADICATE



See this? This is the equipment screen. Think very carefully about what kind of marines you want to be hanging around with before messing about on this screen. For example, you can equip your marines with either light weapons or heavy weapons. Let's say you've tooled up one of your dudes with a light machine gun. He then gains points in the use of light weapons, and so becomes eligible to use the next batch of light weapons up the scale. Same thing goes for heavy weapons, of course. Marines with heavy weapons are very dangerous, and so should be first in line when the aliens come for you, but they're also pretty cumbersome and slow. You can offset this slight problem by having marines with light weapons who'll be very fast and nimble, and a safe bet if you want to send someone in to open a door and then get back as quickly as possible. So you see then, that the utmost care should be taken when choosing which weapons to send your marines into battle with, or you'll pay the price when the alien scum come looking for you, mark our words.

I'm leaving on a jet pack

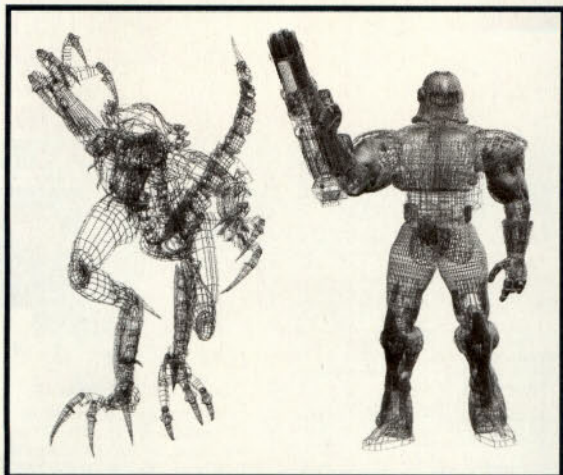
What do you do if you want to take to the skies and place yourself conveniently behind some unsuspecting aliens? You don your trusty jet pack, of course. This is just one of the weird and wonderful gadgets you'll come across in the world of

Incubation. High walls, unreachable platforms, packs of aliens, none of these things will ever be a problem again once you've got a jet pack. It can also be a real boon when some silly sod's gone and spilt coffee all over the floor and you're wearing

your best shoes. Of course, having the ability to zoom all around the level at will is quite a considerable advantage and the game's designers have been very careful only to give you jet packs on the more difficult levels, otherwise you'd complete the game in a thrice. It goes without saying that you should make sure any of your marines equipped with jet packs are heavily protected at all times from the alien scumbags. You don't want to find yourself wading through the level from hell with all your marines super-glued to Terra Firma, do you? Thought not.



MAGNIFY TO IDENTIFY



From this kind of wire-frame models come the incredibly detailed soldiers and aliens in the game.

use have limited ammunition. The temptation to stand one of your guys in a room and watch as he repeatedly blows aliens to pieces is very strong, considering that his experience points go up with every alien he wastes. Do this for too long though, and you'll find your marine runs out of ammo, with a large area of the level still to get through. Result? One very experienced, but very dead marine. So as you can see then, *Incubation* is a game that very much puts the emphasis on strategy. It's also deeply atmospheric. And scary. In fact, it has a lot in common with another game that we slaves to strategy know and hold dear.

Space Hulk anyone?

For some reason, we at *Zone* had already formed our opinions on what to expect from *Incubation*, having seen it briefly at E3. *X-COM* was the word on everyone's lips. 'It'll be *X-COM* then, except with 3D missions' was the general opinion. We were wrong. *X-COM* is a resource management game with an unfolding storyline and tactical combat missions. *Incubation*, on the other hand, is simply a turn-based strategy game. By 'simply', we mean that's all there is to it. You don't have to worry about building things. You don't have to worry about how much money you have or haven't got. All you need to worry about is getting your marines safely from one mission to the next and upgrading their weapons and equipment in preparation for the next battle. If this sounds a bit repetitive, cast your mind back to a game called *Space Hulk*. Haven't played it? Let me tell you about it. It's a mixture of real time and turn-based action in as much as you 'freeze' the action while you tell your marines what to do, then start the clock running again and watch while all hell breaks loose. It's a very, very atmospheric game which forces you to think strategically while at the same time scaring you out of your wits. *Incubation* is very similar. There is an almost unbearable sense of foreboding and tension while you survey each level, knowing that sooner or later you're going to have to give in, hit the 'end turn' button, and hope that you've made

Although your mission briefings will give you general information about your mission and the level you're about to enter, it won't tell you much about the aliens you'll be facing. Fear not, as some of your marines will be carrying magnifying glasses which they can use to identify the enemy. Of course, knowing the alien rushing towards you at the speed of light is called 'Roger' won't be much help to you in the heat of battle, but knowing, for example, that they can only be damaged when your marines are behind them, is very valuable knowledge indeed.



the right decisions. It's not unlike Chess as it happens, in that you will spend more time 'thinking' than 'doing', if you take our meaning. That's not to say *Incubation* is sedate in any way. The entire game environment is fully 3D. This is extremely handy for zooming all around the play area before deciding what your next move should be. But even better still, once you end your turn, you will see the action unfold in front of you in full three-dimensional glory, with the cameras zooming in to the most exciting part of the action at relevant points in the proceedings. This innovative 'free-style camera' technology that Blue Byte have built into the game is unlike anything we've ever set our eyes on before and really has to be seen to be believed.

Think of *Incubation* then, not as a collection of graphically spruced up *X-COM* tactical missions, nor as a new and improved *Space Hulk* for 1997, but as a unique amalgamation of both these things and a hell of a lot more besides. What's more, you can bet your last Rolo that we'll bring you a full and comprehensive review of *Incubation* as soon as we get our hands on a finished copy of the game. **Z**

Thanks to 3Dfx, the units in the game don't pixellate, even close up.



Forget it, they've taken her out of the game (honest).



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Fifteen runner-ups will walk away with *Conquest Earth* 'goodie bags', containing a copy of the game, a T-shirt, some sprouts and a length of phoney dog poo.





A LIEN INVASION, EH? WE'RE ALL terrified of one, but do we actually have anything to fear? Noooo! Of course, we don't – we're human after all, and will no doubt end up destroying the universe ourselves before intelligent life ever happens upon us.

Having said that, this hasn't stopped us turning the tables on our celestial neighbours – *just forra laff like* – with our very own human invasion of the planet Mars, as seen below.

You may also notice that there isn't much of a story – everyone's keeping stumm – which is where you come in. We want *you* to write your *own* story in the empty speech bubbles provided and send the finished strip back to us (you can photocopy the page if you don't want to cut the mag up). People, you can say absolutely anything you like, and if it makes us laugh, you could well end up with a new TV on your doorstep, courtesy of PC Zone and Eidos Interactive.

Data:

GAME. Conquest Earth

GENRE. Multi-player real-time strategy game

DEVELOPER. Data Design

PUBLISHER. Eidos Interactive

PRICE (EARTH POUNDS, STEALING) £39.99

STATUS. PC Zone Recommended

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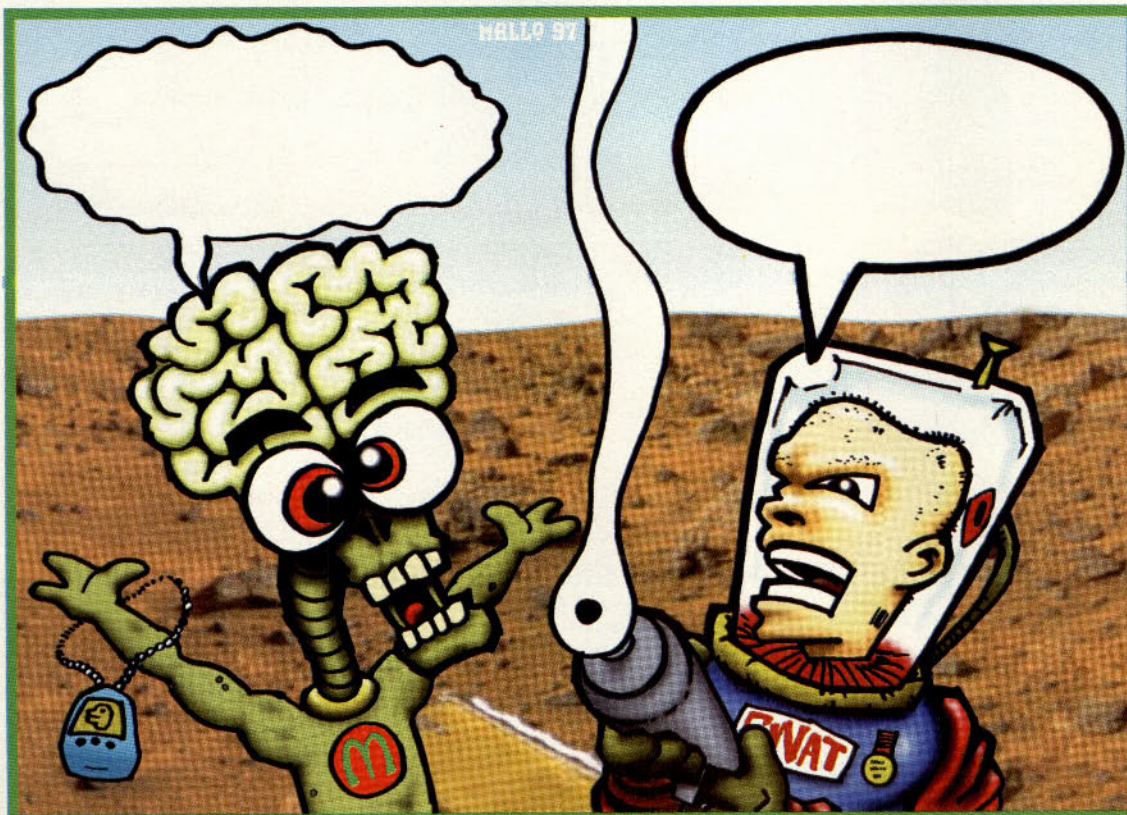
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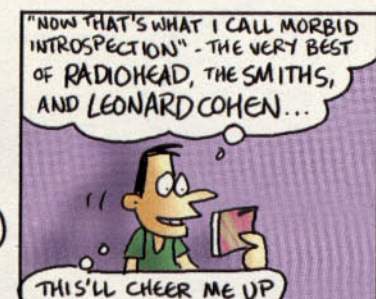
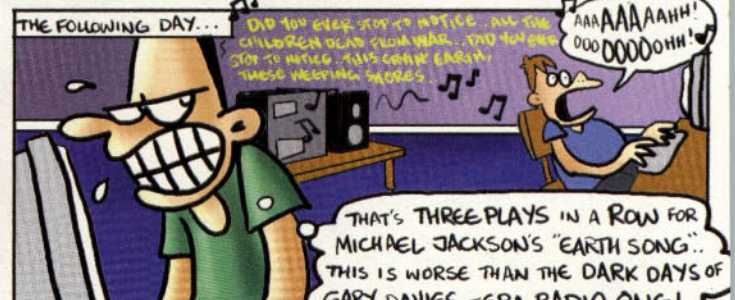
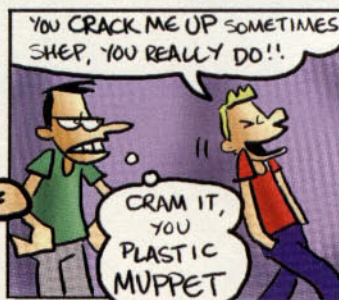


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Rules: All entries to be received by 1 October 1997. Photocopies accepted. One entry per household – repeat entries will be binned. No correspondence will be entered into. The editor's decision is final. Bad spelling will be noted. Ooh. Ah. Ooh.

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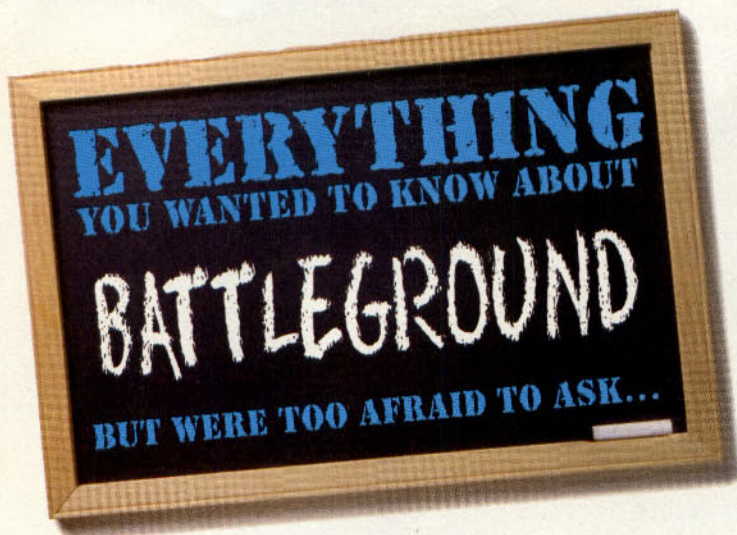
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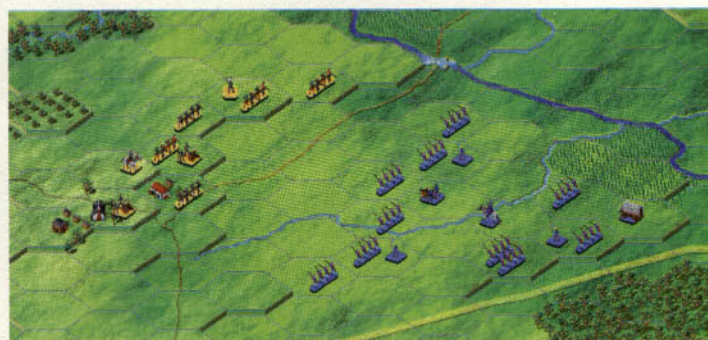


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(Above) This division is advancing with two brigades forward and one in reserve. The poser on the horse is the divisional commander – note that the individual brigade leaders are inside his four-hex command radius. The result, incidentally, was a stalemate, confirming the military maxim which says that you need three times more than the enemy to succeed.



THE AI IN EMPIRE'S *BATTLEGROUNDS* SERIES

is a bit predictable but the developers have just added Internet play to all the titles in the range. This means you can come up against human players and land yourself in the middle of a whole new ball game. In fact, your first few games against a human opponent are likely to end in a complete rout, unless you get the tactics right. Note that the rules and tactics looked at here apply only to the ACW titles – *Gettysburg*, *Shiloh*, *Antietam* and *Bull Run*.

Infantry

Don't put all your regiments or divisions in a line. "Two up, one back" is an old military maxim but it works, whether you're defending or attacking. Keep at least one regiment or brigade in reserve and rotate units in combat often, so they can try to recover fatigue points. Pull out a front line unit when its fatigue reaches three because units on four-plus recover more slowly.

Probably the best way to attack a defensive position is to start with artillery to cause some fatigue and maybe even



(Above) As this Federal (Union) brigade advances on the Rebels, they can't see the two cannons. Note that if they'd put a scout unit on the hill, the trap wouldn't work. All the infantry do is step backwards and let the artillery make mincemeat of the Rebel line. Tactics like this work particularly well against human opponents.

disruption. Then push forward your infantry in waves, one after the other. This means that the front line can take the initial volleys and retire to recover or rally while the second wave takes over. If things get hot, you've still got a fresh third wave that can advance to melee contact or fall back to form a defensive line if you're counter-attacked.

The vital thing is to watch those fatigue levels – more units become 'hors de combat' through fatigue than through casualties. Very large units can fire more effectively when disrupted and fatigued than small ones. If you're suffering from long-range artillery fire, use folds in the ground or other terrain to keep reserve units out of sight.

There are two schools of thought on breakthrough tactics. Do you concentrate your fire along an entire sector, or hit one unit until it breaks? If you opt for the second option, pick a central hex stuffed with units and aim for the weakest, because if you can break one unit, others in the hex and adjacent hexes may rout too. This works best if you spot a weak point and try to drive a wedge through. If you're up against long lines of regiments in defence, try to overlap and then outflank them. Remember the +2 enfilade fire bonus.

Note that at one-hex range, muskets are 50 per cent more effective than rifles, but rifles can stand three, four or five hexes away without fear of counter-volleys. Treat units with Spencer rifles with caution – they are killers.

At your command

Always keep your brigades and divisions within the radius of their respective commanders. Not only is it historically accurate, but you need that +4 morale bonus that comes from being in command if you're to achieve anything. Check frequently using the Display Detached Units option to spot units that are out of command.

In the same way, your divisional commanders have an even more vital role to play. Units stand far less chance of breaking if they're within command radius of both brigade and divisional commanders. What's more, they'll reform or rally more quickly too.

I'm a Union man

Union players need to understand the nature of the troops they're using. Many Union units are huge with 800-900 men and even at long range they can deliver devastating volleys and overrun most Rebel units in melee. However, they tend to have



(Left) There are no rules when it comes to the comms dialogue box – in fact, you can insult your opponent as many times a turn as your fingers can manage.

Melee tips

- 1 Don't attack at a differential of 1 or less, unless you are absolutely desperate.
- 2 Always aim for flanking attacks as this provides you with an extra +2 bonus.
- 3 Only assault with the bare minimum of men you need to get decent odds because each attacker is automatically disrupted.
- 4 Don't fire units in the offensive fire phase if you intend meleeing with them – they'll get a +1 bonus.

(Above right) In a melee, use only enough units to get the job done. One or two from each hex is best, otherwise you'll find there are no undisrupted units to throw into the breach.



Top tips

- Upgrade to the newest version of the game. It has new rules and extra features, as well as Internet connectivity for versions that don't have it already. They're on the cover CD or available from www.talonssoft.com.
- Use corps level leaders to rally routed troops – the updated game allows them to influence adjacent hexes too.
- Units in LOS of the enemy can 'conceal' other units that are in the hexes behind them on the same elevation. Use this to bring up and unlimber artillery, dismount cavalry etc.
- Watch your facing – if your units end up at the wrong angle, your oppo might get in a sneaky enfilade bonus.
- Oh, and don't use the Auto Movement feature (select and drag). It still doesn't work properly and can get you into loads of trouble when fog of war's on.

lower qualities and break more easily, and they need to be well-supported and always in command. If you're facing smaller Rebel units, give them one or two volleys, then close quickly.

Rebel, rebel

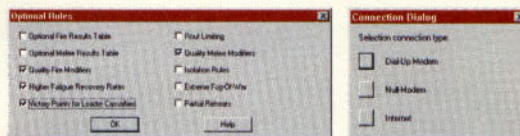
Rebel players usually have the opposite problem – too few men even though on average they're of better quality. Don't even think about slugging it out hand to hand with big Yankee regiments. Give ground if necessary and concentrate your firepower on them as best you can to make holes in the line. Lightning counter-attacks by elite Rebel units can create mayhem in the Union lines.

Bring in the arty

Artillery is a long-range weapon, but if you need to blast a hole in the enemy defences, pull it up close to the front to double or triple your firepower. Long-range fire is a waste if you're low on ammo, unless the target is in the open. Remember, Napoleons (N) and howitzers (H) are good for



(Above) Watch the old fatigue levels – these blokes need to give it some Zzzzs for an hour or so.



(Above left) Get the upgrade, the new rules (not to mention the fixes) are well worth it. (Above right) Play by serial link, modem-to-modem and now – ta-da – the Internet. Well, it had to be useful for something, one day...

close-range work while rifled cannons (T) and Whitworths (W) are better at moderate to long ranges.

Screen advancing batteries with infantry and unmask them when they're unlimbered and ready, and keep some decent infantry (or cavalry) in the same hex at all times too, in case the enemy launches a surprise retaliatory raid. Remember, artillery is worth a lot of victory points and is especially vulnerable when limbered.

Take some time to find a good position for your batteries. Use the Check LOS tool to test the lines of sight from various vantage points.

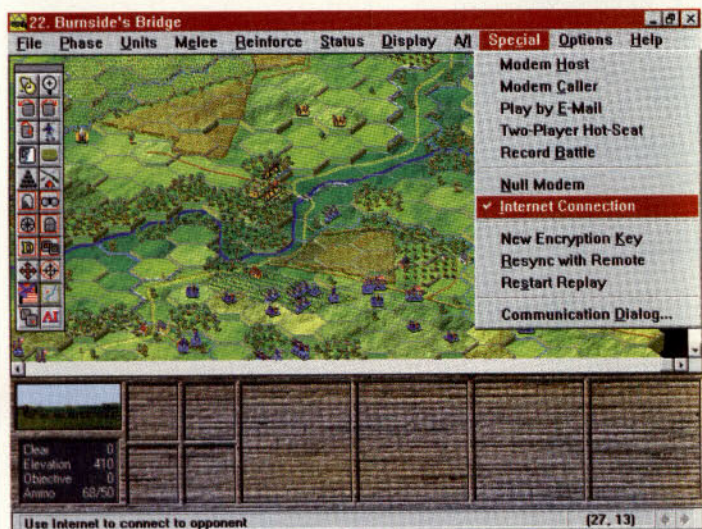
Here comes the cavalry

Unlike *BG Waterloo*, it's best to think of cavalry as mounted infantry as they get no charge bonus and are very vulnerable when mounted. However when dismounted, their short quick-firing carbines are actually more deadly than muskets and rifles at one-hex range so they make an excellent 'fire brigade' defensive force, especially behind breastworks or stone walls. They're also effective in dense woods.

The cavalry's primary role should be scouting on the flanks to force enemy units into view and to cause as much uncertainty as possible. After that, use them as a mobile reserve.

Cheat?

Anyone found cheating will have the drawstrings ceremonially pulled off their anorak but, as with all games, it's easy. You can edit the MAIN.PDT file for the scenario you're playing to do almost anything you want with the rules. Give your rifles extra range, *Quake*-style firepower, you name it. The only trouble is your opponent will have to be pretty dim not to catch on. If you just want to stretch the rules a bit, one annoying tactic is to use worthless promoted leaders as expendable scouts on missions behind the lines – just don't expect to make any new friends...



(Above) All you need to do now is find yourself a know-all Yankee opponent on the Internet and stuff him. (In your dreams...)

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Discworld II

Fret no more - we have all the answers



Act I

Act 1

The Rite stuff

After emerging from the Dining Hall, go to the High Energy Facility in the University grounds. Get the bellows and the magnet from the shelves and floor near Skazz, and get the test tube from the centre of the machine on the desk. Picking up the test tube will de-bug the machine so it no longer works, but don't worry about it now as you'll fix it later. Talk with Skazz about everything and brace yourself for some really bad computer gags. Let the groan out. It's therapeutic.

Leave the University Grounds and find the Shop (it moves around the map). When inside, collect the flamingo, the stuffed fish and the incense. Look at the candles on the shelf, then talk to the old woman. Ask her about candles.

Leave the Shop and proceed to the Fools' Guild which was destroyed in the intro. Pick up the hooter on the floor. Look at the Fool, then talk to him. Ask him about everything.

Pick up the brick on the left of the screen, and then use it on the Fool. Then go down the hole into the sewers. Go left, and then use the bellows on the grate - this will allow the Milkmaid to do an impromptu Marilyn Monroe impression. This will also provide you with Glitter Dust, which is one of the five quest items for Act I.

Go right again, and then climb back up. Go to the Plaza and talk with Dibbler. Ask him about everything. When you are done, you should have collected some popcorn and a brochure from him. Now go to the Shades.

After a brief, meaningless conversation with the Death Of Rats, proceed to the Troll's Head. Talk to the troll behind the bar and you'll get a tankard of beer for your trouble. Use the beer on the popcorn to soak it in alcohol and then talk to Casanunda. Ask him about everything, but do make sure you ask him about his ladder.

Go left and collect the matches before talking to the vampire. Ask him about everything, and then leave the Troll's Head and walk left to the Mortuary. Once you're inside, get the knife from the slops tray, and then look at Granny. You try and talk to her, but unfortunately she's comatose and you have just found Casanunda's greatest challenge. Return to the Troll's Head and tell Casanunda about Granny. He will give you his ladder as a sign of his thanks (try not to think too much about where it's been, though...)

Leave the Troll's Head and walk all the way left until you come to Mrs Cakes. Enter, and take a look at the genie bottle on the shelf by the door.

Talk with Mrs Cake. She will anticipate what you are about to ask and will answer you before you get a chance to say anything, so click the icons in this order: sarcasm, question, muse, greet. You can now talk to her normally. Ask her everything. She will tell you that you can have the genie bottle providing you find her some ectoplasm.

Walk to the left, open the closet and get the ironing board. Also, pick up the scissors and the petticoat. Now return to Unseen University. Go to the High Energy Facility. Throw the brick at the accelerator; this will cause the ghost to splatter ectoplasm all over you.

Leave and go to the Garden. Walk right and use the alcohol-drenched corn on the rooster to catch it. Go around the corner and use the magnet on the imp to get its boots.

Leave the University Grounds and go to the Docks. Look at the bird, then use the stuffed fish on the water. Now pick up the bird and use the knife on the net so that you can pick up the hammerhead shark. Return to the Garden in Unseen University.

Use the shark on the Bursar's mallet.

Use the flamingo

on the Dean's

mallet. Use the

wading bird on

the Librarian's

mallet. Voila!

Three Sticks of

equal length, your

second quest item.

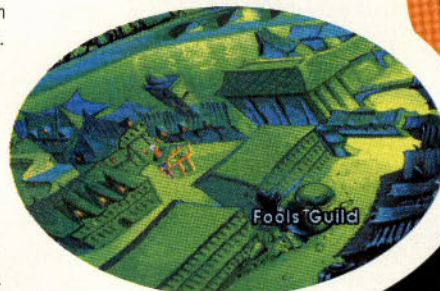
Leave the University again and go to the far right of the Shades. Get the pot and the saw. Use the rooster on the can to sober it up. Then go to Gimlets, over on the right. Get the chilli from the table and operate the menu. Then talk to Gimlet. Ask him about everything and order a mouse-burger (Yum).

Return to the Troll's Head. Use the rooster on the vampire. This will make him think that it's dawn and

The two *Discworld* games are two of the toughest adventures around... and many people have been getting more than a little stuck. This second episode might be supposedly easier to complete, but it's still a bastard to get through... so here's a bit of help for the needy from **Pete Davison**.

info

Note: *Discworld* is a non-linear game, so it's quite possible to solve many of the problems in a different order to that stated here. Also, this guide only states puzzle solutions. A lot of the very Python-esque humour in the game comes across through the incidental characters. Foul Ole Ron, for example, is a hilarious character to talk to, but he doesn't advance the plot any. We've ignored any characters or events that don't help the player towards the conclusion, but do feel free to deviate slightly, and have a chat with the incidental characters. Also remember that most of the scenes scroll. If you can't find an object which is referred to, walk to the sides of the screen and see if it scrolls.



Act 1



◀ he'll return to his coffin. In the meantime, return to Mrs Cakes and give her the ectoplasm.

Go back outside. Walk all the way right and look at Foul Ole Ron's Vile Smell. Use the boots on the Smell. Use the boots in the genie bottle, then use the baited bottle to capture the Smell. You now have your third quest item.

Leave the Shades and make your way to the Cemetery. Get the pick from the floor and talk to the Suffrajester. Continue to the right until you meet Windle. After a brief conversation you will enter the tomb. Use the ladder which is on the slab to climb up and get the teeth. Use the teeth on the mouse, then use the bloody teeth on the test tube. This gives you Mouse Blood, your fourth quest item.

Leave the Cemetery, and return once again to the Unseen University's Garden. Walk towards the left and talk to the beekeeper about everything, then give him the film brochure. He will then depart in a hurry to make a clickie about bees.

Set fire to the incense and then use the petticoat on Rincewind as a veil. Use the incense on the bees to persuade them to get out of the way. Operate the hive to grab some beeswax and use the pot on the hive to get some honey.

Return to the Shop and give the wax to the old woman. She will tell you it's not dribbly enough to make proper dribbly candles. Go back to the Garden and use the chilli on the flower bush; then pick up some dribbly wax in the same way as before. Go back to the Shop and give it to the old woman. This gives you Dribbly Candles, your final quest item for Act I. Return to the Unseen University Dining Hall.

Give the blood, mallets, vile smell, glitter dust and dribbly candles to the Arch-Chancellor and watch the cut-scene. It's now down to you to go and find Death.



Act 1

Death into a movie. You will need novelties, a babe, a jingle and a band to play the jingle. Thus begins Act II, Part II. Go to Holy Wood. Enter the Castle. This is the Costume department. Look at the horse suit before talking to the dwarf of questionable sexuality. Ask her about the horse suit.

Leave. Pick up the one-ton weight and operate the mailbox. Then enter Makeup (by the piano). Watch the cut-scene and leave again. Go right, pick up the camera and look at the lazy imp. Ask the trainer about the imp, then watch what it does.

Leave Holy Wood and go to Djelibeybi. Go to the Camel dealership. Look at the camels, and then talk to the salesman. Greet him, then ask about camels. You now happen to be the proud owner of one of these revolting creatures, you lucky fella.

Walk to the left and enter the Shop. Talk with the architect, then take the poster from the wall. Now leave, and go further left. Talk with D'Blah about everything. Then have a natter with Uri Djeller about jingles, and the Cartwheel will appear on your map. Look at the Candy Rock, then talk to the Rock Seller about it. Just as Rincewind is about to buy it, the Mystic Tempresses Of The East will steal it.

Go up to the stoning grounds. Pick up the stake. Go back to Djelibeybi and use your camel. Then go to the Hill. Talk with Bone Idle about the jingle, then use the knife on him to set him free. You now have the Band which is part of what you need for the jingle.

Now go to the Pyramid. Pick up the gluepot from the floor and cut the mummy's bandage with the scissors. Bandage the wooden arm, then go to the Oasis and use the bandaged wooden arm on the rotten arm. Operate the rotten arm to get the ring. Notice that the vultures are now following you because you are carrying their property – this will become more relevant later.

Return to Holy Wood, and go to the Costume department (the Castle). Give the ring to the dwarf. After a slightly disturbing experience, you will no doubt be delighted by the fact that you now own a horse costume. Use the glue on the hooter then stick it to the horse suit. You have just made a unicorn suit.

Now make your way to XXXX (it's on the left edge of map). Look at the bent sticks and baskets, then talk to Dibbjla. You will get a boomerang. Try to pick up a basket, then talk with Dibbjla again and ask him about baskets. Now leave and go back to Holy Wood again.

Dip the boomerang in the paint in the ILM area, then chuck it at the imp in the set when he appears. Use the imp on your camera and return to XXXX.

Act II

Come die with me

Act II is by far the longest and most difficult and comprises two distinct parts. Death is hiding on the continent of XXXX (the disc's equivalent of Australia) so first you have to escape from pestilent Ankh-Morpork.

First, go to the Shades. Here you will meet the Death Of Rats and a Raven, who will later turn out to be Granny Weatherwax. Enter Mrs Cakes. Saw the arm off her wooden dummy. Now leave the Shades and go to the Fools' Guild. Enter the sewers down the hole, and go right and then up. Use the pick on the ice to get a block. Leave, and return to the Shades. Talk to the Dead Collector, ask him about everything. Then go to the Mortuary and ask the Mortician about Death Certificates. Pick up his mirror and heat it up on the bunsen burner, but make sure you return it to the bench.

Lie on the slab. Use the wooden arm on Rincewind. Use the ice on Rincewind. Talk to the Mortician. After an eye-wateringly painful experience, Rincewind will be declared dead. Go back outside and give the certificate to the Dead Collector. Watch the cut-scene. Welcome to XXXX, the land of sun, surf, sand and prawns. A plot will be unveiled automatically, and you will be told that you need to put

Act 2



Saw the legs of the ironing board and then smother it in glue. Use your new surfboard on the waves on the sea. When you arrive in the cave, use the camera on the paintings and then return to Bonedie Beach to leave XXXX.

Now go to the Cartwheel, and talk with ST Ungulant. Ask him about jingles. He will send you away to find out "Why??".

Go to Ankh-Morpork, Unseen University, Dining Hall. Use the hamper on the food and ask the librarian about the unicorn costume. Use the librarian on the unicorn suit. He will take the front end, and you will have a convenient disguise for later on. Now go to the Garden. Pick up the now unused croquet hoops and then go round the corner to where the compost heap is. Talk with the Suffrajester, then show her the stake you 'liberated' from Djelibeybi. After that, put the stake in the compost heap. Pick her up and put her in the Luggage (try not to think too hard about the scientific implications of this action).

Return to Djelibeybi and go back to the stoning area. Use the Suffrajester on the hole in the floor and watch the 'Gratuitous Python Scene'. After a long series of really bad jokes, pick up the Candy Rock and put it in the Luggage, then get the rope from the floor and return to Djelibeybi. Give the croquet hoops to Uri Djeller who will strain a bit before straightening them out to form some metal sticks. Use these new sticks on the pyramid plans to make a scale model time-accelerating pyramid.

Now leave and go back to XXXX. Go all the way right and to the cliff top. Use the stuffed hamper on the ant hill before returning to the High Energy Facility in Ankh-Morpork.

Talk to Skazz about everything under the sun, and then reintroduce the bugs to HEX by using the infested hamper on it. The ants will be reluctant to come out, so entice them into HEX using the honey pot. Now have another chat with Skazz. Ask about The Question again. Skazz will tell you The Answer will be ready in a 'jiffy' - a common contraction of the Klatchian word Jifficitra, meaning 'aeon' or 'age of the world'. This obviously isn't any good to you whatsoever... so

Act 2



will reveal the location of the Forest on your map. Go there. Put the camera into Rincewind's inventory, then use the unicorn suit on the stone circle. The Luggage cannot follow you through, so you can only carry the items you need.

Use the suit on Rincewind (how he stored the Librarian away is anyone's guess), and the dynamic duo will rush off to the Elven Castle. Use the camera on the Elf Queen, then leave and go to the Make-up Department in Holy Wood.

Give the film of the Elf Queen to the make-up girl, then leave the Make-up Department. Exit to the right. Look at the door, then operate it and talk with the troll. Ask him about the key. Unlock the door and open it, but don't go in.

Give the Candy Rock to the troll. Use the rope on the troll ▶



remember what D'Blah told you earlier about Pyramid Power.

Pyramids have the effect of changing the flow of time, either speeding it up or slowing it down. Get Rincewind (the pointy-hatted, dress-wearing magic geezer) to put the spanky new time-accelerating pyramid on HEX. Now ask Skazz about The Question again. After a short delay, The Answer will come out of HEX. Take it to ST Ungulant at the Cartwheel who will present you with the Jingle.

Now go back to Ankh-Morpork. Go to the Docks. Use the one-ton weight on the hook, and then push it. Then use the '10' sticker on the weight to transform it into a ten-ton weight. Push it again, and pick up the snow storms. These are the Novelties you need.

Go to the Mortuary in the Shades. Talk with Casanunda and send him away to visit the Mystic Tempresses Of The East. Now talk with Granny Weatherwax about Elves and she

GUARANTEED HIT

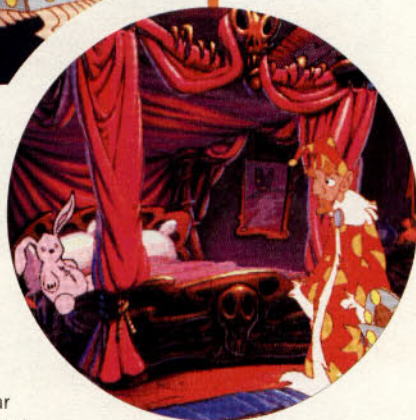
In this town, you do whatever it takes to win:
hit targets, eliminate problems, make millions.
Hey, I'm a businessman... my
family's huge in asset protection.
Building insurance? I'll give
you a policy that's
as solid as a
concrete overcoat.

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Act 3



to pull out his diamond tooth. Now enter the trailer and talk with the Milkmaid. Give her the troll's tooth as a 'little friend' for her ring. Then leave and walk upwards.

Give the band, jingle, babe and snow storms to Dibbler and sit back and enjoy the cut-scene showcasing Death's magnificent acting talent. End of the Act? You might think so, but there's no rest for the weary... Death wants a stunt double - and guess who has to find one?

Go to the Shades in Ankh-Morpork. Walk to the far left where you'll see a door up some steps. Knock on it by operating it, and you will be told that you can only come in if you are dead. Now use the death certificate on the door to prove you are indeed dead and therefore qualify for membership to Reg Shoe's Fresh Start Club. There are plenty of people in here, but you don't need to talk to any of them. (You can if you *want* to though... Jeez!)

Open the closet and have a conversation with the Black Sheep. Tell it about being a stunt double, and then show it the film of the sheep paintings. Voila! One stunt sheep. Put your feet up and watch the cut-scene.

When the film has finished showing, pick up the rear film reel. Use it on the splicing machine to the left, then splice in the remaining Elf Queen footage before replacing the reel on the projector. Death will suddenly become very popular... but he doesn't want his old job back, so therefore it's up to Rincewind to temporarily fill in for him...

Act III

The grim Rincewind

This one's fairly straightforward, and nowhere near as long as Act II. Go to Death's house. Operate the mat to get a key. Open the door and enter. Get the scythe from the umbrella stand, and pick up the curtains at the bottom left.

Go through the left door into the kitchen and talk with Albert. Pick up the oily rag and set fire to it. Then open the



Act 3

pot-bellied stove and leave. Go through the right-hand door into the Library. Look at the books which are floating in mid-air until you find Rincewind's. Pick it up and go back out.

Climb the stairs and exit to the left into Susan's bedroom. Pick up the bunny, and operate it to get the lacy pyjamas. Leave Susan's room and exit at the bottom to Death's Study. Get the inkwell off Death's desk and pull the cord. Now quickly go back to the Kitchen and take the sugar bowl.

Go outside to the Stables and pick up the rope. Smear the saddle with glue, then give the sugar to Binky. Now operate the sticky saddle to place it on Binky, then operate Binky for a magnificent display of horsemanship. Go back to the front of the house. Use the boomerang on the rope, then use the resulting item on the chimney. Operate the chimney to climb up, then operate it again to use The Voice. Climb back down, exit to the right and go to the Garden.

Use the pyjamas on Rincewind. Use the burning rag on the bees. Sound familiar? Yes, do the same as before... pick up some beeswax and some honey. Walk to the right and dye the pond black using the inkwell. Dip the curtains in the pond to make a robe that's blacker than black.

Get the fishing rod from the gnome, and use the honey pot on the fishing rod. Look at the toy cart, then talk with Susan and ask her about it. Then give her your life-book. But no, Rincewind's life isn't exciting enough, so you have to find a really old one - we'll do this in a minute.

Go further right and use the baited fishing rod on the dots. These are the souls of Skazz's ants which were killed earlier and they'll be relevant later. Go back into the kitchen in the house and show the scythe to Albert.

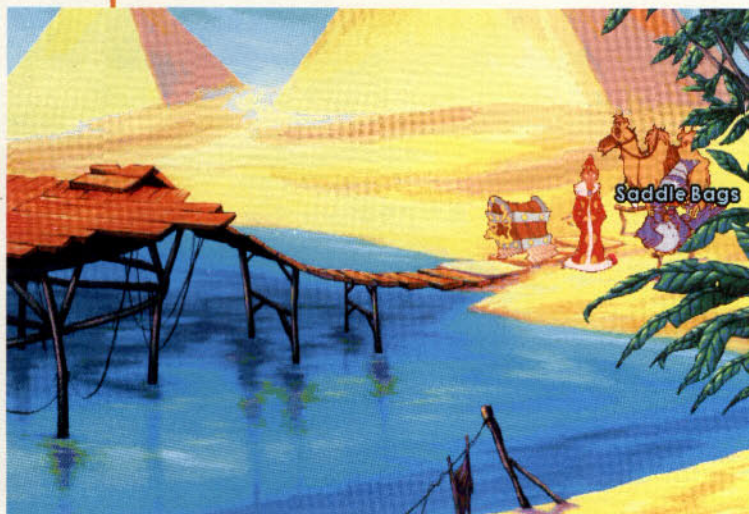
Go back to Susan's room. Get the string from the dresser and use it on the beeswax to make a black candle. Light it and put it in Rincewind's inventory window.

Go back to the Library. Unlock the alcove on the right with the little key, and enter. Use the candle on the Alcove tag to light your way. Find the loose tablet (it has a different tag) and take it, then return to the Garden. Hand the tablet over to Susan, who will finally be satisfied.

Now leave the Garden and walk to the foreground. Walk right to a field of corn, and use the scythe on it. Rincewind's back hurts, so make things easier for him by using the scythe on the toy cart. Now use the new Reaper on the corn. Then go back to the kitchen. Show the robe to Albert and watch the cut-scene. Exciting, isn't it?

Go back into the kitchen and give the pot of ant souls to Albert. Congratulations, Rincewind is now Death - The Ultimate Reality, The Assassin Against Whom No Lock Will Hold and the best cure for the terminally ill (it says here). Watch the cut-scene and the plot to kill Death will be revealed in all its glory...

Act 4



Saddle Bags

Act 4



E

Act IV

Till Death us do part

Go to Bonestock. Extract the cork from Death's hat, and then leave again. Proceed to Djelibeybi. Walk to the left until you clap eyes on Casanunda. Walk around a little near the shop (but don't go in) until the Explorer arrives. Quickly go over to his camel and search his saddlebag to find a canteen. Then put the rotten arm in the saddlebag. Don't forget though, the vultures are following this grisly limb.

Follow the Explorer to the Fountain Of Youth. Walk left and look at the fountain. Fill the canteen with Youth Water – it's very important that you remember to do this! Plug the fountain with the cork and scoop up the sand with Death's hourglass. You have just saved Death's life, so sit back and watch the *Terminator*-esque Gratuitous 3D Scene.

The assassin will now try to kill Rincewind, but Death will save him. That's Act IV. Easy, wasn't it?

Epilogue

Queen Kong

Watch the cut-scene, including Death's wonderful movie. Rincewind will automatically splice in the Elf Queen as before, but then something dreadful will happen. When the Elf Queen appears, the party will follow her to the Tower Of Art. She is holding the Librarian hostage.



E



When Rincewind turns up, look at the Tower, and then look at the raven. Now talk to Granny Weatherwax about the raven. She will 'borrow' its mind and be unaware that you are 'borrowing' her broomstick. Talk with Dibbler about everything, and buy some bladders. Fill them up with Youth Water and put them into Rincewind's inventory window. Finally, use the broom on Rincewind to take off, and you'll be able to vanquish the Elf Queen and save the day. And then of course they all live happily ever after. The end! 2

MORTAR COMBAT

You what? Ooh, no, the only game I know's the building game. Not much call for computers round here. Unique cinematic interface? More than my job's worth, matey. Build you an entire city by Monday? Righto!

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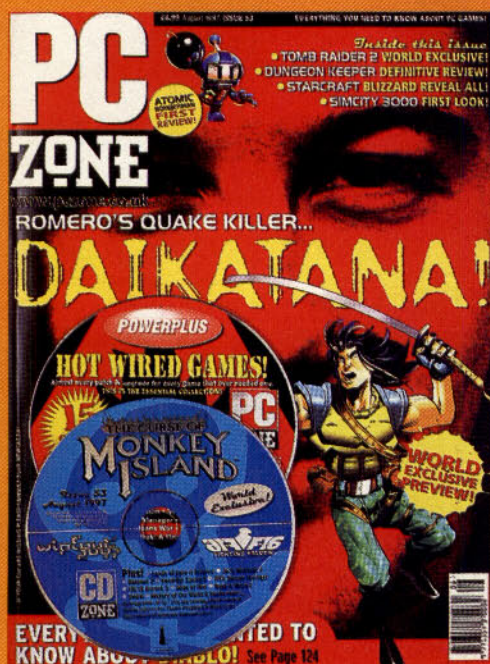
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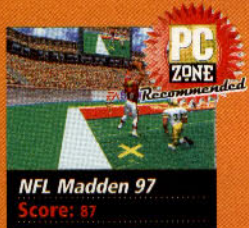
93

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PC ZONE

Welcome to the *PC Zone* Recommended section. Here you'll find the cream of the games we've painstakingly reviewed and picked out over the years, plus those we feel should go down in PC gaming history as all-time Classics.



IN AN EFFORT TO KEEP IT simple, we've split it up into genres: Action games, Sports simulations, Adventure games, Flight simulations, Driving games, Role-playing games and Strategy games.

The top ten games of each genre are then listed, with a brief summary of the game, review score, publisher and contact number. Most of the games listed here were awarded *PC Zone* Classic status (90 per cent and above), and some managed a *PC Zone* Recommended award (80 per cent and above) at the time that they were reviewed. To achieve the highest accolade, a game must not only be very playable, entertaining and offer long-term appeal, but it must also be original and/or bring something new and worthwhile to the genre.



To this end, we've included some sequels, and although these show a lower score than the original title, they are deemed better (they didn't get a higher score 'cos the game had already been done, so the sequels weren't exactly bursting with originality – okay?), so this guide isn't a list of the highest scoring games ever reviewed by *PC Zone*, but a guide to the best games currently available.

When you're reading the reviews in the rest of the magazine, please remember to bear this section in mind. The highest scoring game is supposed to represent a benchmark in a particular genre, and we will always be comparing new games with this, in accordance with the above criteria. If you use this section along with the 'In Perspective' guide that now accompanies every review, you should be able to gauge pretty accurately whether a game is worth buying, whatever your personal preference and taste. As a result, you will see games dropping out of this section as new and better titles are released, so keep your eyes peeled for new entries in each of the genres.



Jeremy Wells, Editor

Recommended

Action



QUAKE (96)

The seminal 3D shoot 'em up and quite possibly the most important PC game ever released. Very atmospheric when played as a one-player game and untouchable when played over a network. Despite the fact that it's now pretty aged, it's still the office favourite. Definitely 'pour hommes'!

Publisher:

GT Interactive (0171 258 3791)



TOMB RAIDER (94)

The first game to take the *Alone In The Dark* principles and apply them in a new, in-er-face way. The play area is vast, the puzzles are clever and it's eminently playable thanks to an incredibly agile control system. If you have a 3Dfx card, you're in for a treat.

Publisher:

Core/Eidos (0181 780 2222)



DARK FORCES (95)

Although not as technically impressive as *Quake*, *Dark Forces* is still held up as a better one-player game by some and yet slandered by others for not having a multi-player facility. That aside, it's a thrilling 3D mix of shooting action and exploration.

Publisher:

LucasArts/VIE (0171 368 2255)



HEXEN II (94)

The long-awaited, hub-based gib-fest sweeps into action with its trusty sword, hoping to carve a big 'H' on the chest of its older cousin, *Quake*. This is a first-person hack 'em off with balls as well as a big chopper.

Publisher:

Activision (01895 456700)



FADE TO BLACK (94)

The unofficial sequel to the excellent *Flashback*, this is a near-perfect blend of third-person exploration and combat action. The technical precursor to the fantastic *Tomb Raider*, it's a classic in its own right.

Publisher:

Electronic Arts (01753 549442)



DUKE NUKEM 3D (93)

The debate rages on, and there are still an awful lot of people who rate *Duke* over *Quake*. It's not as technically impressive, but brags gameplay by the bucketload in one-player mode and when played over a network.

Publisher:

Eidos Interactive (0181 780 2222)



PRIVATEER 2: THE DARKENING (94)

The ultimate mix of space combat, *Elite*-style trading and FMV action, *Privateer 2* was the first big budget release from Origin to use live action in a positive way. Packed with stars, this is pukka stuff.

Publisher:

Origin/EA (01753 549442)



DARKLIGHT CONFLICT (92)

It might not have a mega-budget cast or a film licence, but *Darklight* knocks spots off just about every other space combat sim there is. It looks utterly fantastic and the 3D engine is quite superb and very fast.

Publisher:

Electronic Arts (01753 549442)



TIE FIGHTER (94)

Still rated by many as the finest space combat sim ever released, it successfully blends all the kudos of *Star Wars* with a wicked new engine for super-fast *TIE* on *X-Wing* fisticuffs.

Publisher:

LucasArts/VIE (0171 368 2255)



MAGIC CARPET 2 (92)

The original wooed us with its speed and smoothness – this is even better, with new night-time bits, monsters and a very useful on-line help system. Technically exquisite, the game engine's yet to be bettered.

Publisher:

Bullfrog/EA (01753 549442)

Driving



CARMAGEDDON (95)

Absolutely awesome arcade-style racer that's heavy on the hit 'n' run and gameplay. Loads of different cars to choose from, plenty of tracks, three ways to play and a fab multi-player network mode make this one of the most entertaining driving games ever.

Publisher:
SCI (0171 585 3308)



NASCAR RACING 2 (92)

A worthy upgrade of the original game, featuring a new, smoother 3D engine, more controllable cars, improved opponent AI, a simple single-screen car set-up and a multi-player network option. With the constant stream of headset messages to add atmosphere, this is a racing sim fan must.

Publisher:
Sierra (0118 920 9100)



NETWORK Q RAC RALLY (94)

The seminal rally racer from Europress is the ultimate in skiddy, slidey action. 27 (count 'em) stages, loads of cars, a fantastic eight-way network option and varied terrain and conditions make this superior to the limited *Sega Rally*. Go buy it!

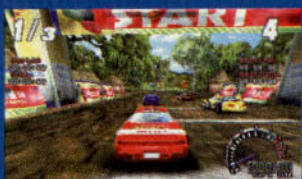
Publisher:
Europress Software (01625 859444)



INDYCAR 2 (90)

If you don't mind going round and round in circles but still crave that unbelievable detail, this is the only real alternative to *F1GP2*. Technically mind-blowing, though a little chuggy on anything but a high-end Pentium in SVGA mode.

Publisher:
Sierra (0118 920 9100)



SCREAMER 2 (93)

Whereas the first game cocked its hat at the classic *Ridge Racer*, this game is *Sega Rally* in just about every way but name – except that it's better in every way. Like *TNFS*, it's very much an arcade, which makes it ideal for a quick fix.

Publisher:
VIE (0171 368 2255)



POD (90)

One of the first racing games to support 3Dfx, Direct3D and MMX. The graphics are awesome (understatement of the year) and with new cars, tracks and power-ups promised to be posted regularly on the Internet, you'll never get bored.

Publisher:
Ubi Soft (0181 944 9000)



MICRO MACHINES 2 (93)

The console classic is converted to the PC as new tracks provide a new challenge. The easy-to-use control system means it's user-friendly for the uninitiated. This version comes with a track designer.

Publisher:
Codemasters (01926 814132)



THE NEED FOR SPEED (89)

Exciting arcade racing action at its best, with a good selection of cars and road tracks. Suicidal oncoming traffic and angry cops entrench *TNFS* firmly within the 'arcade' game sector.

Publisher:
Electronic Arts (01753 549442)



FORMULA 1 GRAND PRIX 2 (92)

The amazing sequel to the greatest F1 driving sim ever. Updated brilliantly for the 94/95 season with all-new detailed circuits, cars and teams. Ninja Pentium needed to run the hi-res mode – but it's still great.

Publisher:
MicroProse (01454 893893)



DESTRUCTION DERBY 2 (86)

Another sequel, but this one's actually much better than the first game. The tracks are much improved, the cars handle much better and there's loads more options. Worth buying even if you own the original.

Publisher:
Psygnosis (0151 282 3000)

Sports



LINKS LS (94)

The classic golf sim gets an update, and unsurprisingly it's fab. There's more options, luscious graphics, a redesigned menu and a view selection system. There's even a built-in upgrader for all the old data disk courses you splashed out on.

Publisher:
Eidos Interactive (0181 780 2222)



VIRTUAL POOL (91)

No self-respecting pool aficionado should miss out on this simple but very playable sim with an ingenious mouse-drag control system and an impressive engine. One-player games are fun, but go for the two-player games and network links, which are even better.

Publisher:
Interplay (01628 423666)



PGA TOUR 96 (94)

There's little choice between *PGA Tour 96* and *PGA European Tour*, it just depends on which accents and jumpers you prefer. Both offer fantastic graphics, an easy-to-use control method and plenty of customisable play options. Golfing at its best.

Publisher:
EA Sports (01753 549442)



NHL HOCKEY 97 (90)

Visually slick and very playable, this 'all-new' updated *NHL* game features some graphical tweaks and a smoother, faster engine. There's a handful of national sides thrown in as well as the most recently completed season's statistics and teams.

Publisher:
EA Sports (01753 549442)



ACTUA SOCCER (92)

Still the best soccer game on the PC, thanks to a super 3D polygonal engine and motion-captured players. One-player games might be frustrating, but in two-player mode it excels, and Barry Davies provides some knockout commentary.

Publisher:
Gremlin Interactive (01142 753423)



PRO PINBALL: TIMESHOCK! (91)

Remember *PP: The Web*? Well, this is the second table in the series, and it's better in every way. The ball dynamics and detail have been improved as have the sound effects. Plus the world's dirtiest computer game voice returns to "Lock those balls".

Publisher:
Empire Interactive (0181 343 7337)



NBA LIVE 97 (92)

Much better than the previous version (which lacked drive), this offering is well put together. With excellent graphics, sound effects and a hip soundtrack, thankfully it plays as good as it looks.

Publisher:
EA Sports (01753 549442)



MADDEN NFL 97 (87)

This PC incarnation is well up to the quality seen on the console versions, with all the features and slick presentation we assume as standard for an EA Sports release. The best American football game on the PC.

Publisher:
EA Sports (01753 549442)



PETE SAMPRAS TENNIS 97 (92)

This game doesn't quite better *Super Tennis* on the SNES, but it's as close as you'll come on the PC. With a simple control system, it's instantly playable, but the women's skirts still don't fly up when they serve.

Publisher:
Codemasters (01926 814132)



FRONT PAGE SPORTS BASEBALL (85)

An interesting game that nicks the best bits from other baseball titles. Gameplay is a tad on the uninspired side as things plod along, but then this is a baseball game.

Publisher:
Sierra (0118 920 9100)

Adventures



ALONE IN THE DARK 3 (95)

Better than the previous *AITD* instalments, *Alone 3* is a tense, ambient tale of Navajo Indian magic and reincarnation that unfolds in the usual *AITD* manner. Now available as part of a compilation budget pack.

Publisher:

Infogrames (0181 738 8199)



INDIANA JONES AND THE FATE OF ATLANTIS (93)

Follow a post-*Raiders* Indy in his search for the submerged metropolis. Three ways to play make for a high replayability factor, and the inter-character banter is brilliant.

Publisher:

LucasArts/VIE (0171 368 2255)



BIOFORCE (95)

Futuristic *Alone In The Dark*-style game with impressive graphics, puzzles and soundtrack. Often preferred over *AITD* games as its unique blend of arcade combat is explosive. The only drag is EA's refusal to make a sequel for it.

Publisher:

Electronic Arts (01753 549442)



LBA 2: TWINEN'S ODYSSEY (93)

Twinen, the sprite with the egg-shaped head, is back – this time to thwart those pesky Esmers in this sumptuous sequel. The huge play area, coupled with seamlessly linked puzzles, creates a great looking and atmospheric adventure.

Publisher:

Electronic Arts (01753 549442)



SYSTEM SHOCK (95)

This futuristic first-person cyberpunk adventure from the makers of *Ultima* was initially overlooked by many people. Now available on budget, this is a must-buy for those new to the game. The graphics might be a little dated, but the atmosphere is invigorating.

Publisher:

Electronic Arts (01753 549442)



SAM & MAX (93)

Steve Purcell's hilarious dog/rabbit 'freelance police' duo's first and only PC outing, in which they need to solve a host of bizarre puzzles. An all-talkie adventure with a gag-laden script, this is an essential budget-priced purchase even if you're not a massive point-and-click fan.

Publisher:

LucasArts/VIE (0171 368 2255)



STAR TREK TNG: A FINAL UNITY (94)

A style oozier. At times it's as if you're inside a *Star Trek: TNG* episode. Non-linear and beautifully presented, it's a Trek-head must-buy. Yet to be bettered.

Publisher:

MicroProse (01454 893893)



ECSTATICA II (90)

We dubbed it "An adventure with balls". It's hard, but it's one of the most rewarding adventures we've ever seen. It constantly surprises and is sure to keep even the most battle-weary adventure fan busy for weeks.

Publisher:

Psygnosis (0151 282 3000)



DISCWORD II (93)

Perfect Entertainment's immaculate sequel to *Discworld* follows the would-be wizard Rincewind in his search for the Grim Reaper. Not as hard as the first game, but bigger and better looking. *Discworld II* is a universally appealing adventure game.

Publisher:

Psygnosis (0151 282 3000)



THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND 2: LECHUCK'S REVENGE (PRE-PC ZONE)

Anyone with even a casual interest in adventures must have this game. The graphics look dated, but the one-liners are side-splitting. And it's on budget!

Publisher:

Virgin (0171 368 2255)

Role-Playing Games



ULTIMA UNDERWORLD 2: LABYRINTH OF WORLDS (94)

This improves on almost every aspect of its prequel, *The Stygian Abyss*. You explore a complex, ever-evolving dungeon; it has unsurpassed atmosphere and interaction.

Publisher:

Origin/EA (01753 549442)



RAVENLOFT: STONE PROPHET (78)

A great improvement overSSI's previous AD&D *Ravenloft* RPGs. The graphics are average but the intuitive spell/combat system is a joy.

Publisher:

Mindscape (01444 246333)



ULTIMA VII (89)

Arguably the best of all the *Ultima* games, *Ultima VII* blends character interaction with the exploration of the detailed world of Britannia. This is the last of the *Ultima* series to give you complete party control. Soon to reappear as *Ultima On-Line*.

Publisher:

Origin/EA (01753 549442)



ULTIMA UNDERWORLD: THE STYGIAN ABYSS (PRE-PC ZONE)

This one took RPGs away from first-person tile-based RPGs. Amazing architecture, witty characterisations, layers of storyline and the best ending of any computer game in history. Buy it and believe it.

Publisher:

Origin/EA (01753 549442)



DIABLO (88)

Diablo is standard hack 'n' slash fare but the game's designers pull the whole thing off with such style that the overall game experience is addictive. A great storyline compensates for repetitive arcade combat and supremely detailed animation makes it a superb coffee-table game.

Publisher:

Zabrac/Blizzard (01626 332233)



EYE OF THE BEHOLDER II (PRE-PC ZONE)

It's one of those 'olde-worlde', first-person RPGs, but its progressive, party-based gameplay and subtle story elements set it worlds apart from all the other dross. The flick-screen graphics are a bit dated, but dungeon design is still worth a look.

Publisher:

VIE (0171 368 2255)



TERRIS (88)

A MUD in the old-school style of text-based RPGs, but so addictive we're still playing it. The quests, puzzles and monsters will keep you going for days. The gameplay is excellent, if you can handle the 'texty-ness'.

Publisher:

AOL (0800 2797444)



LANDS OF LORE (PRE-PC ZONE)

Graphics and gameplay! Westwood Studios' graphical flair shines in this push-scrolling story about a witch. Adding non-player characters to your party keeps it interesting. CD version features Patrick Stewart.

Publisher:

VIE (0171 368 2255)



MERIDIAN 59 (86)

This ground-breaking on-line RPG, though cursed with garish and horrible graphics, allows thousands of people to interact with each other in the same fantasy universe at the same time. Currently one of the best on-line multi-player RPGs around.

Publisher:

3DO Company (0181 296 1965)



BETRAYAL AT KRONDOR (PRE-PC ZONE)

First-person perspective RPG with a huge game world and fairly complex battle system. Failed to take the RPG crown from *Ultima* due to limited character interaction, but a worthy second-hand buy.

Publisher:

Sierra (0118 920 9100)

Strategy



DUNGEON KEEPER (96)

A game with a genre almost impossible to define, *DK* takes *SimCity 2000*, *C&C* and *Ultima Underworld* and remoulds them into one hell of a title. Fantastic gameplay, and a lifespan on a par with the Queen Mother.

Publisher:
Electronic Arts (01753 549442)



MASTER OF ORION 2 (92)

Very sophisticated space exploration/strategy game that rewards long-term play. If you're willing to put the time into it, *Orion 2* will stay on your hard drive for aeons.

Publisher:
MicroProse (01454 893893)



SYNDICATE WARS (95)

One of the best strategy games of all time gets a sequel, and what a fabulous sequel it is too. It houses a wealth of intricate levels, gorgeous graphics and enough gratuitous violence to keep anyone happy.

Publisher:
EA/Bullfrog (01753 549442)



AGE OF EMPIRES (94)

Think of *Civilization 2*. Imagine the same great empire-building gameplay, some excellent graphical touches and comprehensive multi- and single-player options (all in real time). That's *Age Of Empires* in a nutshell.

Publisher:
Microsoft (0345 002000)



X-COM 3: APOCALYPSE (95)

A revamped engine and a healthy helping of real-time combat have brought the fantastically addictive *X-COM* series bang up to date. If you like your strategy games deep and meaningful, you should buy *X-COM 3* immediately. It'll keep you busy for weeks.

Publisher:
MicroProse (01454 893893)



SIMCITY 2000 (92)

A classic game that deserves its reputation as one of the all-time greats in the strategy world. Build and maintain the city of your dreams and cope with all the problems a real-life Mayor would come up against. It's a lot more fun than it sounds, trust us.

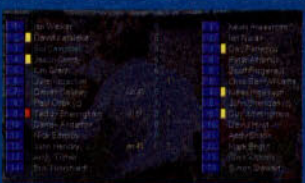
Publisher:
Maxis (0171 505 1500)



COMMAND & CONQUER: RED ALERT (94)

...or *C&C* in SVGA with a few new units. It's a testament to the original's gameplay that the sequel can get away with adding few new features and still be fun to play.

Publisher:
Virgin (0171 368 2255)



CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 2 (90)

So you want to be a football manager, eh? Well so does our Jeremy, which is why he spends his life playing this, the most realistic, addictive football management game available.

Publisher:
Eidos Interactive (0181 780 2222)



PUZZLE BOBBLE (94)

We can't agree exactly where *Puzzle Bobble* fits in *PC Zone Recommends*. Does it belong in here, with the *Civs* and *Sims* of the PC gaming world, or should it go in the action section? Who cares, as long as it's in...

Publisher:
GT Interactive (0171 258 3791)



CIVILIZATION 2 (90)

Explore the world, conquer territories and research new technologies in one of the most successful strategy games ever. It's not that different to the first one, but it merits a '90s update and a place here.

Publisher:
MicroProse (01454 893893)

Flight Simulations



EF2000 (97)

With fantastic graphics and a very realistic flight model, this is one of the best flight sims on the PC. Not even Microsoft's mighty *Flight Sim* can topple it from the top of the *PC Zone* prop-head ladder.

Publisher:
Ocean/DID (0161 832 6633)



US MARINE FIGHTERS (92)

Lovely graphics and a realistic enough flight model. Originally released as a mission disk for *US Navy Fighters*, *Marine Fighters* now comes as part of the *US Navy Fighters Gold* pack, so go get that instead!

Publisher:
Electronic Arts (01753 549442)



FLIGHT UNLIMITED (96)

This was the first flight sim to sport truly amazing graphics and a frighteningly realistic flight model. You don't get to kill anyone (just like *Flight Sim 95*) but it still stands up well against today's competition, and you still need a beefy machine to fly it.

Publisher:
Looking Glass/Virgin (0171 368 2255)



FLYING CORPS (92)

Action-packed WWI flight sim with neat graphics. Nostalgic gamers will recall *Red Baron* as one of the greatest WWI flight sims ever - this improves on the old classic to become the best WWI sim currently available for the PC.

Publisher:
Empire Interactive (0181 343 7337)



APACHE LONGBOW (96)

The *EF2000* of helicopter sims, in as much as it marries fab graphics with a realistic flight model. The structure encourages you to adopt the same tactics as a real Apache pilot (or so we're told) and the missions are challenging and varied enough to keep you at it for weeks. It's big, too.

Publisher:
Digital Integration (01276 684959)



COMANCHE 3 (92)

This latest version of the *Comanche* flight sim is without a doubt the finest we've seen yet, sporting juicy terrain graphics due to a revamped VoxelSpace engine. Despite an accurate flight model, it still delivers intense gameplay, and is extremely good fun.

Publisher:
NovaLogic (0171 405 1777)



FLIGHT SIM 95 (95)

The longest-running and most successful PC flight sim. An incredibly realistic flight model prompted the US Air Force to use this software as a training tool for their pilots. (But you don't get to shoot anything.)

Publisher:
Microsoft (0181 242 4194)



JETFIGHTER III (91)

The follow-up to one of the most popular sims ever. Fly over three and a half million square miles of accurately-mapped terrain of South America. You get to shoot things too, but there's no duty free option.

Publisher:
Eidos Interactive (0181 780 2222)



SU27 FLANKER (95)

One for flight sim purists. Admittedly the graphics are crap, but our reviewer raved about it. A great flight model and superb mission builder make it an essential buy for prop-heads everywhere, just don't expect your best mate to be impressed.

Publisher:
Electronic Arts (01753 549442)



A-10 CUBA (90)

Functional graphics (cough) for a game that captures the imagination, mainly because the plane is an absolute joy to fly. Slightly limited with the absence of a fully-fledged campaign but great fun nonetheless, and pretty speedy on a modest Pentium.

Publisher:
Activision (01895 456700)

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to completely edit and rewrite all
correspondence in an effort to
make ourselves look even more
smug and witty (and handsome)..

CM2 TOO EASY?

I think you'll have to agree
that I just kick butt on
Championship Manager 2.
Not only did I take Northern Ireland
to the World Cup Finals (only to be
knocked out because Germany and
Spain were in my group), but I then
completed the treble with Manchester
United and Roy Keane finishing as
top scorer with 23 goals. Enclosed is
a copy of my completed fixture list
and the player roster. Please note the
presence of messrs Kluivert, Anderton
and Juninho, all bought for absolutely
sod all as a result of my brilliant
management skills. Now for the
suck up part. I think that the mag is
fantastic and I was especially pleased
to see the *Everything You Wanted
To Know* feature on CM2. Thanks for
taking football management sims as
seriously as other games.

**Matthew Stephens, Truro,
Cornwall**

O kay, so you won the
treble with Man Utd.
Big deal. You're not
exactly making things hard for
yourself, are you? Not only do
you start with arguably the best
squad in the league and the
biggest stadium, but millions of
quid in the bank. At the end of
the day, if you didn't win anything
with Man Utd, then you'd be crap.
Well done for getting Northern
Ireland into the World Cup Finals,
though. God bless Neil Lennon, eh?

For the record, I've taken
Chester to the top of the Premier
League, won the FA Cup, UEFA
Cup and finished quite respectfully
placed in the Champions League.
Top goal scorer in my first season
was Cyril Regis with 42 goals. Not
bad for an oldie, eh? Patrick has
accomplished even greater feats
with Gillingham and has literally
won everything with Spurs
(check out the screenshots that
accompanied the "Everything"

piece for proof). Try starting
again with a crap *Third Division
side* and then we'll see how good
you really are.

CARMAGEDDON IS CRAP!

H ere is a letter of complaint
about *Carmageddon*. I get
the two demos from the
cover CD and they're the best demos
I've ever played. I can't wait until it
comes out in the shops. I wait, and
wait, and wait, and eventually – three
and a half months later – it comes
out. I rush out and buy it, load it up
and start playing. But what's this,
the man with the chequered flag is
bleeding green? And what's happened
to the people who used to scream
as they desperately try to escape?
Why, they've all been replaced by
zombies which all look the same,
make annoying squeaking noises,
and have green blood.

After 20 minutes of being irritated
to death by this crap reprogramming,
I get so pissed off that I take the
game back to the shop and demand
my money back. Is the proper bloody

version ever going to be released, or
is potentially the greatest car game
ever destined to be forever crap?

I'm so pissed off now that I think
I'll go and mow down some innocents
in my motor. Over and over again.

For the moral minority who might
read this, the above line is sarcastic
and I can actually tell the difference
between computer games and reality.

**Brian the Angry, Abingdon,
Oxford**

B rian, calm down. It's
not worth it. We were
pretty disappointed too.
However, we did find a patch
on the Internet that changes the
zombies back to bleeding people.
We put it on the last two CDs.
Check it out (though you'll have to
go and buy the game again, which
could prove a bit embarrassing if
you go back to the same shop).
We've been talking to developers
Stainless and publishers SCI
about the whole thing and we'll
be revealing all in a special
report very soon. So remember
to watch this space.



This'll be the day. Proof that you
can bend reality and space time
with *Champion Manager 2*.



It's time to lose the crappy zombies and put gore galore back in
Carmageddon with our 'magic' patch on this month's CD.

Letter of the Month

TELL ME A STORY

People everywhere these days continue to think of interactive movies as a load of rubbish, and I must admit that most of them are. But this is only because the stories are so bad. Game designers spend ages working on gameplay, interactivity, playability, puzzles and the like, when all their creative energy should be directed at developing the story. The only thing that makes a game any good is a story, not the design, the puzzles and the rest. No producers really care about the story – they tend to think that if it looks good and plays well, it will sell.

My favourite game and interactive movie of all time is *SpyCraft*, because it had simple gameplay, great graphics, good interaction and a superb story and a razor-sharp plot. The atmosphere was so great, I suspect they ripped off a Tom Clancy novel. Have you ever finished a game and felt like you were living someone else's life? That's how games should make you feel. Give me a strong storyline every time.

Luke Bruenjes, Victoria, Australia

Interactive movies do tend to get a bit of a slagging, but that's because most of the games that fall under this banner have been utterly crap. Take *Phantasmagoria* for example. The story could have quite easily been made into a movie, but the limited level of interaction made it nice to look at, but very dull to play. When people buy games they expect to

a) be entertained (it's got to be fun), and b) be immersed. *Phantasmagoria* didn't fulfil either criteria and just left people feeling frustrated because it didn't meet their expectations of what a game should do. Roberta Williams (who developed *Phantasmagoria* and the excellent *King's Quest* series of adventures), Chris Roberts (of *Wing Commander* fame), and LucasArts who have produced the superb *Indiana Jones* and *Monkey Island* adventures, all pride themselves on telling stories within their games. They also appreciate that gamers want a high level of interactivity, immersion and expect to be entertained.

A good story alone just isn't enough. Look at games like *Quake*, which get people ducking and diving, and *C&C*, which turn them into twitching megalomaniacs. Other elements are integral to the whole of the gaming equation.

With the arrival of facial motion capture and the advent of Digital Video Disk (DVD), we can expect to see some pretty intense 'interactive movies' in the next couple of years that feature diverse and complicated characters and very realistic environments. Let's hope that the developers try to include all the desired elements in their games, as well as a gripping storyline.

If your letter is selected as 'Letter of the Month', we'll send you a bundle of T-shirts and maybe even a game. COO!



COME PLAY WITH ME

Could you tell me where I can download some software from the Internet to play on-line games? Love the mag, etc. Thanks.

Daryl Hall, e-mail

Daryl, can I point your attention to the PC Zone Website (www.pczone.co.uk)? We've recently set up our own server and you can download various bits and pieces to get you gaming on-line. There are also a few chat forums you can visit to get some advice on what's hot and where it's at. Failing that, check out our On-Line section in the mag. It's just what you're looking for.

MORE DIABLO PLEASE

I like playing *Diablo* a lot. I've played it to death since it came out, and as I'm not connected to the Net, I wondered if you could tell me if Blizzard are planning to release a mission disk, or if there are any patches around with new monsters and stuff?

Simon Sharp, Milton Keynes

We haven't heard anything about an official extras disc, but we have heard that a sequel is already in the pipeline due for release later next year. We found some patches on the Net and put them on last month's CD (the September issue) ▶

HOT Topic

Edited by Charlie Brooker

Each month we pick a topic so hot, it's in danger of igniting your head. Then we ask you to venture your opinions on it. This month's comments have all been taken from our fantabulous Web-based chat forum. Simply point your browsers at www.pczone.co.uk, and within seconds, you can join in too...



YES FOLKS, IT'S TIME ONCE AGAIN for *Hot Topic*, the column with a hazelnut in every 'byte'. Tee hee. The subject under discussion this month is dreams. More specifically, game-related dreams. Have you ever suffered from them? What does this say about you? And is this the worst *Hot Topic* ever?

Some of the responses are gathered here for your perusal. Please note that on-line chat tends to be of a highly 'fruity' nature, in which every other word begins with the letter 'F' or 'C'. To this end, we have toned down some of your language this month, by replacing the offending 'rudies' with equally suitable, yet infinitely superior, expressions – just look for the underlined, italicised words. We do this in an attempt to broaden the vocabulary of our readers, and *not* because we're too scared to use the word 'fuck' now and again. Kay? Kay.

Anyway, no sooner has the topic been posted, than the youthful Gary Ambrose pipes up almost immediately with a stark confession...

"I have only ever had one game-related dream – actually it's a bit sexy," he writes. "I had just bought *Rebel Assault II* and that night I went to bed and dreamt I was at school, and every pupil there was either a Rebel or an Imperial. Everyone had blasters and we were

just killing each other." So far so dull, but it soon transpires that this classroom-based shootout is merely a transparently metaphorical preamble to the main dreamscape event. Within moments Gary admits: "Then I went into a room and *deflowered* a girl and her mum came in and told me to get out." Her mum came in and told you to get out? Of the room or her daughter? You disgusting little wretch. Clean your mind out with soap, young man.

Next, the comparatively virtuous Paul Wood interjects with a simple nightmare about a simple game.

"I had a dream about *Puzzle Bobble*," he says. "All I can remember is feeling really uncomfortable, and hearing that bloody 'dooop dooop' noise." That sounds like a sado-masochistic techno fan's idea of heaven to us, but Paul continues: "It was really bright and colourful, and not a bit nice. I think it was something to do with the fact that I can never get on my *blessed* computer anymore, because my whole family is always on it playing that *accursed* game. I hate it."

Despite the fragrant *Pig Foetus*' sulky protest – "I refuse to answer this *Hot Topic* on the grounds of it being *wholly unsatisfactory*" – readers were soon queuing up to tell all...

so be sure to check these out, though most of these are for *Diablo on-line*. In the meantime, get yourself hooked up and play *Battle.net*. You'll love it.

SWOS RULES

I have to disagree with your charts on the topic of sports. You put down *FIFA 97* and *Actua Soccer* as the two footie games worth playing. Although I have both of these games and play them a lot, I think the best soccer game of all time on the PC has got to be *Sensible World of Soccer*. *SWOS* is a game I have not been able to put down for ages. Although the graphics are rather poor, and the commentary may not be that good, the game is as playable as *Red Alert*, *Tomb Raider* and *FIFA* any day.

SWOS has many more features than *Actua* or *FIFA*. It allows you to make transfers and keep accounts as well as play the game. This combines management and football into one game. The other titles seem to concentrate on making the game look good and forget about how playable it is. I think *FIFA 97* and other games of that ilk are too realistic for their own good.

I was surprised that you didn't include *SWOS* in the recommendations, but then you never had the original *Screamer* and you did have *Screamer 2*, which isn't that much better than *Screamer 1*. You've even got *Nascar 2* in there, which I think is heavily over-rated. There is much more to do in *Screamer* and the graphics are better.

The retro-minded *NotJim* reveals: "I dream about *Manic Miner* a lot. You know, I'm like in this room and I need to jump over the penguins to get the keys... and small bushes with berries kill me... and *confound it* a moving floor! *Blast* please don't let me die!" Gasp. And then? "Then I wake up." Oh. Next.

Kevin Rooke had a cracking *Tetris* dream. He says he was looking out over a city and he had to slot buildings in between the existing buildings. Soon the city reached up to the sky. Sounds strange to us. Make a good music video, though.

'Csleigh' describes a recurring dream he had about an Atari ST game based in Vietnam - probably the Ocean version of *Platoon*... "The dream was me as the commanding officer going through the jungle and terrorising the VC and shooting snipers. It was one of those dreams where you are half aware that it is a dream. I remember



Diablo on-line: quite a bit of a laugh really, innit?

Still, I found the CDs on the last two issues of *PC Zone* to be very, very good and full of the latest and best software available. They also had some of the classics which I have not got, but are still great fun to play, good graphics or not.

A *SWOS* fan via CIX

SWOS is undoubtedly an extremely playable football game, but in 1997 gamers quite rightfully expect high-quality graphics in their football games as well as playability. Also, the PC version of SWOS is very weak compared to the Amiga version. It plays way too fast, which means scoring goals is more a matter of luck than an individual's skill. We feel that the PC version of SWOS is not the definitive one and so doesn't deserve a place in our hall of fame. Screamer 2 scored higher than Screamer, which is why we included it. I think you've missed the point. Z

going through the jungle thinking 'bless my soul these graphics are excellent.'

We'll leave the last word to the altogether poetic D. Green, aka 'SoftLad', who tells of an eerie phenomenon worthy of Edgar Allen Poe...

"I'd taken a Monday off work with this stinking cold, so I spent the entire day playing *Lemmings* on my Amiga before crawling wretchedly into bed at about midnight. Three in the morning, I woke up with the worst *bounder* of a toothache I've EVER had, bedsheets screwed into a noose, and to top it all my fevered brain immediately switched into *Lemmings Strategies Tactical Overdrive*. I consequently laid there until dawn, wracked in agony, whimpering like a girl, and watching hundreds of little blue-green *fellows* stomping across my ceiling."

"Lemmings hallucinations - beat that matey." Shucks. We can't and we won't. Z

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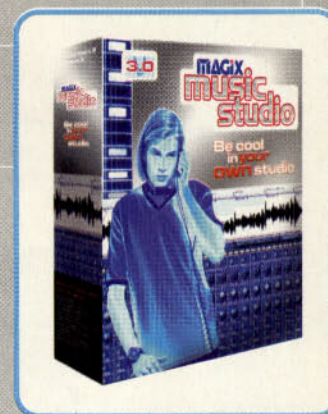


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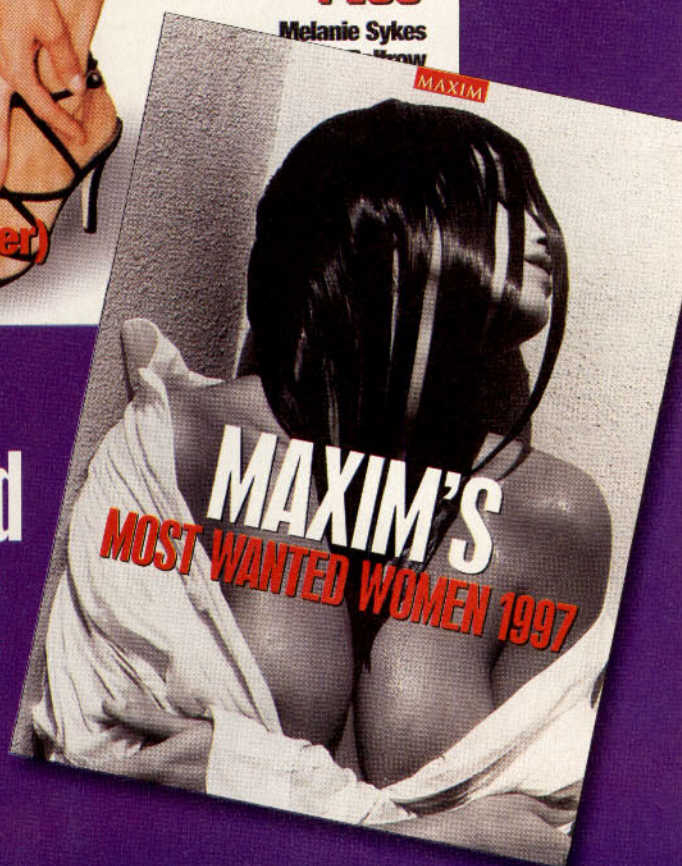
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Comment



David McCandless
finally understands
why games
are addictive.
No, really.

SORTED FOR GAMES & DEMOS

COCAINE, apparently, is a very addictive drug. And a nasty one. After a few dabblings of the old 'showbiz sherbert', you're highly likely to be hooked. You may do a Zammo and start stealing from your mum's handbag to feed your habit, or appear as 'leettle' Jimmy in *Brookside* and start chasing the dragon while your badly-lit parents go spare (why is it that it's only *Grange Hill* actors who become TV smackheads? And, for that matter, how many times did Jackie come to the house to find Ziggy, sorry, Jimmy sprawled over the sofa with a belt? We count 15).

Anyway, cocaine is addictive. And it's addictive for a very strange reason. It's custom-designed to titillate a part of your brain called the 'reward centre'. Positioned somewhere above and to the left of your forehead, the reward centre neurons and chemicals are responsible for pleasure and the sense of achievement. After a tumultuous two hours in the sack, or scoring a goal in the park, for example, it goes into overdrive, swamping your brain in a chemical called Dopamine, which in turn tickles the nerve endings, giving you a warm glow of satisfaction, and an urge to repeat the feat to re-experience

the feeling. Bizarrely enough, it's also responsible for mankind's success as a species. When Captain Caveman all those zillion of years ago speared a fish with his flint dagger, or worked out that – doh – putting A into B resulted in cute little kiddie C, his reward centre would make him feel good. And so he would go on and on, improving and experimenting to recreate the sensation.

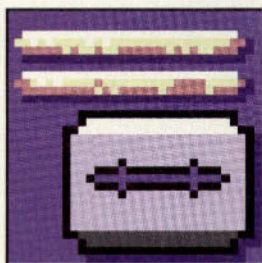
So you can see from a mile off why cocaine is addictive. And why, we tentatively conclude, games are too. Take this example... I was playing *Blood* about a month ago. It's a nice game, nothing extraordinary, nothing too unbelievable. A shoot 'em up in the style of *Duke Nukem*. Lots of levels, passageways, weapons, power-ups and hidden areas. Nicely artworked but pretty repetitive. But for some freaking reason, I spent hours playing it. I sat there for hours, headphone on, crouched in the kind of sitting position you see in "WARNING – RSI" adverts, lights out, staring at the monitor. I crashed out about 4am, woke at 10am, a little



See! The game features a zippo lighter and red 'magic joss-sticks'. Call the police!

immersed. I wasn't intent on finishing it, or reaching the next level. Unwittingly, *Blood* was softly tickling the reward centre of my brain. It was packed with short term goals which gave me a sense of achievement as I played it. And play it I did. Pathologically.

and I couldn't stop. I stayed awake far beyond my usual stamina rating. My eyes were red. My mouth had adopted a texture usually found behind the ears of fat people. But I couldn't stop. I was hooked, addictive, desperate for more. I fell asleep, woke up, and started again.



"My dopamine-soaked brain was high on the petty glories of a computer game. My mouth had adopted a texture usually found behind the ears of fat people."

worse for wear – and guess what? I started playing the bloody thing again.

It's not like I didn't have anything better to do. A couple of chumbos were going to the pub – I could've gone with them and woken up next to a sailor in a puddle of my own vomit. Another female friend of mine was cooking a meal, one of those miscellaneous pasta dishes that girls always 'do'. Or I could've aimlessly spent an evening watching five seconds of every channel on cable. Did I? No. I played *Blood* – a fairly average game, a fairly average life experience.

Why oh why oh why oh why? I realise now that the game was doing very strange things to my head. I wasn't

Two zombies blocked my way to the rocket launcher. I pounded them into dust and grabbed my reward. YES! After a tense creep through a labyrinth I finally found a set of power-ups and some armour. YES! Down to five per cent health and crawling on my hands and knees, trying desperately to reach the health kit, closer... closer... closer – YES! A room full of monsters, just six shots left in my shotgun. Each shot must count. Bang, bang, bang. YES! I am the man. The whole game was a series of challenges and rewards. A constant stream of good crosses and open goals.

No matter what I did, I couldn't stop. My dopamine-soaked brain was high on the petty glories of a computer game

This isn't the first time I've felt like this. And I'm sure I'm not the only one. A games addiction, we can conclude, is not dependent on design or a great concept, nor artwork nor wazzy graphics, or whether it has multi-player network play, or plays well on a 486. It doesn't matter whether it makes you laugh, or has atmosphere, or a 3D engine which makes grown men cry. All these things are irrelevant. It just has to make you feel good, offer you rewards after every challenge, and so titillate your reward centre very much like, well, very much like cocaine does. **Z**

David McCandless's only vice is coffee. And alcohol. And Quake. (All legal note.)

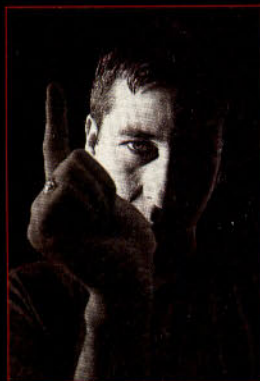


Oh man, it's like blue, with bubbles, and gargoyles. I can't feel my teeth.



LOOKING

BACK



It's hot, it's sticky, it's time to laze in the sun. Tell that to the **PC Zone** team - the best example of a 'Glasgow Tan' you'll ever see...

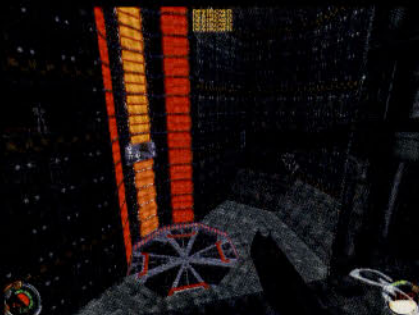


IT'S BEEN A WEIRD MONTH THIS ONE. WHY?

Well, it's been really sunny outside, and while most other people have been topping up their tan in the 'tropical' sunshine, almost everyone here at **PC Zone** has been locked

away in a darkened room playing PC games.

Even our advertising department have been at it. Ad girrrl Emma Lewis has been catching up on her *Tomb Raider*. "She's a sexy little vixen is our Lara," says Emma, obviously more than a little confused about her own sexuality. Emma reckons Lara is also "a great female role model" and "would eat the Spice Girls for breakfast", which conjures an interesting mental picture... Ahem.



Just a few of the games we've been spending time with over the past few weeks.

Dep Ed Chris Anderson's been playing Bullfrog's *Dungeon Keeper* in order to find out what all the fuss is about, and he isn't convinced by what he's seen. Chris says he's "very disappointed" with it and that he found the gameplay to be "really repetitive", which is fair enough, but there are plenty of people out there who disagree with him. *Imperium Galactica* is his game of choice this month, though. "It's absolutely brilliant," he told me, "the first real mix of C&C and space exploration to actually work in a game of this sort."

Judas Jezza, on the other hand, has been mucking around with console racing games, namely *V-Rally* on the PlayStation (PlayStation?!), which he reckons is the business. *V-Rally*'s abundance of tracks and brilliant car dynamics are apparently what makes it such a hit with our esteemed Editor. On the PC side of things, Jeremy's succumbed to the addictive qualities of Virgin's *Ignition*. "It's really playable," he attests, "and is easy to pick up and play."

Publishing guru and long term 'games animal' John Davison has spent many hours getting into GT's *Total Annihilation*, which he claims is "rock hard". According to John, *Total Annihilation* is definitely taking the genre in the right direction and it's also got tons of interesting features, which helped keep him glued to his PC for the best part of an entire week. *Total Annihilation* should give *Starcraft* a run for its money when it hit the shelves in October.

The subdued lighting in **PC Zone**'s disc production department is the ideal environment for late night gamesplaying, which is why Gareth Ramsay and Daniel Emery haven't been out sunning themselves recently. Gareth's been playing around with a 3Dfx version of *Jedi Knight*, which he thought was "a bit boring" when he first started out but now thinks is fantastic, having unlocked a few of the game's secrets. Dan prefers the maniacal gameplay in System 3's *Constructor* which he claims to have played "untold" (whatever that means). "It's the most fantastically spoooge-worthy 'god' game ever," claims Dan. At least it'll keep him off *Terris* for a while.

Paul Presley has been investing most of his free time in Eidos' seminal *Champ Manager 2*, teaming up with his brother for lengthy

"Since blowing his machine up Steve has had to resort to playing games on Mallo's crusty 486DX2 66."


weekend management sessions. The start of a new season of Premiership football is obviously something to do with this strange behaviour.

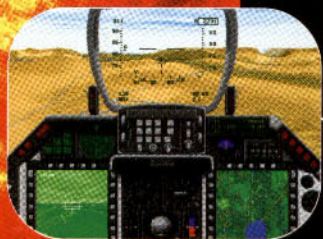
Since blowing his machine up (see last month's *Looking Back*), Steve has had to resort to playing games on Mallo's crusty 486 DX2 66. In between appearances on Live TV's *A Game of Two Scarves*, Mr Hill has been whiling away the hours with an old copy of *Pinball Illusions*. "It's great," says Steve - a man who is obviously very easily pleased. And who are we to argue?

New boy Richie (or 'Shoey' or 'Moog' as he's sometimes called by his friends) must think all his Christmases have come at once - the amount of new games he's had to play since starting on **PC Zone**. Richard's already discovered *Carmageddon* in a big way, and continues to play *Ignition* even after finishing the review. Rich has also been initiated into our regular evening deathmatch club, and is improving steadily after a short period as a handy, human-controlled 'whipping boy'.

Macca's got the emulator bug baaaaad and is *still* dabbling with MAIME, an amazing piece of software which runs arcade code perfectly on a PC. "It even does all the vector games, such as *Battlezone* and *Tempest*," he enthused. Of course, *Jedi Knight* is currently swallowing a huge amount of his time as his incessant quoting of the films ("I have you now" etc) proves.

Charlie's been on holiday (again), but confesses to have spent many an hour playing *Dungeon Keeper* instead of packing his bags.

While all this has been going on I've been locking horns with *Warlords III*, and am loving every minute of it (as you can probably tell from my review on page 90). Having completed the game in campaign mode, I'm now ploughing through the game's one-off scenarios - some of which are rock hard (and sorry, I'm not prepared to play the game in 'easy' mode). *Warlords III* is definitely one of the most addictive games I've ever played, which is bad news on gloriously sunny days like this... 



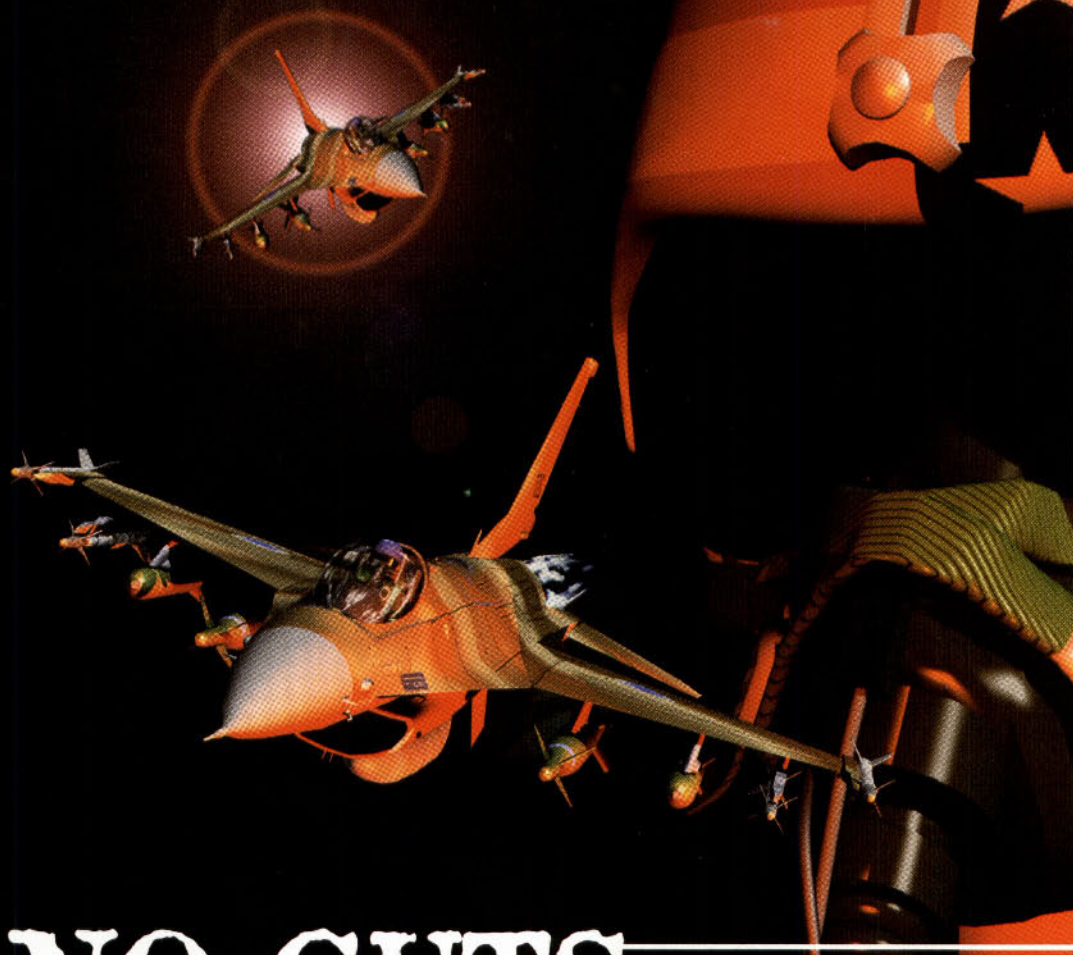
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worlds."

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