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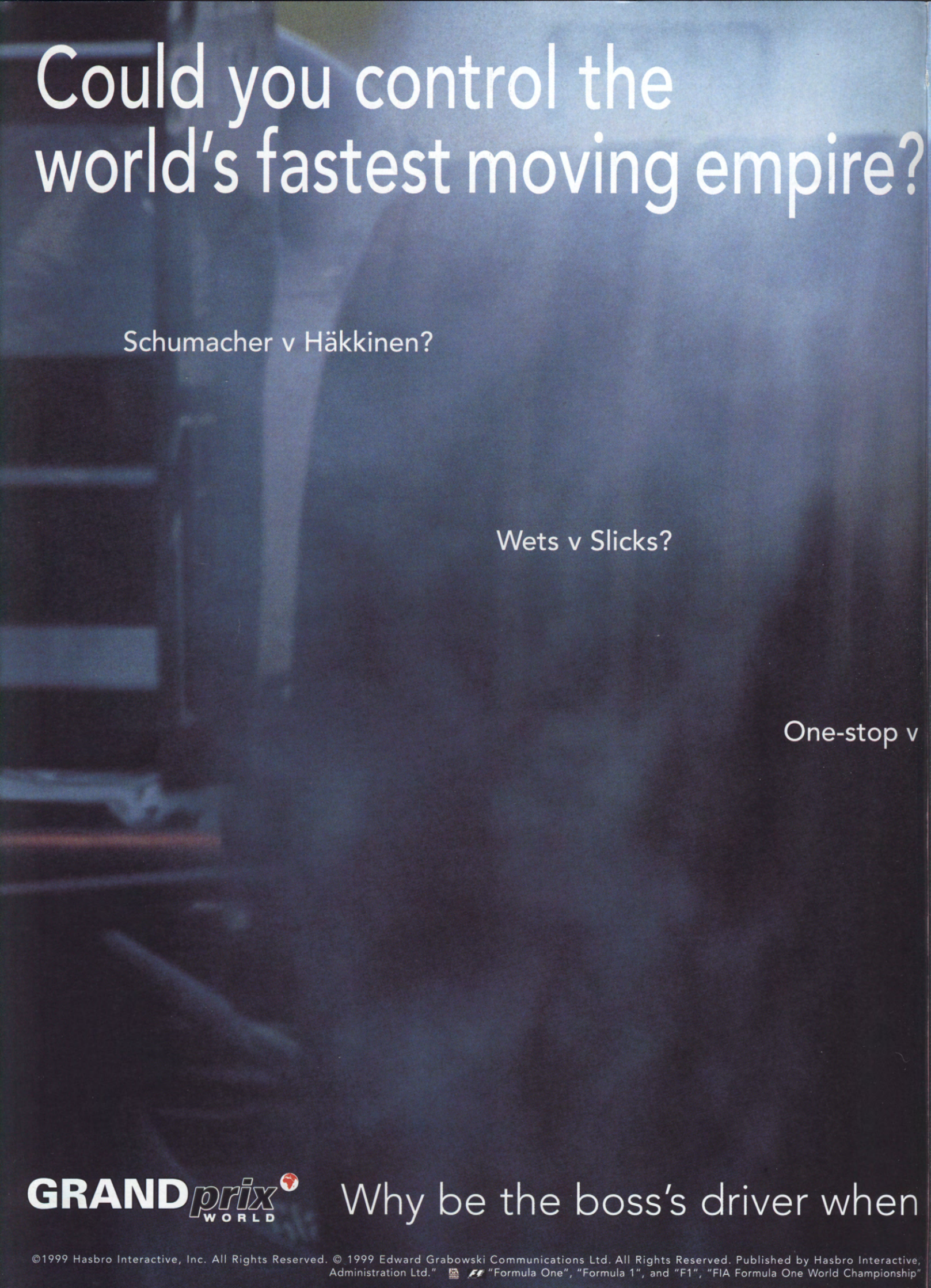

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WIN THE TOP 10 PC GAMES
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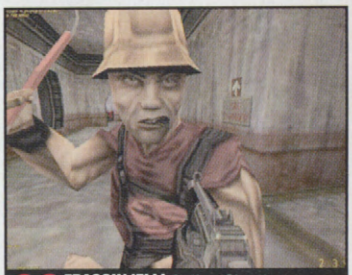

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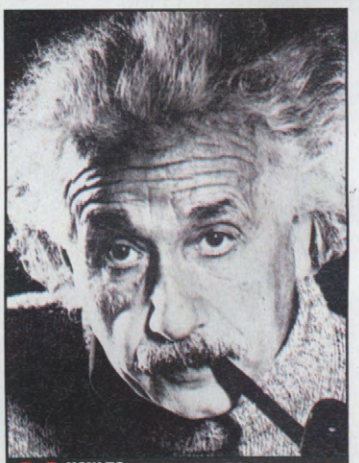

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SPECIAL READERS' OFFER
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"*Thief II* continues where *Thief* left off... but there's a hell of a lot more variety this time around"

42 THIEF II: THE METAL AGE Garrett the one-eyed thief returns in the 3D sneak 'em up everyone's been waiting for.

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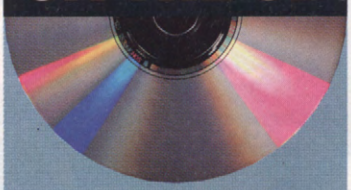

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That silvery thing on the cover is loaded with great demos, patches and helpful files guaranteed to ensure you get more out of your PC

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Charlie Brooker isn't very good at *Quake* on the Internet but he thought he'd give it a go anyway. Thankfully, it looks like he has hit upon a rather novel plan to help solicit sympathy and ensure no-one kills him

WIN! THE COMPO NO ONE FINDS Correctly answer this month's cover question and you could win some PC goodies. Send your entry on a postcard addressed to: **The Compo No One Finds (87), *PC ZONE*, 19 Bolsover Street, London W1P 7HJ.** The first entry with the correct answer plucked out of the hat wins a mystery prize. The Ed's decision is final. Closing date: Friday 10 March 2000. The winner of our January (#85) cover compo was Mark Churchill from Hertfordshire, who wins something from the *ZONE* prizes cupboard for sending in the correct answer (Bob) to our last little teaser.

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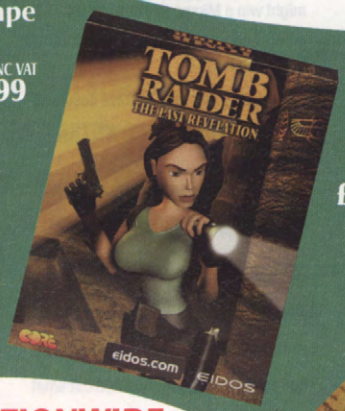

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RPG OVERLOAD

A quick glance at the contents pages this month will tell you this issue has become over-run with RPGs. *Final Fantasy VIII*, *Nox*, *Odium*, *Septerra Core*, they all arrived for review this month. This news will be welcomed by veteran goblin-chasers everywhere, although the rest of you will no doubt be wondering what the hell is going on. Well, it came as something of a shock to us, too. We had a very hard time filling the RPG section of the Top 100 when we revised it a few issues back. Finding ten top RPGs on PC proved to be a nightmare, as publishers have preferred to release a million first-person shoot 'em ups and real-time strategy games.

The fact that *Baldur's Gate* went straight to number one on its release would appear to have something to do with publishers sitting up and taking notice of this beleaguered genre, and with *Planescape: Torment* raising the stakes once more with its mix of witty dialogue, superb character development and masterful story-telling, this month's batch of RPGs will need to be something very special to make an impression on us. Can *Final Fantasy VIII* possibly improve on its illustrious predecessor? Can Westwood make a mark with *Nox*, its first entry into the RPG genre since *Lands Of Lore III*? The answers to both of these questions are inside this very issue.

Genuine RPG fans have cause to rejoice when they reach this month's review section despite *Ultima Ascension* failing to make an appearance for another record-breaking month. EA still couldn't give us review code as we were going to press. Just so you know, the version reviewed in other UK magazines is the heavily-bugged US version (incredibly, one of our rivals scored the game *down* for having so many bugs, despite the fact the UK version will be patched and won't have all these problems – the mind boggles). We will almost definitely have a review of *Ascension* next month. In the meantime, if it shows up in your local game shop don't go near it.

Non-RPG fans will no doubt welcome a return to business as usual next month when we promise to once again bring you lots of games with people shooting other people in them, and games in which strategic decisions are made in real-time. Enjoy the issue, see you next month.

Chris Anderson, Editor

MEET THE ZONE TEAM

All *PC ZONE*'s reviewers are experts in their field. We like to give every game that comes in for review the best chance, which is why we give it to a reviewer who's a fan of the genre

CHRIS ANDERSON

You are a character in a role-playing game. What class would you be and why?

A wizard. The only one that guarantees you a pointy hat.

What are your stats (0-20)?

Strength: 1
Pointy hats: 20
Charisma: 1
Dexterity: 1

DAVE WOODS

I'd be a *Quake III* character, armed with a rocket launcher, primed to seek out the faintest whiff of a beard.

Strength: 20
Single player-campaign: 1
Bounce pads: lots
Dexterity: 20

RICHIE SHOEMAKER

Anyone suicidal, so that I could die quickly and get back to the real world.

Strength: 2
Intelligence: 20
Death wish: 20
Life chances: 0

MARK HILL

A disembodied skull because they have all the fun.

Strength: 1
Intelligence: 2
Complexion: 0
Body: 0

MARTIN KORDA

Upper class, because then I could afford to buy all the best weapons to give everyone else a fine kicking.

Strength: 0
Wealth: 20
Charisma: 0
Social standing: 20

PAUL MALLINSON

A fighter, because I'm a wimp in real life and it would make a nice change to be someone really hard.

Strength: 21
Muscle: 21
Attitude: You looking at me?
Charisma: 0

STEVE HILL

You are a character in a role-playing game. What class would you be and why?

I've never played a role-playing game in my life and I've no idea what you're talking about.

What are your stats (0-20)?

Wit: 20
Tolerance: Champ Manager
Hit points: 99/00
Pointy hat or beard: Watch it

CHARLIE BROOKER

I wouldn't. I'd seal all the role-playing games in the world in a huge iron ball and fire them into the sun.

Wit: 20
Pointy hats: Nah
Beards: Nope
Iron balls: 1

ANDREW WRIGHT

I'd be a cleric, because I love their ability to use combinations of spells and weapons. I also love to worship the Sun God

Strength: 10
Intelligence: 15
Dexterity: 5
Tan: 20

KEITH PULLIN

I'd be a 15th level dark pixie, because of their ability to merge wisdom and magic.

Wisdom: 20
Magic: 20
Level: 15
Height: 0

ADAM PHILLIPS

A warrior of course. Why? Have you seen my physique?

Strength: 20
Intelligence: What's that then?
Sword: 20inches
Corpses: 9,996

PHIL WAND

Master and omnipotent overseer of the latest online RPG. No particular reason.

Intelligence: 21
Networkable PCs: 6
Connection: T1 thanks
Real-world acquaintances: 0

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Origination Elements 0171 323 0022
Printed in England by ET Heron
Distribution Seymour Distribution

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WIN! Name the main character in *Thief II: The Metal Age*. Send entries on the back of a postcard to: I've read the small print, *PC ZONE* (87), 19 Bolsover Street, London W1P 7HJ by Thursday 10 February. Winner and prize announced same place next issue.

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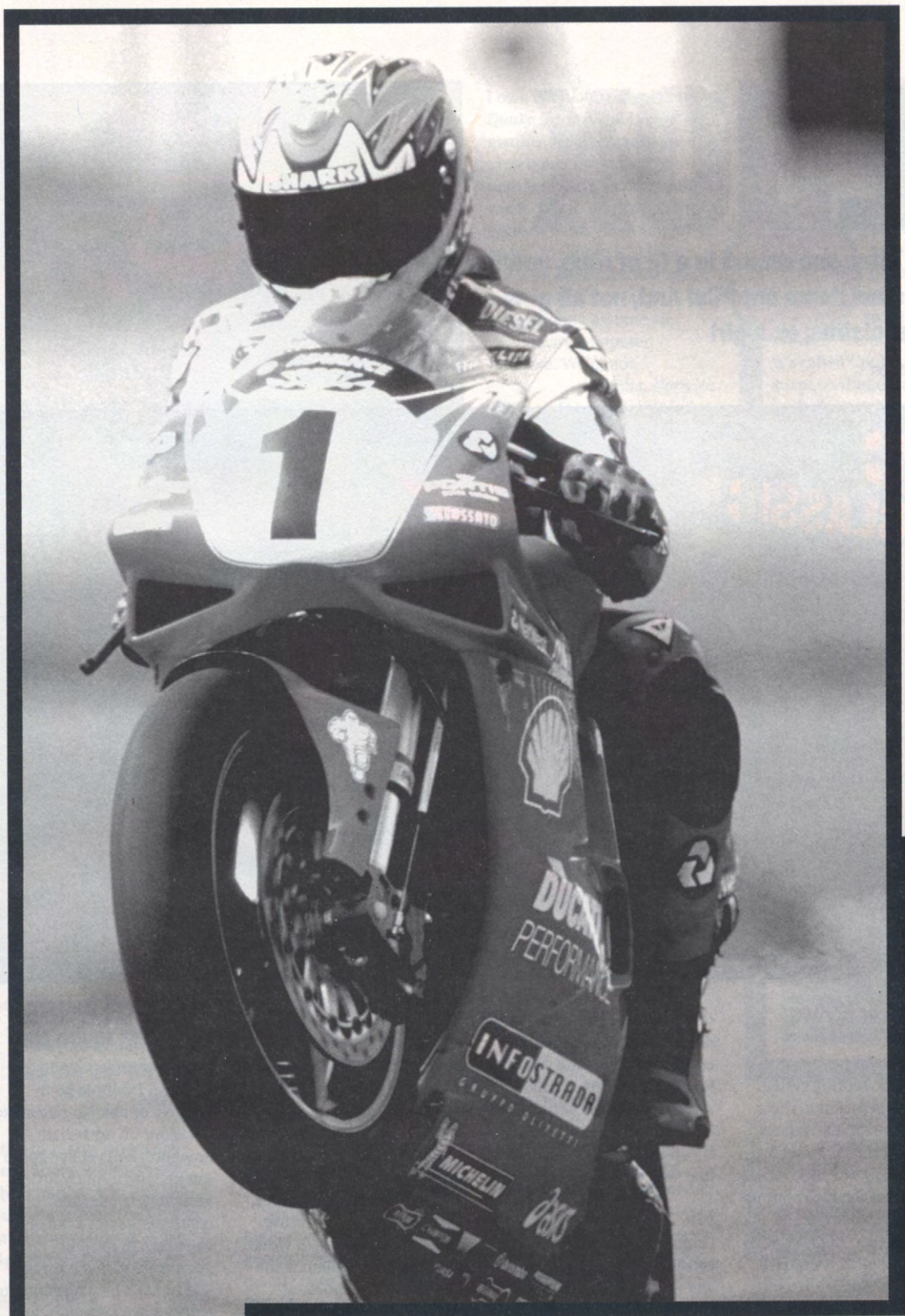

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MAILBOX

"Damn the BBFC" cites one reader in a fit of rage, another reader encourages us to slow down our PCs! And, not all girls are totally computer illiterate, claims, er, a girl

ANSWERED BY Chris Anderson

CONTACT INFO

Write to us, and if your letter is selected as Letter of the Month we'll send you a prize.

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EMAIL letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk

CHAT FORUM If you've got something pressing to say, check out the 'lively' chat forum on our website. Point your browser at **www.pczone.co.uk** for further info.

"Cheesy sci-fi settings are in the grand tradition of gaming, so is it wrong to pay homage to our heritage?"

MATTHEW OF HALESOWEN HAS NO PROBLEM WITH FANTASY

***Half-Life* is one of the few games actually entitled to the new *PCZONE* Classic award.**

SUPER PRIZES TO BE WON

For the next few issues of *PC ZONE*, we will be giving away a Microsoft IntelliMouse to everyone who gets a letter printed in Mailbox. These digital rodents are perfect for 3D shooters and games that require a quick and precise response from your pointing device – you can even use them with Windows 98 if you really want to. So get your writing skates on and send us your literary masterpieces. We promise not to be rude when we reply to them. Well, not much.

You too can own a Microsoft IntelliMouse. Simply send a vaguely intelligent/interesting letter to Mailbox and, if it gets printed, we'll send you one.

SETTLING THE SCORE

I think that the new 'Benchmark' scoring system works a gem now that there are so many top-end games arriving on the PC scene. It also made my obsessive friend James Reichelt shut up about how *Quake II* is the best game ever. At last justice has been done and *Quake II* has been bumped down into a worthy, yet honourable, fourth place. It also seems to bring into the limelight the new, dazzling games and puts them into the charts, even if it's just for a month or two. Although, I would advise *PC ZONE* readers to take the reviewers score as an opinion and nothing else as they're going to have to be damn good to get Classic status. Great work though – change is definitely good in small doses!

Chris Peacey, Cheltenham

Glad you like our new scoring system. Reader support for this so far has been excellent, although there have been a few dissenting voices. Please continue to give me your feedback on this. Drop me an email or send your letters to the usual address if you feel strongly about it one way or the other.

HE'S TIRED

I enjoy your mag, but find the constant carping about sci-fi and fantasy settings in games is becoming rather tiresome. What started out as a fair point worthy of discussion, seems to have become an obsession with some of your writers – hardly a healthy state of affairs when readers are seeking impartial advice.

Cheesy sci-fi settings are in the grand tradition of video gaming, so is it wrong to pay homage to our heritage? As for fantasy, isn't it the case that *Lord Of The Rings* is the nation's favourite book?

It's never cool to throw your hat in with populist culture, and the use of realistic settings may have been under-exploited, but do we really want to replace *Pacman* with an anti-depressant, pill-guzzling Vietnam vet, haunted by the ghosts of war?

Matthew, Halesowen

Charlie and Steve's answer to your last question would undoubtedly be yes, but we agree that fantasy does have its place in video games. The problem is the balance at the moment swings overwhelmingly in favour of fantasy and sci-fi games. We would like to see a little more realism to redress the balance. I will talk to Charlie and Steve about their "constant carping". I hope you don't mind if I give them your address, so they can "discuss" it with you in person.

HELL AND DAMNATION

Damn the BBFC. I hate them and here's why. A few weeks ago I tried to buy *GTA 2*, only to be told that I couldn't buy it because it had an 18 certificate and I am only 17. I couldn't believe it. I live by myself, cook for myself and decide if I want to go to lectures or not. No-one makes decisions on my behalf anymore, and yet I've got to put up with a spotty little gimp telling me what computer games I can or can't buy. In the end I just got a mate to buy it for me.

I've been playing computer games since I was five, and during that time I've played all the so-called controversial games. I played *Carmaggedon* for months on end, but never felt the urge to hop in an armour-plated car and mow down pedestrians. I also played the original *GTA* for ages, but don't want to steal a car or kill policemen for the simple reason that I know these things are wrong. I know the difference between right and wrong, and I don't think computer games should be blamed for society's failings. It's like the Americans trying to blame *Quake* for teaching kids how

It's official, *Carmageddon 2* does not make you want to jump in a car and kill people (or dogs)!

to shoot when Grandpa says: "Look Tommy, this is my Colt .45, see if you can hit that bottle over there." I'm 18 in two weeks, so it's not an issue for me anymore, but I still think it's wrong

Peter Clarke, Dundee

While it's true the BBFC can be a little heavy-handed at times, such regulations have to be in place to protect minors from material that may be unsuitable for them. This policy sometimes has unfortunate repercussions on people like yourself and I can understand why you feel the system is unfair. However, generally we feel BBFC certificates are spot-on, as are those of ELSPA (the industry's own self-regulatory body), but if this changes you can be sure we will be the first to start complaining. A lot. Speaking of which...

A COMPLAINT

I have been reading your magazine for a few months now and I can't believe the amount of complaints that people send in. They complain about multiplayer games, patches, not having a good enough PC to play new games, how games are getting easier, etc. I don't know why people can't just enjoy playing computer games and stop moaning. Alternatively, stop playing games on the computer.

Tom Barber, Ceredigion

I would like to complain about this letter, which complains about people complaining. Feel free to write back complaining about Editors complaining too much about... Oh the fun we will have...

YOU'VE BEEN TOLD

Having been an avid PC gamer for at least five years, it came as quite a surprise to find out that I'm in a minority. First of all, I'm a female gamer, something the male population seems to have a problem with for various reasons. Figures have indicated that only one per cent of women play games and even less are actually good at playing them. I found this amazing, along with the figure quoted by a survey that said the average game-player was in their early 20s – I'm 13.

An article in your magazine suggested various games women could play – mainly puzzle games as it turned out. I'm the complete opposite to this and much prefer gore and violence. I own *Half-Life*, *Kingpin* and *Quake III*. At school, boys assume (wrongly so) that myself and other girls know nothing about how computers work. This is another myth, because I can pull a computer apart, add more RAM and put it all back together again. The moral of this tale is simple: don't assume all women are computer illiterate. We're not.

Jenna, Norwich

Good for you Jenna. Because of the image videogaming has in the eyes of Joe Public (ie we are all supposedly geeky male adolescents), people assume girls are not interested in videogames. This erroneous preconception is changing rapidly, particularly with the advent of online gaming, which is attracting a large proportion of female participants. Who knows, some day soon *PC ZONE*'s female readership might be on the increase (it would be nice to get it higher than two per cent). Ah, we can but hope.

LOVE ME, LOVE MY LAN

I would like to point out a seemingly overlooked part of multiplayer gaming – the LAN. Games like *Team Fortress Classic* and *Quake CTF* are amazing over the Internet but, importantly, teams never really play as teams. With a LAN (in an office or school for instance) you can hear your fellow team mates curse and swear, and you can plot your strategies directly with them.

Future team multiplayer games will also suffer the problem of disorganised teamplay and I strongly advise anyone who has several computers in the house to link them up with a network card.

Via email

LAN gaming is not necessarily over-looked, it simply isn't an option for many people (how many people do you know who can afford their own LAN at home?). We believe online gaming is the way forward, and as faster connections become available and direct speech devices become the norm, you will soon be able to replicate the LAN experience over the Internet with people from all over the world, which is, of course, a very, very good thing.

"I played *Carmaggedon* for months on end, but never felt the urge to hop in an armour-plated car and mow down pedestrians"

PETER CLARKE, DOESN'T BELIEVE COMPUTER GAMES WILL TURN HIM INTO A LAW BREAKER

LAN gaming beats online gaming hands down for speed, but not for too much longer.

LETTER OF THE MONTH

GO SLOW

GOODIES WINNER!

I love your magazine and I've never missed an issue. Just recently I've noticed that you've been having problems running old games on your new PCs because they're *too* fast. I had the same problem and used to howl in dismay as the players in *SWOS* zipped around at 100mph and finished a game in less than a minute.

Well, after months of searching I found a cure – it's called CpuLower and you can download it from **http://village.flashnet.it/users/pa2059/cpulower.zip**

It slows down your processor, which means you can play all those old classics as slow or as fast as you like. Thought you might like to know.

Pagan, via email

With processor technology advancing at the speed of light, there will be more and more games that run too fast on very high-end PCs. Your handy tip will go a long way to solving the problem, and as an added bonus, you win the highly coveted *PC ZONE* goodies bag. Coo!

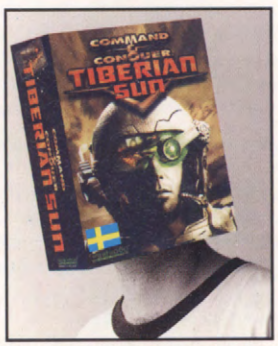
Nostalgic RPG fans can finally play *Ultima 7* at a normal speed with the help of CpuLower.

BOXING CHARLIE

Please find enclosed a large *Tiberian Sun* box to stick on Charlie Brooker's head. Why? Because his comment about boxes being too big a couple of issues ago is just total cack. The reason boxes are so big is so that companies can actually fit in multi-language instruction manuals.

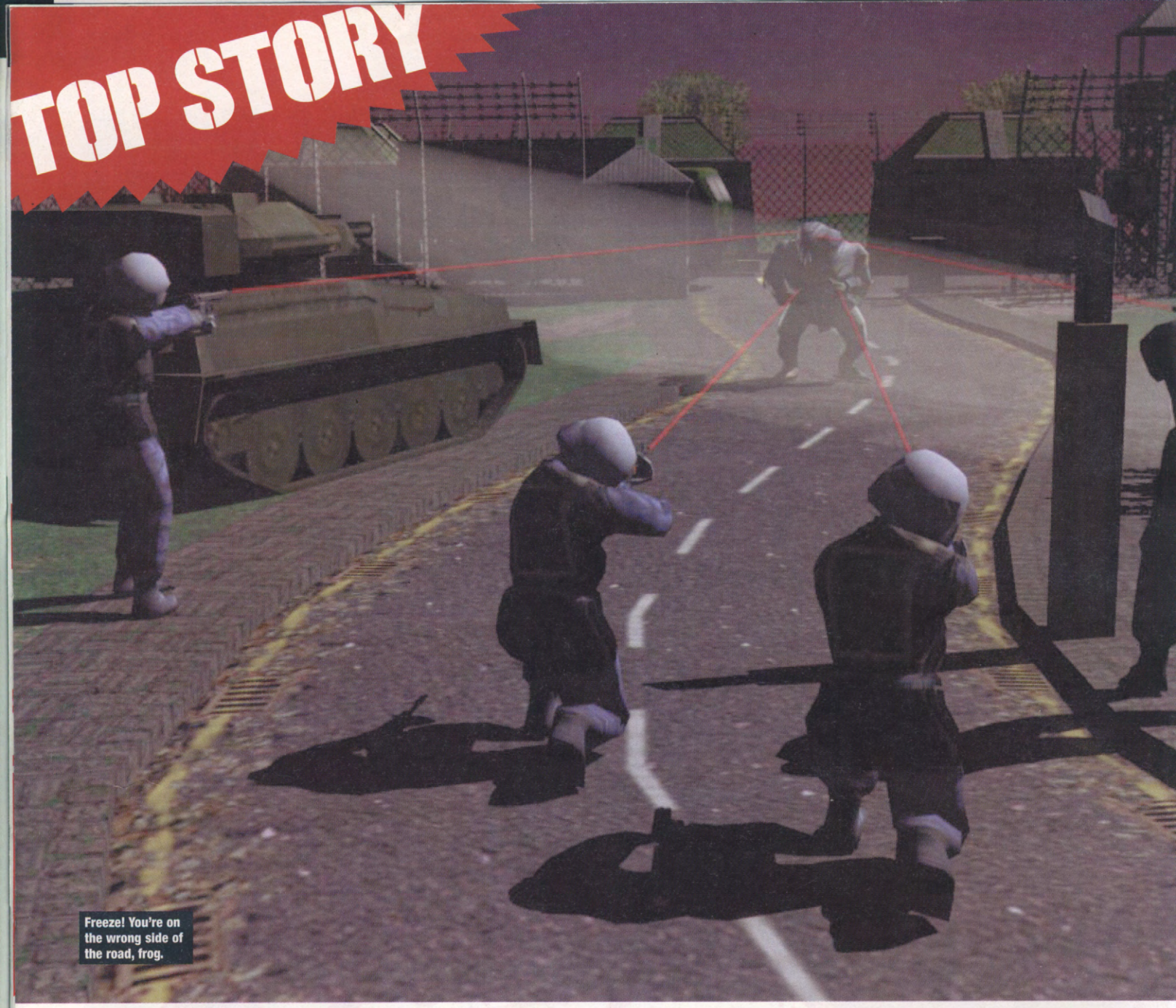
Boris Wade (a Swedish gamer), Somerset

Erm, OK, whatever you say Boris. We don't agree with you, but we're quite happy to stick a box on Charlie's head.



Charlie tries the *Tiberian Sun* box on for size. Nice fit, eh?

TOP STORY



Freeze! You're on the wrong side of the road, frog.

MOVE OVER *X-COM*, THE SAURANS HAVE LANDED...

THE DREAMLAND CHRONICLES: FREEDOM RIDGE

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER Mythos Games
PUBLISHER Virgin Interactive
EXPECTED RELEASE DATE November 2000

IN SUMMARY

A turn-based strategy game set in the near future. Lizard-like aliens have taken over the world and it's up to you and your resistance fighters to claim back the planet by locating weapons, building up resources and battling it out in awesome 3D tactical combat.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

It's being developed by the legendary creators of *X-COM* and features first- or third-person viewpoints, a fully-rendered landscape, semi-random tactical maps and a resource management level to tie it all together.

Is there life after *X-COM*? Mythos, the developers, seem to think so – and that's why they're working on another turn-based effort with super-realistic 3D combat...

CLOSING THE *X-COM* FILES Andrew Wright

Lizard graffiti artists run for cover...

Up a bit, left a bit, fire.

With these kinds of vehicles crashing, who needs bumper cars?

Just get over the wire, past the tank and nick the chopper. No problem, men, I'll just wait here for you...

Little Billy was playing with his chemistry set in the kitchen when he remembered that *The Dreamland Chronicles* used fully destructible terrain...

The Saurans even have their very own version of the Budweiser ad.

Nip back in time a bit, to 1988. That was the year that Essex-based developers Mythos released one of the first tactical combat games – *Laser Squad*. The follow-up, originally intended to be *Laser Squad 2*, was given a new strategic management layer to link the tactical scenarios together and an inventive sci-fi storyline based around the ever-popular alien invasion of earth. It was renamed *UFO: Enemy Unknown* – the rest is history.

With the *X-COM* mantle passed on to others, Mythos is working on *The Dreamland Chronicles: Freedom Ridge*, another alien epic. Its 3D rendered graphics, unrestricted movement system and first-person viewpoint look likely to take turn-based strategy gaming closer to perfection.

"It's far more than just *X-COM* in 3D," says Mythos Games' Julian Gollop. "For starters, the storyline is fundamentally different."

"Basically, a lizard-like alien race called the Saurans have taken over earth and laid waste to much of the planet," Julian continues. "You lead a small band of resistance engaged in what at first seems a hopeless struggle against the powerful aliens. Until, that is, you detect strange signals coming from the old, top-secret research base in Nevada known as Area 51 and code-named 'Dreamland'."

"Its 3D rendered graphics, unrestricted movement system and first-person viewpoint look likely to take turn-based strategy gaming closer to perfection"

The game shares *X-COM's* multi-level gameplay where players switch from strategic management on a world scale to tactical combat at squad level. However, it's the new turn-based 3D combat system that makes this title so exciting.

You and your resistance fighters will be able to reclaim all kinds of weapons, from M16 rifles to F16 jets, Humvees and tanks, as well as captured Sauran weapons. Weapons will be aimed with the mouse, although the results are calculated rather than based on player skill. The size of the on-screen aiming reticule will reflect the hit chance, taking into account things such as weapon type, the soldier's ability, morale and wounds.

You'll be able to watch the action from a first-person, third-person or an independent camera viewpoint, zoom in and out, and even see inside buildings. The basic unit will be the individual soldier, but some will be able to drive cars, or operate fighting vehicles and their mounted weapons.

The Dreamland Chronicles won't use hexes or squares to dictate unit positions. Unrestricted movement is the key and the game will look and feel more like *Half-Life* than *Incubation* or earlier *X-COM* titles where units move on a square grid. Each tactical map will be generated at run-time from randomly-oriented tiled sections. Buildings, vehicles and terrain are all destructible, so you'll be able to blast your way through all obstacles.

Mythos is going for a minimal user interface: a narrow information bar along the bottom and a series of pop-up menus rather than page after page of icons. You'll be able to move soldiers using the arrow keys and aim or look around with the mouse.

The Dreamland Chronicles is more than just a strategy game and there's a complicated but fairly linear plot to uncover while you plan the Saurans' base-by-base destruction. There are plenty of surprises, including contact with two other alien races and some awesome weapons that make nukes look like rubber bullets. In short, *The Dreamland Chronicles* sounds like the shot-in-the-arm that strategy gamers have been waiting for. PCZ

TOP STORY

Call Of Cthulhu is set in the 1920s, when a large part of the world remained unexplored, making the discovery of an ancient alien race relatively plausible.

CONFRONT YOUR DEMONS IN...

CALL OF CTHULHU: DARK CORNERS OF THE EARTH

HP Lovecraft was responsible for some of the best horror fiction of the last century. Now his warped creations are being brought to the PC

IN HIS OWN DARK CORNER Paul Mallinson

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER Headfirst
PUBLISHER TBA
EXPECTED RELEASE DATE Autumn 2001
WEBSITE www.headfirst.co.uk

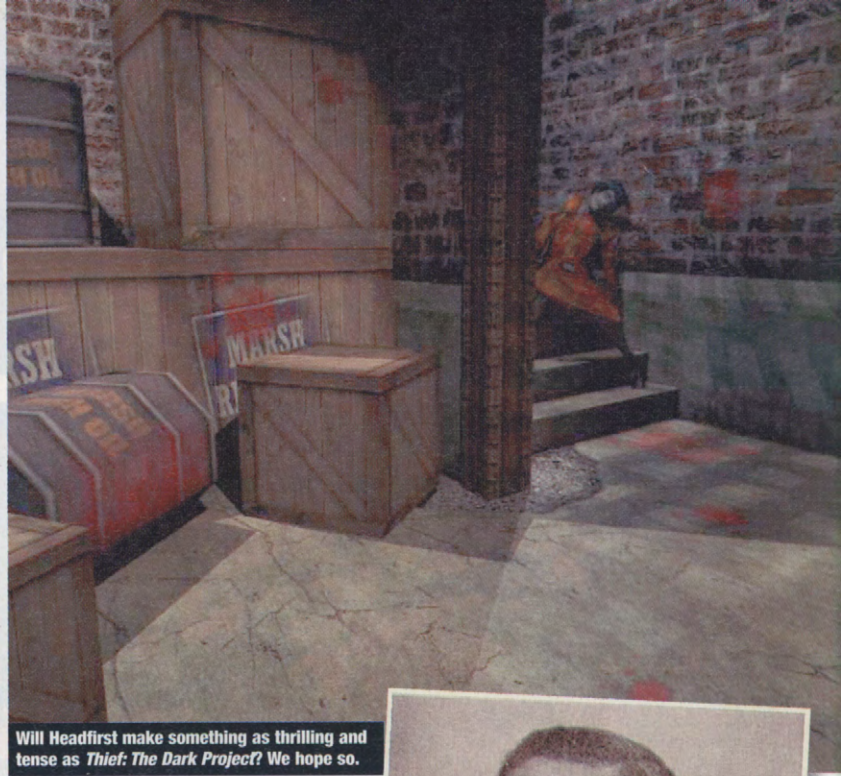
IN SUMMARY

Horror role-playing based on the dark and twisted world of HP Lovecraft. A mix of action and adventure, with plenty of scares to boot.

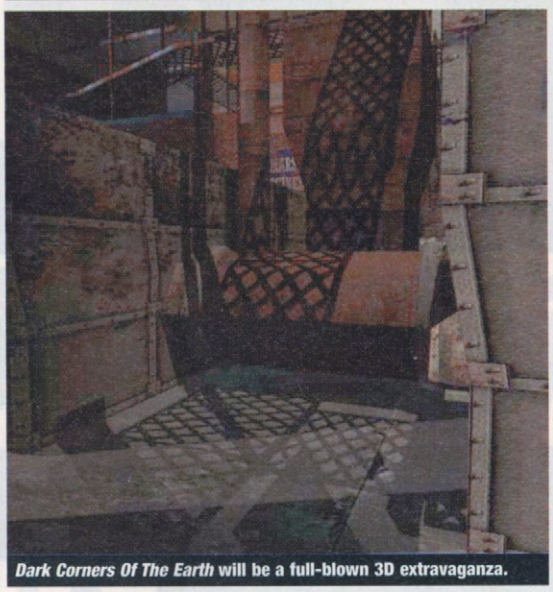
WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

Lovecraft fans will need little persuading, but the rest might want to hold out to see exactly how the action/RPG mix balances out.

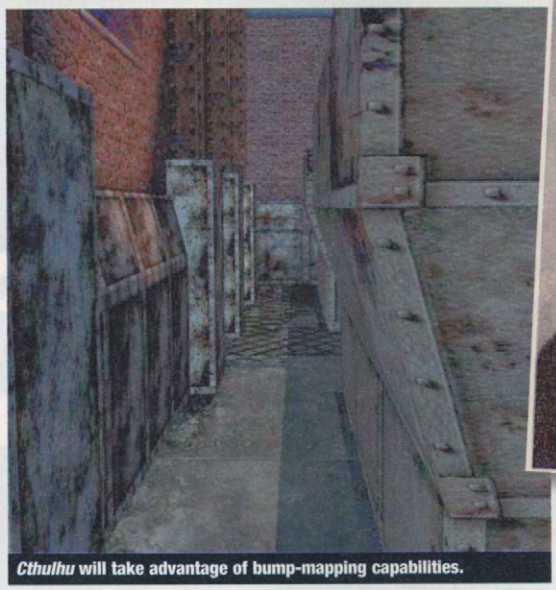
At the moment only two monsters have been designed, expect plenty more to come.



Will Headfirst make something as thrilling and tense as *Thief: The Dark Project*? We hope so.



Dark Corners Of The Earth will be a full-blown 3D extravaganza.



Cthulhu will take advantage of bump-mapping capabilities.

HP Lovecraft (1890-1937) is probably best known as a writer of weird fiction, but some believe his vast amounts of correspondence to be his greatest accomplishment.

When Howard Philips Lovecraft wrote the majority of his books in the 1920s and '30s no one took much notice. When he died in 1937, aged 47, his writings were considered 'cult' material and his stature began to grow. Now he is generally recognised as *the* major American horror-story writer of the 20th century. It is from Lovecraft's chilling tales that we were given the Necronomicon and Shub-Niggurath, and several other staples of modern horror. His ideas have been adapted into films and TV shows, and are now set to be fashioned into a computer game.

Headfirst Productions, the UK-based development team currently working on *Simon The Sorcerer 3D* (previewed on page 48), have obtained a licence from board game manufacturer Chaosium to make a game based on its *Call Of Cthulhu* (pronounced Cuh-thoo-loo) table-top RPG.

"Our game won't be too closely linked to the RPG though," explains *Cthulhu* designer Andrew Brazier. "Those pen-and-paper games never translate very well – you usually end up with loads of stats and numbers." One thing Headfirst is planning to take from the table-top original, though, is the 'sanity' rating – a device that monitors your wellbeing and erodes as you come across scary or hideous situations. So over time you'll begin to hear voices inside your head if you don't take care of yourself, just like in real life.

Having already licensed NDL's *NetImmersive* 3D engine to create *Simon The Sorcerer 3D*, Headfirst decided to use it to make *Call Of Cthulhu* as well. Andrew says: "*NetImmersive* is a very flexible third-party engine. Using that instead of developing our own gives us more time to concentrate on the game rather than constantly fighting to keep our engine competitive. They do all that for us. Having said that, we're also incorporating our own code, like the advanced physics engine, which isn't in *Simon The Sorcerer 3D*."

Regardless of the engine politics, early peeks seem favourable and *Cthulhu* appears suitably dark. But how scary will this game be? Will it measure up to the hair-prickling suspense of something like *System Shock 2*?

"We're thinking of including a free, clean pair of skids with each copy," boasts Andrew. "We will really be concentrating hard to make it as scary as possible by using dramatic graphics and locations, as well as tailoring the music and sound effects to suit the action."

"We are thinking of including a free, clean pair of skids with each copy. We will be concentrating hard to make it as scary as possible by using dramatic graphics"

Apparently Andrew and his team spent a lot of time watching horror films in the build-up to *Cthulhu*'s green light (no doubt including Stuart Gordon's Lovecraft-based *From Beyond*, which is worth checking out if you've never seen it), and even consulted a psychologist to ensure they capture the madness inherent in much of Lovecraft's writing. As for the gameplay, co-operative, story-based multiplay, straight-forward deathmatch, and six huge single-player stories will provide the backbone of the game, to keep the scares flowing.

At this stage in time *Call Of Cthulhu: Dark Corners Of The Earth* is still a way off. Headfirst estimates an autumn 2001 release for the game when it's eventually picked up by a publisher. Until then, Lovecraft followers should watch out for updates in future issues of *PC ZONE*.

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NEWS

THE MONTH OF THE BEARD

NEWS EDITOR Richie Shoemaker

Last month you'll have noticed two things: 1) that you were still alive and that the promised end of the world was just a crank call; 2) that for one month only, *PC ZONE* was a little bit different. Thankfully, for us at least, normal service has resumed. Sort of.

Traditionally a slow month for new releases, January 2000 has mirrored January 1999, in that it is the month of the role-playing game, which I shall rename 'The Month Of The Beard'. Last year saw *Baldur's Gate* roll its way to the top of the charts, this issue we review *Final Fantasy VIII*, *Odium*, *Septerra Core*, (which are all relatively free of facial hair) and Westwood's demi-RPG *Nox* – which is so hairy it makes Tom Selleck look like Duncan Goodhew.

Getting away from the beard-related stuff for a moment, talk around the office recently has centred on a particularly beautiful game. I talk, of course, about *Championship Manager 99/00*, which I have become so addicted to that re-entering real life in the morning, after just three hours sleep, has become a huge chore. Even worse is that in reality my team Pompey have about as much chance as staying in Division 1 as Graham Taylor has of staying in the Premiership.

With Steve Hill's beloved Chester City in similar strife in Division 3, it's no wonder we have to turn to *CM99/00* from time to time. Interestingly, those in the office who don't play *CM99/00*, are those whose teams always do well (by 'well', I mean 'not relegated'): Dave's beloved Coventry, Mallo's Leicester and Chis' Chelsea. Maybe if their teams were sitting at the foot of the Premiership, they would finally understand. We live in hope.

Anyway, it was just a thought. You can go back to your dungeons and your pointy hats now. I've got sleep to catch up on . Does anyone have any potions that might help?

THE PCZONE CHARTS

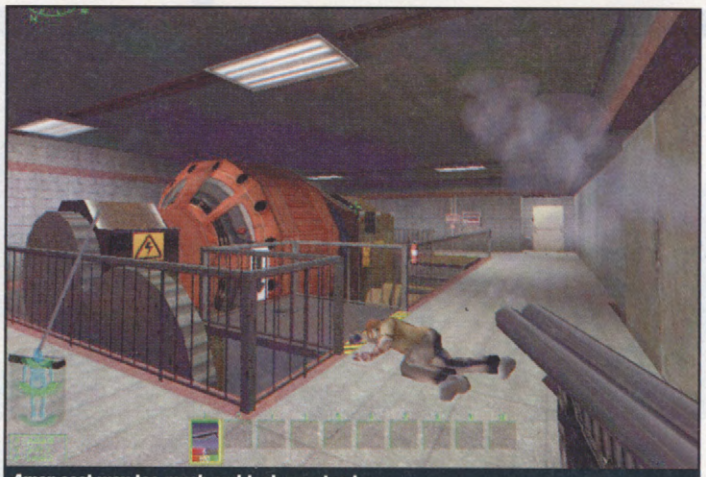
What's in, out, up and down

P.24

TECH-HEAD

It's 3dfx casting yet more Voodoo magic with new cards on the way

P.26



***Amen* cost way too much and took way too long.**

AMEN CANNED, TA GOES ON

Cavedog's promising first-person shooter *Amen: The Awakening* has been put out of its misery and thrown in the communal recycle bin, with the unsettled team having steadily gone over budget and fallen behind schedule. Two years in the making, the ambitious game – said to rival *Half-Life* – was only 60 per cent complete when the decision was made to pull the plug on the project last month.

Bad news for first-person shooter fans then, but good for those of real-time strategy, with many of *Amen*'s team now working on *The Iron Plague* – the first add-on for *Total Annihilation: Kingdoms*. The expansion disc speeds up the original game and adds The Creon – a new, scientific-lead race, 25 single-player missions, 25 multiplayer maps and a new online multiplayer feature called The Darien Crusades, a cooperative game played over dozens of maps in the same vein as *TA*'s Galactic War.

Interestingly, Cavedog says that *Amen*'s highly developed 3D engine will not go to waste, prompting rumours that *Total Annihilation 2*, which is in development, will be a totally three-dimensional real-time strategy game. When it will see the light of day is anyone's guess, but *The Iron Plague* will be with us next month. In the meantime, new units for both *TA* and *TA: Kingdoms* are still to be released – keep checking at **www.cavedog.com**

The Creon, from *Iron Plague*, favour science over magic.

CM4 SECRETS & LIES

People got a little over-excited last month when we included a short piece on *Championship Manager 4*, the sure-to-be sequel to the world's favourite football management game, that we speculatively quoted as being down for a September release. In actual fact, developers Sports Interactive has barely had time to get over the success of *CM99/00* to worry about the next version of the game. It didn't help matters that both themselves and publishers Eidos were 'swamped' with calls on the matter. Officially, *CM4* doesn't exist. Unofficially, it does and is currently swimming around the heads of the developers. When it eventually plops out, we'll let you know. Sorry.

We're too addicted to *CM99/00* to worry about *CM4*.

ONLINE DIARY
ADSL – what will it cost?

P.30

MAN WHO KNOWS
The very latest industry gossip

P.38

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO....?
Three games that should've been here by now

P.35

HOTSHOTS
Big games and even bigger pictures

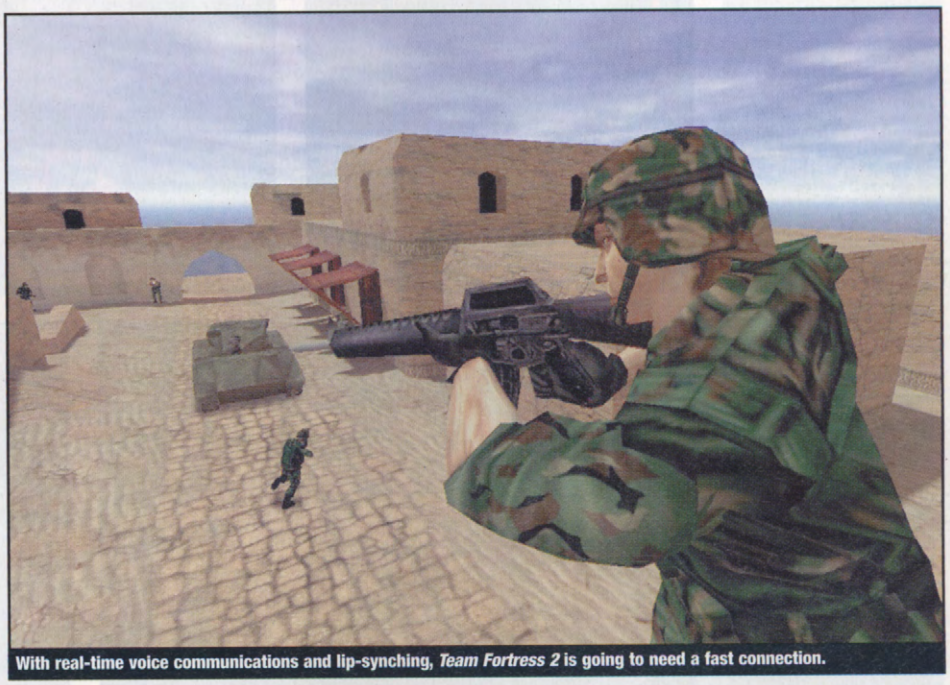
P.40

POWER TO THE PLAYERS

Online gaming is to get its biggest boost yet, as two key players join forces to fight lag

Shame you can't fly this in the game

POWERPLAY
Look forward to seeing this logo on the box of next year's games.


With real-time voice communications and lip-synching, *Team Fortress 2* is going to need a fast connection.

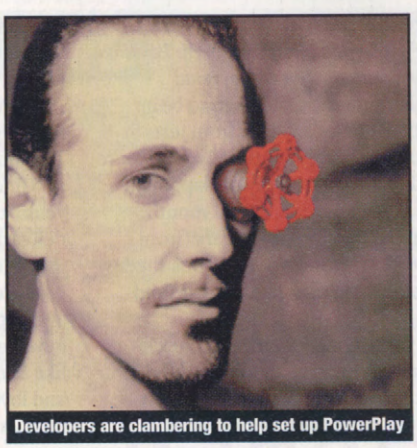
It's certain to bring about one of the biggest advances in online gaming ever, yet you've probably never heard of it. Cisco Systems, the company whose products link 80 per cent of the Internet's global infrastructure, and Valve Software, trophy-laden creators of *Half-Life*, have come together in a collaboration known as PowerPlay.

Designed to enhance the way you game online, PowerPlay is a set of new communications protocols and standards designed to reduce lag, eliminate packet loss, and generally speed up rates of transmission. The end result should be a vastly improved quality of gameplay, more akin to a local area network (LAN) than to the Internet. And you'll want it, because users who have PowerPlay enabled on their system will experience none of the jumpiness, jerkiness and general slowdown normally associated with online gaming.

With the co-operation of a major and as yet unnamed ISP, the new system is due to hit America within the next few months; a no-obligation, 30-day free trial should ensure healthy rates of subscription. At the same time, Valve will release a special PowerPlay improved version of *Team Fortress Classic* to emphasise the whole concept, and other prominent developers, including Looking Glass *(System Shock)*, Bioware *(Baldur's Gate)*, Epic *(Unreal Tournament)*, Outrage *(Descent)* and Relic *(Homeworld)*, will also release a number of specially adapted titles.

"There are a lot of opportunities available to extend the Internet in order to be able to handle games and entertainment better," says Gabe Newell of Valve Software. "Giving gamers a free copy of PowerPlay-enhanced *Team Fortress* and a free month on the PowerPlay service will let them see the progress we've made so far."

The word is *TF2* has slipped to a Christmas release


Developers are clambering to help set up PowerPlay

None of this could work without the help of Cisco, the people who power more than three quarters of the world's Internet routers and dial-up gateways. "Cisco has a tremendous opportunity to improve a gamer's dial-up connection. But to achieve maximum improvement, the game itself, the network it is deployed on and the dial-up connection have to be optimised," says Gabe.

The bad news is that European gamers are unlikely to experience the joys of the new system until PowerPlay 2.0 is released much later in the year, if not early next year. The second wave will benefit from a much broader participation and from deployment of an open standards initiative. What that means is that the key ideas and core code behind PowerPlay will become public domain – in simpler terms, the technology will be available to any developer or manufacturer who wants to incorporate it into its product.

In the same way you might watch Dolby Digital movies on DVD or play games with a Force Feedback joystick, you'll soon be able to buy PowerPlay modems and dial into PowerPlay service providers. Combine this with upcoming broadband communications technology, such as Cable and ADSL, and the future of online gaming is suddenly much clearer than ever before.

SHORTS

CODENAME DIRT

Cyan, creators of the groundbreaking, best-selling and jaw-achingly boring slideshow games *Myst* and *Riven*, has announced their next project as *Mudpie*. Apparently, in secret isolation, the game has been in development for years. Apart from that, nothing is really known about the game, if it is a game, outside of the team's Washington HQ. When we hear something more exciting and substantial, we'll fill you in, OK?

JURASSIC SID

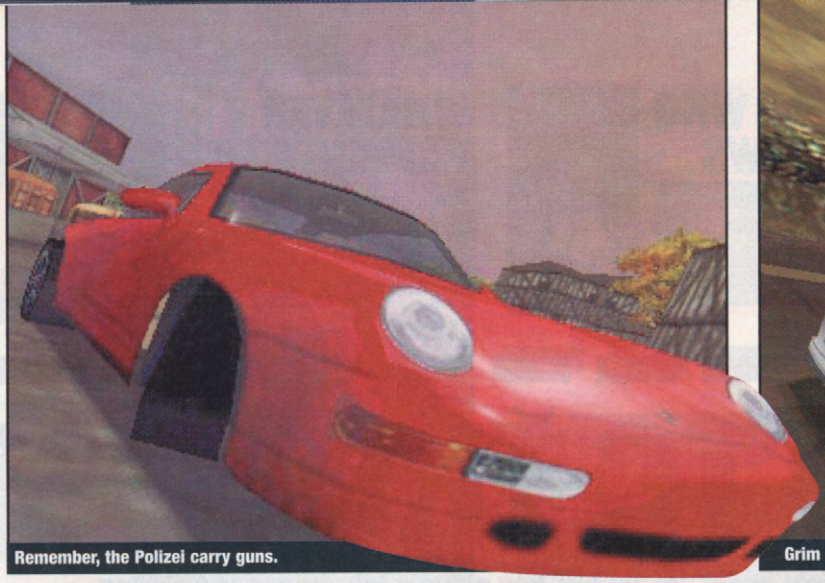
Sid Meier and his Firaxis team, fresh from completing *Antietnam*, are striding ahead with their as-yet unnamed dinosaur game. Taking in the scope of *Civilization* and *SimCity*, the game is all about the survival of the fittest as players strive to subdue other species in a fight for resources. As yet we don't know if the game will be real-time or fully 3D, but we are quite sure it'll be worth the wait. Keep up to date at **www.firaxis.com/dinosaurs/**

MUD IN YOUR RACE

The utterly pointless Florida 'sport' of *Swamp Buggy Racing* (the driving equivalent of running knee-deep in water) is being brought to the PC thanks to WizardWorks. Officially endorsed by NASRA (don't ask), the game features just two tracks and no multiplayer options. Thankfully, a UK release is unlikely. But if it does slip quietly onto local shelves, as so often happens with WizardWorks' games, don't expect to pay more than a tenner.

ROUGH GUIDE TO...

Having already released a steady stream of adventure games set in and named after wondrous locations such as *China*, *Egypt*, *Versailles* and *Atlantis*, Cryo Interactive plans to continue its circumnavigation of the world with *Pompeii*, *Atlantis II* and *Venice* – all of which should be available right about now.



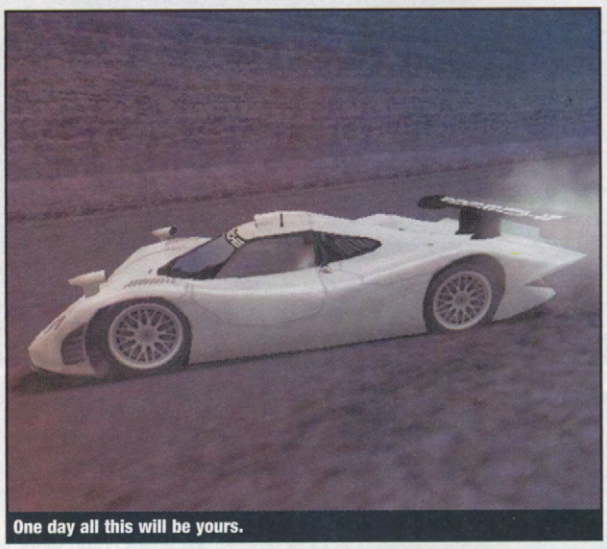
Remember, the Polizei carry guns.

Grim skies over post-war Germany.

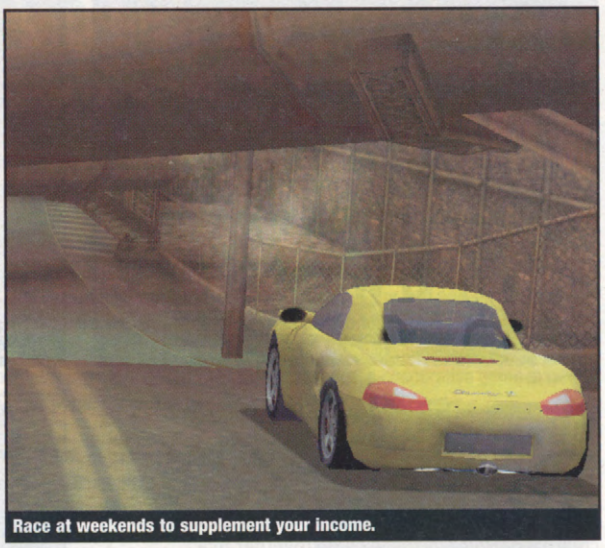
Fun fun fun on the autobahn.

Tracks will offer multiple routes.

Deliver the cars on time to get a promotion.



One day all this will be yours.



Race at weekends to supplement your income.

PORSCHE SPICE

Need For Speed hits fifth gear

The fifth in the *Need For Speed* series is all about Porsches, as is evident by the game's full title: *Need For Speed: Porsche 2000*. You'll notice, as with the last *NFS* game, *Road Challenge*, that sequential numbers have ceased to be an issue in the series, which is a shame because apart from just modelling cars from the one manufacturer, this time around there are a number of new features that make it worthy of slapping a big red '5' on the box when the game arrives late next month.

Apart from the usual race modes and a range of cars (from the '48 Roadster to the latest 966 Turbo model) in various shades, *Porsche 2000* is taking the venerable *Speed* series into the land of role-playing.

Choosing the Career Mode, you start the game as a Porsche test driver in 1948 and as well as driving new models around a test track, you have to deliver cars from the plant to their new owners. Do well and a promotion to drive ever more valuable and powerful cars to their prospective buyers is yours. Scratch the paintwork however, and it's back to mine-clearing duty among the ruins of Berlin.

To supplement your income, you can buy yourself (in Porsche terms) a banger and go racing at weekends, *Gran Turismo*-style. The more races you win, the better the car you can afford to drive.

Time doesn't stand still in *Porsche 2000* either and as the years roll by, new models of Porsche hit the streets. If you keep delivering cars on time, you'll find you can retain your job well into your frail dotage as the millennium looms ever nearer.

Of course, buying and selling parts, tinkering with spanners, and cop evasion will feature heavily in the game, as will a new 'persistent economy' – making *Porsche 2000* sound more like *Elite* on wheels than the no-brain racer we've come to know and love. However, maybe we should take a closer look at this next issue. Yes, let's.

Geoff helps someone to the ground.

Stealing has never been so much fun.

Laser trip switches are the least of your worries.

THIEF – THE MODERN AGE

The act of killing in games is nothing new, but stealing is a relatively new phenomenon, which, as yet, has failed to stoke the tabloid fires. A sure-fire way to keep the mainstream press away from any potential controversy, is to take a game – where breaking the law is central to success – and dress it up to be funny. Then, if people are offended, you deride them for their lack of a sense of humour. It worked for *Carmageddon*. It worked for *GTA*. It might work for *Picassio*.

Developed by Promethean Designs (of *Powerboat Racer* infamy), *Picassio* can be likened to a more modern-day reworking of *Thief: The Dark Project*. The aim is to steal various artworks from the World's top galleries, using hi-tech equipment and plenty of cunning. Escape routes must be planned, timings, er… timed, and guards avoided (or boxed about the ears and dragged into cupboards).

Although details are scarce, we imagine a cross between the aforementioned *Thief* and *Rainbow Six*, with a spot of Bond thrown in. And the humour? Brace yourself: paintings up for grabs include Munch's 'The Laugh' and Da Vinci's 'Moanalisa'. Brilliant. Let's hope they set the sequel in South London.

Another day at the beach, wish you were here...?

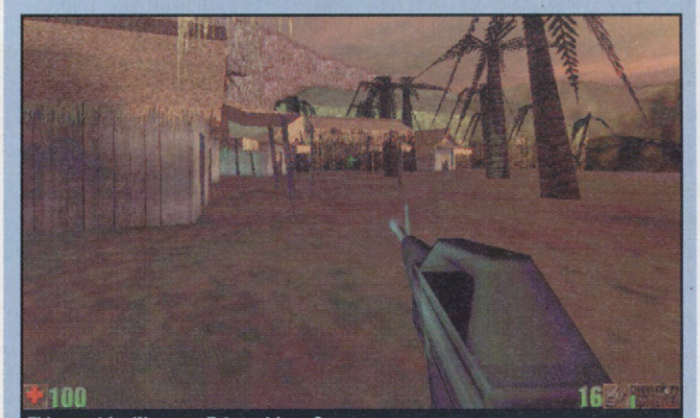
D-DAY FOR SUDDEN STRIKE

Although we never managed to get ourselves a reviewable copy this issue, we've been in close contact with the guys behind this WWII real-time strategy game since we first got wind of it a few months back. The game's German publisher CDV is still trying to pin down a deal with a UK company, and if all goes well we could have a review next issue.

In the meantime, the developers have now written a *Private Ryan*-style mission into the game, where the aim is to survive the D-Day landings and find one 'James R' and bring him back alive. With so many units on screen, it looks like being utter carnage.

WAR IS STUPID

Sandbox Studios, having hired the creator of *Marine Doom*, aims to bring the full horrors of war to the PC with an *Unreal*-powered game, currently going by the name of *Tet*. We know not where or when it's based, but the idea behind the game is to create the most visually realistic simulation of war yet, with bad tactical decisions coming from officers and confused soldiers shooting each other. Think of the first half-hour of *Saving Private Ryan* meets *Soldier Of Fortune*. Hopefully.



This must be 'Nam, so *Tet* must be...?

Lonely Hearts

- **A** pretty, black, British female, 26, happy and outgoing, curvy figure, seeks one professional, genuinely good looking, white male, 26-36, in London, for a long term relationship. Ring Voicebox 0996 368 4647
- **Adventurous,** slim, dark haired girl seeks travelling companion and guiding hand for dangerous liaisons in Egypt. Take me away for £27.99 Contact www.gameswire.com/lara
- **Adonis** No Good. Male, 40-50, down to earth, solvent, honest, gsoh, driver, ready to leave before you die Yes Call this likeminded woman now. Ring Voicebox 0996 368 3917
- **Articulate,** slim, n/s, intelligent affectionate lady, in Kent, wltm mature minded gentleman, with an understanding and romantic nature, for a long term relationship. Age 58-68. Ring Voicebox 0996 368 2020.
- **Genuine,** professional male, assertive, attractive, 30, wltm unassertive woman, for a long term, loving relationship. Ring Voicebox 0996 368 1681
- **Genuinely** handsome guy, late 40s, grey hair, blue eyes, great shape, kind, considerate, intelligent, travelled, solvent, gsoh, seeks beautiful lady, 24-38, with similar virtues. Ring Voicebox 0996 868 2337
- **Genuine** one woman man, white, 49, n/s, vgsoh, loyal, loving, kind, romantic wltm sincere one man woman for lasting friendship and relationship. Ring Voicebox 0996 368 5607
- **Genuine** white guy, down to earth, 36, slim and smartly dressed seeks female soul mate, 20-40, for long term relationship. Nationality unimportant. Ring Voicebox 0996 368 4242
- **Gino,** 6ft 3in, dark haired, looking for a girl, with good personality, who likes to have fun, go clubbing, staying in or going out. Should be a similar age. Ring Voicebox 0996 368 3058
- **Black** female, 19, 5ft 4in, looking for white male, 19-25, for long term relationship. Can make the right man happy. Ring Voicebox 0906 368 2250
- **Black** female, 23, stylish, size 16, wltm white male, aged between 23-30. Ring Voicebox 0996 368 3321
- **Black** female, 32, 5ft 7in, caring, kind, enjoys movies, wltm tall, handsome, sincere, prof white male, over 6ft, 33-38 for meaningful relationship. Ring Voicebox 0996 368 4732
- **Attractive** lady, late 30s, varied interests, looking for a kind, attractive, genuine, non smoking male, who she can get close to. No mobile telephone numbers please. Ring Voicebox 0996 368 4140
- **Attractive** single black lady, 37, wltm unattached, professional, honest, mature, white male, 37-41, n/s, for stable, 1-2-1 relationship, leading to marriage. No time wasters. SE London. Ring Voicebox 0996 368 8853
- **Attractive** woman, 47, professional, wltm professional gentleman for lasting relationship. Ring Voicebox 0996 368 2810
- **Can** anyone prove me wrong Female seeking a West Indian/Caribbean male, 45-55, well presented, intelligent and working. Ring Voicebox 0996 368 1494
- **Caribbean** female, tall, size 16, kind, affectionate, busty, seeks professional, caring, educated, white male, 25-35, for a long term relationship/marriage. Ring Voicebox 0996 368 3285
- **Caring,** white female, with warm personality, tall, size 18-20, smoker, 47, wltm tall, white guy, 40s-50s, honest, sincere with gsoh, for long lasting relationship. Heathrow area. Ring Voicebox 0996 368 3281
- **Cuddly,** black female, 27, 5ft 2in, wltm white/mixed race well established male, 29-53, who enjoys spoiling women for relationship. No time wasters or smokers. Ring Voicebox 0996 368 2303
- **Curvy** blonde, 32, seeks affectionate, broad shouldered, beefy, white male, 33-40, for lots of love, cuddles, friendship and possible romance. Ring Voicebox 0996 368 1105

gameswire.com

CHARTS

All you need to know about which games are selling by the shedload, plus the buzz on the streets – where you tell us what *you* think

***CM99/00* wins play of the month and manager of the year.**

THE Virgin megastores TOP 10

JAN	FEB	TITLE	DEVELOPER	PUBLISHER	REV SCORE
2	1	**HALF-LIFE: OPPOSING FORCE**	GEARBOX	SIERRA	85%
NE	2	PLANESCAPE: TORMENT	BLACK ISLE	INTERPLAY	87%
1	3	CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER – SEASON 99/00	SPORTS INTERACTIVE	EIDOS	92%
4	4	QUAKE III ARENA	ID SOFTWARE	ACTIVISION	89%
8	5	SWAT 3: CLOSE QUARTERS BATTLE	SIERRA STUDIOS	SIERRA	89%
6	6	AGE OF EMPIRES II: THE AGE OF KINGS	ENSEMBLE STUDIOS	MICROSOFT	90%
9	7	C&C: TIBERIAN SUN	WESTWOOD	EA	82%
RE	8	HOMEWORLD	RELIC	SIERRA	85%
RE	9	DRIVER	REFLECTIONS	GT INTERACTIVE	80%
3	10	THEME PARK WORLD	BULLFROG	EA	70%

THE ChartTrack TOP10

ELSPA

JAN	FEB	TITLE	DEVELOPER	PUBLISHER	SCORE
1	1	CHAMP MAN – SEASON 99/00	SPORTS INTERACTIVE	EIDOS	92%
3	2	AGE OF EMPIRES II: THE AGE OF KINGS	ENSEMBLE STUDIOS	MICROSOFT	90%
NE	3	PLANESCAPE: TORMENT	BLACK ISLE	INTERPLAY	87%
4	4	QUAKE III ARENA	ID SOFTWARE	ACTIVISION	89%
2	5	TOMB RAIDER: THE LAST REVELATION	CORE DESIGN	EIDOS	85%
8	6	HALF-LIFE: OPPOSING FORCE	GEARBOX	SIERRA	85%
7	7	UNREAL TOURNAMENT	EPIC	GT INTERACTIVE	90%
5	8	THEME PARK WORLD	BULLFROG	EA	70%
6	9	FIFA 2000	EA SPORTS	EA	88%
9	10	C&C: TIBERIAN SUN	WESTWOOD	EA	82%

(Compiled by Chart Track © ELSPA 2000)

COMPETITION

WIN THE ENTIRE VIRGIN TOP 10!

***PC ZONE* and Virgin have teamed up to give you the chance to win every game in the current Top 10. All you have to do to enter the draw is answer this simple question:**

Question: *What is the name of the character you play in* Half-Life: Opposing Force*?*

Just answer the above question and send it on a postcard, along with with *all* the information requested, to the address below

- *Name / Address / Postcode / Daytime phone number / Email / Job title / Company name / Age if under 18*
- *Please tell us if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers or new products from other companies*
- *Are you a current subscriber to* PC ZONE*?*

Answers on a postcard to: *PC ZONE* Chart Compo (CPCZ001A), Dennis Publishing, PO Box 154, Bradford BD1 5RZ. Closing date: Thursday 9 March

- *Terms and conditions: Winners will be notified by post. No cash alternative. Prizes not necessarily as shown. No correspondence will be entered into. The Ed's decision is final. All the other usual competition rules, conditions and restrictions apply. Capische?*

THE BUZZ ON THE STREETS

"What the…? *Planescape: Torment* above the mighty *Quake III*! What is the world coming to? Go out and buy *Quake III* now!"

Gareth Brierley, Manchester

"Looks like the PC and games companies are marking time and cashing in. Everything in the charts is a sequel or an up-date of an existing format. I just hope it picks up soon 'cos the PC market is starting to look like the PlayStation: no imagination, little effort, no risks."

Chris Howarth, Bristol

"It's ridiculous that *Quake III* is above *Unreal Tournament*. Graphics and smart lighting just doesn't do it for me – I prefer playing a game that is intelligent and has good gameplay. However, it's good to see *Championship Manager* clutching on to the number one spot – at least it isn't a bloody FPS!"

Alex Malone, Staines

"*Quake III* above *Unreal Tournament*? I wonder if this is because *UT* has been out longer, or are people buying *Quake III* because it's, well, *Quake* – despite *UT* being the better game on all accounts."

Eddie Amphlett, Huddersfield

"Ah, it seems that the '*Unreal* is better than *Quake III*' brigade are outvoted, a truly just result, or merely proof that hype outweighs quality? Whatever the reason, once the mods start rolling out properly, *Quake III* will rule the planet. Well, I hope so anyway – I spent 30 quid on the bugger!"

Rob Medlock, Peterborough

CHART COMMENT

BASED ON CHART TRACK TOP 10

Traditionally a quiet month, January saw only one new release make an impact: the bizarre role-player from Black Isle Studios, *Planescape: Torment*. It was Black Isle who last year poached the number one position with *Baldur's Gate* – maybe there's a pattern emerging here…

But *Planescape* has failed to usurp the mighty *Championship Manager 99/00* – the update to one of the best-selling games of all time. So while *Quake III* Arena and *Unreal Tournament* fought among themselves in the middle of the charts, *CM99/00* came in and leapfrogged them both, taking the Christmas number one slot and staying there to this day. Unlike Westlife, we only hope *CM* comes back next Christmas.

Richie Shoemaker

RETRO CHARTS

1 YEAR AGO...

1. Baldur's Gate *(Interplay)*
2. Half-Life *(Sierra)*
3. Tomb Raider III *(Eidos)*
4. FIFA 99 *(EA)*
5. Gangsters: Organised Crime *(Eidos)*

2 YEARS AGO...

1. Tomb Raider II *(Eidos)*
2. Quake II *(Activision)*
3. FIFA: Road To World Cup 98 *(EA)*
4. Championship Manager 97/98 *(Eidos)*
5. Grand Theft Auto *(BMG)*

5 YEARS AGO...

1. Mega Race *(Mindscape)*
2. Doom 2 *(Virgin)*
3. Creature Shock *(Virgin)*
4. Theme Park *(EA)*
5. Privateer/Strike Commander *(EA)*

Players must control mana stones to gather magical energy.

MAYHEM OVER FOR MYTHOS

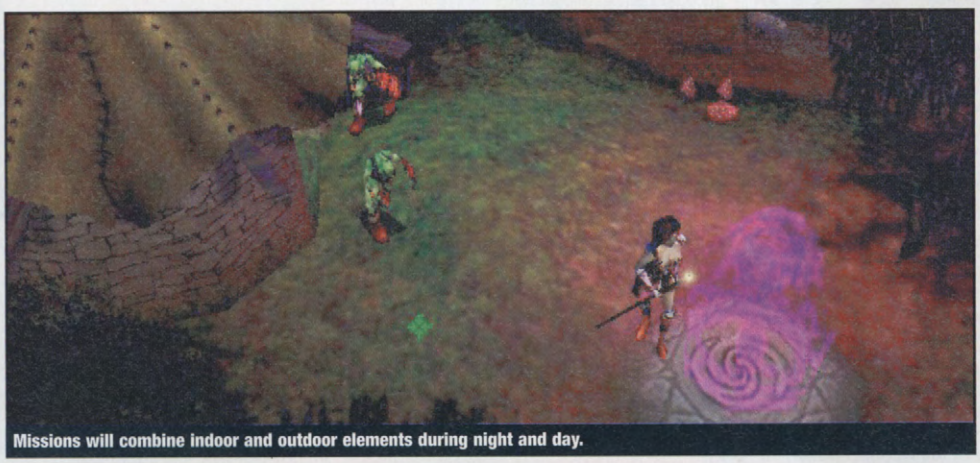
Mythos relinquishes *Mayhem 2* in favour of *The Dreamland Chronicles*

Texan developers Charybdis (who we thought had gone the way of the dodo) have taken over Mythos' *Magic & Mayhem 2* while the UK strategy specialists stick to completing their 3D turn-based strategy game *The Dreamland Chronicles* (see p14).

"We abandoned *M&M2* in favour of *The Dreamland Chronicles* since the original *Magic & Mayhem* didn't sell well enough," said Mythos' Julian Gollop. "However, publishers Virgin thought there was still mileage in it, so as part of the deal on *The Dreamland Chronicles* Virgin has the rights to develop *M&M2*, now called *The Art Of Magic*."

The Art Of Magic has obviously come a long way since Mythos handed over its designs to work on *The Dreamland Chronicles*. Although we still have a year to wait until the game is released, a new interface and a full 3D engine has been added to what was a strictly 2D isometric game.

Like *Magic & Mayhem*, *Art Of Magic* is a quirky blend of strategy and role-playing. It places you in control of a young wizard, where the aim is to defeat enemy conjurers and creatures by using up to 60 spells that may be at your disposal. As well as fireballs and the usual magical arsenal of many a goblin game, players will be able to summon over 20 creatures to do their bidding, including flying dragons and horses that can be ridden. Over 30 non-linear missions are planned, as well as a full range of multiplayer options.



Missions will combine indoor and outdoor elements during night and day.

1942 AGAIN

Heavily influenced by the coin-op classic *1942*, InterActive Vision's *Pacific Warriors* is a retro-style shoot 'em up with a thoroughly 21st Century look. Flying over 25 3D levels, the aim is simply to blast everything in sight, from submarines to tanks and Japanese bombers, while collecting numerous power-ups. Split into five campaigns, players will be treated to 'boss enemies', dispatched using one of the three fighters at your disposal. Not much skill required then apart from fast reactions, but expect plenty of eye and ear candy when and if the game becomes available in the UK.

Don't expect too much realism in this game.

DESERT ISLAND CDS

If Shiny's Dave Perry was stuck on a desert island with a PC and an unlimited power supply, what five games would keep him going?

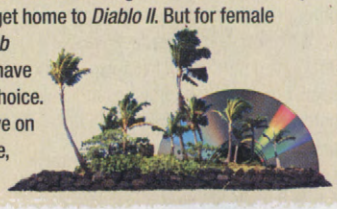
- **INDEPENDENCE WAR** (Infogrames)
- **SIM CITY 3000** (EA)
- **TROPHY BASS 3D** (Sierra)
- **TOMB RAIDER** (Eidos)*
- **DIABLO** (Sierra)

* choice if allowed only one game

Comment

"If I was deserted on a tropical island, *Independence War* would be the best game to while away the months – it lasts for ages. I would take *Sim City 3000* as well, so that I could plan out my island when it becomes a sprawling metropolis. *Trophy Bass* would be handy for survival, in order to work out the best lures.

"The original *Diablo* would give me the will to keep swimming to get home to *Diablo II*. But for female company, *Tomb Raider* would have to be my top choice. Man cannot live on coconuts alone, after all."



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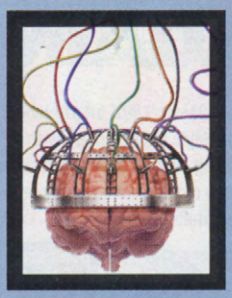


TECHHEAD

COMDEX Fall '99 was the last big computer show of the millennium, and all the big names were present and correct as it kicked off in Las Vegas

ON THE BALL Carlos Ruiz

VOODOO MAGIC

The household name in 3D acceleration lives on well into the new millennium...

Motion blur is used to great effect in the fast-paced action of *Quake III: Arena*.

CARD	INTERFACE	VSA-100 PROCESSORS	RAM	FILL RATE (Megatexels/sec)
Voodoo4 4500	PCI or AGP	1	32Mb	333-367
Voodoo5 5000	PCI	2	32Mb	667-733
Voodoo5 5500	AGP	2	64Mb	667-733
Voodoo5 6000	AGP	4	128Mb	1330-1470

Fill rate is the biggest indicator of how many frames a graphics card can push out per second. The higher the fill rate, the smoother and faster your games can run, although you should remember that the speed of your CPU will ultimately be the deciding factor. As you can see, the Voodoo5 cards are very capable in this respect – especially when you consider that NVIDIA's GeForce 256 and S3's Savage 2000 chipsets can only muster 480 and 500 Megatexels/sec respectively.

Most gamers will surely be opting for the Voodoo5 5500, since the 'magic' 64Mb not only has a nice ring to it (giving you superb bragging opportunities), but will also be very beneficial when running games with high resolutions and colour depths. Everyone is catered for, though – while the Voodoo4 4500 looks suspiciously like a sub-£100 budget option, the powerhouse Voodoo5 6000 may cost more than £300(!) when it becomes available over here.

At this year's COMDEX, 3dfx unveiled plans for its highly anticipated fourth-generation Napalm technology and, with the other graphics vendors already engaging in battle, the company's announcements were heard with interest from consumers and competitors alike.

The new family of cards will be known as Voodoo4 and Voodoo5, all based on varying numbers of the powerful VSA-100 (Voodoo Scaleable Architecture) processor. The VSA-100 core is manufactured in an enhanced six-layer '0.25' micron process, and includes support for true 32-bit colour, 2048x2048 textures, AGP4x, and pretty much everything else that other graphics cards have had for nearly a year now.

It's a shame that Voodoo3 was so widely criticised for many of these omissions, since 3dfx was quite correct in saying that none of these were really needed at all during its life span. But now as 3D graphics are undergoing another revolution with the introduction of hardware Transformation and Lighting (T&L) acceleration, 3dfx has chosen not to embrace this new and exciting technology.

Instead, the company is concentrating on improving the visual experience not only in future games, but also in existing ones. This will be done mainly by the T-Buffer special effects (soft shadows, motion blur, field focus, and blurred reflections), which will be supported in many forthcoming titles, providing lots of impressive eye candy.

Developers should also jump to provide support for the FXT1 and DirectX texture compression routines, meaning that detail in games could potentially become far better than what we are used to. And last but not least, the full-scene, spatial anti-aliasing feature smoothes out jagged edges and generally sharpens up the screen image in any 3D game.

THE CARDS

The Voodoo4 cards are kitted out with a single VSA-100 processor and 32Mb RAM. Due to the relative lack of performance, the T-Buffer special effects and full-scene, spatial anti-aliasing are not included.

However, if you splash out on one of the Voodoo5 cards you get all the effects and features – since they have the power of either two or four processors, and as much as 128Mb RAM.

Note: 3dfx has a habit of making last-minute decisions, so don't be surprised if new variants are announced. The following chart shows the basic plans for the Napalm technology, but check www.3dfx.com for any new developments.

THE FINAL WORD

One major drawback of having a T&L card is that you'll be waiting an age for a decent selection of games that actually support this feature, whereas a Voodoo5 will provide instant out-of-box performance and visual tricks. 3dfx says that T&L support is not necessary for this generation of video cards, and it looks like it just might be right again.

But how long will you have to wait for the new Voodoos? If you're after a Voodoo4 4500 or a Voodoo5 5000, you'll be able to get hold of one in March or April. The Voodoo5 5500 might take a little longer to reach our shores, while the 6000 cards will almost certainly take their time – and be in short supply when they arrive.

So, those are the basic facts you need to know. If you're after a fourth-generation card, we would definitely recommend that you hold on there and wait to see how things progress. If anything, your purchase will be cheaper as a result. Reviews and round-ups of the latest 3D cards will appear in future issues of *PC ZONE*, starting next issue in fact, so keep your eyes peeled.

The Voodoo5 6000 needs a chunky power supply unit to feed its quad VSA-100 processors.

CPU WAR HOTS UP

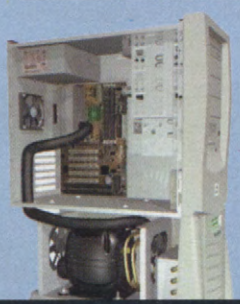
§ There is much at stake as the wait for true 1GHz processors continues

There have been many goings-on in the CPU industry of late and, in such an unpredictable battlefield, it's hard to tell who will come out on top: Intel or AMD? As the 1GHz (1,000MHz) barrier looks set to be broken, the competition is as fierce as it gets.

At COMDEX, both companies were intent on making a good impression. While neither had any really important news, AMD attracted attention with numerous high-speed Athlon systems running at their stand, including a Kryotech cooled unit (read 'fridge'), in which a 750MHz Athlon had been successfully clocked up to 1GHz.

The accolade for the fastest processor of the millennium goes to Intel, who squeezed out the 800MHz Pentium III just before Christmas. Although AMD has only just caught up, it still has the upper hand. The company knows that the Athlon is very capable of running up to 1GHz, and so is able to pick and choose a time to release one at that speed. The Pentium III's situation, meanwhile, is less certain.

A very desirable, clocked-up 1GHz Athlon system, with all the trimmings...



...and this is what goes on inside the box. Dedicated cooling stops the CPU looking like melted liquorice, which is helpful.

THE NEXT GEN

This could be why Merced (codenames are big in the Intel camp) is being touted as the first Intel processor to hit 1GHz. Still in the development stages, this new 64-bit CPU is already failing to achieve satisfactory clock speeds in production tests, but when they get everything sorted out, Merced should be very impressive. We'll have more on this and the other future Intel technologies, Willamette and Foster, soon.

AMD has not been twiddling its thumbs though, because it too has a 64-bit CPU on the way. Codenamed SledgeHammer, the eighth-generation 'K8' will run on the new Lightning Data Transport™ system bus, and will boast a complete 64-bit architecture while still maintaining full compatibility with existing applications.

But when will we see the first true 1GHz processor? Will it be a Pentium III, an Athlon, a Merced or a SledgeHammer? More importantly, who will come out on top when the next-generation 64-bit processors hit the market? There are interesting times ahead, but with delays and technical problems becoming commonplace, the industry looks to be going nowhere fast.

IT'S ON THE MOVE

The latest model of a wearable PC is parading the catwalk

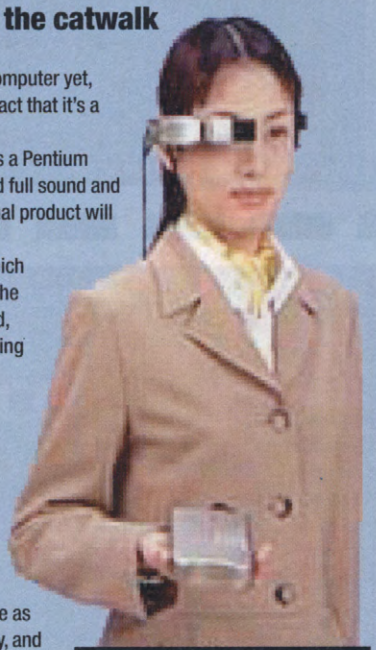
IBM and Olympus have been hard at work designing the lightest wearable computer yet, which weighs in at just 370g. However, the weight is less amazing than the fact that it's a fully functional, Windows 98-based PC system.

The main compartment (which can be held or clipped to your belt) houses a Pentium 233MHz MMX processor, 64Mb RAM, a matchbox-sized 340Mb hard disk and full sound and video capabilities. It also sports external keyboard and USB ports, and the final product will ship with a separate docking cradle that has even more connections.

The headset is made up of headphones and a tiny LCD screen display, which sits a couple of inches in front of your right eye. This close proximity means the experience is similar to viewing a 10inch monitor from about a foot away and, even better, it's partially transparent – so you can see exactly what you're doing in the real world. Surprisingly, it is also capable of displaying standard PC resolutions of up to 800x600, with 1.4 million colours.

A miniature hand-held controller is supplied for navigation around the desktop, but it also has an integrated microphone for voice activation and speech recognition (IBM's own ViaVoice software takes care of this). Other niceties include a Lithium-Ion battery pack that enables three hours of use between recharges, and a PC card slot allowing the installation of modems, and so on.

The whole system improves no end on the previous outing, making commercial possibilities much more realistic. If released, it would serve more as an industrial tool than a general purpose device (largely due to its practicality, and not helped by a shocking price tag), but you never know – in five years time we might all be walking around with them.



Innovation comes at a price – in this case, several thousand pounds.

FACTCANNON

Windows 'Millennium' (production name only) will be the new operating system of choice for gaming, multimedia, and general home use. It'll be a significantly enhanced version of Windows 98, with more speed and stability, improved networking and peripheral support, as well as better Internet and digital media tools. Release is set for the first half of 2000, but you can check www.microsoft.com for updates in the meantime.

If you need a new disc drive and don't like the idea of migrating to DVD just yet, have a look at Kenwood's new 72x True X CD-ROM. The drive is both quiet and reliable, and the lightning-quick access and spin speeds mean you can slice valuable minutes off large installs and loading times. See www.kenwoodtech.com for all the details.

Sony's CRX120 external 4x/4x/24x CD-Rewriter drives are modelled in the stylish blue and silver VAIO design, and come in USB and i.Link (Firewire) variations – the latter allowing burst data transfer rates of up to 50Mb/sec. The retail kits include plenty of software, cables, media, and even a marker pen. For more information, see www.sony-cp.com.

Klipsch (www.klipsch.com) has a new 400Watt speaker solution in the ProMedia v.2-400 kit. It includes four high-quality satellites (for 3D positional sound), and a mean-looking sub to provide some thumping bass. The whole lot is THX-certified, so it'll definitely go some way to giving your games a certain cinematic atmosphere.

Once you've backed up your MP3 collection onto a CD-R or CD-RW, there's no reason to leave it in a drawer to gather dust. The new Mambo X portable CD player will play MP3 files directly from recordable discs, so you can take all your favourite tunes wherever you go. It also plays standard audio CDs – visit www.mambox.com and see for yourself.

Do you want unlimited, free instant access to the Internet (no call charges) at blistering speeds of up to 512Kbps? Of course you do – and depending on where you live in the UK, you may be able to use cable lines in your area to go online. Once you have a house connection and a £150 cable modem, NTL (www.ntl.com) can provide all of the above for £40 per month.

As sound becomes increasingly important in games, you may like to think about investing in some decent speakers. At £219 (ex VAT), TEAC's new PowerMax2000 set doesn't come cheap, but the speakers are fully digital and comprise a central speaker, subwoofer and four satellites. With multiple sound modes, including Dolby Pro-Logic, games and DVD movies may never be the same.

Monaco we presume.

F1 2000

EA's F1 sim lines up for the big race

With the world eagerly awaiting the arrival of Geoff Crammond's *F1 Grand Prix 3*, EA are planning to release their own Formula 1 Association endorsed sim, *F1 2000*. Due out at the end of March, to coincide with the start of the new Grand Prix season, the game will include all the teams, drivers and tracks from the impending 2000 championship, making it the most up-to-date of the three 'official' Formula 1 sims coming out this year, the other being the Joint Ubi Soft/VSC game *F1 World Grand Prix*.

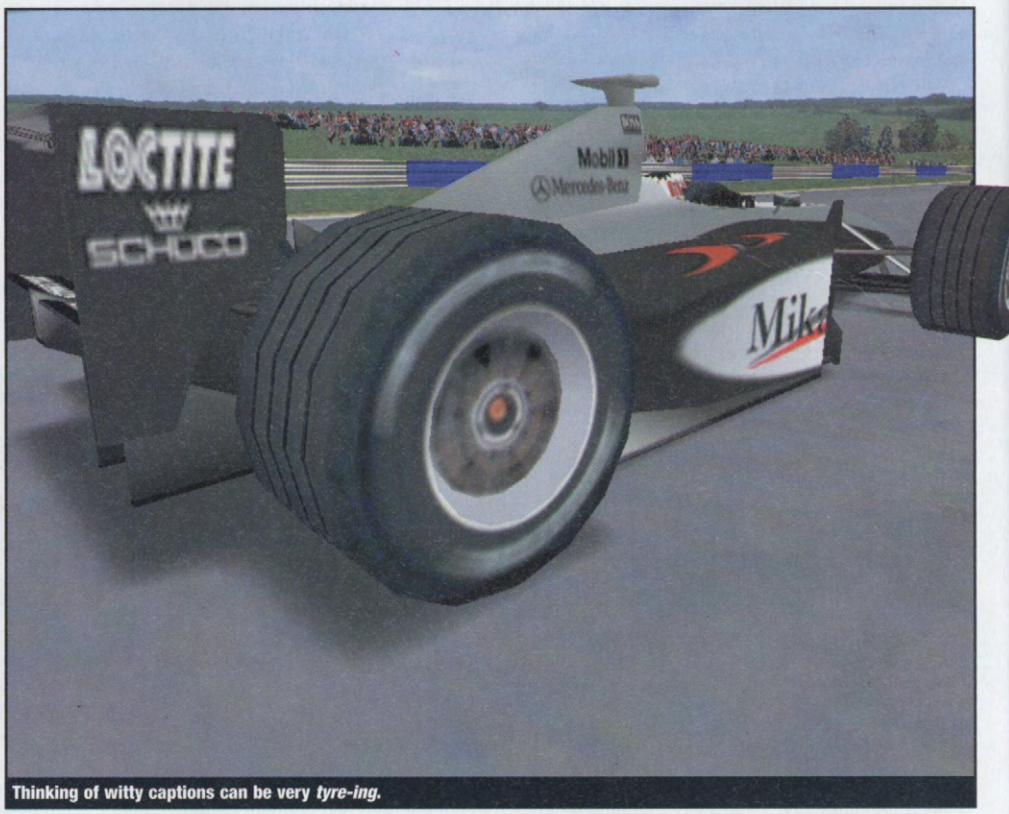
Boasting photo-realistic graphics, *F1 2000* claims to have the most accurate reproduction of F1 car handling, ever. To add gloss to the package, TV presenter Jim Rosenthal will do his usual pre-race introductions. However, EA have decided against in-game commentary, concentrating instead on pit communications, which will relay problems and positions directly into your car.

Along with the usual features, such as car set up and driver aids, it will include what EA are calling '6D' physics, enabling cars to roll realistically in every direction imaginable. The whole experience will be recreated down to the smallest detail – including effects such as smoke and dust.

It's a risky time for anyone, even EA with their proven record in sport sims, to release an F1 game. Everyone is waiting for what is promising to be another masterpiece from Geoff Crammond, and if *F1 2000* is going to compete, it's going to have to be more like Grand Prix racing than Grand Prix racing. In other words, its chances of bettering *F1GP3* are about as likely as Tora Takagi winning the World Driver's Championship. Which could happen.

Will 2000 be Ferrari's year to win the championship, again?

F1 2000 will have pit communications.



Thinking of witty captions can be very *tyre-ing*.

COMPETITION

WIN A QUAKE GUIDE

20 COPIES TO GIVE AWAY

Just out is Prima's Official *Quake III Arena Strategy Guide*, and wouldn't you know it, they've given us 20 of them, just like that. Trouble is, we don't need them, because we are *that* good at the game. So we thought, why not give them away? So we are. Of course, getting your sweaty palms on £12.99 worth of top tips and tactics won't be as easy as simply demanding one down the phone. You'll have to earn it, young apprentice.

QUESTION: *Quake* legend John Romero left id Software to create which game?

Just answer the question and send it on a postcard, along with with *all* the information requested, to the address below

- *Name/Address/Postcode/Daytine phone number/Email/Job title/Company name/Age if under 18*
- *Please tell us if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers or new products from other companies*
- *Are you a current subscriber to* PC ZONE*?*

Send your entry to: *Quake III Strategy Guide* Competition, *PC ZONE*, Dennis Publishing, 19 Bolsover St, London W1P 7HJ. (Closing date: 9 March 2000.)

Terms and conditions: only entries with all the questions completed and received before the closing date will be entered into the prize draw. Winners will be notified by post. No cash alternative. Prizes not necessarily as shown. No correspondence will be entered into. The Editor's decision is final. All the other usual competition rules, conditions and restrictions apply. And all that. Phew!

We are promised a living city filled with unique characters.

Break too many laws and the army gets called in to sort things out.

Charlton Heston wouldn't be too pleased with the cop killing.

True day/night cycles, with infra-red equipment for seeing in the dark.

DRIVE-BY SHOOTER

Fancy a driving game where you can get out of the car and walk around in first-person mode? Well, up until now, you could – in last year's *Redline* – but it just wasn't much fun.

Part driving game, part first-person shooter, Buka Entertainment's *Overdrive* is going to have to pull something special out of the airbag if it doesn't want to go down the same road as *Redline* and *Interstate '82* – two games that failed to add up to the sum of their parts.

Like the recent *Driver*, *Overdrive* is primarily a mission-based game, but it's non-linear and more contemporary. At the start of the game you've just been released from prison and your aim is to once more ascend the crime ladder, taking on jobs in order to improve your standing in the world. The city in which you ply your dubious trade – as hit man, courier or bodyguard – will feature hundreds of buildings, all of which can be entered, with dozens of drivable cars and weapons to fire.

URBAN OPS

Rogue Spear's first add-on, *Urban Operations*, is due for release in April and features five new missions, set in Cairo, Mexico City, London and Hong Kong. Word is we can expect new medium assault weapons, grenades and proximity mines, but most intriguing is that five of the best levels from the original *Rainbow Six* will be updated for *Rogue Spear*'s enhanced multiplayer game, as well as five new multiplayer maps.

Tubeway Army?

Fire In Cairo?

TEAMTALK

A quick chat with the part-timers who make games not for money, but for love

Who are you and what are you working on?
"My name's Tony Davis, I'm 24 and I've been working on artwork for a sequel to *Carrier Command* (**www.carrier2.freeserve.co.uk**) for roughly eight months. We plan to update the game with new graphics and throw in some new gameplay ideas as well."

How many people are working on the project and where are you based?
"For a while it was only me, working on mock-ups. Then late last year Dennis Jackman offered his services as a C++ programmer and the project changed into something more substantial. I'm from Essex, Dennis lives in Berkshire. We also have a guy called Robert Roast who's doing the music. We communicate via email and ICQ. A lot of fans of the original *Carrier Command* have offered to help, and we're on the look out for people with programming and graphics skills.

What do you do for a living and how much time do you devote to *Carrier 2*?
"I'm trained as a video editor but am working part-time in civil engineering at the moment. I plan what I'm going to add to *Carrier 2* during the day – sketches, plans, etc – then work on it at night."

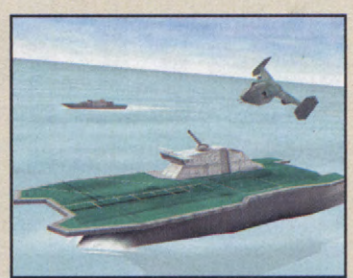
When will it be finished?
"We are taking our time with it – none of us has games industry experience, so we're looking at about one year to 18 months minimum."

What are your hopes for *Carrier 2*?
"That it will retain the finely-balanced gameplay of the original, and that the updated graphics, multiplayer support, etc will appeal to a new audience."

What would be your ideal job in the games industry?
"Graphic artist on a game like *Carrier Command*, or *Elite IV* maybe. Anything really..."

What games are you looking forward to and why?
"Paul Johnstone's *Elite Legacy* (currently postponed) and *B-17 Flying Fortress 2*. I loved the Amiga original of *B-17*. It had loads of good ideas, such as being able to re-name your crew members. You'd get attached to your ball turret gunner, think twice about landing with the wheels up, and then do it anyway."

Tony's worked on *Carrier 2* art for months.



Will the final game look this good?

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ONLINE DIARY

BT firm up wholesale ADSL pricing and Freeserve lose money... again

ALWAYS ONLINE Phil Wand

ADSL

Online all day, every day, with 512K of bandwidth. But at what cost?

There's growing concern that asymmetric digital subscriber line (ADSL), the next-generation connection technology due to arrive some time this spring, will be overpriced and slow to roll out. Does the UK ever have it any other way?

We've heard various prices from a number of sources, with price tags ranging from as low as £30 a month to as much as £150. Whatever the final price is, it's certain that UK consumers are likely to pay more than their European and American counterparts. With BT set to wholesale ADSL lines to ISPs for £35 a month, consumers are sure to end up with a £50 bill each month. To give you a comparison, Deutsche Telekom charge £30; US telco Bell Atlantic charge just £25.

There is a distinct possibility that operators will run their lines at a loss in order to undercut the ever greedy BT, giving eager punters 512Kbps download speed and 256Kbps upload speed for just £35 a month, but that's just a rumour. We reckon it's more likely that the predicted £45-£55 price tag will stay for now, but that it will gradually drop over the next 18 months.

Less to look at than your video card, this Wisecom internal ADSL modem can handle up to 8Mbps downstream and 768Kbps upstream. It stays connected to the Internet for as long as your PC is powered up – no more connecting and disconnecting.

BETTER THAN CABLE?

Despite what people may have told you, ADSL *is* better than cable in many ways. The most important difference is that cable modems are networked to the local cable company, which means every user is allocated a 'share' of the overall bandwidth. The more cable users you have online, the less bandwidth there is to share between them. ADSL lines are private networks in that they run directly to ISPs without anyone else sharing your bits and bytes. In that respect, it is a vastly superior technology, able to expand across the country without the frustrating problem of bottlenecks.

OBSOLETE, MATE

As is so typical of the computer world, the technology we're just beginning to plug in at home is already crap and obsolete. ADSL may well be all your dreams screwed down in one little grey box, but already people are demonstrating the dramatic possibilities of Internet2, the codename for the Internet's long overdue replacement. Theoretically, Internet2 will be able to send more than 2.4 billion bits of information over IP – more than the combined contents of the entire Encyclopaedia Britannica – every single second. Regular modems that you're using now have top speeds of just 56,000bps; give it five years and you could well be connecting to your local gigaPoP and downloading the local telephone directory.

THE VERDICT

Although £50 may not be the cheapest price in the world, it sure beats the way we pay for access at the moment. And once you've had an unmetered, permanent link, you'll never want it any other way. Roll on the spring, and all power to Oftel!

WHAT'S ON AT GAMEPLAY

MMM Better known as Multiplayer Millennium Madness, MMM is an excuse for Wireplay to give away £1,000 prizes to tournament winners. Tourney games range from *Alien Vs Predator* to *Chess*. See **www.gameplay.com/madness** for more info.

TOP TEN GAMES Wireplay's Top Ten Online Games list continues to be dominated by *Half-Life*, *Team Fortress* and *Air Attack*. If you wonder why we keep on about them, there's a good reason – everyone's playing 'em. Check the Wireplay site to find out how you can join in.

COMMUNITY Check the growing *Unreal Tournament* community page, with its download links to numerous map packs, mods, skins, and the all-important line-up of official patches.
www.gameplay.com/wireplay

Wireplay now at gameplay.com

gameplay.com
we're never beaten

Online Diary is sponsored by gameplay.com

NET PROFIT

With over 1.5m users, Freeserve has become a household name, but it's still losing money

Freeserve has recently released their figures for Q3, showing it has upped its weekly income by a staggering 49 per cent over Q1 figures. Turnover now stands at £3.8 million a quarter, with the majority of this money made up through kickback from their 0845 dial-up number and the remainder from advertising and commerce.

The only fly in the ointment is a pre tax loss of £3.6m. Considering the company now clocks up *over 150 million minutes* of online time each week, and is ranked as the UK's top point of entry to the Internet, one wonders if the company is capable of making a profit. Along with online giant Amazon, who are also constantly overdrawn, we wonder if anyone will be able to squeeze a profit from cyberspace.

GO HERE NOW

HYPERMIND
Burping machines. Farting machines. Virtual bubble wrap. Naughty animations. Desktop toys. Pretend viruses. The *Throbber2000* weenie designer. Hypermind is the playground of the desperately bored and the terminally insane. There are all manner of stupid pranks, tricks and giggles to keep you and your daft mates occupied for *years*. The administrator, a Danish loon called Markus, keeps the site updated every day with everything from full-blown Windows applications to short video clips of people with frankfurters up their backsides. Top bookmark! www.hypermind.dk

VOODOO EXTREME
Check out Voodoo Extreme's article on PowerPlay, the new connection technology created from a joint venture by Cisco Systems and Valve Software. The idea is to create a new way of transmitting data across the Internet to allow faster access and lag free game playing. Others involved in the project include Bioware (*Baldur's Gate*, *MDK*), Epic (*Unreal*, *Unreal Tournament*) and Looking Glass (*System Shock*). The idea is to create a new, open standard that all developers can use to enhance their multiplayer products. An initial US-based rollout will see punters get a specially adapted copy of *Team Fortress* to test out online. www.voodooextreme.com/powerplay

Everything you ever wanted to know about Voodoo.

PLANETQ3.com
Essential reading for everyone new to *Quake III: Arena*, PlanetQ3's Newbie Guide covers every aspect of online and multiplayer setup, together with useful reference material on hardware conflicts and getting the most from your 3D accelerator. The latest cards such as the NVIDIA GeForce 256 and S3 Savage 2000 get the big 'thumbs up' as they provide *Quake III* with gobsmacking visual qualities, care of their Transform & Lighting functions (see *Future PC*, *PCZ* #86). Go there now. www.planetq3.com/newbieguide.shtml

You'll be flying for the US Coast Guard.

Water will spray up as you descend, providing you're over it of course.

InterActive Vision, the developers, are promising unrivalled ground detail.

BIG RED CHOPPER

Take to the skies and save peoples lives

The original *Search And Rescue* from InterActive Vision seems to have passed us by. In fact, until we saw *Search And Rescue II*, we'd never even heard of it. A quick scan on the Internet threw up nothing on the game, briefly prompting us to believe the developers were messing with our brains.

No matter, it's the sequel we're interested in – for the simple reason that we at last have a game where the aim is to save people rather than mutilate them, so this is definitely a game worth looking forward to.

Much like the fairly agreeable *SimCopter*, released by Simis a couple of years back, *Search And Rescue II* places you in the seat of a rescue helicopter, the aim being to complete a series of ever-more difficult missions. There will be an arcade mode, but realism will play a major part in the game, with pilots having to contend with severe weather like storms and fog, with each mission offering a number of random elements. The game won't just be a case of flying out to sea to hoist up some drunken yuppies either – some missions will see you flying through cities and towns as well, day or night.

The only problem we forsee is one of eventual release – when or if the game turns up on our shores. Let's hope so.

WORLD VIEW

QUAKE III ARENA vs *UNREAL TOURNAMENT*

Absolute silence – that's what greeted us when last month's 'Spinal Tap cover' hit the cold January streets, the issue with the *Quake III* review in it. We were expecting screaming phones, hordes of *Quake III* clansmen camping outside our offices, waving placards and demanding the editor's head be lopped off for the sub-90 per cent score. Yet the uproar we expected didn't happen. Maybe the shock has yet to sink in. Maybe by the time *this* issue comes out, we will be strung up by our ankles outside *PC ZONE* towers, soaked with slops and covered in flies. Possibly, as we speak, plans are being drawn up.

The fact is, though, that we were not alone in our opinions on the latest round in the 3D shooter war. It isn't just us who thinks *Unreal Tournament* is better than id's latest masterpiece (and it is a masterpiece, by the way). Just to back up our opinion, (if ever the matter came to court, you understand) we went wandering on the web to find out what the worldwide view is. And get this: of all the game related websites we knew that had reviewed both *Unreal Tournament* and *Quake III Arena*, 81 per cent preferred the former and only 13 per cent scored *Quake III* higher. What those figures don't show, of course, is how damn close those scores were. You may remember we gave *Unreal Tournament* 90 per cent and *Quake III* 89 per cent. You can't get much closer than that, and as we stated in the review, if you want the best, you really have to buy both. As one American reviewer said: "No matter which one you end up liking more, it's a great time to be a fan of the first-person genre!" Bang on.

Quake III Arena **gets one in the face from** ***Unreal Tournament.***

OUR MOST WANTED

As *Black & White* gets closer to completion, the more we look forward to it – even though we haven't quite grasped what it's all about. We should also get a review copy of *Vampire* next issue and we can't wait to get our teeth into it

1	**Black & White** (Bullfrog/EA)	April
2	**Vampire: The Masquerade Redemption** (Nihilistic/Activision)	March
3	**Team Fortress 2** (Valve/Sierra)	Winter 00
4	**Duke Nukem Forever** (3D Realms/GT Interactive)	April/May
5	**Star Trek – Voyager: Elite Force** (Raven/Activision)	June/July
6	**Diablo II** (Blizzard/Sierra)	April
7	**Freelancer** (Digital Anvil)	Winter 00/01
8	**C&C: Renegade** (Westwood/EA) -	Spring
9	**Star Wars: Obi Wan** (LucasArts/Activision)	Xmas
10	**B-17 Flying Fortress 2: The Mighty 8th** (Wayward/Hasbro)	March

PHONEY PLAYSTA

Martin Korda picks up a copy of *Bleem!* – just as stocks run out

In the world of computer gaming, there seem to be two different types of people. The first are the gaming purists, who believe that each format should have a set of games exclusive to itself. The second is the type of person who thinks that formats should be integrated. Covered back in *PCZ* #81, the PSX emulator *Bleem!* caters for the latter, allowing PlayStation discs to be played on the PC. Better still, several months after its initial release in the States, it's now available in the UK.

After much wrangling with Sony over the legality of the product (lawyers are still at loggerheads), *Bleem!* has finally made its way into a select few UK shops. Buying the program proved far from easy. We eventually managed to pick up a copy from Computer Exchange (**www.cex.co.uk**) for £24.99, but at the time of print it had sold out, and there seem to be no plans to stock the product in the future. However, *Bleem!* has already clocked up over 150,000 sales worldwide, and the website (**www.bleem.com**) receives around 70,000 visitors daily. The emulator can be ordered via this site, but it's overly expensive and not always reliable, as readers Tim Dyson and Farhad Agzamov discovered (see Watchdog *PCZ* #85).

Bleem! claims to allow gamers to run more than 300 PlayStation games at much higher resolutions (800x600 and above) than on the PlayStation itself (which runs at 360x480) without any loss of performance, something which has had even the greatest cynics salivating over their monitors. Other features include total compatibility with all PC game controllers and the utilisation of 3D cards via Direct 3D, in order to replicate and enhance the PlayStation experience. The CD provided works as a key, giving you access to free upgrades via the *Bleem!* website. The options menu offers a shortcut to the site, where an upgrade to version 1.5b is available, and downloading this is a recommendation.

SO HOW WELL DOES IT WORK?

After a quick installation, the informative manual leads you through the process of making your PC compatible with PSX software. Let's face it, PCs have trouble being compatible with each other, let alone with PlayStations, so anticipate a great deal of tweaking of settings and multiple reloads in order to make games run well on your machine. That is, of course, unless you possess a powerful PII or above, with an up-to-date graphics card. If you're lucky enough to own one of these, your life will be much easier. On anything under a P233, you're just going to have to be patient and search for the settings that are best suited to your machine. If you get past the frustration and manage to avoid throwing your computer out of a high building, you can actually get *Bleem!* to run pretty well, even on a lower spec PC. The developers suggest a P166MMX as a minimum, but our tests showed that a P233 was the lowest spec which could be used successfully. Keyboard

"You can actually get *Bleem!* to run pretty well, even on a lower spec PC"

THE CONVERTS

Who'd have thought you'd ever be able to play these popular PlayStation titles on a PC?

The detail on each character is incredible.

Now replays are even better to watch.

TEKKEN 3

PSX's most famous beat 'em up and one of the best on any platform

£19.99 • Namco • Supports D3D • Compatibility: Yes

On a P233, this simply wasn't playable. To a far lesser extent this was also the case when the game was played on a PII 400. But switch the music off and the game runs like a dream (on the PII 400 at 600x400 and above). Some CD and DVD drives can't access the music quickly enough, causing the game to stutter. Apart from the odd glitch and marginally inferior frame rates, the game was excellent.

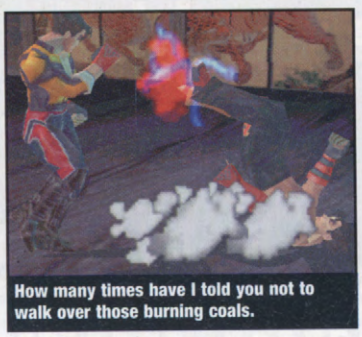
GRAN TURISMO

The all-time definitive driving game

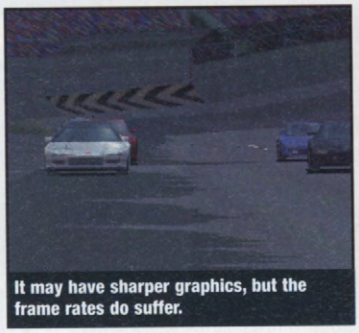
£19.99 • Sony • Supports D3D • Compatibility: Yes

Not too bad on a P233, but totally awesome on the higher end machines. Playing the game in a high resolution (600x400+) is the icing on the cake in what is already an incredible game, but it has to be said that frame rates do suffer slightly. You may have to do without the music for smooth play, but it's *so* worth it. Without doubt, the best out of the lot.

Oooh, it's getting so nasty that I can't bear to watch.



How many times have I told you not to walk over those burning coals.



It may have sharper graphics, but the frame rates do suffer.

Well, the sign said nothing about not *driving* on the grass.

TION

SPECIAL REPORT

and joystick controls are clumsy, so using a game pad is the best way to play. We'd also recommend a third-generation 3D card, and at *least* an AWE64 sound card to reproduce PSX sound, but even with this, sound effects can at times sound hollow and distorted.

The *Bleem!* website is incredibly helpful, and tackles a wide variety of problems that can occur. You're also encouraged to email any problems you have to *Bleem!*, so that they can be ironed out of the software. Overseas sales aside, there's a feeling that these people care about the customer, and help is never far away if it is needed. Another feature on the website includes a compatibility list, showing which games are compatible, partially compatible and not yet compatible. The list, although helpful, is also somewhat misleading. The word "partial" can mean that the game will run (claiming only minor glitches), but will be totally unplayable (see "The Converts" boxout below).

Bleem! is a product that is getting better by the day, and so in turn every update makes it a more viable buy. It seems to come down to vanity more than anything else. If you want your games to look beautiful and are willing to risk occasional glitches and slightly reduced frame rates, even in the "totally compatible" games, then *Bleem!* is for you – just make sure you have a PII or above. But there's something satisfying about sitting around a TV with your mates, playing on a real PlayStation and using a Dual Shock™. It's a feeling that no amount of high resolution graphics can substitute. Somehow, crowding round your PC just isn't quite the same.

SILENT HILL

Action adventure, with interactive movie elements

★ £29.99 • Konami • Supports D3D • Compatibility: Partial

Before the game loads up you are given a warning that it may have some *minor* graphical and sound glitches (due to its only partial completion), but unfortunately there's nothing minor about them. Characters walk around in white boxes and the cut-scenes make no sense as the sentences they say are all in the wrong order. Needs a lot more work.

METAL GEAR SOLID

The game that launched the sneak 'em up genre on the PlayStation

★ £29.99 • Konami • Supports D3D • Compatibility: Partial

The worst out of all the titles. Again claiming only minor glitches, the cut-scenes are unwatchable and inaudible when using D3D and just as inaudible without. In-game, the controls sometimes don't work properly, and the screen keeps whiting out in software mode.

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Bedlam
Blade Runner
Blood
Braveheart
Brian Lara Cricket
Caesar 1, 2 & 3
Carmageddon 1 & 2
Championship Manager 2,3, & '97/'98
Civilization 1 & 2
Colin McRae Rally
Colonization
Command & Conquer
Command & Conquer: Counterstrike
Command & Conquer: Red Alert
Command & Conquer: Tiberian Sun
Commandos: Behind Enemy Lines
Commandos: Beyond the Call of Duty
Croc: Legend of Gobbos
Cueball: Jimmy Whites
Dark Forces
Dark Forces 2:Jedi Knight
Dark Reign
Day of the Tentacle
Delta Force
Descent 1,2 & 3
Destruction Derby 1 & 2
Diablo
Die By The Sword
Die Hard Trilogy
Doom and Doom 2
Driver
Duke Nukem & Duke Nukem 2
Duke Nukem 3D and Atomic Edition
Dungeon Keeper 1 & 2
Earthworm Jim 1
Excalibur 2555 A.D.
F22 Lightning 3
FIFA '97,'98,'99 and 2000
Final Doom
Final Fantasy VII
Flight Sim '98
Flight Unlimited 2
Formula 1
Formula One Grand Prix
Forsaken
Full Throttle

G-K

Gangsters
G-Police
Grand Theft Auto 1 & 2, London
Grand Touring
Half Life
Hardwar
Heretic
Heroes of Might and Magic I & II
Hexen 1 & 2
Hi Octane
Hidden and Dangerous
Incoming
Indiana Jones & The Fate of Atlantis
Indianapolis
Interstate 76 and Nitro Pack
Iwar
Jedi Knight
Jurassic Park
Kingpin
Klingon Honor Guard

L-P

Lego Island
Lemmings 2: The Tribes
Little Big Adventure 2
Lords of Magic:Special Edition
Madden NFL '98
Master of Orion 1 & 2
MDK
Mechcommander
Mechwarrior 2
Men in Black
Midtown Madness
Monopoly
Monster Truck Madness 2
Monty Python:Quest for the Holy Grail
Mortal Kombat 2, 3 & 4
Moto Racer
Motorhead
Myth 2:Soulblighter
Myth:The Fallen Lords
NBA Live '95, '96 & '97
Need For Speed 2 & 3
NHL '97, '98 & '99
NHL Breakaway '98
Nightmare Creatures
Nuclear Strike
Outcast
Outrun
Pandemonium
Pitfall
Police Quest:SWAT 2
Populous
Populous: The Beginning
Premier Manager 1, 3 & '99
Pro Pinball

Q-U

Quake and Quake 2
Railroad Tycoon 1 & 2
Rainbow Islands
Rainbow Six
Rally Cross
Rayman
Rebel Assault 2
Requiem:Avenging Angel
Resident Evil 1 & 2
Road Rash
Rollcage
Roller Coaster Tycoon
Sanatarium
Screamer 1 & 2
Sensible World of Soccer
Settlers 1, 2 & 3
Shogo Mobile Armor Division
Sim City 2000 & 3000
SimCity
SimTower
SiN
Sonic and Nuckles Collection
South Park
Star Trek:Birth of the Federation
Star Wars:Episode 1 Phantom Menace
Star Wars:Episode 1 Racer
Star Wars:Rogue Squadron
Star Wars:Shadows of the Empire
StarCraft
Street Fighter 2 and Alpha
Super Bubsy
Super Frog
Superbike World Championship
SWIV 3D
Syndicate Wars
System Shock
Test Drive 1, 2, 4 & Off Road
The 11th Hour
The Fifth Element
The Hunt for Red October
Theme Hospital
Theme Park
Thief :The Dark Project
Time Commando
TOCA 1 & 2
Tomb Raider 1, 2 & 3
Total Annihilation
Total Annihilation:Kingdoms
Toy Story
Trespasser
Turok 1 & 2
Ultimate Soccer Manager 1, 2 & '98
Unreal
US Navy Fighters

V-Z

Virtual Springfield
VR Powerboat Racing
War Games:Defcon 1
Warcraft & Warcraft 2
Wargasm
Warhammer: Dark Omen
Warzone 2100
Wing Commander IV
Wipeout & Wipeout XL
Wolfenstein 3D
World Cup '98
Worms, Worms 2 and Armageddon
WWF Wrestlemania
X Wing
X-Com:Apocalypse
X-Com:Enemy Unknown
X-Com:Ufo Defense
X-Files: The Game
X-Games Pro Boarder
X-Men: Children of the Atom

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Did you spill my pint?

Now this is what I call robot wars.

The multilevel playing field allows you to control ground, underground and air combat.

Build Combots to your own desired specifications.

METAL FATIGUE

Bigs bots on the horizon

You'd be forgiven for being a bit sceptical these days when hearing claims that a new RTS game will break the mould of its genre. It seems to go without saying that every such offering boasts this accolade, but rarely do any of them deliver on the promise. GT Interactive's *Metal Fatigue* is gunning to be the exception.

Although the game is viewed from a top down isometric vantage point, the terrain and units are all rendered in 3D. However, where *MF* really differs from the competition is that it allows simultaneous control of land, air and underground forces via a multilevel playing field. Also, units such as the Combots (giant man operated warrior robots) can be individually built to your specification, and upgraded with parts from defeated enemies.

Developers Zono Inc believe that their AI system will be superior to that of any other RTS game. Instead of having one set of AI personality, each mission will pit you against a different 'AI General' with tactics and traits individual to them. Potentially, it seems very exciting, and the good news is that we may just get reviewable code in time for the next issue.

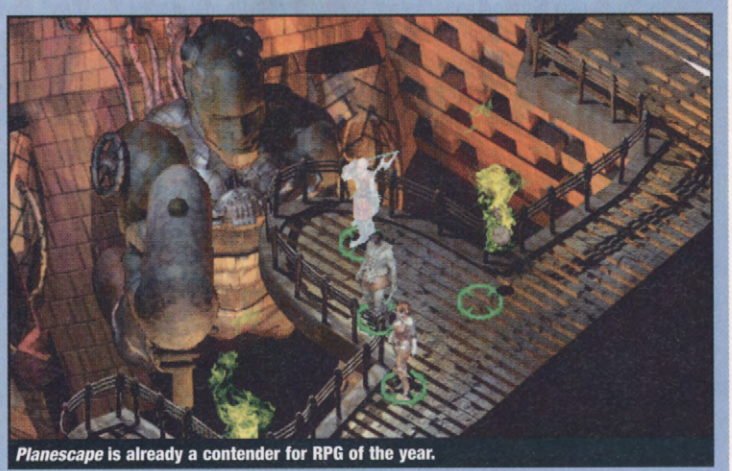
£10 OFF*

PLANESCAPE: TORMENT

***Normal high street price**

Fans of *Baldur's Gate* would have read last month's review of *Planescape: Torment* with glee. Offering slick play, a large choice of party members and best of all an engrossing story line, which tops even that of *Baldur's Gate*, fans of the genre will be in RPG heaven. Now, just to enhance this sense of euphoria, the lads from Gameplay, generous lot that they are, have decided to offer £10 off *Planescape: Torment*. At £24.99 it would be just *plain* rude to turn them down, especially when the game is this good.

To qualify for your £10 discount, all you have to do is ring the Gameplay Hotline on 0113 234 0444, while brandishing this copy of *PC ZONE*. They'll ask you a simple question and if you get that right, you can use your credit card to purchase the game at the reduced price. Pick up that receiver and ring now, or you'll be missing out on some of the best RPG action around.



Planescape is already a contender for RPG of the year.

FEELING RISKY

Having played a four-hour online game of *Axis & Allies*, only to have it crash during a crucial battle, we know how frustrating (and expensive) a turn-based strategy game can be when played over the Internet, with half the time spent waiting for your opponent to make their move. *Risk II* is set to change all that, with simultaneous play and an innovative communication system. For the single-player, an enhanced interface and realistic AI are promised. Whether it lives up to its board-based counterpart, we shall find out next month.

The *Risk* world is no longer flat.

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO...

The place where you can monitor the progress of the games that should have been on the shelves by now

One day we may even get to play this. You never know.

DAIKATANA (Ion Storm)

LAST SEEN *PC ZONE* #86
ORIGINAL RELEASE DATE Christmas '97

Having missed yet another promised deadline, Ion Storm, in line with tradition, has failed to produce the goods, again. But let's be honest, is anyone really that surprised? No? Didn't think so, and neither are we. A quick call to Eidos revealed an even bleaker picture. There is now no set date for release (probably a sensible decision going by their past performances) and, at best, the game will be with us in about two months time. Don't be fooled by the game's website either, which boldly claims, 'The Wait Is Over', because quite obviously, it is not.

INFANTRY (Brainscan)

LAST SEEN *PC ZONE* #77
ORIGINAL RELEASE DATE Summer '99

You'll be able to storm opposing bases.

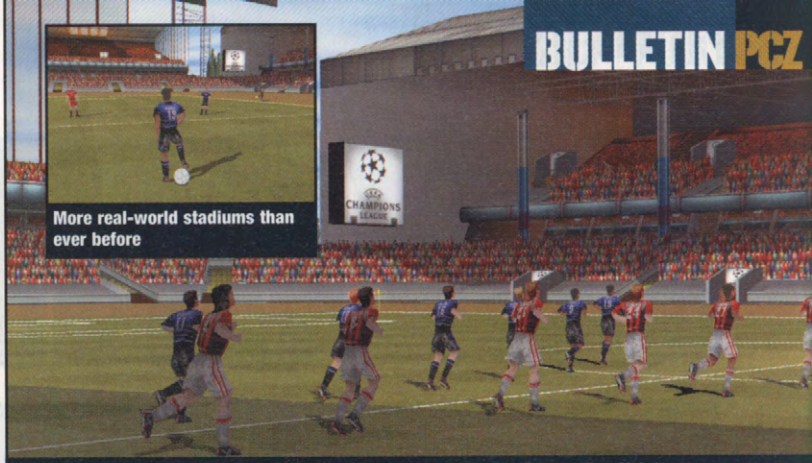
Still causing as much excitement now as it did when we first featured it back in issue 77, *Infantry* – the over-the-net, tactical combat game – is set for release sometime this summer. Allowing players to battle over a massive landscape, both individually and co-operatively, the game will have a constantly evolving game universe, which will run online, 24x7. A strong role-playing element is also being vaunted. A free beta test download is now available from the website (**www.infantryzone.com**). Looking at the host of features on offer, summer suddenly seems a very long way away.

THE REAL NEVERENDING STORY (Discreet Monsters)

LAST SEEN *PC ZONE* #70
ORIGINAL RELEASE DATE: April '99

"If you think I'm falling for the old 'They're behind you' joke..."

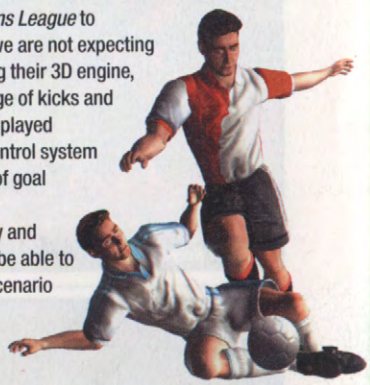
It's beginning to feel like a never ending wait for what is proclaimed as being the potential saviour of the adventure game genre. With an expected release date of Christmas 2000, that feeling is set to continue. Developers Discreet Monsters claim that their 'Elastic Story Streaming' will allow the player total freedom, with the game featuring loads of sub-quests, and a real-time environment where events happen whether the player is there or not. It sounds like it could be worth the wait.



More real-world stadiums than ever before

UEFA Champions League: 22 player multiplayer games, with everyone on the pitch human-controlled? Best buy a few extra game pads then.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE REACHES SECOND STAGE



Silicon Dreams are updating last years *UEFA Champions League* to accommodate data from the current season. Though we are not expecting a *FIFA* beater, the developers are hard at work updating their 3D engine, giving the players more fluid movement, a greater range of kicks and moves and more responsive passing. Those who have played previous versions of the game may like to know the control system is being tweaked, and we can expect a greater range of goal celebration animations.

BBC defector Bob Wilson, along with Clive Tyldesley and Kevin Keegan will provide the commentary, and you'll be able to play 22-player games in multiplayer mode. Finally, a scenario mode will allow you to play every final since 1960.

UEFA Champions League – Season 1999/2000 is due out in March from Eidos.

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PCZONE READER

Age Of Empires II: The Age Of Kings

Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri

Baldur's Gate

Dungeon Keeper II

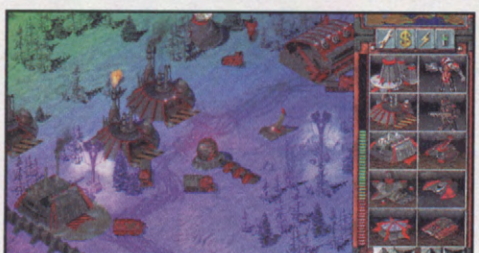
FIFA 2000

Microsoft Flight Simulator 2000

Half-Life: Game Of The Year Edition

Hidden & Dangerous

Homeworld


C&C: Tiberian Sun

Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation

Ultima Online: The Second Age

Friends, gamers, readers, lend us your votes. Do not ask what your magazine can do for you, but what you can do for your magazine. Yes, it's that time of year where you have the chance to vote for your favourite games of '99

The 1999 *PC ZONE* Reader Awards are here, and it's up to each one of you to have your say as to which of last year's games were tops and which were flops. If you have ever sat reading one of our reviews, screaming that we had got it all wrong and swearing that *Sim Laundrette* really is the greatest game in the world, then now is your chance to tell everyone. However, if washing machines aren't your thing, we've made a few suggestions of our own to help you pick the cream of the crop of last year's games.

Every year games just keep getting better and better, and 1999 was certainly no exception. *Unreal Tournament* (*PCZ* #81) with its near-human bots, *Homeworld* (*PCZ* #82), which literally brought a new dimension to the RTS genre and the fiendishly addictive *Midtown Madness* (*PCZ* #79), were just three of the corkers we enjoyed. That's not forgetting such *PC ZONE* benchmark Classics as *System Shock 2* (*PCZ* #80), *Age Of Empires II* (*PCZ* #84), *Championship Manager 99/00* (*PCZ* #84), *Half-Life: Game Of The Year Edition* (*PCZ* #71), *Ultima Online* (*PCZ* #80) and *Hidden & Dangerous* (*PCZ* #79). Lordy, there's almost too many games to choose from. Still, it's not our problem.

Thankfully, voting couldn't be any easier. All you have to do is fill in the Voting Form and send it to us in the post. Either that or whizz your vote along via the Internet by visiting the *PC ZONE* website at **www.pczone.co.uk**, which will save you 19p on the cost of a stamp and keep your copy of *PC ZONE* in pristine condition. Of course, if you've already registered on the website, you'll be receiving your voting form via email. And if you miss all that, the voting slip will be printed again next issue. However, we'll need your votes in by 16 March. So, to stop a last minute influx, please send them in as soon as you possibly can.

The awards ceremony itself will be staged at the London club Fabric on Tuesday, 11 April, and it promises to be the best *PC ZONE* awards ceremony to date. Unfortunately, unless your name's down, you won't get in. We're terribly sorry about that.

AWARDS 1999

WIN WIN WIN

Not only do you get to have your say, you can win as well

The games you vote for won't be the only winners of the *PC ZONE* Reader Awards 1999. All Voting Forms and emails will be entered into a draw to win something suitably snazzy from one of the sponsors, so now there's extra incentive for you to send in your list of top games. Remember, your votes need to be with us by 16 March at the very latest, for our data entry monkeys to be able to process everything in time. Those of you voting by email need to state the categories the games you have chosen fall into (eg Best Role-Playing Game: *Baldur's Gate*), as well as including your name, phone number and address. Without these your vote will be void. So, get to it and happy voting.

Unreal Tournament

THE CATEGORIES

Here are the categories for this year's awards, and a few of our recommendations for each one

BEST FIRST-PERSON ACTION GAME
Unreal Tournament, Quake III Arena, Aliens Vs Predator, Kingpin, Rogue Spear, Half-Life: Game Of The Year Edition, Hidden & Dangerous, Descent 3, Starsiege Universe

BEST STRATEGY GAME
Age Of Empires II: The Age Of Kings, Civilisation II: The Test Of Time, Homeworld, Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri, C&C: Tiberian Sun, Dungeon Keeper II, Theme Park World, SimCity 3000

BEST ROLE-PLAYING GAMES
System Shock 2, Baldur's Gate, Lands Of Lore III, Everquest, Ultima Online: The Second Age

BEST ACTION/ADVENTURE GAME
Indiana Jones And The Infernal Machine, The Nomad Soul, Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation, Resident Evil 2

BEST DRIVING GAME
Midtown Madness, Rally Championship, TOCA 2, Driver, Superbike World Championship

BEST SIMULATION
F/A 18E Super Hornet, Mig Alley, Flight Unlimited III, Team Alligator, Microsoft Flight Simulator 2000, Freespace 2

BEST SPORTS GAME
FIFA 2000, NBA Live 2000, Championship Manager 99/00, PGA Championship Golf, International Cricket Captain 2

GAME OF THE YEAR
Championship Manager 99/00, Unreal Tournament, Civilisation II: Test Of Time, Hidden And Dangerous, Homeworld, System Shock 2, Half-Life, Dungeon Keeper II, C&C Tiberian Sun, Age of Empires II: The Age Of Kings, Midtown Madness, Ultima Online

BEST PUBLISHER
Sierra, GT Interactive, Activision, EA, Eidos, Interplay, Hasbro, Microsoft, Take 2

BEST DEVELOPER
Valve, id Software, Ensemble Studios, Westwood, Core Design, LucasArts, Origin, DMA Design

PCZONE READER AWARDS 1999 VOTING FORM

BEST FIRST-PERSON ACTION GAME

BEST STRATEGY GAME

BEST ROLE-PLAYING GAME

BEST ACTION\ADVENTURE GAME

BEST DRIVING GAME

BEST SIMULATION

BEST SPORTS GAME

GAME OF THE YEAR

PUBLISHER OF THE YEAR

DEVELOPER OF THE YEAR

Name:

Job Title:

Address:

Postcode: Daytime Telephone:

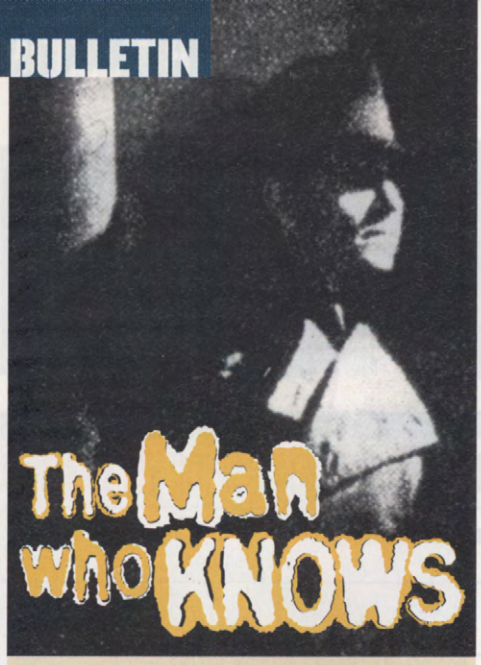
☐ *Please tick if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers or new products from other companies*

☐ *Please tick if under 18 years of age*

✪ *TERMS AND CONDITIONS: Entries with all nominations filled out 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 any other companies associated with the Awards. Only one entry per reader. No cash alternatives will be offered. Submission of entry will be taken as acceptance of these rules.*

SEND YOUR VOTES TO: Helen Cribb, *PC ZONE*, 19 Bolsover Street, London W1P 7HJ.

✪ *All nominations must reach us by 16 March, so please start sending them in right away. A photocopy of the voting form or a postcard are fine if you don't want to cut up your copy of the mag, just don't forget to include all the details required. Either this, or you can vote via the website as stated above, or through the email we send to you if you are already registered on the site.*



GOD, FILTH & FOOTBALL

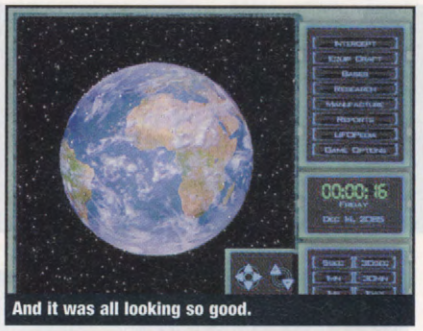
Mortal Kombat developer **Midway** has come under attack from a bunch of torch-wielding god-botherers intent on purging sickness from their city. Incensed by the award of $2m business grant to the developer, 20 so-called 'Christian peacemakers' marched on **Chicago City Hall** demanding that it be removed immediately. Chicago's planning department insisted that Midway's expansion program would benefit the city, whereas one of the god-mitherers wailed: "Public money should not be going to companies that sell violent war toys for children."

There are, however, far worse things that can be done to children, and the games industry was recently rocked by the revelation that one of the creators of ***Tomb Raider*** has been charged with soliciting sex from a nine-year-old girl. **Kenneth Lockley**, 28, an executive with **Core Design**, was arrested at the **Regent's Hotel** in London, where he had been due to attend a gala launch party for *Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation*. Lockley was busted after allegedly contacting an undercover policeman, whom he asked to find a nine-year-old girl to have sex with an unnamed third person. Lockley was suspended from the company pending an investigation, and the situation is clearly of great embarrassment to both Core and publishers **Eidos**. If the allegations prove true, the section of the latest game involving playing with the young Lara will take on a far more sinister meaning. Pram Raider, anyone?

On a lighter note, it would appear that ***Championship Manager*** addiction is more widespread than first feared, afflicting even Premiership footballers. **Everton** defender **Michael Ball** has revealed himself to be a fan, and in fact has even had to sell himself in the game. Decipher his strategy if you can: "I'm quite good on it. Me and me brother teamed up and we sort of cheated a bit. He was Man U and I was Everton, and we got all the best players and sold all the not so good, all the young lads. I was up for sale at Everton for about £18 million and I was on 20-25 grand a week, but I wasn't happy! I was fuming that I had to sell meself! And I just said to meself, 'No, you're not going!'. I wasn't happy, I was being dead greedy, so me brother had a big gob on with me, calling me all nicknames and everything. I was on too much money." As for his Finishing rating of 11/20, he said: "That's being a bit biased there. That's being very biased – they haven't seen me on the training field, obviously. It's probably me penalties, that's about it, 'cos I take penalties, but anything in free play I'm hopeless at. I would hope me tackling and me passing was a bit higher but the rest are fair and the shooting bit's a bit biased."

Given the **Collyer** brothers well-publicised support of Everton, there are no surprises there.

Check out www.tacticalplanet.com/xcom for more *X-COM* details.



And it was all looking so good.

Dark days for *X-COM* fans.

X-COM REVELATIONS

What's going on with *X-COM*?

The entire *X-COM: Genesis* team, many of whom worked on the space combat sim *X-COM: Interceptor*, have been made redundant as a result of recent plans to downsize the organisation. Hasbro has stated that development on the game will continue, under a different team. This isn't the first time the same fate has befallen an *X-COM* game: last year, development on the *Unreal*-powered 3D shooter *X-COM: Alliance* was switched from England to the US, apparently as development was not going to plan.

Hasbro has kept quiet regarding the whole matter (these screenshots were leaked onto the Net), but depending on how far the ex-*Genesis* team were into development, we can expect a delay of at least six months.

Thankfully, we are told development on *X-COM: Alliance* is still up to speed, with the game still scheduled for release in the second half of the year. If at all, *Genesis* will be out some time next year.

TICKERTAPE

STARTS++ Pumpkin Studios has announced that work on its 3D strategy sequel, *WarZone 2120*, has been put on hold while the team gets stuck into newer projects. **++STOP++** It seems Xatrix, the developers of *Kingpin*, are not working on the fabled *Wolfenstein* sequel after all. According to our sources, Raven Games, creators of *Soldier Of Fortune*, are working on *Wolfenstein* instead. **++STOP++** Infogrames has binned *Mission Impossible*, the conversion of the N64 action game, which apparently wasn't much cop anyway. **++STOP++** Also canned is Blue Byte's real-time strategy game *Shadowpact*. **++STOP++** *Power Of The Mind Worms* is the title of the first graphic novel to be based on *Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri* and should be available now. **++ENDS**

STAFF WRITER WANTED!

Dennis Interactive, the online arm of Dennis Publishing, is looking to hire a young, enthusiastic gamer to work on the websites for the company's two leading games titles, *PC ZONE* and *Official Dreamcast Magazine*.

As staff writer, you will be responsible for maintaining the sites' archive of material from the magazines, including reviews, previews, news and game guides, while keeping them topped up with a good proportion of original content, developing new features and maintaining a relationship with the sites' readers through email, forums and live chat.

You needn't be an HTML wizard, programmer or professional journalist, although a working knowledge of websites, previous experience on an online games site and the ability to source hot (and preferably exclusive) content will certainly count in your favour.

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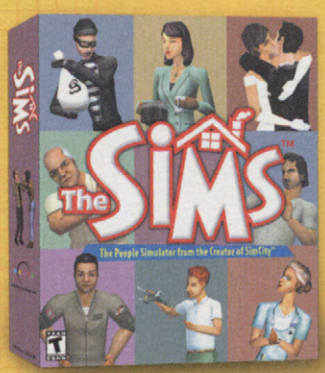

PC CD

MAXIS

Meet The Sims at www.TheSims.com

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HOTSHOTS

In which *PC ZONE* takes a look at hot new games that will be coming your way soon. This month we've got brand new screenshots from Hasbro Interactive's impressive *B-17 Flying Fortress 2 – The Mighty 8th*

B-17 FLYING FORTRESS 2 THE MIGHTY 8TH

★ Hasbro Interactive • Out March

The soulless era of flight sims is set to end when Hasbro release *B-17 2*. Apart from being the only dedicated WWII bomber sim since the original *B-17* came out nine years ago, *The Mighty 8th* also allows players to fly eight different fighters, on either the American or German side, as well as, of course, man each station within the eponymous bomber. However, one of *B-17 2*'s most impressive features is its crew development. A bit like in a RPG, you must develop your crew in different skills, look after them throughout each mission and see them safely home. As a squadron commander you can allocate targets, or if you prefer to sit out the war as a belly gunner, you can leave the flying to your AI comrades and take pot shots at incoming fighters. Basically *B-17 2* is one of the few flight sims we here at *PC ZONE* are looking forward to. Expect a full review next issue.

DIRECTIONAL GYRO
GYRO HORIZON
COOLANT TEMP
R.P.M.
CARB AIR TEMP
MOVE STICK FORWARD TO UNLOCK TAIL WHEEL
BLINKER
DELAY
INST.

Just one of Dan Thron's many artistic creations. (See boxout page 44).

"*Thief II* continues where *Thief* left off, Garrett has vanquished the Trickster and the town has moved into a more prosperous era"

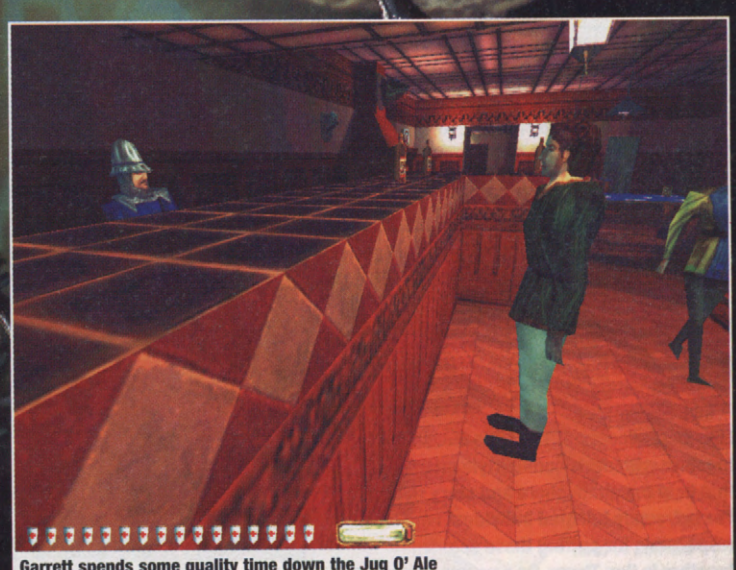
That sneaky one-eyed thief is back...

THIEF II: THE METAL AGE

The first-person looter is back in town and he's looking for places to ply his trade. *Keith Pullin* was found lurking in the shadows in an attempt to uncover some of his tricks

It's always worth checking out patrol routes before you attempt a break-in.

A lot of the architecture is based on old European stately homes, not quite sure what this is based on though...



Garrett spends some quality time down the Jug O' Ale

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Looking Glass Studios
PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive
WEBSITE www.lglass.com
OUT March 2000

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- The bionic eye
- Much bigger levels than before
- Third revision of the Dark Engine (second used in *System Shock 2*)
- Frighteningly cunning AI
- Weather affects gameplay

About 18 months ago *Thief: The Dark Project* blew us away. However, it wasn't rocket launchers, miniguns, plasma rifles and all that childish tomfoolery that tickled our fancy. No, no, no – that would be too easy. *Thief* managed to stun us all into appreciative silence by turning the first-person perspective action game on its head: *Thief* controversially encouraged players to avoid combat, concentrating instead on sneaking about stealing other peoples' belongings. For some, this was just plain boring. For others, *Thief* was a breath of fresh air and a benchmark in gaming realism. The only thing it lacked was the ability to nick a car and ram raid it into the nearest Post Office. That aside, *Thief* pioneered a new genre. What genre? The 'sneak 'em up'.

THIEVING GYPSY...

Thief II: The Metal Age continues where *Thief* left off. Garrett has vanquished the Trickster and the town has moved into a more prosperous era. Royalty and nobility lord it up on a daily basis, while Sheriff Gormon Truart keeps crime at a virtually non-existent level; the slightest hint of criminal activity and guards swoop in to administer instant decapitation.

The trouble is with all these rich folk poncing about there's a lot of loot lying around just waiting to be pilfered, so any self-respecting thief will take the risk to reap the rewards. Our Garrett is no exception, except for him things are slightly different: for some unknown reason the new Sheriff wants him dead.

Gratitude for saving the town from Pagan rule one year ago doesn't even enter into this vile policeman's head. Garrett won't stand for it, of course, so he sets off to discover why his head is wanted on a plate. One thing leads to another and it's not long before our master thief stumbles into a plot of corruption and betrayal that goes beyond mere thief persecution.

Once again, politics play a huge part in the story. The game contains three main rival groups: the mysterious Keepers; a technological sect known as the Mechanists; and the Pagans. Their contempt for each other runs deep, so as far as sub-plots go, expect plenty.

Thief II does contain one very welcome change from the original: you can forget about zombies, ghouls and all that other undead lark. Looking Glass has decided to keep *Thief II* 'real', as project director Steve Pearsall explains: "Garrett will be operating mostly in the city itself, so the missions will be set in more of an urban setting. You'll see missions in places you'd expect to find in a city – mansions, museums, banks, warehouses and churches."

That's a huge relief for those of us who found ourselves floundering in the underground crypt stage on the original game. Furthermore, *Thief II* spans 15 gargantuan stages. Associate producer Lulu Lamer jokingly implies that one particular level is almost as big as the whole of the original game. A slight exaggeration possibly, yet playing the single level demo on this month's cover disc will give you an idea of what she's getting at.

There's also a hell of a lot more variety this time round. Instead of simply running around nicking stuff, you can get involved in a whole host of nefarious sidelines. One stage sees our world-weary thief plan and execute an after-hours bank robbery, and you can also try your hand at framing somebody for a crime they didn't commit. If that's not devious enough for you, how about kidnapping someone? Interestingly, you also get the chance to sneak aboard and stow away on an enemy boat. And in a strange twist of fate, you're also called upon to investigate a murder site. Poirot anyone?

"There's a hell of a lot more variety this time round. Instead of simply running around nicking stuff, you can get involved in a whole host of nefarious sidelines"

Basically, there's an entire city at your disposal, almost every major building in the game plays an important part in the story at one point or another. And, as you can see from playing the demo, you can traverse the entire city via the rooftops, or as it's known in the trade – 'the thieves' highway'.

CV

LOOKING GLASS STUDIOS

Founded in 1992, Looking Glass Studios has made more than £70 million in just eight years and is now one of the largest independent game developers in the world. Here are the games that did it for them.

1992	*Ultima Underworld: The Stygian Abyss*
1993	*Ultima Underworld II: Labyrinth Of Worlds* (PCZ #1, 94%)
1994	*System Shock* (PCZ #20, 95%)
1995	*Flight Unlimited* (PCZ #25, 96%)
1996	*Terra Nova: Strike Force Centauri* (PCZ #39, 90%)
1996	*Flight Unlimited II* (PCZ #60, 84%)
1998	*Thief: The Dark Project* (PCZ #72, 90%)
1999	*Flight Unlimited III* (PCZ #82, 90%)
1999	*System Shock 2* (PCZ #80, 95%)
1999	*Thief Gold* (PCZ #84, 91%)

COMIC CAPERS

Like its predecessor, *Thief II* is woven together with dark, comic-style interludes that help the atmosphere and story flow. The extremely talented individual who is responsible for putting these sequences together is Dan Thron. So now you know...

Getting up close and personal – not the best way to progress through the game.

IT'S DARK OUT THERE

Thief II uses the third revision of the Dark Engine. The second version was used in *System Shock 2* incidentally, so graphically things look pretty hot, if a little on the dark side. And get your head around this spark of brilliance: you can actually hide in the fog. This is a world first, and rest assured it's a spine-tingling experience. Imagine it: you're hiding in the mist, you can see out, but your enemies can't see in. Talk about a thief's best friend. The potential for mischief is limitless.

As in the original game a 'lightometer' at the bottom middle of the screen informs you how visible you are to prying eyes. When the meter is dark you are safe and cannot be seen. When it lights up you are visible and in danger of being rumbled. There are no changes at all in that department apart from the fact that the light density spectrum has increased, meaning there are even more levels of shade. You'll also notice the appearance of coloured lighting, something that was strangely absent from the original game.

Another little quirk of inspiration comes in the form of variable translucency. In other words, expect to see muddy water as well as crystal clear water. Yet again this has the potential to help some of the more cunning thieves, especially if you can find a way to stay underwater for a long time...

As a special bonus Looking Glass has used the cloud routines from the *Flight Unlimited* series to create an authentic-looking sky. And guess what? They've also gone and put bloody weather in there as well. Rain lashes down (or even sideways due to some cool wind physics), as does snow. Certainly one thing we never counted on was being caught in a blizzard. Is there nothing these guys can't do?

Another pleasing, yet underrated, aspect of the original was the wonderful use of sound. Amazingly this has been improved upon. Guards mutter even more gibberish to themselves, and shout more absurdities while trying to detect you. You can also eavesdrop on private conversations, many of which contain important clues as to the whereabouts of valuable items and other stuff.

You can even listen at doors and windows to find out if anyone's lurking behind them. Much of the banter is actually quite amusing, it's almost as if the developers have decided that if we're going to have to listen to this medieval drivel, we might as well be amused by it.

Ambient sound has also been improved. Music from street performers wafts through alleyways, and the clamour of a busy marketplace echoes across the rooftops. *Thief II* could well be an acoustic masterpiece.

Q&A

LULU LAMER

Lulu Lamer is associate producer on Thief II. *She's also a surfer, DJ and diehard action/adventure fanatic*

PCZ What was the first game you ever played?

LULU *Pong.*

PCZ What's the best game you've ever played?

LULU *ADOM* or *System Shock.*

PCZ What was the last game you bought?

LULU *Ultima IX.*

PCZ Have you ever stolen anything yourself?

LULU Look, I was raised by wolves, of course I've stolen a few chickens here and there, maybe the odd neglected baby, but it was for the good of the pack!

PCZ Do you think thieves should have their hands chopped off as punishment?

LULU I'd have to say no – I'm not really an advocate of corporal punishment.

PCZ Have you ever been in a fight before? If so, what happened?

LULU Yes. I have an older sister – enough said?

TOGETHER WE STEAL

So what about that elusive multiplayer mode? Rumour had it that *Thief II* was going to attempt the impossible and actually have a few thieves running around the same environment. At this point, Steve Pearsall makes his excuses: "Even though we have a multiplayer mode working in the engine and have some test multiplayer levels up and running, we have decided to hold off on shipping any multiplayer levels with *Thief II*."

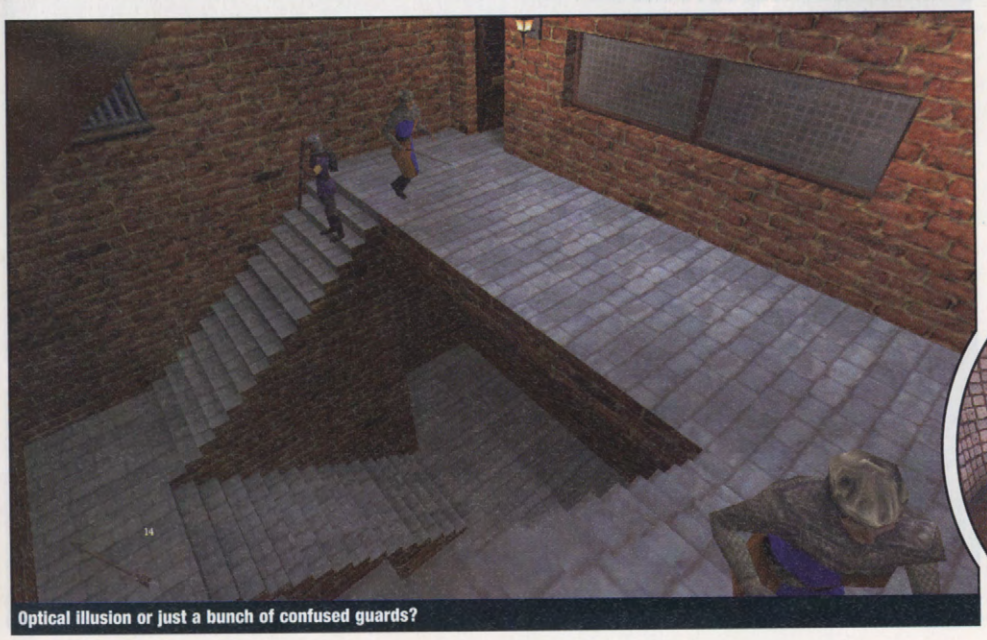
So what's the problem exactly?

"We think we can add a new twist to multiplayer play just as we did to single-player first-person gaming with *Thief*, but we don't have the resources to do a new kind of multiplayer and ship a finely tuned single-player game at the moment," says Pearsall.

Shame really, but you've got to take your hats off to the Looking Glass bods: rather than release a dodgy version, they're holding back until they get it

Conceptual artwork depicting various Mechanist drones.

Wandering around in the open is a sure way to get spotted.



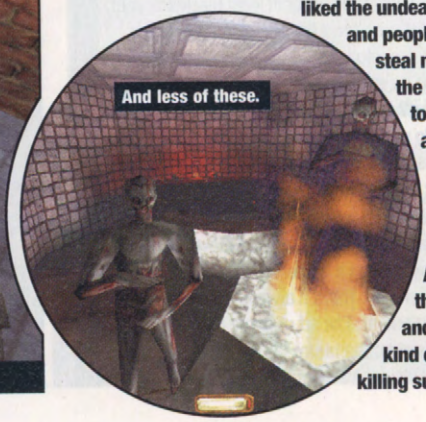
Optical illusion or just a bunch of confused guards?

PUBLIC OPINION

Looking Glass decided the people will get what the people want

Expect to see more of this...

One of the key elements in the development of *Thief II: The Metal Age* was listening to what the public and specialist press had to say about *Thief: The Dark Project*. After more than a year's worth of feedback, Looking Glass came to the following conclusion: nobody liked the undead sections and people wanted to steal more stuff. So the developers took heed and have produced a game that makes a lot more sense. A thief is a thief after all, and not some kind of zombie-killing superhero.



And less of these.

THIEF IN THE HOUSE...

INTERVIEW WITH STEVE PEARSALL

We plucked project director Steve Pearsall away from his hectic schedule and asked him a few questions about *Thief II: The Metal Age* and the future of the *Thief* franchise...

PCZ Were you at any time during development tempted to go for a more direct, action-orientated approach? Was it difficult to stop yourself straying from the core gameplay element, which of course is stealth and cunning?

STEVE Not at all. We really wanted to fully explore the possibilities of stealthy gameplay. *Thief* was a very experimental title for us and, as such, we hedged our bets a bit and didn't push stealth gameplay as far as we could have. Now that we have the gaming public's endorsement we feel like we can take things a lot further than we were able to in the original game.

PCZ It seems like you've concentrated more on the sound this time, too – this shows just by playing the demo. Roughly how many hours of script have you got in the full game? Oh, and what exactly is a 'taffer'?

STEVE All together our AI characters have over 4,000 separate speech files and no-one has counted the number of sound effects and ambient music files. A 'taffer' is a slang word that started out meaning a criminal, but has since evolved in the local language to mean any sort of low-life character.

PCZ With *System Shock 2* currently taking the world by storm and *Thief II* about to hit the streets, it's probably fair to say that Looking Glass is one of the top developers at the moment. What are you most proud of in *Thief II*? Also, are there many gameplay elements that you couln't fit in this time and would like to squeeze into a future game?

STEVE In fairness to other development houses I would like to mention that being independently owned makes it easier for us to take risks and to develop games based on innovative and untried gameplay concepts that larger corporations are adverse to taking. I think the *Thief II* team is most proud of the effort we are making to take the unique stealth gameplay we pioneered in *Thief* to a more refined level, to immerse the player more completely in the world we are building in *Thief II*.

PCZ Any plans to take the *Thief* series into modern times? Dodging lasers, hi-tech security cameras?

STEVE Well, I can't talk about any projects that haven't been publicly announced, but it does sound like you could make a pretty good game out of that concept, doesn't it? But I've said too much already and if I said anymore I'd have to kill you all, or at least blackjack you!

PCZ It's all right we won't tell anyone...

STEVE No, I'd better stop.

PCZ So, where do you see first-person perspective games heading? Do you think it'll take over gaming, and do you think there's room for other types of games as more people seek out entertainment in 'real' locations?

STEVE I think first-person gaming is heading for more immersive environments that draw the player into a gaming world by making it easier for them to suspend their sense of disbelief. There'll always be room for all forms of entertainment. The art of game design is *still* in its infancy and the future holds gameplay innovations that we can't even imagine right now.

just right. In the long run that's probably for the best, because that can only mean *Thief III* is already in the pipeline...

In the meantime, we can reveal that the multiplayer option will be co-op rather than deathmatch, and that gameplay will focus on joint puzzle solving. For instance, you may come across a room with two guards, both of them standing next to alarms. In order to get past said guards you need to kill them at exactly the same time, so that the other guard doesn't raise the alarm. In other words, each player takes a guard. So there you have it, *Thief III* – you heard it here first.

Which brings us nicely around to the AI. Once again, we presume you're going to play this month's demo. Doing so will reveal to you the frightening intelligence bestowed upon the city's inhabitants: normal citizens seem to have a heightened sense of panic that always sends them running for the nearest guard. When a guard hears of the intrusion, he'll dash instantly to where you were spotted and attempt to nobble you.

They don't give up easily either, and some guards are better with a bow and arrow than they are with a sword. The moment they spot your greasy, dank hair flopping round the corner of a wall, they'll open up with a lethal salvo of arrows. Still, the abundance of archers means you can steal arrows straight out of their quiver – assuming you can get close enough of course.

There are also some very strange and interesting servants wandering about...

Automated drone things, constructed by the technologically advanced Mechanists, wander about doing their master's bidding. Some of these drones are only able to see and some are only able to hear, which adds a new curious dimension to the gameplay, especially when there's a mixture of both in one room and you have to employ a kind of softly, softly, flash bomb approach to get through.

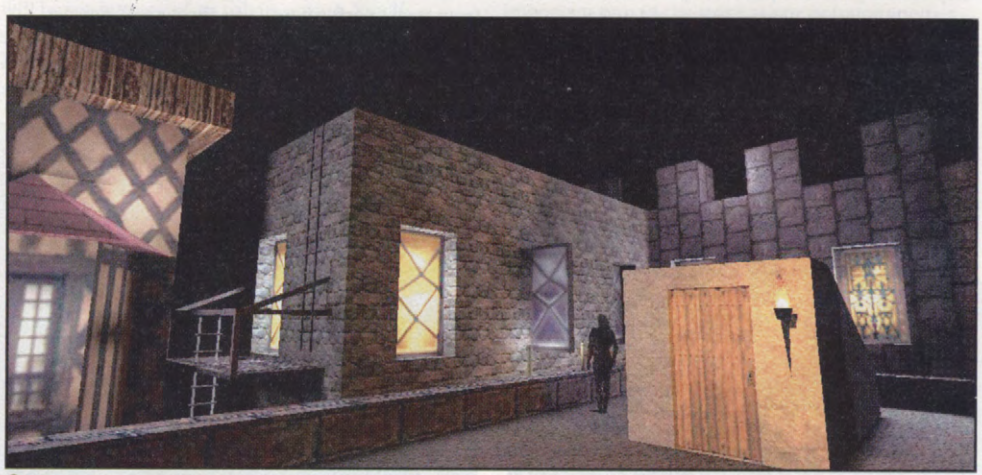
And if all that's not enough, there are also security cameras to deal with. Worse still, there are huge mechanical beasts that seem to have taken a wrong turn off the set of *Robocop*. If these behemoths spot you it's goodnight Garrett.

"Some drones are only able to see and some are only able to hear, which adds a new curious dimension to the gameplay, especially when there's a mixture of both in one room"

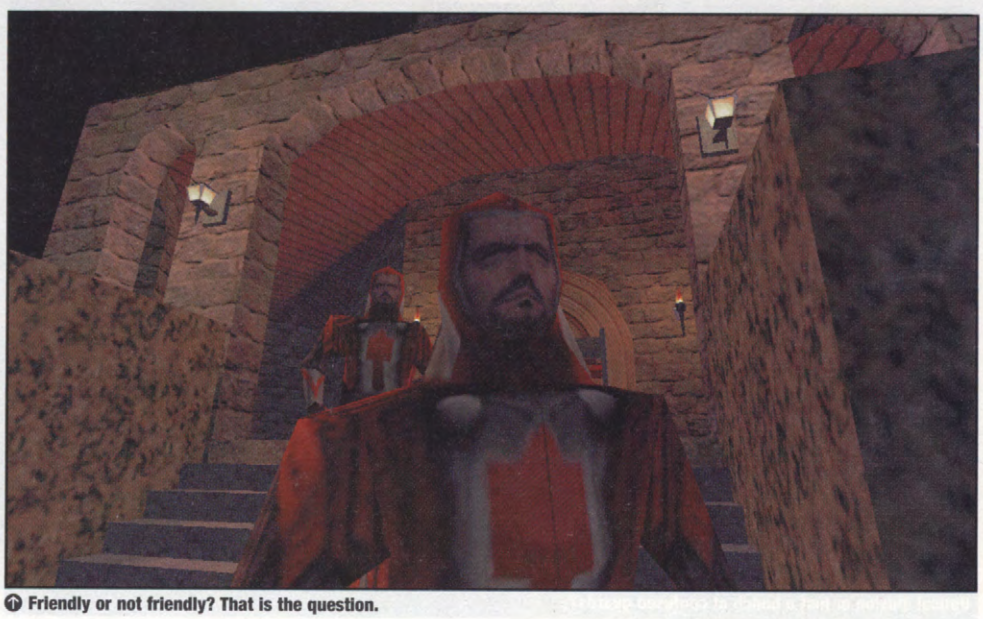
If you thought the first game was tough (and most gnarled gamers did), you really haven't seen anything yet. If you take the difficulty of *Thief* and multiply it by six billion you're getting close to *Thief II*.

INSPECTOR GADGET?

Yes, developers can be cruel, but they can also offer a semblance of light at the end of tunnel. In this particular case it's the new weapons and gadgets that are at your disposal. Most notable of all is



The rooftops tend to be the city's liveliest spot.



Friendly or not friendly? That is the question.

Garrett's mechanical eye. Remember in the first game when the Trickster ripped our hero's eye out? Well, in a startling bit of continuity, Looking Glass has given the new improved eye a few Steve Austin-type bionic powers.

This neat little gizmo can be thrown, dropped or placed in various locations to give Garrett a sneak peek of what's up the next corridor or room. It can also flip between normal, night and heat vision. You can zoom in and have a closer look at certain situations, and it also has a built-in automatic distance compensation for the bow. Whether this is some kind of auto-targeting system is unknown at this stage because it's still not implemented, so we'll just have to wait and see. Sounds good, though.

SO WHAT ELSE? MUCH MORE...

There are some brilliant new explosive devices, such as standard mines and gas mines that knock out anyone in the vicinity. Flares also come into play, so you can see exactly where you're going, even in complete darkness. Looking Glass has also promised some amendments on the lock-picking aspect of the gameplay. But once again this is something that Looking Glass is still in the process of tweaking, so we've yet to see the results of that particular innovation.

Sadly, it looks as though the much maligned moss arrow will stay, however, more arrows will now be available, including vine arrows, which stick to surfaces other than wood or earth. A new invisibility potion will be a helpful addition for beginners and finally a 'catfall' potion can be used to fall or jump from massive heights.

SHADOWY FIGURE

We have extremely high hopes for *Thief II: The Metal Age*, as you've probably gathered from this massive six-page preview. And, OK, we've already mentioned it a couple of times, but if you don't believe the hype, why not try out the demo? Remember, it's just an alpha version and a lot of the shadows and textures still have to be smoothed, but that aside, we're sure you'll find it impressive. All you have to do now is wait until next month for the full review.

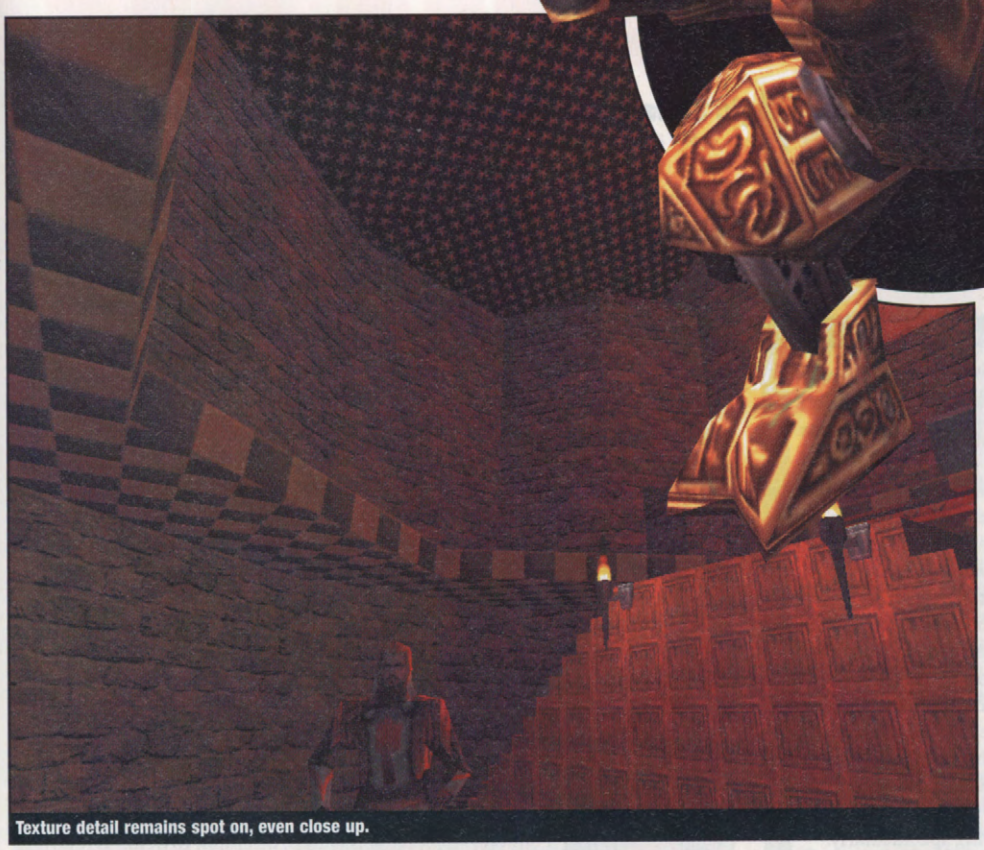
Until then, try crawling across the rooftops of your own hometown, or rubbing black shoe polish over your hands and face and flitting from one dark alleyway to the next. You never know, you might be able to break into your local game stockist and steal a copy.

Then again, perhaps not – stealing is illegal. Didn't you know? PCZ

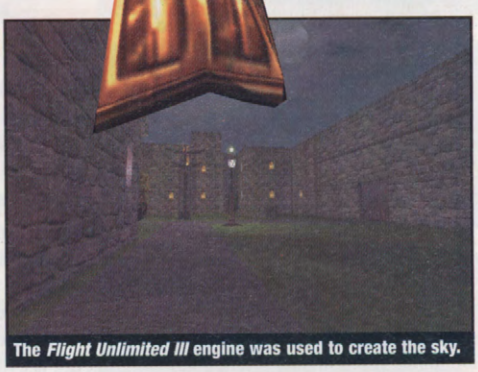
Even the weather has a habit of taking you by surprise...

A weary Looking Glass graphic artist travelled the world to find textures that would fit the game.

"What's a nice girl like you doing in a place like this?"



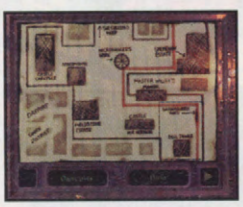
Texture detail remains spot on, even close up.

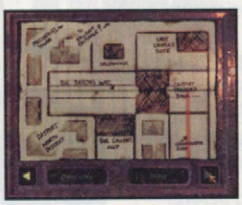


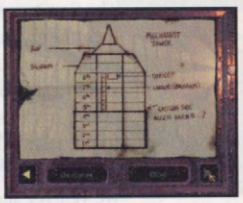
The *Flight Unlimited III* engine was used to create the sky.

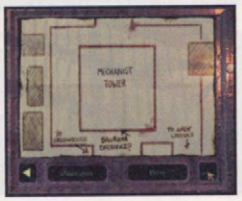
MAPPING IT UP

In *Thief* there was generally one map per level. *Thief II* tends to have at least three or four. This is to give the player a chance to properly 'case the joint' before diving in and committing a robbery. On the demo, for instance, there are four separate maps...









Could be trouble brewing for our cheeky teenager from Brum.

Now that's magic!

SIMON THE

Sorcery abounds as another 2D adventure gets that magic 3D facelift. *Keith Pullin* pulls the rabbit from the hat

CV

ADVENTURESOFT/ HEADFIRST PRODUCTIONS

AdventureSoft (now known as Headfirst Productions in order to shake off its adventure image) has been around for an incredible 17 years. The company has released products on virtually every format going, including the Acorn Electron, Commodore 64, Spectrum 48K, Amiga and Atari ST. Here's a quick shifty at what AdventureSoft has done for the PC...

- **1986** Masters Of The Universe – Super Adventure
- **1988** Heroes Of The Lance
- **1989** Personal Nightmare
- **1990** Elvira: Mistress Of The Dark
- **1991** Elvira II: The Jaws Of Cerberus
- **1992** Waxworks
- **1993** Simon The Sorcerer
- **1995** Simon The Sorcerer II
- **1997** The Feeble Files
- **1998** Simon The Sorcerer's Puzzle Pack

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Headfirst Productions
PUBLISHER Hasbro Interactive
WEBSITE www.headfirst.co.uk
OUT March/April

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Should be very funny indeed
- Really imaginative subgames
- Loads of characters and speech
- It's crazy, wild and wacky, man

The *King's Quest*, *Prince Of Persia* and *Indiana Jones* series of PC adventures have all recently undergone dramatic changes. Gone are the 2D backgrounds, in their place new, glorious 3D environments have appeared. Admittedly, some attempts (like *Prince Of Persia 3D*) have fallen a bit flat, but generally most developers deserve a big pat on the back – the new 3D adventure genre is evolving spectacularly.

It comes as no great surprise then to find the highly successful *Simon The Sorcerer* series getting the same treatment. But what is surprising is that it looks like developers Headfirst Productions has enough tricks up its sleeve to actually take this fledging genre further than we've ever seen before.

FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

Simon will eventually boast over 30 separate expressions including laughter, tears, anger, and total brown trouser fear. Simon's real-time gurning antics will also give an indication of what to expect next. If our wannabe wizard is looking a bit worried, you can expect trouble. If he's skipping through fields of joy with a big grin on his face, you know that everything is going as planned.

This graphical attention to detail should also improve the effectiveness of the interface. Headfirst has gone into *Grim Fandango* territory here, so, when Simon sees something interesting or fundamental to the plot, he turns his head, raises his eyebrows and looks straight at it.

A box at the top of the screen then displays the object or person that Simon is looking at and gives you appropriate actions to perform on said article. Simple. As far as puzzles go you can expect classic adventure fare. Find the golden cow, pull its golden udders, put stuff in mouth and become invincible. The 3D environment changes nothing in that respect. Like the brilliant *Indiana Jones And The Infernal Machine*, the gameplay is completely puzzle-led. However, unlike *Indy*'s latest outing, *SS3D* doesn't contain the slightest hint of combat. Simon can die, but it's in a kind of 'Oops, I've messed up the puzzle' fall-into-a-ravine kind of death. This doesn't mean there's a lack of action and excitement though – Simon is armed with a yo-yo, you know...

> **"The team has created something that is very English and very *Monty Python*"**

TALK TO ME BABY

Overall, attention to detail is really quite impressive. Film director Tom Lawsy has been brought in to advise on fixed camera angles, and they've also invited Bryan Bowles (the same thespian who did Simon's voice on the second game) back for a further 10,000 lines of dialogue.

In fact, the speech interface is something the team has worked on studiously. As with the previous two

Simon thinks he's somebody else for a moment.

Simon is aided throughout the game by his helpful, if a little ugly, Fairy Godmother.

Q&A

ANDREW BRAZIER

Andrew is assistant designer and texture artist on Simon The Sorcerer 3D. *Don't take the piss out of his surname though, we did – once, but we got away with it…*

PCZ What was the first game you ever played?
ANDREW I had a ZX81 and one of those 'make your own game' books, which involved typing in pages and pages of BASIC. I think the final result was a driving game in which you had to skilfully guide a number eight between a lot of capital 'I's. Thrilling.
PCZ And the best?
ANDREW *Formula 1* by CRL on the Spectrum. Oh, and more recently, it would have to be *Half-Life*.
PCZ What was the last game you bought?
ANDREW *Hidden And Dangerous*, but I took it back the next day because I didn't like it. I recently bought *Atomic Bomberman* on budget because it's a classic.
PCZ Who is the best game character ever? (Not Simon please…)
ANDREW That's a tough one. I reckon Max from *Sam & Max*.
PCZ Have you ever had fight?
ANDREW Yes I have, but it was very one-sided. I was outside a club with some mates and this drunken idiot punched me in the mouth because he thought I was a guy called John Parker. I fell over, he staggered off, and that was that really.
PCZ Who would you most like to fight now?
ANDREW John Parker. I reckon he owes me big time.

SORCERER 3D

games, the player has a choice of about four responses in any given situation. However, unlike its prequels, *SS3D* contains a 'banter mode' that filters out the gibberish, giving you the basic facts. The idea being that it will lead, hopefully, to a smoother flowing playing experience.

And then there's the humour. The good news is that it's business as usual in that department. The team has remained faithful to its satirical values in creating something that is very English and very *Monty Python*. It even has a stab at the games industry itself with subtle digs at clichéd plots like Nintendo's *Zelda*.

Other abstract references appear too. Astute retro-gamers will notice *The Hobbit* arcade game in one of the local pubs. Even stranger is the inclusion of some totally weird subgames. Ever played conkers on a PC? Didn't think so.

LAST-MINUTE PLOT

The world Simon finds himself in is big and beautiful. There are nine areas to solve including a temple, forest, city, swamp and fortress. There are tons of characters too – 80 of the blighters to be exact. We're even promised a huge plot twist at the end of the game.

Overall it looks as if this third (and apparently not final) instalment is the shape of things to come as far as Simon's concerned. So look out *Indy*, *3D Simon* is hot on your heels. PCZ

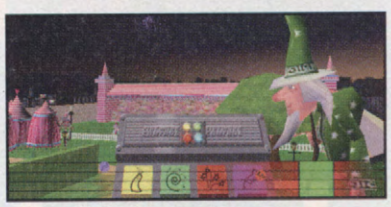
Recognise this?

ALL WORK AND NO PLAY...

Here are just a few of the strange subgames you're likely to find. Oh yes, they're a weird bunch at Headfirst – for starters they come from Birmingham, you know.

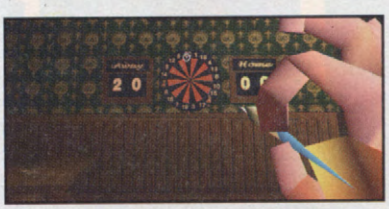
CONKERS

The classic playground game comes to the PC at long last. Hopefully you'll be able to save your conker and play it against other people, although somehow that's doubtful.



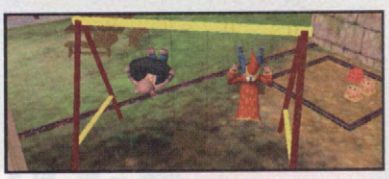
FIREWORKS

Direct your own firework display (or something). Details are sparse on this one, but we're reliably informed that this is actually a very important part of the whole game.



DARTS

Get really pissed up in your local and start hurling darts at the wall. We did ask if they were going to include a pool table too, but we just got strange looks.



SWINGS

Swing higher than your friends and see who's first to fly off. Alternatively, see if you can make the entire frame fall over. Great fun.

Don't play at being a hero. Be one.

You're in command of the LEGO Rock Raiders. These are your orders.

1. Go underground. 2. Build a base.
3. Control formidable technology.
4. Explore hostile terrain.
5. Seek crystal deposits.
6. Take your team home safely.

A word of warning: beware of Rock Monsters - it's deep, dark and very dangerous down there. Good luck!

LEGO Rock Raiders is available as a strategy game for your PC and action adventure for your PlayStation.

LEGO ROCK RAIDERS

Also available as a brand new range of LEGO system construction toys.
www.LEGO.com

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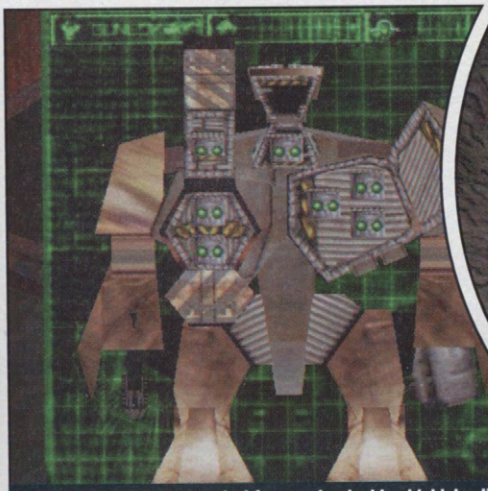
Co-operative multiplayer against a horde of evil spider-robots.

Real-time combat is mixed with full-on RPG level-ups.



As well as Gunlok, you control four customisable sidekicks, like this hulk.

This is what capitalism is going to do to your planet.

Now that's a big gun.

FIRST ENCOUNTER

GUNLOK

Robots have taken over in a world gone mad. *Dave Woods* infiltrates the ranks

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Rebellion
PUBLISHER TBC
WEBSITE www.rebellion.co.uk
OUT Easter 2000

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- It's a robotic RPG!
- Advanced 3D engine
- Real-time combat
- Full multiplayer capabilities

Capitalism, eh? You were warned about the rampant rise of the evil multinationals, but you were too busy buying the latest consumer desirables to listen. Now look what's happened. Mega corporations have taken over the planet and original humans have been wiped out during a decade of persecution, war and general misery. In their place, cyborgs are systematically stripping the planet of its remaining natural resources – and all because you had to get your whites whiter than white. Feeling suitably guilty yet?

So reads the blurb behind the latest game from Oxford-based Rebellion. Having coded the sublime *Aliens Versus Predator* (which didn't do as well as it should have done in our opinion), they've turned their talents towards *Gunlok*, a 3D RPG, set 500 years in the future on a dark, disturbed planet. Crikes.

You play the part of the eponymous hero and the first robot to gain consciousness. Your task is to work your way through 15 3D environments, aided by four customisable companions (presumably impregnated with the consciousness bug as well): Frend, a huge, hulk of a robot who's very loyal but just a little bit dim; Hark, who's small and quick-witted but extremely easy to kill; Elint, a technological genius no less (who actually rebuilt himself from spare parts – impressive, huh?) and Maskelyn the mystic. And what have you got to do with them? Er, save the world. So, no surprise there then.

But, forgetting the somewhat trite storyline, *Gunlok* looks mighty impressive. If you've played *AvP*, then you'll know that Rebellion can handle its 3D engines with a huge amount of aplomb. Early screenshots of *Gunlok* back this statement up, with an advanced particle system for fire, smoke, rain and lightning, and super high resolutions using DXTn texture compression, multitexturing and real-time shadows. If you don't know your DirectX 7 technicalities, this means that *Gunlok* is going to look rather smashing to say the least.

"*Gunlok* is promising at least ten multiplayer and skirmish levels playable over a network/Internet"

The action is viewed in a third-person 'from above' viewpoint, and you also have the freedom to move, rotate and zoom your viewpoint to get as close to the action as you dare. Combat is in real-time, with the promise of advanced AI (we've heard that one somewhere before), upgradeable weapons and more pyrotechnics than you can shake a stick at. Environmental 3D sound effects are going to back up the visuals, meaning that *Gunlok* should prove to be an extremely immersive experience.

ROBOT WARS

Along with the huge single-player and co-operative multiplayer campaign, *Gunlok* is promising at least ten distinct multiplayer and skirmish levels playable over a network or the Internet. We've yet to see code running, but we're getting quite excited about the prospect, and if you've got a soft spot for robots, we'd suggest keeping an eye on *Gunlok*'s progress. We'll keep you up to date with the latest developments as they happen – as always. Until then, go and hug a tree or something. PCZ

SEA DOGS

It's time for further adventures with that salty old cabinboy *Richie Shoemaker* – as once again he attempts to supplement his income down the docks

FIRST ENCOUNTER

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Akella
PUBLISHER Virgin Interactive
WEBSITE www.seadogs.net
OUT August 2000

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- 17th Century mix of RPG, action, resource management and adventure
- Unlike *Cutthroats* and *Corsairs*, it's in 3D, all of it
- 20 islands to conquer and over 100 characters to meet
- An online-only sequel is already in development

As the saying goes, you're only as good as your last game, which makes Russian coders Akella something of an unknown quantity, what with *Sea Dogs* being their first entertainment offering. They are no strangers to the binary language of moisture evaporators, however, having practically flooded the Russian market with interactive encyclopedias, one of which – *World Of Beer* – could do with a full UK release for obvious reasons.

Knowing all about lager is all well and good, but unless your first game happens to chronicle the sexual antics of *Giorgi And His Magic Beer Glasses*, you're going to have great difficulty in creating a game all about peg-legged pirates shouldering brightly-plumed parrots. Thankfully, the bods at Akella have done the necessary research: not only do they live in a country where software piracy is rife, but they've also done one of those hateful 'edutainment' titles, on, you guessed it, pirates.

Choosing to captain a ship from either the English, Spanish or French navy, the aim in *Sea Dogs* is simply to claim a newly discovered group of Atlantic islands for your king or queen. Fall foul of your monarch or vice versa, and far from walking the plank, you can go all Adam Ant and take the islands for your own and govern each as you see fit.

Much of the fighting of course takes place at sea and far from being a straightforward affair as it was in the recent *Cutthroats* (*PCZ* #83, 68%), cap'ns will have to take many factors into consideration: from wind direction and the type of sails you have, to the skill of your crew and the calibre of cannons and the type of shot used. Did we mention the weather? Or magic? Well, they'll be important too.

Once your foe's vessel is immobile, boarding can commence, again in full 3D. Depending on your 'infamy' score – which rises with each successful capture or attack – the enemy may surrender even if their number is greater. The ship then joins your fleet.

To keep your ship in tip-top condition money will become increasingly important and, if you don't want to go the way of piracy, trading will be central to success. There will be 12 types of vessel in the game, as well as forts, with over 200 ships at sea at any one time.

Sea Dogs is as much an RPG as it is an action game. While the ship-to-ship combat and boarding parties may be the icing on the cake, what we'll most be looking forward to is the crew management, trading and the non-linear missions. *Sea Dogs* is an ambitious game, especially bearing in mind that it's the developers' first title. Whether it'll be an unholy mess of genres, or an update of that long-admired and much-missed classic, Sid Meier's *Pirates*, we shall have to wait and see. If Akella does pull it off though, you can bet its next project, *Sea Dogs Online* (out in early 2001), will be worth shivering your timber at. PCZ

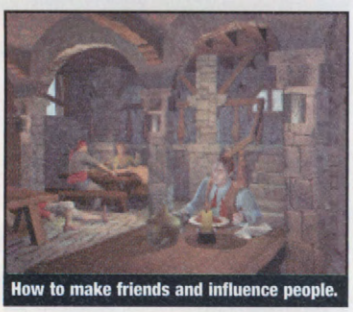
"*Sea Dogs* is as much an RPG as it is an action game... what we'll most be looking forward to is the crew management, trading and the non-linear missions"

Sea monsters and magic spells? Well, it's obviously not *too* realistic.

There will be four types of cannonball. No really.

Ah, the calm before the storm.

You can command up to three ships.


How to make friends and influence people.

The 3D people do need a bit of work.

Where you place cargo affects manoeuvres.

As well as English, Spanish and French fleets, there will be merchant ships and pirates.

REMEMBER, IF YOU DIE A HERO, YOU'RE STILL DEAD.

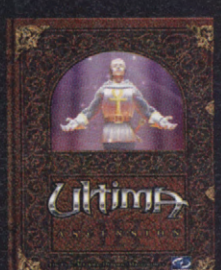
The Avatar has battled twenty long years for Britannia's glory.

Now, you must draw your sword and sharpen your wits one last time.

As you travel through the fully-animated landscape, all attention can be devoted to your epic quests thanks to Ultima's new intuitive interface.

And once you've carved your name into the final chapters of Ultima's history book, continue adventuring online at www.uo.com.

Provided, of course, that you survive.



PC CD

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sometimes negotiation requires more than a handshake

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exec scan procedure.....
security level COV9.....
.....clearance granted.

SOLDIER OF FORTUNE®

Thirty real-to-life missions spanning five continents, plus innovative multi-player modes.

3-D accelerated Quake II™ engine, upgraded with GHOUL rendering system for unprecedented detail and faster gameplay.

Story-driven plotline with ultra-realistic weapons, enemies & environments.

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PC CD ROM

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A great big majestic castle, yesterday.

As your kingdom grows, so will the amount of heroes visiting it.

A character wonders why he's three times taller than the door to this building.

Your town can be attacked by evil creatures.

The boys swiftly head for a convenient clump of trees, for a much-needed slash.

Roland Rat resurfaces with his minions after years of self-imposed exile.

MAJESTY

FIRST ENCOUNTER

After a king for a day was found to check out the forthcoming *Majesty*, megalomaniac *Martin Korda* beheaded the original previewer, stole his jewelled crown and decided to write it himself

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Cyberlore Studios
PUBLISHER Hasbro Interactive
WEBSITE www.hasbrointeractive.com
OUT April 2000

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- RTS and RPG in one game
- 19 different quests
- 18 different classes
- Head-to-head and co-operative mutiplayer action

Bullfrog's *Dungeon Keeper II* set a new standard in strategy gaming. Although it offered excellent graphics and gameplay, the greatest satisfaction came from the manipulation element. It was the knowing, or rather hoping, that would-be heroes in your dungeon would react to the obstacles you had deliberately set up for them that provided the sort of fun Cyberlore Studios is hoping to recreate with *Majesty*.

Cyberlore has a good pedigree, having coded expansion packs for *Warcraft II* and *Heroes of M&M*, and they're hoping for another smash with a game that promises to give you a similar sense of control to the fabulous *DKII*.

Proclaiming itself as a 'fantasy kingdom sim', the game instates you as monarch of a small society, in which the decisions you make affect your subjects and realm. It's up to you to build the sort of city that will entice the greatest heroes of the land, who each possess individual character traits. There will be 18 different hero classes, including Warriors, Rangers and Wizards, and all of these will be able to gain experience from relevant acts. Once they've arrived, it's up to you to provide the resources and the entertainment to keep them there. Guilds, shops, libraries, taverns and markets will have to be put in place, to stop the visitors from getting disillusioned and wandering off to ply their trade in another town.

Resource management will also play a major role in the game. Town building isn't cheap and must be funded through a taxation system. And, when your domain starts to expand beyond the boundaries of your kingdom, you'll have to go looking for other places in which to build. This is the reason why your town needs to be so welcoming to heroes – without plenty of these you're not going to have much joy expanding.

Although *Majesty* doesn't allow direct control of NPCs, you can use other methods to get your own way. If new regions are needed in order to expand your city, but happen to be infested by evil creatures, rewards can be offered to any adventurer(s) brave enough to attempt purging the land of their presence. Likewise, this can be done to eliminate any enemies you may have made along the way, or have just taken a general disliking to.

> **"In all, *Majesty* will feature 32 types of enemy, ranging from the meek to the type which stimulates loss of bladder control"**

In all, *Majesty* will feature 32 different nasties, ranging from the meek to the type which stimulates loss of bladder control. Because you can't fight these directly, you have to make sure your town is strong enough to withstand any onslaught. Build barricades and any passing heroes will man them and repel the evil forces. Alternatively, you can cast magic – the only way you directly influence proceedings – and save your skin the beardy-weirdy way.

The game features three modes of play: freestyle, Epic Quests and head-to-head multiplayer. The first allows customisation of game parameters, such as enemy strength and terrain type, with play continuing until the given quest is completed. Epic Quests will feature a succession of 29 challenges, where completion of one will lead onto the next. Multiplayer mode will provide the option of head-to-head or alliance play between two or more players.

Majesty has the potential to appeal to lovers of *Dungeon Keeper* and no doubt to *Civilization* fans as well. The broad scope allowed by both the real-time strategy and role-playing elements will give it a large potential audience. If it succeeds in melding the two genres successfully, it could be in for a long and happy reign. PCZ

A new and exciting way to choose your lottery numbers.

Race up to 24 computer-controlled bikers at a time.

Monza is one of 13 tracks that can be raced on.

Ride the most famous models in the world – of bikes that is.

Go on. Get that knee down.

SUPERBIKE 2000

High-speed action on world class models? *Martin Korda* straps on the leather and investigates

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Milestone
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts
WEBSITE www.ea.com
OUT Mid-February

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Exclusive licence to SBK Superbike World Championship
- Top team bikes like Ducatti and Honda
- LAN and Internet multiplayer options
- TV-style presentation

FIRST ENCOUNTER

Motorbike games are a funny old lot. Portraying what is one of the most exhilarating sports in the world, they somehow always end up coming a poor second to the cream of four-wheeled driving games available for the PC. Last year saw the emergence of games such as *Castrol Honda Superbike 2000* and *Superbike 2000's* predecessor, *Superbike World Championship*, with the latter being the closest yet to a truly realistic and entertaining PC representation of the sport. But like a bottle of cheap champagne, this type of game soon seems to lose its sparkle, leaving behind a bland aftertaste. In *Superbike 2000*, EA is seeking to redress the balance and create the Bollinger of bike sims.

Developed by Milan-based Milestone, *Superbike 2000* boasts the official licence to the 1999 SBK Superbike World Championship, with statistics, riders, bikes and teams all accurately reproduced. High profile teams Ducatti™, Honda™, Aprilia™, Yamaha™, Kawasaki™ and Suzuki™ will be available and can be raced over a selection of 13 real-to-life tracks, including Hockenheim and Monza. Conditions on these are influenced by varying weather settings, while the bikes can be tuned with regard to chassis, gearing and suspension. All bikes and their surroundings will be subject to accurate representations of physics, hopefully meaning realistic slipstreaming, wheel spins and handling. This means that it's not really a game for arcade freaks, although if you're a beginner *S2000* offers five pre-set levels of guidance, helping with braking, speed and acceleration.

To round off the whole biking experience, the game will feature high-end 3D graphics covered by multi-angled cameras, sampled sounds and TV-style presentation, with commentary from Sky Sports' Keith Huewen.

"Like a bottle of cheap champagne, this type of game soon seems to lose its sparkle, but in *Superbike 2000* EA is seeking to create the Bollinger of bike sims"

Superbike 2000 will also boast several modes of play. Single-player mode will offer a full Championship, race weekend (with practice, qualifying, superpole and two races) and a single race. You'll be able to race against up to 24 computer opponents simultaneously. The multiplayer side has been improved since the last game, and looks set to be one of the most exciting features, allowing split-screen action, LAN and, best of all, Internet play, bringing in the unpredictability of other human players. Milestone has realised the importance of Internet gameplay, an option that gives the game a dimension lacking in the previous version. We haven't had a chance to check the Internet coding, but if it works well this could be the missing piece to the biking jigsaw.

The folk at Milestone have a hard task ahead of them, but having made the leading game in the genre (*SWC* last year, they have every chance of coming up with a winner. Much depends on how well the sound and graphics (early in-game shots look a little blocky) can reproduce the exhilaration of high-speed racing on two wheels, along with the intelligence of the other bikers. If they can get these parts right, then *Superbike 2000* could be the toast of the genre. PCZ

PLAYER MANAGER 2000

MORE THAN JUST A NUMBERS' GAME!

With the real life professional experience of top managers, including Bobby Robson, John Gregory, Jim Smith, Harry Redknapp, Gordon Strachan, Paul Bracewell and Graham Taylor, no other game gives you more control, no other game gives you more realism, nothing gets you closer to the action.

Exploit their skills, nurture their individual characteristics and build their experience into your team strategy.

- The most powerful search engine ever - thousands of players detailed
- 3 game modes: commentary, scanner and full 3D
- Manage major European clubs in domestic and international competitions
- The most in-depth pre-match and post-match statistics

"a fantastic game!" - Harry Redknapp

PLAYER MANAGER 2000

THE MANAGERS MANAGEMENT GAME

ANCO 3DO PC CD ROM

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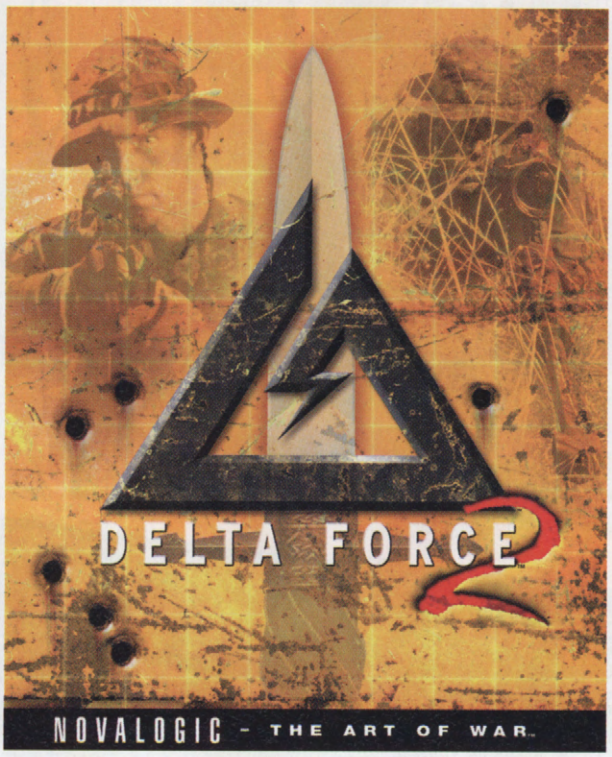

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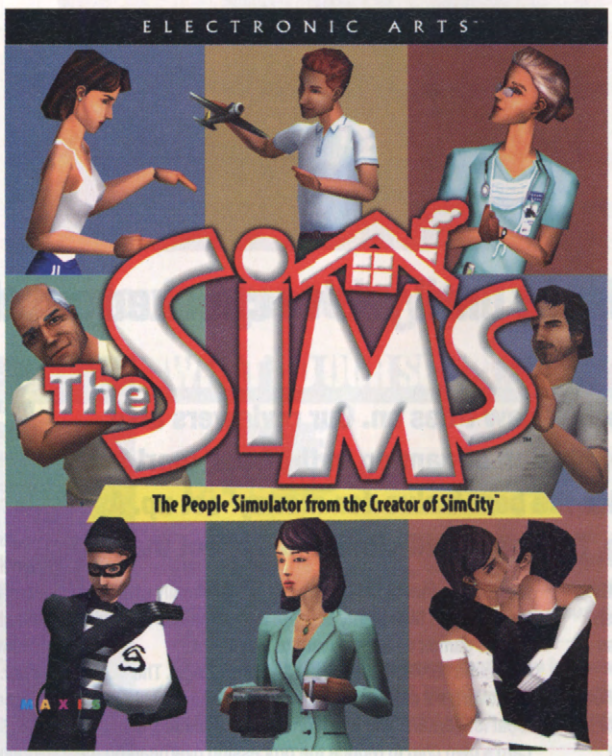

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PC ZONE REVI

Don't spend a single penny until you've checked out the *ZONE* reviews first –

THE PC ZONE GAMES SYSTEM

This is the machine we use to review new titles on. Our reviewers also use older machines to get an impression of gaming in the 'real' world, but this is what we currently consider the best 'value-for-money' set up. As games become more demanding, the specs will change to reflect that

At the heart of the machine is a 600MHz AMD Athlon processor. These babies are seriously scorching, optimised for 3D applications, so first-person shooters fly like you wouldn't believe. Faster Athlons are now available, but at the present prices, this is probably the best value for money of the family. The system bus runs at a godlike speed, so basically the whole thing is like a supercar with no brake pedal.

Supporting the processor is a MaxiGamer Xentor 32 from Guillemot, purveyors of all things graphicy. Based on the TNT2 chipset, these RAM-packed beasties are designed to cope with the polygons, textures and special effects that those game developers insist on chucking at the screen. Guillemot have a new GeForce 256-based card in the offing, which we're hoping to upgrade to soon.

Pionex has supplied the cases and 128Mb of PC100 memory for the motherboard. For gaming, especially with RAM prices as they are at the time of writing, 128Mb is the optimum amount. The cases have plenty of room for expansion without taking up excessive space. Nifty floppy slot as well…

Hard drive services are provided by the stunning 7,200 rpm, 20Gb Maxtor DiamondMax Plus (from the 5120 family of drives). It's large and fast: plenty of room for full installs and quick to load games when you want to play them.

Sound services are supplied by VideoLogic. The SonicVortex 2 card is a PCI device featuring Aureal A3D 2.0, ideal for gamers. The latest drivers are stunning, using the card's own chip to reduce the processing overhead on the CPU when calculating 3D audio. Aureal's API now handles not only sounds themselves but also their reflections: as you approach a doorway, you can hear sounds from the room reflected into the corridor. Immersive stuff.

VideoLogic also supply speakers from the superb Sirocco range. We use primarily Crossfires for gaming – they may seem expensive, but you get twice the quality you pay for. Four satellite speakers and a humungous subwoofer give pinpoint accuracy for 3D audio and bass meaty enough for the rumbliest explosions. We also use other speakers from the range (the original Sirocco and new Sirocco Pro) for sound card testing.

Guillemot's DVD Theater setup provides not only the ability to load games quickly, but also to watch DVD movies (essential for reviewing games – not) with its bundled MPEG decoder card.

Peripherals are supplied by Microsoft, from USB mice (top-notch for first-person shooters) through the full force-feedback monty – joysticks and driving wheels – to the ubiquitous Sidewinder gamepads.

Last but certainly not least are headphones from Philips (when the others in the office are suffering from Sirocco overkill) and fabulous 17inch Brilliance monitors (107Bs). If you're used to the cheaper monitors typically bundled with new PCs, the crispness and stability of the image displayed on these comes as quite a shock.

REVIEWS YOU CAN TRUST

We at *ZONE* pride ourselves on telling you exactly what we think. Our writers are the most experienced and talented reviewers in the business. They're all experts in their chosen genre and they won't pull any punches – if a game's not worth buying, we'll tell you why. But we don't leave it there. We also want to know what you think of the games that come out, which is why we have our 'Feedback' section on page 96. This is where you get the opportunity to put your point of view into *PC ZONE*. If you've got a comment to make, then we want to hear it.

CHECK THE SPECS!

The standard spec machine these days is a P233 with 32Mb of memory – but before buying any game you need to make sure it will work on your system. Because the technical specs on packaging can sometimes be a little optimistic to say the least, make sure you check out the 'We say' bit in our tech specs box at the start of reviews. This is where we report on what we think the minimum tech specs should be. If a game runs like a tortoise on the machine listed by the publishers, then we'll tell you. All the games reviewed are tested on the minimum-spec PC as quoted on the packaging.

WHERE TO CALL

Having trouble finding any of the games listed in the reviews section of the magazine? Here are the numbers you need to call

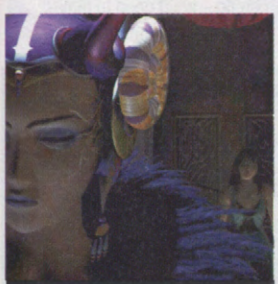
Acclaim 0171 344 5000 • **Activision** 01895 456700 • **Anco** 01322 292513 • **Blue Byte** 01604 232200 • **Codemasters** 01926 814132 • **Cryo** 01926 315550 • **Eidos Interactive** 0181 636 3000 • **Electronic Arts** 01753 549442 • **Empire Interactive** 0208 343 7337 • **Europress** 01625 855000 • **Gremlin Interactive** 0114 263 9900 • **GT Interactive** 0208 222 9700 •**Hasbro Interactive** 0181 569 1234 • **Infogrames** 0161 827 8000 • **Interplay** 0171 551 4222 • **Microids** (France) 00 33 146 01 54 01 • **Microsoft** 0181 242 1000 • **Mindscape** 01444 246333 • **NovaLogic** 0171 405 1777 • **Rage Software** 0151 237 2200 • **Take 2 Interactive** 01753 722900 • **THQ** 01483 767656 • **Ubi Soft** 0181 944 9300 **Zablac** 01626 332233

REVIEWS

we'll tell you which games you've got to buy and which games to avoid

REVIEWS

62 THE SIMS



66 FINAL FANTASY VIII

69 NOX

73 ODIUM

74 MORTYR

WHAT DO OUR SCORES MEAN?

PC ZONE CLASSIC 90-100% Here at *ZONE* we score every game out of 100. If a game receives a score of 90 or above, it is awarded the *PC ZONE* Classic award. These games are original, innovative, compelling and are worth buying even if you're not a fan of the genre.

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED 80-89% Games that score 80-89 get the *PC ZONE* Recommended award. Games in this category are excellent examples of their type and, if you're a fan of the genre, they're well worth buying.

70-79% Any games that score between 70-79 have just missed a Recommended award, but don't ignore them. The score is well above average and that means you're getting a great title that's worth the investment if you're a fan of the genre.

50-69% Games that score in this region don't win any awards, but they're above average and well worth a look. If you're not a fan of the genre though, they will probably offer limited long-term appeal.

20-49% These games are below average and you should really only consider parting with your cash if you're a big fan of the series or genre, or you happen to see them at a reduced price.

PC ZONE PANTS 0-19% Games that score under 20 should be avoided. They offer little in the way of long-term appeal, can be frustrating and definitely aren't much fun. If a game is seriously bugged, then it will also fall into this category. You have been warned.

PC ZONE HALL OF FAME

These are the games that currently score 90% or above and so are deemed to be *PC ZONE* classics

HALF-LIFE

AGE OF EMPIRES II

SYSTEM SHOCK 2

GRIM FANDANGO

COLIN MCRAE

FALCON 4

HIDDEN & DANGEROUS

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 99/00

ULTIMA ONLINE

UNREAL TOURNAMENT

THE SIMS

£34.99 • Electronic Arts • Out now

Everyone laughed when *Mark Hill* said he could manage someone else's life as well as his own. He showed them. They're laughing even harder now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P233 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** A PII with 64Mb RAM for an easier life

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED

7:49 AM Get up, brush my teeth and have a shower. Stumble over last night's take-away curry on the way out to work. Energy levels low.
8:35 AM Have a female commuter's elbow lodged in my inner ear and develop a furious itch in my foot I can't scratch, due to train being vertically and horizontally packed.
10:12 AM Arrive late at *PC ZONE* office. But am still first one in.
12:40 PM Three PC crashes and four readers' phone calls (one prank call, two "the demo doesn't work on my PC" calls and one "asking for the wrong games mag" call) later, my hunger levels reach a critical level and propel me to the snazzy baguette shop.
2:51 PM A game called *The Sims* arrives. I announce my intention to review it. A fluorescent light bursts above my head.
2:55 PM Seven people have crowded around my computer, shouting things like "make him come through the back door" and "can he kill the neighbour?"
7:14 PM Arrive home, put dinner on, start playing *The Sims* again.
8:23 PM Smell fire in kitchen, put it out and go back to the computer.
1:31 AM Really should go to the toilet. But my sim needs it more. The icon above his head says so.
5:59 AM Someone takes screenshots of me still playing and posts them on **www.needstogetoutmore.com**
11:42 AM S**t! I forgot the time – I should be at work!

THE TRUMAN SHOW

We've all pretended to be a god at some point or another. We've had villages worshipping us as we cast down bolts of lightning. We've built colosseums and pyramids and watched huts turn into villas. We've constructed whole cities, with railway systems, hospitals and industrial areas, making off-the-cuff decisions that affected millions of people. But have you ever wondered what went on in those tiny little lives, what happened inside those rows of houses you erected in the residential area, or how they got it together to increase the population? The creator of *SimCity*, Will Wright, did. In fact, he was so obsessed with the idea, he spent seven years working on *The Sims*. And you'll spend the next seven years playing it.

This is a game of people (simulated people), and their lives, works and loves. They have personalities, feelings and needs. Unfortunately for them, they also have you to guide, nurture and destroy them. The gaming camera has zoomed right into the minutiae of their daily lives, turning your screen into a window to another world, your very own reality show, the greatest fly-on-the-wall documentary you could possibly imagine. This isn't so much a god sim as a voyeur sim.

The game begins in a neighbourhood with just a few houses, two of them already inhabited and the others waiting for your own creations to settle in.

"There's so much you can do – we'd need to play the game for months, then write a whole book if we were to do it justice"

You can choose to start off with a pre-created family or make your own (choosing the traits that will determine their personality) before moving into one of the houses or building your own from scratch. Then you're forced away from your own life and into this new one, doing the things you should be doing for real without moving out of your chair.

FITTER, HAPPIER, MORE PRODUCTIVE

Your sim (or sims if you choose to start with more than one person) has a set of needs you must look after at all times: hunger (you need to make your sim cook and feed itself), comfort (they can't stand up all day, you know), hygiene (even computer people need showers), bladder (self-explanatory, it also includes bowels), energy (it'll have to sleep or drink coffee), fun (watching TV, playing games, reading books), social (meeting people and building relationships) and room (nice furniture, decorations, clean floors). This is a Tamagotchi like you've never seen before. You need to find a job, invite people over for a chat, build up skills (like cooking and charisma) and buy all manner of things to make your house a nicer, better place to live in. To advance, you need to build successful friendships and romances and do well at work. And the sims will only do that if you keep them happy. But that's just the start of it.

In fact, there's so much you can do – we'd need to play the game for months, then

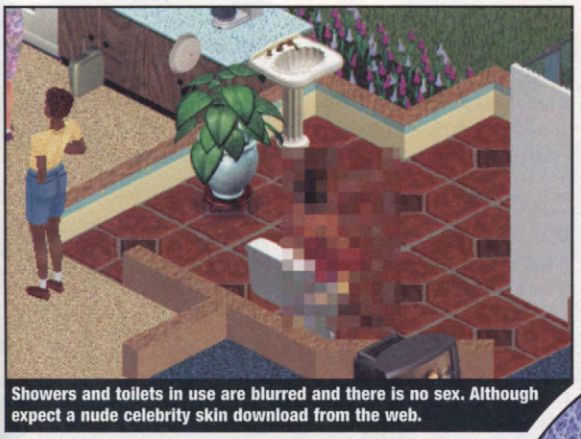
PINGU-SPEAK

Good Lord, they're speaking in sim tongues...

Something you'll notice straight away about the sims is that they don't talk like we do and that you can't understand a word they're saying. You can see why there wouldn't be lines of dialogue that would restrict the infinite possibilities each conversation holds, but did they really have to make them sound like Pingu? If you've ever watched old Czechoslovakian cartoons, you'll recognise the gibberish instantly (the kind that was supposed to make their product international since it didn't need translating). Those mental images of badly drawn pictures of bearded brothers making furniture and ugly children crying when their balloon floats away give the game a sinister, quaint (and somewhat annoying) touch.

"Gljhgurehsss?" he said. "Wblrwgggaaaw" she answered coyly.

This suburban neighbourhood may not be realistic, but at least it's not the East End.

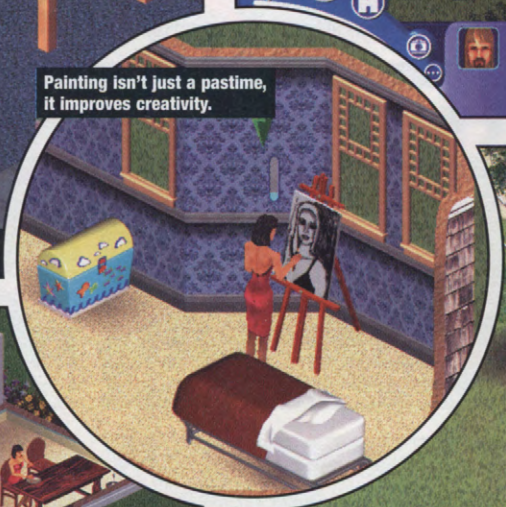


Showers and toilets in use are blurred and there is no sex. Although expect a nude celebrity skin download from the web.

Potential fathers take note: you can't kill the kid if she hits a wrong note.

Just like in our world, watching TV can be a way of life.

You could spend all day playing with the train set. You sad anorak, you.



Painting isn't just a pastime, it improves creativity.

It's a female copper. Either his fantasy has finally come true or the neighbours are complaining about the noise.

www.midas

WATCHING ME, WATCHING YOU

Somewhere on that tiny screen is a pixelated version of you, playing a game, watching someone play...

Not that we want to make you paranoid – just watch your back...

One of the activities sims can indulge in is playing games on their PC (which can also be used to find jobs). If you take a moment to think about it, this is where the enormity of the game really hits home. Our society has become so obsessed with the culture of docu-soaps, watching other people's lives on a screen, becoming the camera rather than the spectator or the actor that a game like *The Sims* was just waiting to happen. What if your creation is playing a version of it on his or her PC? What if there's a camera hidden in your very own room, monitoring your reactions, keeping tabs on your movements? What then, eh? EH?

write a whole book if we were to do a review that can truly do it justice. How do you review life? *The Sims* provides tools for endless possibilities (especially when you consider how much new stuff you'll be able to download from the Internet as people create their own neighbourhoods and mods). And, while we can assess those tools to a certain extent, you'll have to do most of the discovering yourself.

There are essentially three ways to play *The Sims*: 1) create a monster, a maniac, a veritable human wreck who works as a criminal, watches TV all day and eats pizzas; 2) invent a situation and try out things for the sake of discovering what will happen next (eg "I wonder what will happen if I just do this..."); 3) develop a happy, productive sim with a healthy social life and a nice home. Not nearly as much fun of course – in the short term at least – as the first one. Just take a look at the following example...

CASE STUDY: PAUL CALF

This Steve Coogan alter-ego look-alike was a sim-wreck from the moment we spotted him. Paul began the day watching children's cartoons in his pyjamas and eating a freshly ordered pizza. Instead of the much-needed kitchen table and bathroom sink, he bought himself a mini-bar and proceeded to get quietly drunk. Then the neighbours arrived to welcome him to the area. After unsuccessfully chatting up Betty Newby, he invited everyone in and staggered into the kitchen. He tickled Mr Newby and almost got punched in the process, before deciding he would cook dinner for everyone. His cooking skills being somewhat lacking, the pan caught fire and began to spread. Paul didn't waste any time in calling the firemen, except for the 20 minutes he ran around like a maniac, screaming and panicking. After the flames had been extinguished, and thinking he wasn't making the best possible impression on his new acquaintances, he turned on the stereo and began dancing with Mrs Hyacinth Goth. After telling her a dirty joke that almost earned him a slap, Paul paid the consequences for forgetting to go to the toilet. Displaying all his alcoholic incontinence, he wet himself all over the kitchen floor and fell over in his own puddle. People began to leave the party...

It isn't a bad taste party, it's a look into the house of the Kitsch family.

THE GAME OF LIFE

Once you've finished arsing about though, you'll want to try your hand at making a successful sim. And it isn't as easy as you might think. Just taking care of their everyday needs can be a full-time job. Because much of the game concerns your management of time, you sometimes find there's hardly any left to do interesting things. You spend so long doing the boring basic tasks of life that there's little time for anything else. In fact, time soon becomes the real protagonist of the game. Just as in real life, having a job leaves little room for doing much else. You get up, go to work, have some dinner and go to bed. But somehow you have to fit in a busy social life, have fun and learn new skills.

It doesn't help that you can't do two things at once, like cooking and talking. You need to put each action into a queue, which is usually messed up by the need to answer the phone, sit down or take a dump. Other annoyances include not being able to open the door to let everybody in (instead having to greet each visitor individually). But, considering the depth to this game, these are minor grievances. We've barely scraped the surface here. We've not mentioned how relationships are complicated by unrequited loves, jealousy and fights. How you can have babies and how gay couples can adopt children. How you can move into a house with a swimming pool, a snooker table and a giant TV. How you can be a polygamist. How you can increase your logic levels by playing chess or your muscles by lifting weights. We can only suggest that you buy yourself a copy right now and discover it all for yourself. To miss out on *The Sims* would be to turn your back on one of the most significant steps forward PC games have ever witnessed. PCZ

IN PERSPECTIVE

There really isn't anything like *The Sims* out there. Even if it isn't your kind of game on paper, everybody should own a copy.

The Sims

SimCity 3000

Creatures 2

Dogz and Catz

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS It's a real world of living sims • Endless possibilities • More addictive than breathing

DOWNERS Music and sound are poor • Managing basic needs can be very boring • Sims' AI could be better

86 **Hurrah! At last PC gamers can get a life**

TO KILL A SIM

Feeling sadistic? What could be simpler than taking it out on your sim? But can you live with the guilt?

You may not be able to murder other people, but you can employ all your darkest sadistic skills in driving your sim to an early grave. We decided the wreck of a person that was Paul Calf didn't deserve to live. Whenever sims have a real pressing need, they perform the required action by themselves. Unless you stop them. We started by depriving Calf of showers until he could barely stand the smell of his own armpits, and preventing him from going to bed until he staggered around the room in exhaustion. Then we sold most of his furniture and blocked his way to the fridge. But that wasn't enough, oh no. We put him in the kitchen and walled up the doors, then got rid of everything in there except the rubbish. Every time he went to sleep we woke him up. After 12 attempts to call for a pizza we sold the phone. It was a pitiful sight. He finally gave up the struggle after five days without washing, four days of barely sleeping and three days of starvation, curling up in a corner to die. We're so ashamed, we've already started campaigning to set up a Royal Society For The Protection Of Sims.

The stench from Paul Calf's armpits is starting to turn *our* stomachs.

Sadly, it wasn't the first time that he'd fallen asleep on his doorstep.

Ah, Paul finally seems to be reaching the lowest levels of human degradation...

May this sim rest in peace. Except now he'll probably come back to haunt you.

Silkolene HONDA MOTOCROSS GP

PC CD

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...get on it... and pray.

MiDAS

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The sorceress and Rinoa get up close and personal.

The strangest monsters this side of Japan.

FINAL FANTASY VIII

£39.99 • Eidos • Out now

If you saw it in the video shop you'd think it was a dodgy soft-porn flick. *Dave Woods* tries to mask his disappointment

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** 200MHz **Memory** 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 8Mb video card, 32Mb hard disk space **SUPPORTS** DirectX **WE SAY** Go for a PII-266 with 500Mb hard disk space

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED

Japanese culture is weird. The proof? Vending machines that sell used underwear to ageing businessmen and ultra-violent cartoons featuring schoolgirls with huge eyes and misogynistic predators. It's not all bad, though. *Final Fantasy VII* was responsible for bringing RPGs to the masses and now the sequel to the game that sold millions on the PlayStation and a couple of hundred on the PC is back to swallow your spare time.

In a lot of respects the game is exactly the same as *Final Fantasy VII*. Unless you're particularly good or especially bad at these games, you can expect to complete it in about 50 hours. And, in those 50 hours you can expect to be gobsmacked by the visuals (which have been sharpened up for the PC release this time round), gripped by the amazing storyline, and left cold by the feeling that you're not actually having to do a great deal to progress.

A few things have changed since the last outing. As well as providing 640x480 visuals, the graphics are more conventional and Western in style and there's a distinct lack of cutesy surreal Japanese-ness, which is going to be good news for some (us included) and a source of distinct discomfort for other, may we say younger, players.

WATFORD JUNCTION

Also, there's a new Junction system that provides access to magic and the extremely powerful Guardian Forces. Squaresoft has tried to make this seem as complicated as possible, and if you can get a solid handle on the concept by sitting through the on-screen tutorials, then you're better men than us. It took us about an hour of solid head scratching before we realised that there wasn't actually anything to it. The process goes as follows: obtain a Guardian Force and you get the option to Junction various abilities such as Magic, Draw (used to obtain magic spells from either a Draw Point or an enemy in battle), Item and GF (summon the beastie itself).

As you move through the game you're given access to more powerful magic, and as well as the characters levelling-up, your GFs do as well, learning new abilities in the process and improving their hit point tally (for they can suffer the humiliating KO as well). The fact that your GFs can take damage instead of you, when their summon-bar is charging down, adds another tactical element to the fights.

That's about it though. If you're looking for a radical overhaul, you won't find it here. It's still blatantly obvious that *Final Fantasy VIII* has originated from a console and anyone who says otherwise is talking from the wrong end. The peculiar control system is still present and correct, and the dialogue boxes look like they've been ported across from the SNES. It doesn't affect the quality of the game itself, but it's lazy programming and completely at odds with the cut-scenes that are by far the best we've seen on the PC, ever. And we mean *ever*. Square must have commandeered every single workstation in Japan and had them running 24x7 for a couple of years to end up with as much quality footage as they have here.

"It's still obvious that *FF VIII* has originated from a console game and anyone who says otherwise is talking from the wrong end"

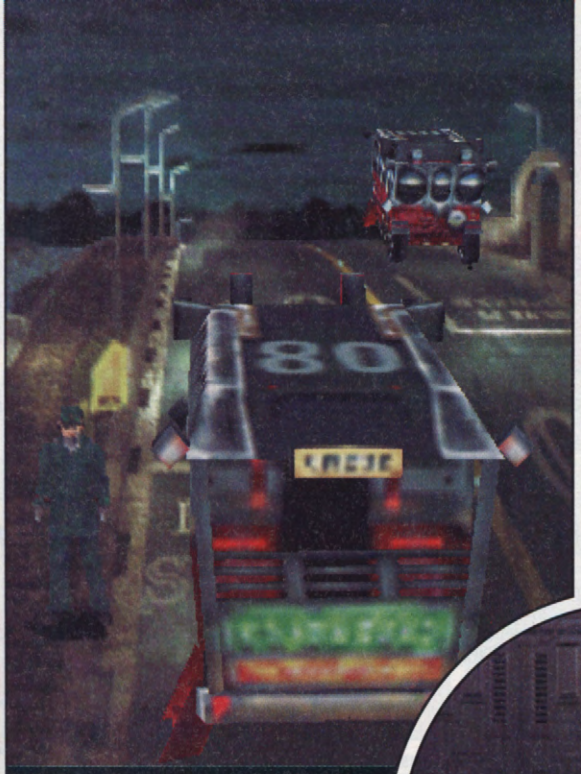
TOP PLOT

Then there's the story. It starts off as wet as a puddle, with too much slop and sentiment, but you just know it's going to improve. Flashbacks mix with dream sequences and character betrayals to provide more plot twists than the entire archive of *Tales Of The Unexpected*. You genuinely care about the characters you're playing and although Squall, the central hero, is a bit of an arse, you still get attached to him. And, if you don't get out much – and you won't once you start playing this game – then Rinoa and Selphie should provide fuel for your fantasies. Although admitting attraction to animated characters is not something we approve of. Ahem.

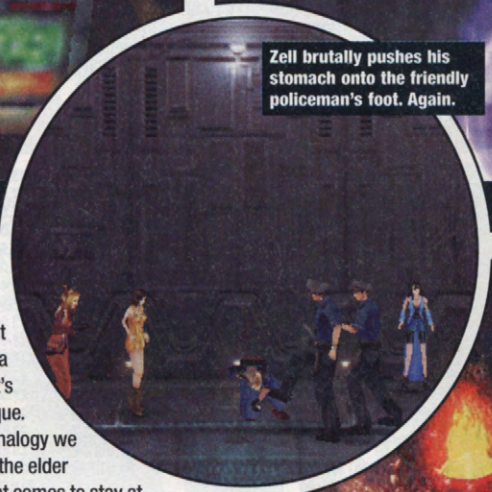
We're not giving away the plot. If you want to know what happens, you're going to have to be prepared to invest 50 hours of your valuable time repeatedly hitting the 'x' key on your keyboard. Are we being a bit harsh on the gameplay? Possibly, but a lot of *Final Fantasy VIII* is just too linear to be hailed as a classic. In fact, in this respect it's actually worse than *FFVII*. For the first ten hours of the game you can't put a foot wrong. Battles are too easy and it's impossible to wander away from the all-important storyline.

REPETITIVE

Progress through the second CD and fights start to level out and you're likely to see the 'Game Over' legend appear on your screen a few times. This uproots another problem: if you've played *FFVII* you will know that the summon spells take a long time to brew. Fight someone powerful and you're likely to spend half an hour watching the most OTT



In the larger towns you can walk and get lost or catch the rickety buses.



Zell brutally pushes his stomach onto the friendly policeman's foot. Again.

You gain spells through "drawing" and your supply is finite so you need to use them with care.

spells that the Japanese have ever invented. We'd have to repeat the line "it gets repetitive" about 1,000 times to get the point across properly. Please: if you code a *Final Fantasy IX*, and we think you will, then let us escape from these time-wasters with a hot-key. If you want to sit through a 40-minute battle that consists of 37 minutes of the same animation playing over and over again, then that's your business, but we've got better things to do with our time.

WE STILL LOVE YOU

Also gone are the humorous and surreal sub-games, such as the motorbike chase and the Chocobo race. Throughout the whole of the first two CDs, the best we got was a quick round of 'turn the wheel to open the hatch'. To win you have to hit the 'a' key repeatedly for ten seconds. Talk about dumbing down. And these are two words that you're going to be muttering under your breath if you've played any of the respected RPGs from the Black Isle stable – *Planescape: Torment* in particular. However, we're well aware that there are a lot of people who like linear adventures and if this is you, then you can't do better than this.

And despite all the criticisms that we've levelled at the game, we were still strangely addicted from the moment the first risible strains of music started spewing from our speakers. Why? The quality of the graphics (which are better than sex in places) and the amazing storyline are the chief culprits, but *Final Fantasy VIII* goes beyond that. It could be dismissed as a clone of *FFVII*, but it also has a charm that's totally unique. The best analogy we can use is the elder relative that comes to stay at Christmas: you're always willing to ignore the embarrassing bits because you love what's underneath. PCZ

IN PERSPECTIVE

If you haven't played *Final Fantasy VII*, it's also worth checking out – but if you want a real RPG, the one to go for is *Planescape: Torment*. It's the business.

Final Fantasy VIII

Final Fantasy VII

Planescape: Torment

Baldur's Gate

System Shock II

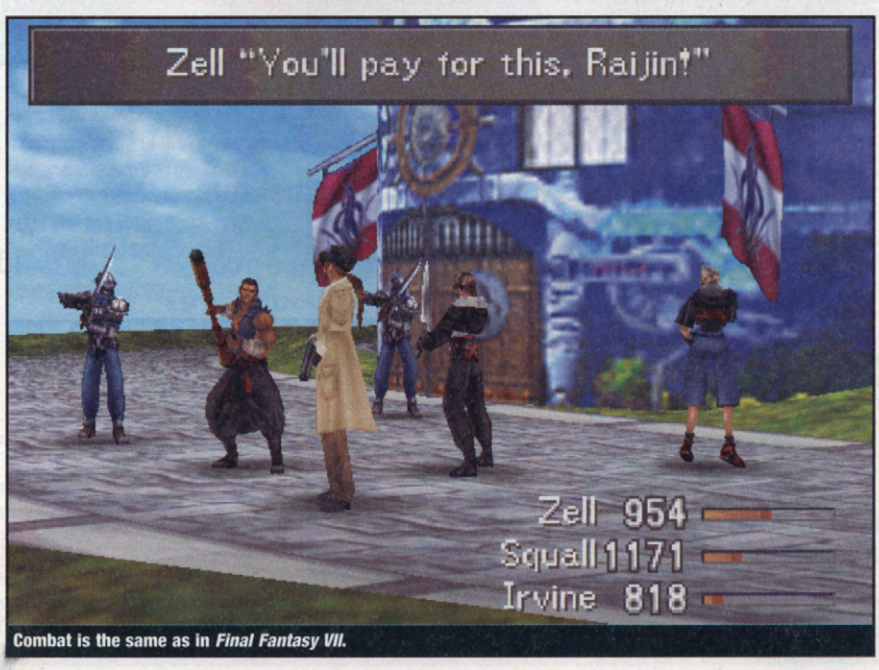
PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Gorgeous cut-scenes • Excellent storyline • Unique atmosphere

DOWNERS Too linear • Console quirks • OTT summon spells are very repetitive

83 ***Final Fantasy*** **fans will love it**

This static screenshot doesn't do justice to the level of detail in some of the cut-scenes. It's staggering.



Combat is the same as in *Final Fantasy VII*.

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Sort your spells and weapons before you go into battle.

All together now: "Abracadabra!"

Crisp graphics, but haven't we seen it all somewhere before?

NOX

£34.99 • Electronic Arts • Out now

Westwood's first game since *Tiberian Sun* has finally arrived. *David Stark* can hardly contain his excitement

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P166 **Memory** 16Mb RAM **REQUIRES** 50Mb hard disk space

Picture the scene: you're sitting in front of your TV set in T-shirt, jeans and sneakers. You have a couple of beers within easy reach, and the footie's just about to start. Echellente! But no, what's this? Suddenly you and your television set are accidentally catapulted through a three-dimensional wormhole and you find yourself in a strange fantasy world full of grown men with pointy hats and warriors waving swords at everyone.

Sound familiar? Yes indeed, this exact scenario has been used many times in the *Ultima* series and is now making a reappearance in the intro sequence to *Nox*. 'Most original video game intro' of the new millennium does not go to Westwood for this effort, but the similarity to *Ultima* ends right there. Enter stage left – *Diablo*.

DIABLO?

That's right. For *Nox*, see *Diablo*, and vice versa. *Nox* is a very simplistic hack 'n' slash, action-oriented spell 'em up. It could almost do a convincing stint as a sort of makeshift *Diablo 2*, if the graphics were a bit more ambitious (it looks a bit dated in normal resolution, and is just about acceptable in hi-res, except the characters look too small unless you have a giant monitor). However, as we never tire of saying, "It's gameplay that counts, not graphics" – and in this department *Nox* holds its own, although this was not immediately apparent (bear with me a moment).

"At higher levels you get spells which can justifiably be called 'neat', and weapons which can be described as 'spiffy'"

Before the game begins, your character choices are thus: wizard, conjurer, and warrior. Whatever character you choose, the basic gameplay remains the same. Navigate dungeons, woods and cities, killing baddies to gain experience and level up your character, picking up heal and mana potions and dropped weapons and armour (which you can sell later), returning to town once you're done, whereupon you will be told to go out and do exactly the same thing all over again in a new location.

I am going to be honest here. There were times I literally hated *Nox*. Entering a new play area, I almost groaned at how similar it looked to the last one I had completed, and the one before that – it was *so* repetitive that I almost gave up several times. But perseverance pays off, and at higher levels you get spells which can be justifiably called 'neat', and weapons which can certainly be described as 'spiffy'. Also in its favour is its high replay value.

There is a very distinct difference in the way each character plays. Wizards rely heavily on spells and can take out tough monsters from a distance (although they are so easily killed in close combat that you will often find yourself running round in circles in a Benny Hill stylee to avoid being hit); conjurers can charm creatures and monsters and get them to hunt other monsters or fight on your behalf; and warriors get several 'amusing' skillsets, which basically give them the ability to scream and roar a lot and charge into creatures causing heavy damage.

All in all, there's *just* about enough here to make *Nox* a worthwhile purchase, but many of you will be dismayed at the repetitive nature of the gameplay. My advice is to try to get hold of a demo before buying this game. What you see in the demo is what you'll get in the full game. PCZ

IN PERSPECTIVE

If you like *Diablo*, you will like *Nox* – there isn't much to choose between these two. *Planescape Torment* is an altogether more cerebral affair and is devoid of orcs, goblins, and men in pointy hats, and *Baldur's Gate* is set in a similar fantasy environment to *Nox* but is worlds ahead of it in terms of gameplay.

Planescape Torment

Baldur's Gate

Nox

Diablo

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS High replay value • Tons of spells and weapons • You won't complete this in a day

DOWNERS Repetitive levels • Old-school graphics • It's *Diablo* • Throwaway 'save the world' plot

72 **Repetitive and derivative, but strangely addictive**

Police roadblocks failed to stop the New Age RPGers.

The conjurer takes on a huuuge beetle.

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SLAVE ZERO

£34.99 • Infogrames • Out now

Robots are big, brainless and made of metal. Just like *Charlie Brooker*

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P233 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 3D card
WE SAY We experienced some ugly glitches using a Riva TNT

IN PERSPECTIVE

We've been waiting for *Slave Zero* for ever, and now that we've seen it we know it's not as good as *Shogo*. Also try *Quake III Arena* or *Unreal Tournament* – they might not have much in common with *Slave Zero*, but they're filled with brainless gunplay, and they're both better than this.

Slave Zero

Shogo: Mobile Armour Division

Quake III Arena

Unreal Tournament

If most games are primarily an exercise in allowing you to vicariously perform feats you'd like to do in real life but can't, why are there so many games about stomping around inside a gigantic robot suit? Surely this can't be a particularly widespread fantasy? Presumably it's the sort of thing that appeals to the diminutive or under-endowed, or the sort of perverts who appear on *Robot Wars*. Look, if you *really* want to experience the heady thrill of a bulky inorganic exo-skeleton, just hurl yourself in front of a bus, then you too can spend the next nine months held together with so many metallic pins and plates, you won't be able to cross the room without generating more sparks than a fireworks display at a welder's convention.

Cuh. Anyway, *Slave Zero* may be yet *another* game starring a cast of giant robots, but at least it isn't as boring as *MechWarrior* (apologies to *MechWarrior* fans, but let's face it – *MechWarrior* is shit). Whereas most robo-combat games tend to be as slow and plodding as the lumbering mechs themselves, *Slave Zero* is nothing but an exercise in lightning fast, simple-minded arcade action, starring a cast of robots whose speed, grace and agility would put a Moldavian acrobat to shame.

BRAINLESS STOMPER

It's a shoot 'em-up. A simple, brainless shoot 'em up. You (controlling the eponymous Slave Zero) spend the entire game stomping through a sprawling futuristic city, blowing the heck out of more or less everything you see – assault helicopters, tanks, gun turrets, other robots, and little armed men running around on the floor. As you progress, bigger and beefier weapons become available, until you find yourself packing the same kind of military firepower as, say, North Korea. You can jump, you can stomp up and down and you can even bend down and pluck innocent civilians from the pavement and hurl them against buildings for a laugh.

"The pace rarely lets up, it's original and all perfectly adequate – yet the game never really becomes truly exciting"

Visually, it's not too bad, if a tad limited. *Slave Zero* is also available for Dreamcast, and it's hardly the best-looking title on that platform either (certainly the likes of *Soul Calibur* could have it for breakfast). It feels a bit like an upgraded PlayStation port, even if it isn't one.

And that's more or less it really. There's nothing wrong with a mindless arcade game – heck, what else is multiplayer *Quake III* – but sadly *Slave Zero*'s not a classic example of the genre.

The pace rarely lets up, it's original and all perfectly adequate – yet the game never really becomes truly exciting. Whether that's because it's hard to really relate to a 400ft robot, or simply because of the repetitive nature of the action is impossible to gauge, but there you have it: it's true. It's good enough for a quick lunchtime blast, but that's about all. Wait for the budget release, unless you're so loaded you just walk around buying things all day long, for the sheer fun of it. In which case buy ten. Sod it. Why not? PCZ

PCZ VERDICT

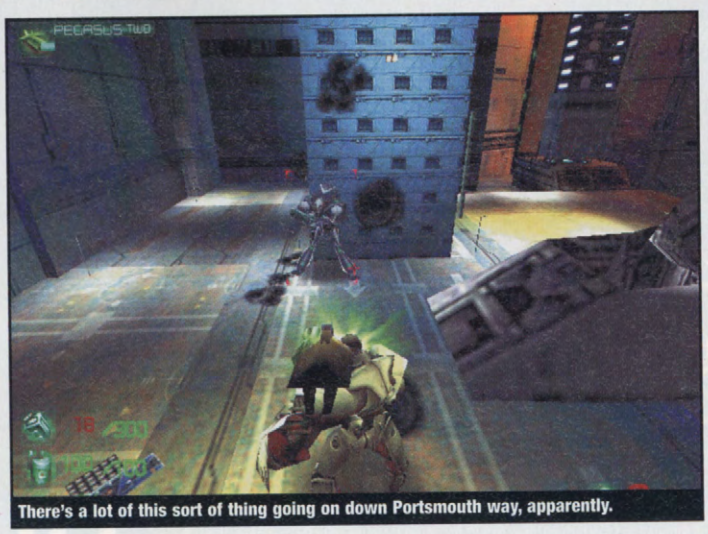
UPPERS Hurling pedestrians against buildings • Good, brainless fun • Decent graphics

DOWNERS Too limited • The game never grabs you

69 Good, but never great, arcade-robo action

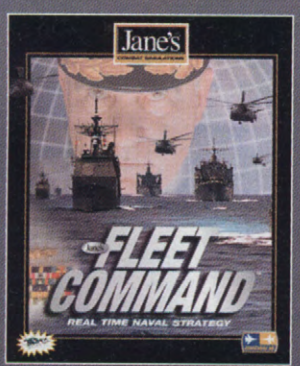
That's the motorway buggered, then.

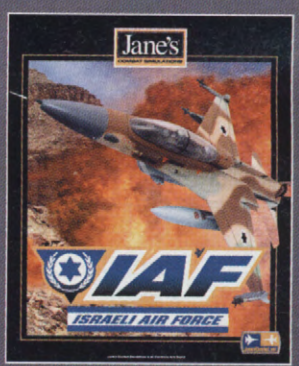
The robots are all nicely designed. All very Manga.


There's a lot of this sort of thing going on down Portsmouth way, apparently.

Some giant robotic future war stuff.

The Jane's range.





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PC CD

ODIUM

£34.99 • Ubi Soft • Out now

He is known for harbouring a hatred for many things, but *Mark Hill* actually quite liked this game

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P200 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** As usual a 3D card is essential if you don't want it to look like a dog

What is it with real-time? The mere mention of it sends people into uncontrolled spasms of excitement normally associated with animal mating rituals. Maybe it's just that I'm completely unable to think on my feet without pausing to reflect how this particular movement interferes with the alignment of the planets or what psychological impact that other attack would have on my people. Maybe I'm just a boring old fart. But as far as I'm concerned, RTS is a pointless and empty experience. What does it mean, anyway? What is so real about it? Controlling matchstick men with bionic arms and building weapons factories within seconds? In real war it takes hours to decide where the troops will attack next, there's a long chain of command and soldiers don't just pop out of recently constructed barracks just because you have enough wood or tiberium.

But in the midst of all this mass delusion, *Odium* wears its turn-based combat system with pride.

TURN, TURN, TURN

The best way to describe it would be as the bastard son of *Final Fantasy* and *X-COM*, without the epic, movie-like story of the former or the deep and involving gameplay of the latter, but with enough quality to attract fans of both. You command a team of three UN soldiers (now, there's a pleasant change) investigating a village subjected to Russian experiments. You soon discover that the town is infested with hideous mutants and biomechanical monsters with integrated weaponry. To say you explore the environment would be an exaggeration; the game constantly moves you in one direction and you occasionally pick up items (weapons, ammo, keys and medicine) and meet characters. But the real fun is in the actual combat. Think of a high-res version of *X-COM* with larger characters and smaller arenas and you're almost there.

> **"Think of *X-COM* with larger characters and smaller arenas and you're almost there"**

The stats of each of your characters are taken a step further down the RPG road than *X-COM* hinted at, with experience given for every successful shot and allocation of points every time you level up. But it's still little more than 'RPG lite'.

The real tactics come into play when you decide which weapons to use and, considering how thin on the ground ammo is, the wrong choice could mean death. In *Odium*, death really *is* the end. If one of your men dies, it's game over, the words bringing waves of nostalgia over you, along with more than a little annoyance. You soon learn how to keep them alive, however, and you won't be able to prevent a tremendous feeling of satisfaction as you emerge victorious.

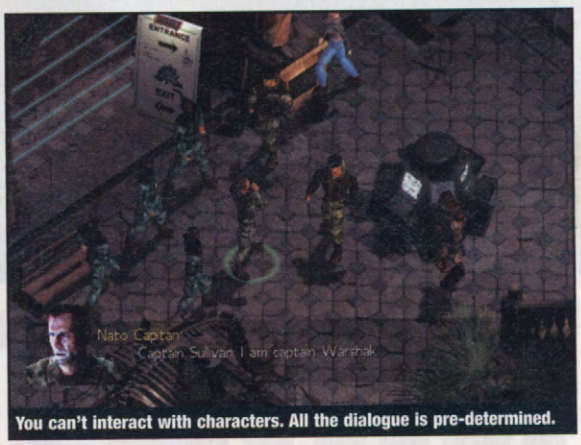
AGAIN, AGAIN, AGAIN

While the story and the development of your characters is important, it soon becomes obvious that combat is the only thing that really matters. It doesn't happen randomly, as in *Final Fantasy*, but it happens just as often. Every few steps will start up a fight, and every time you pick up an object you'll find yourself surrounded by mutants. These come in all shapes and sizes, and one of the incentives to keep going is to see what you'll have to fight next. It's not just a case of taking turns shooting until one side wins, either. Success in some battles depends on winning before a bomb goes off, or protecting a certain vital creature or object. The enemies act intelligently, getting out of the way of your strongest characters and attacking the weakest.

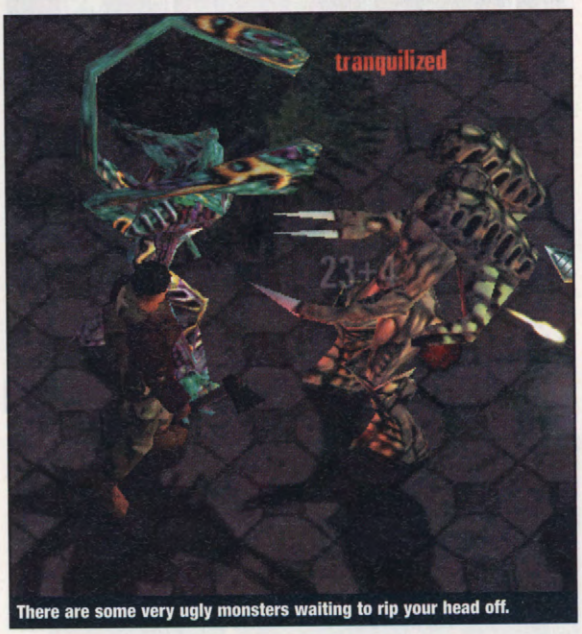
In the end, though, being thrust from one battle into another with barely a rest or a chance to find more ammo is disheartening and frustrating. But we should still praise *Odium* for making a turn-based stand against the current market trends such an enjoyable, if ultimately shallow, experience. And, yes, OK, I'll admit it, I'm sh*t at real-time strategy games. PCZ

Big bosses come preceded by some spectacular FMV sequences.

Some 300 battles later it starts to get repetitive...



You can't interact with characters. All the dialogue is pre-determined.



There are some very ugly monsters waiting to rip your head off.

IN PERSPECTIVE

If you want a pure RPG experience, *Planescape* is your game, but if you miss those *X-COM* days, *Odium* is a good bet.

X-COM: Apocalypse

Final Fantasy VIII

Planescape: Torment

Odium

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS The best turn-based combat since *X-COM* • Intriguing plot • Combines RPG, strategy and adventure • Strangely moreish

DOWNERS Too shallow and linear • Constant battles begin to grate • Dreadful acting

74 *Final Fantasy meets X-COM*

"Zeig ouch!"

MORTYR

★ £29.99 • PBH • Out now

Mortyr, vicar? Ha ha! Ha ha ha ha! Hahahahahahahhahahahahahahahaha hahahahah! D'you get it? *Mortyr*, vicar? Hahahaha! Here's *Charlie Brooker* with a review of a computer game

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** System P200 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **SUPPORTS** Direct3D-compatible card **WE SAY** If it doesn't work, take it back to the shop for a refund

You *thrilled* to World War II in black and white (*The Dambusters*)! You *gawped* at World War II in colour (*World War II In Colour*)! You *pooed your pants* over World War II in big-screen gore-o-vision (*Saving Private Ryan*)! Now prepare to *sit stoney-faced* through World War II in full interactive 3D! Yes, *Mortyr* is here – and it's, um, not very good really. That's all you need to know – but don't tear this article out and hurl it into a big burning bin just yet. Carry on reading and I'll do my damnedest to keep you entertained.

When the first *Mortyr* screenshots trickled down the newspipe and onto our monitor screens, everyone at *PC ZONE* towers said and thought the same two things. Thing number one: "That looks a bit like a hi-tech *Wolfenstein 3D*." And thing number two: "It also looks a little bit tasteless."

Funny, that last bit. There have been countless wargames and simulations set in the thick of World War II, yet nobody says anything. Represent the same era in full-on *Quake-o-vision*, however, and we start getting all woolly and uncomfortable. Hundreds of thousands of people are killed during the average 20p one-player game of arcade shoot 'em up *1941*, and nobody cares, but stab one SS guy in the throat from a 3D first-person perspective and we're all writing to our MPs. Cuh.

Perhaps it's because the *Quake* viewpoint really does cast *you* as the main protagonist, rather than merely letting you sit back and operate a tank or plane by proxy. Still, it doesn't make the action any more realistic – although you wouldn't think this was the case judging by *Mortyr's* advertising campaign, which has made much of the game's alleged life-or-death authentic grit. It's utter bullshit of course – *Mortyr* is about as valid a representation of the earthy reality of armed combat as *The Muppet Christmas Carol*.

ACHTUNG BABY

The story behind *Mortyr* is a bit like a cross between *The Guns Of Navarone* and *Back To The Future Part II*. The game's poorly-translated manual relates a tale in which the Nazis develop a secret weapon, win the war, and rule the world for about 150 years, until you – yes, *you* – are sent back in time to 1944 in order to bung a spanner in their works.

Yadda, yadda, yadda. Cue lots of running around shooting and killing – and searching for key A in order to open door B. This is a no-brainer.

Architecturally, *Mortyr* is reasonably impressive: plenty of looming gothic interiors, stained glass windows and extra 'show-off' effects (such as reflective surfaces and fogging) for those with appropriately muscular accelerator cards.

That's it, fall over, you big Nazi wuss.

IN PERSPECTIVE

Quake III and *Unreal Tournament* are the 3D shooters to play if you're after multiplayer action. More into single player? Then *Half-Life* is definitely the business. If you must have war, go for *Hidden & Dangerous*.

Half-Life

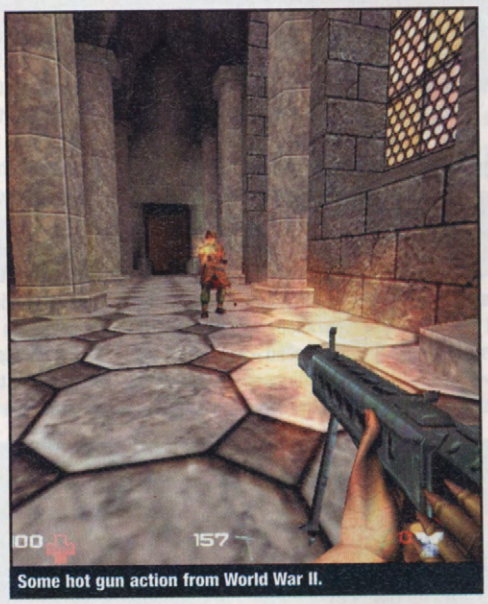
Hidden & Dangerous

Quake III

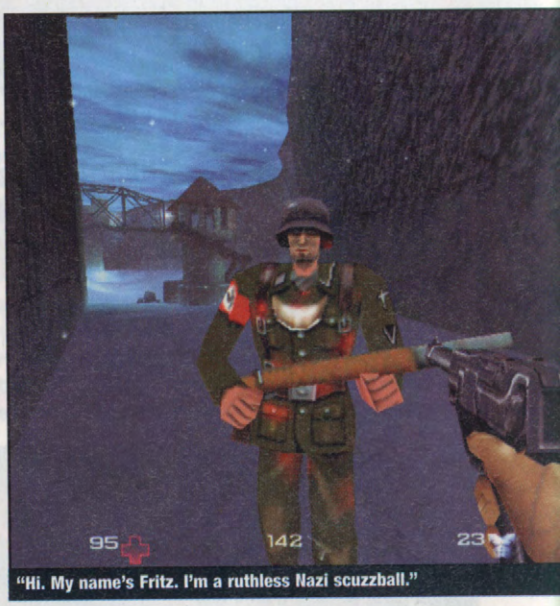
Unreal Tournament

Mortyr

Hey, isn't that Mr Bronson from *Grange Hill*?



Some hot gun action from World War II.



"Hi. My name's Fritz. I'm a ruthless Nazi scuzzball."

The much-vaunted *Mortyr* engine is capable of great things. Before long, though, the environment starts to feel terribly 'samey'. There's little to distinguish one level from the next.

Furthermore, the character models and animations aren't much cop (the guard dogs in particular are *incredibly* bad, looking like an animated sequence from *Taxidermy The Movie*). The sound effects don't help – some of the Nazis actually say "hello" when you walk in the room, while the supposedly 'amusing' comments uttered Duke Nukem-style by your character appear to consist mainly of flat statements of fact delivered by a Dutchman.

Furthermore, the levels have been designed to engage the eye rather than the 'engrossment glands' in your head – there are far too many cavernous spaces with little of interest to fill them up, save a fancy ceiling and some pretty coloured glass. Enemy AI seems practically non-existent – foes simply run at you until you find yourself machine-gunning them in the eyes. If the real Nazis had been this stupid, World War II would've been over by lunchtime.

"Enemy AI is practically non-existent – foes simply run at you until you find yourself machine-gunning them in the eyes"

Then there are the unforgivable clipping bugs – sometimes it's possible to pass through impenetrable surfaces and find yourself stuck fast in the dreaded 'glitch dimension'. Finally, and worst of all, there's the indefinable overall 'feel' of the thing. It just doesn't seem right. It never sucks you in; you never forget you're merely playing a game.

So, it's a load of old shit then? Well, no. Not *completely*. It's actually quite playable in a funny sort of way – provided, like us, you a) haven't paid for it and b) don't have anything better to do at the time. It's about as entertaining as, say, doodling a moustache on a picture of Posh Spice in the paper while you're waiting for a train. Or jumping over a puddle. Or slicing the crust off a bit of wet bread and then throwing it at the wall for no good reason. That much fun. But no more than that. PCZ

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Shooting Nazis • Decent 3D engine

DOWNERS It's a no-brainer • Poor AI • Not much fun

50 War is hell, but it needn't be shoddy

MEIN LIEBE!

Quick history lesson for the kids. id software's *Wolfenstein 3D*, as referred to in this review, was the predecessor to *Doom*, which in turn begat *Quake*, and so on. It's hard to convey how much impact *Wolfenstein* had in its day – your correspondent can remember literally gasping in amazement at its smooth, high-speed 3D visuals. In case you never played it, it was just like *Doom*, but minus stairs, or any angle sharper than 90 degrees. Oh, and it was bright red and blue, and instead of fighting tomato monsters and scary pink behemoths, you were gunning (and knifing) your way through a never-ending parade of young German soldiers (who screamed as you killed them). Banned in Germany, it was both a technical marvel and a breathtaking exercise in tastelessness, kick-starting the trend for ultra-gory 3D shooters that continues to this day.

Of course, were you to download and play it this afternoon, you'd think it was *crap* – but that's hardly the point, dumb arse. This is our *heritage*, maaaan.

www.pczone.co.uk

TOTAL SOCCER 2000

£19.99 • Iridon Interactive • Out now

With an almost hopeless inevitability, *Steve Hill* finds himself reviewing yet another football game. Where did it all go wrong?

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P75 **Memory** 16Mb RAM **WE SAY** P200 with 32Mb of RAM should see you right

If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, then the former employees of Sensible Software can consider themselves roundly flattered. Because they've certainly been imitated, as have the developers of *Kick Off 2* and – for the completist – Dino Dini's long-forgotten *Goal*. *Total Soccer 2000* is an amalgam of all three vintage titles, although, the game it most resembles is the original *Total Soccer*, which was slipped out after the last World Cup. Scarcely anybody bought it then, and it remains to be seen whether the ubiquitous *2000* addendum does the trick this time around.

"The players run around like blue-arsed flies, and in this new version you can elect to have dribbling switched on or off"

If you're really thick, and haven't worked it out yet – despite the numerous visual and written clues overhead – football (not soccer) is the order of the day. Again, the players run around like blue-arsed flies, and in this new version you can elect to have dribbling switched on or off. It really is end-to-end stuff, and with the dribbling switched on, it becomes all too tempting to sprint the length of the pitch, leaving a trail of defenders in your wake. Add the keepers' susceptibility to being rounded – at least on the easier settings – and you end up constantly recreating John Barnes' famous '84 goal in the Maracana Stadium. Switch dribbling off, however, and fashioning the slightest goal-scoring opportunity becomes quite a task.

IN PERSPECTIVE

The major advantage *TS2000* has over the games that inspired it is that will run on a modern system, and it's actually available to buy.

Goal

Kick Off 2

Total Soccer 2000

Sensible World Of Soccer

KICKIN' IT OLD SKOOL

Total Soccer 2000 is a perfectly playable old-skool football game, and with perseverance a number of subtleties become apparent. Ultimately though, it's a tribute game. So what? Tributes work in music. Oasis are little more then The Shouty Beatles, and non-leaguers Gene just a bunch of students trying to be The Smiths. However, they do both endeavour to write their own tunes, whereas *Total Soccer 2000* is so faithful to its inspiration that it's more of a Bjorn Again to *Sensible Soccer*'s Abba. But, unlike music, exponential technological advances are commonplace in the games industry. A tune is always a tune, but a five-year-old game is a relic. While *Sensible Soccer* will always hold a place in any normal, right-thinking person's affections, it would be a devout fan who had actually played it regularly in the last few years.

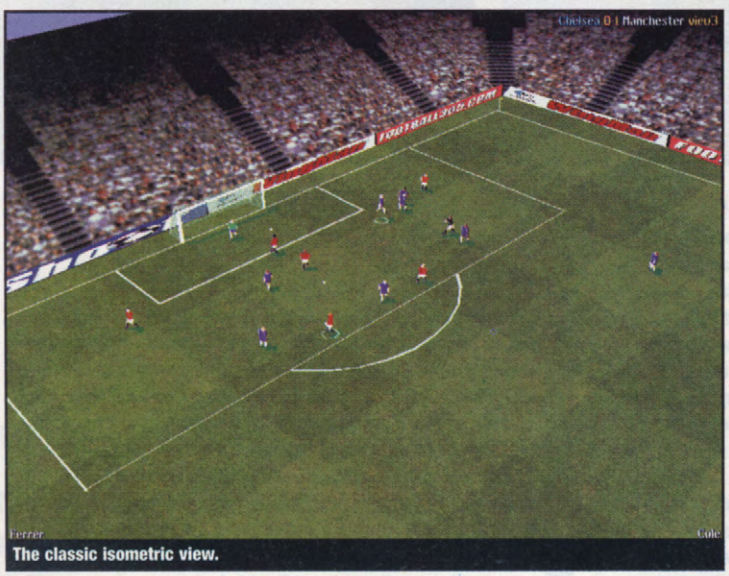
Progress is progress, and playing this is the gaming equivalent of watching a black-and-white TV. Familiar, charming even, but ultimately inferior. It's a different game to *FIFA*, but the key question is will you enjoy it more? We would suggest not. PCZ

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Shedloads of teams • Cheap • Real player names • Makes you want to play *Sensi*

DOWNERS Outdated • No multiplayer support • Kit clashes • Dodgy goalkeepers • Minor bugs

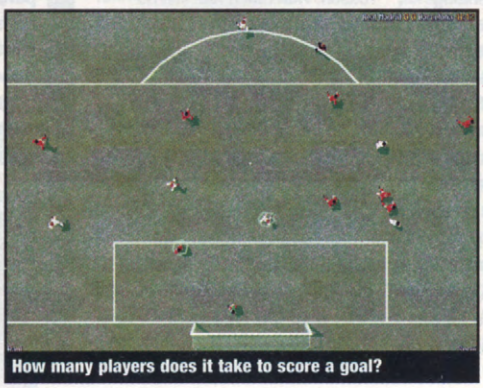
60 A competent update of an outdated game



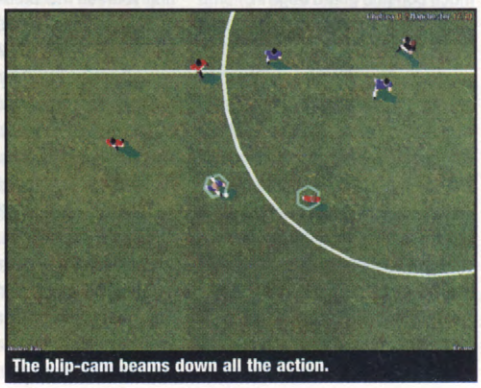
The classic isometric view.

Haven't we seen this somewhere before?

Tactic-obsessed players should look elsewhere.



How many players does it take to score a goal?



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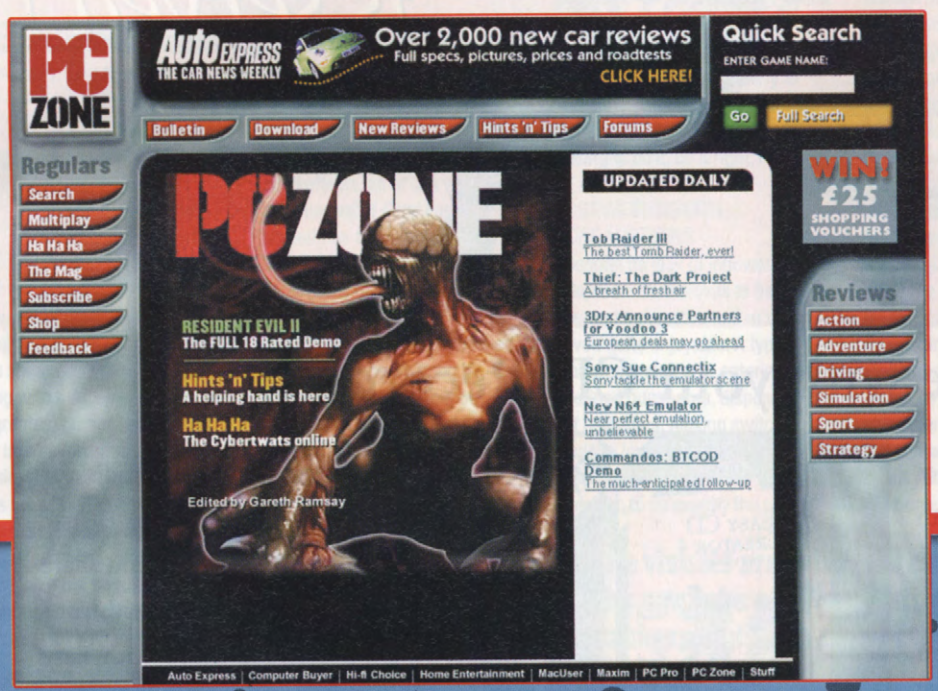

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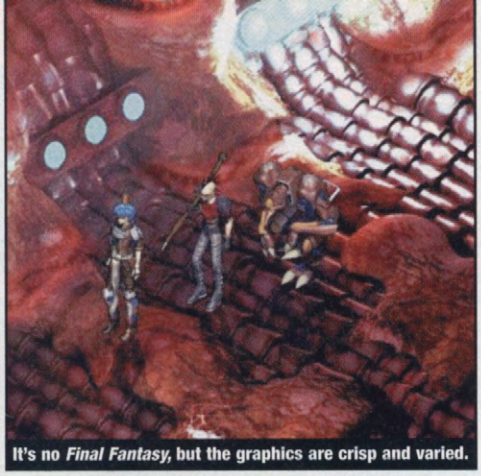
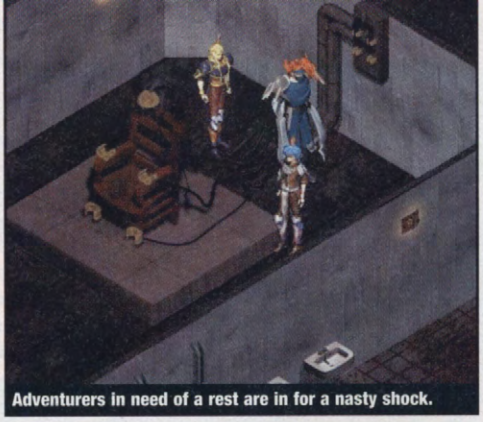
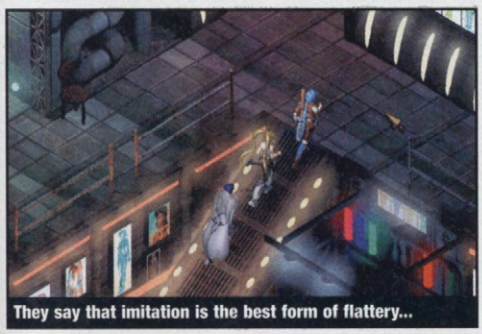
SIZE: COMMUNICATION


It's no *Final Fantasy*, but the graphics are crisp and varied.


Adventurers in need of a rest are in for a nasty shock.

You don't usually see these clothes off the catwalk.


They say that imitation is the best form of flattery...

It's not too beardy-weirdy, but there are fantasy elements.

The combat is almost identical to the turn-based *FF*.

SEPTERRA CORE

£29.99 • Red Orb • Out April

A homage to a great RPG or simply an all-out rip-off? Both, says *Chris Anderson*

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P200 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **SUPPORTS** 4Mb video card **WE SAY** Plays better on a 233MHz with 64Mb RAM

The designers of *Septerra Core* have clearly spent a lot of time playing the *Final Fantasy* games. They must have liked them too, because this game wears its influences on its digital shirt like a large shiny badge. There's nothing wrong with that, up to a point, all the greatest games have drawn their inspirations from old classics, but this one quite simply takes the p*ss. The animé-style characters, the turn-based combat (complete with energy bar, which must be full to perform the strongest attacks), the slowly unfolding plot with token love interest, the OTT animations for spell effects, all of it is very, *very* reminiscent of *Final Fantasy*, sometimes to the point where it is almost laughable.

Is this a bad thing? Well, it depends how you look at it. It's one thing to take an established series and improve upon it. It's quite another to rip it off shamelessly and make it worse. *Septerra Core* falls soundly into the latter category of imitate 'em ups. The visuals are crisp and clear, but lack the panache of *FF*'s beautifully-drawn backgrounds and character animations. The cut-scenes are passable, but *nowhere* near as good as the breathtaking interludes in *FF* (some people are happy to play *FF* just to get to the next cut-scene. Sad? You wouldn't say that if you'd seen them). Admittedly, it was never going to be easy to emulate one of the most famous RPGs of all time, but if you're going to do it, do it right, right?

GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS

Despite its lack of innovation, *Septerra Core* proves to be perfectly playable, and at times even quite enjoyable. A typical mission consists of entering the defined quest area, disposing of bad types, flicking switches, pulling levers, finding 'key' items, and buggering off to the next mission to do exactly the same thing all over again. This may sound dull on paper, but in practice it can be quite fun. You are never left in any doubt as to what you should be doing next or where your next mission is, and the battles, although derivative, can prove quite challenging (particularly in the first quarter of the game). There are many side-quests, which are not particularly exciting, but are handy for levelling-up your characters if the current main-quest area proves too difficult for your team. Towns and villages are liberally scattered throughout the game world and in this department *SC* shines: all the locations in the game are densely populated with people you can talk to in order to further the plot, and places you can go to buy new weapons, armour, and magic items.

There are, however, a few major minus-points worth mentioning. The character-movement interface is utterly *awful*. All too often your main character (Maya) will get stuck in the play area and much messing-about with the mouse ensues to get her out. Other members in the group often get in her way too, so pacing up and down the environment until they move out of the way is common practice. Also, the first half of the game is very linear. You can't explore the game world freely until you get your own ship late in the game (this is also true of *FF*, but at least *FF* has glorious FMV to keep you interested until the game itself opens up). So, *Septerra Core* tries to beat *Final Fantasy* at its own game and fails, but proves to be mildly entertaining nonetheless. A hint to *SC*'s developers: next time, try harder. PCZ

"The visuals are crisp and clear, but lack the panache of *FF*'s beautifully-drawn backgrounds and character animations"

STORYBORED

***Septerra Core* has a suitably convoluted and predictable storyline. The world is made up of seven shells. A mysterious faction (The Chosen) go in search of artefacts that will eventually lead them to the Gift of the Creator (it's very nice, apparently). You play Maya, and it is your job to stop Doskias (The Chosen's chief bad-boy) before he achieves his goal. Can you be bothered? Well...**

IN PERSPECTIVE

Final Fantasy VIII is the obvious choice if you like Japanese-style RPGs, but *Planescape: Torment* is currently the best the genre has to offer as an all-round gaming experience – although, some people may be deterred by its doom-laden atmosphere and storyline. *Silver* is a trite RPG with the emphasis more on action than character development, and *Septerra Core*, well, it's just sort of 'there' as an alternative to *FF* if you really can't get enough of it.

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Big game world • Hours and hours of gameplay • Densely populated cities and towns

DOWNERS Terrible movement interface • Linear to the point of boredom for the first half of the game • It's not *Final Fantasy* (although it wishes it was)

65 ***Final Fantasy* without the polish**

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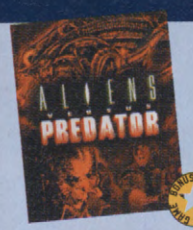

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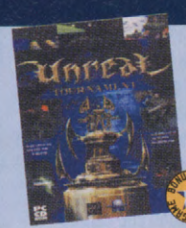

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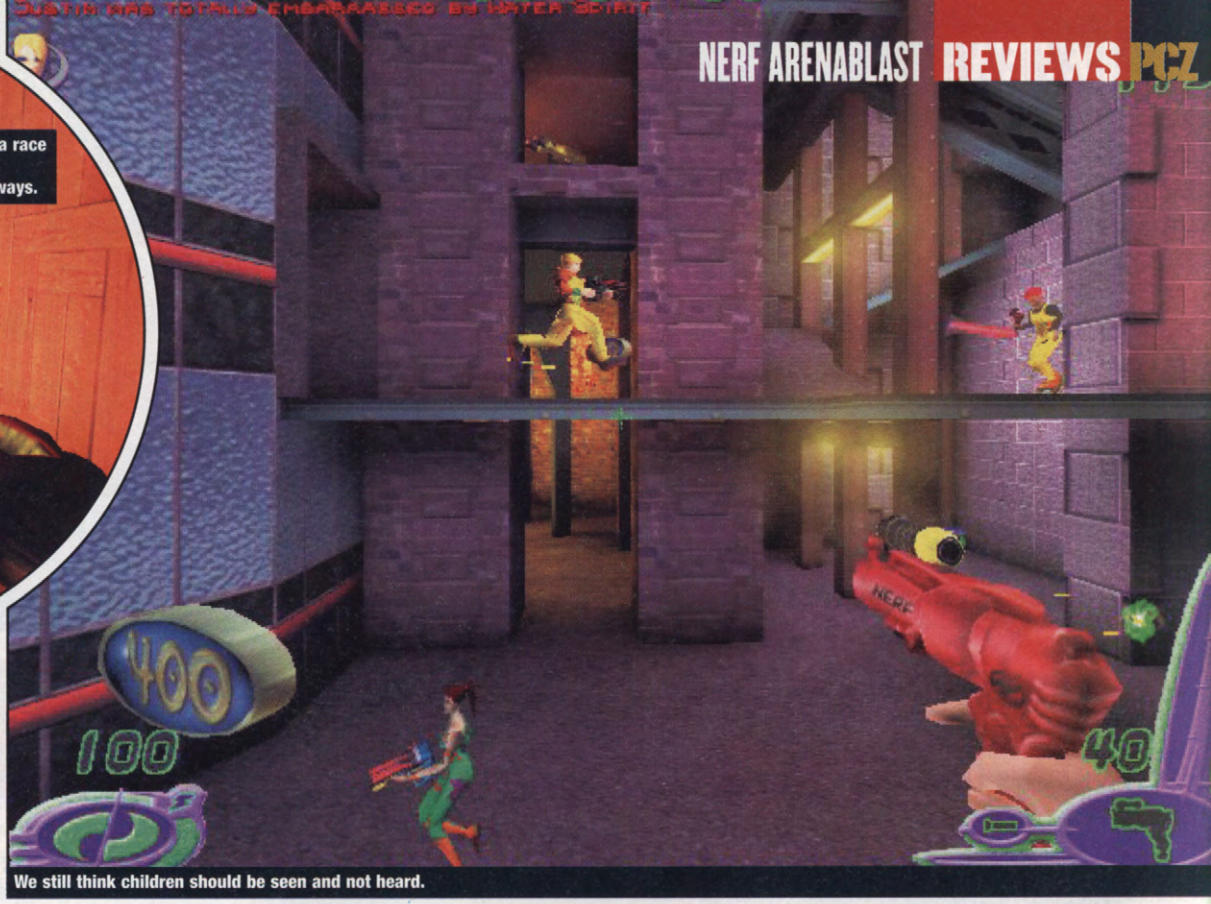
Oops. Don't tell my mum.



We still think children should be seen and not heard.

NERF ARENABLAST!

£29.99 • Hasbro Interactive • Out now

After having his nieces to stay for a week, *Dave Woods* was well up for shooting a few children. But then he's a bit sick like that

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P200 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 120Mb hard disk space **WE SAY** It's the *Unreal* engine, so up the list to at least 64Mb RAM

Have you ever heard of Nerf guns? Made from brightly coloured plastic, they fire varying numbers of foam pellets at high velocity and they're designed to teach kids that shooting people can be fun. Hang on, that's not quite right. They're designed to teach kids that shooting people is wrong. No, that can't be it either. Whatever. They're toy guns and they're really big in America right about now, although we always thought that American kids bypassed toys like this and graduated straight to the real McCoy.

In this virtual-reality driven world, this is the logical progression. Hasbro, having seen that first-person shooters are the most popular genre on the PC at the moment, has decided to take the toy and merge it with the *Unreal* engine to come up with the first ever shooting game aimed at kids.

Before you start shooting, you're led through a simple training course that teaches you how to look around with the mouse and move with the keyboard. The basic FPS skills that we all know off by heart. When you've proved you can control your character, you're taken through your first deathmatch, except it's not called a deathmatch because that might scare younger viewers – try PointBlast instead.

FAT WES

This takes place in a Day-Glo arena that's been designed to resemble one of those nightmarish fun parks, complete with huge slide and the obligatory little brats running around and making too much noise. The beauty of this is that you're encouraged to shoot them with weapons that vary from the single shot to the wild-shot (like the Flak Canon in *UT*), the guided missile or the nasty bouncing beach ball. 'Erase' a brat and a points total appears in its place, which you need to pick up to claim the 'kill'. This leads to highly annoying episodes where you shoot someone just to watch some fat kid called Wes run up and snatch the points from under your nose. Finish high enough at your first PointBlast and the Plaza opens up offering you a run at the other arenas, up to Championship level.

"At the end of the day, in *Nerf ArenaBlast!* you're still teaching kids to shoot things"

This is where the 'fun' begins. As well as the standard deathmatch, *ArenaBlast* offers other games, which involve collecting balls and throwing them through holes to score points (BallBlast), or the race (SpeedBlast) where you have to charge around a narrow track and run through all the flags before your opponents. It adds an extra dimension to the game, which is good because the standard deathmatch is very boring and the AI is sub-*Quake* (ie not very good at all). Full multiplayer capabilities have been built in as well and, if you end up buying this game, this is where you're likely to end up – provided you can find anyone on the Internet to play.

COMPETENT

And that's about it. You should know how good the *Unreal* engine is and the decision to license this rather than build one from scratch means that *Nerf ArenaBlast!* is a competent shooter. However, no-one in their right mind is going to buy this instead of *Quake III* or our favourite *Unreal Tournament*. Let's face facts: if parents are worried about their children playing violent games like either of the latter, they're hardly likely to buy a game that's exactly the same except for the lack of blood and the inclusion of brightly coloured levels. At the end of the day, you're still teaching kids to shoot things. The only plus point that we can see is that the younger generation is going to learn how to use a mouse and a keyboard. And when they're old enough, we'll be ready to take their heads off with a single shot between the eyes. PCZ

IN PERSPECTIVE

If you're looking for a non-violent game for kids, you should try a Disney title. If you want guns, shooting and killing, get *Quake III* or *Unreal Tournament*, or better still *Half-Life* – it will scare your kids to death.

Nerf ArenaBlast!

Unreal Tournament

Quake 3

Half-Life

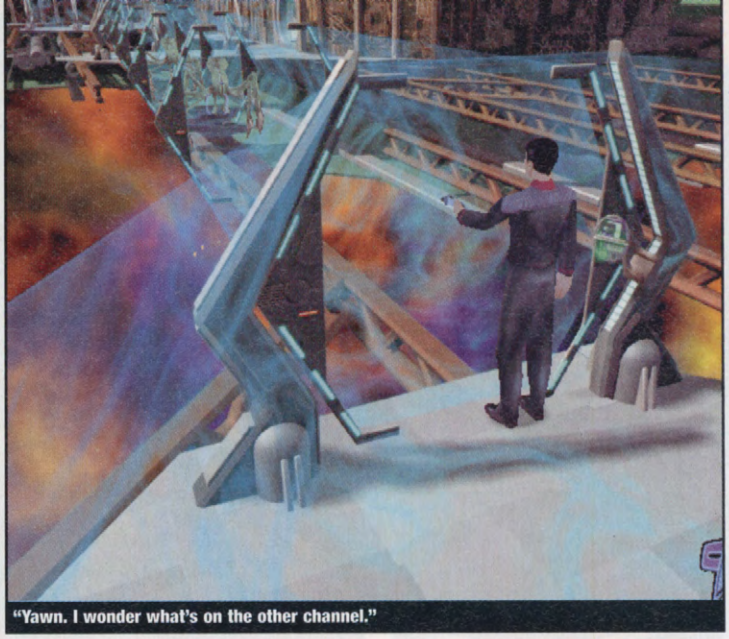
PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS *Unreal* engine • Game variation • Killing Wes

DOWNERS Terrible AI • Pointless concept • Loads better games to buy

52 This is *Quake* for kids – only in America

Don't get too excited, it's dead after two zaps.



"Yawn. I wonder what's on the other channel."

STAR TREK: HIDDEN EVIL

£24.99 • Activision • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P200 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** A 3D card certainly helps

We were always going to be a bit wary of a game that took its inspiration from the latest *Star Trek* film. *Insurrection* disappointed all but the most indiscriminate fans, the ones who'd have been just as happy if the whole crew had farted and burped a selection of Rod Stewart songs for 90 minutes. Exactly the same ones who would enjoy *Hidden Evil*. The game pretends to be some kind of action/adventure in which you play an ensign at the orders of Picard, the only character from the series in it besides Data. Sadly, the pseudo-*Resident Evil* action is pathetic and the puzzles belong in a *My First CD-ROM* children series. The whole thing has been programmed in a half-arsed kind of way (no mouse support – even in the menu – you can't bypass dialogue, there are no options of any kind, and you can forget about changing the resolution) and the plot is just plain boring.

Patrick Stewart and Brent Spiner read their lines with the desperation of actors about to fire their agents, so they must have been only too glad to discover how mercifully short it all is. There are nine missions, where you basically act as the captain's dog: go fetch this, go find that. If you try to communicate with him he barks back: "You have your orders", and if there's anything worth telling him, the game does it automatically. At one stage he's going to send you on an exciting space shuttle mission, only for Data to butt in and decide he'd be the best one to do it, leaving you searching for seeds with your tricorder.

Thankfully, this year will also see the release of the most promising *Trek* game ever, and probably one of the games of the year – *Voyager: Elite Force*. This, on the other hand, is pure evil, and does absolutely nothing to hide it.

Mark Hill

PCZ VERDICT 27%

At this rate, the mighty Chester won't be in next year's version.

Information is conveyed by what looks an old issue of *The Daily Express*.

FOOTBALL WORLD MANAGER 2000

£24.99 • Ubi Soft • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P133 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** Just about gets by on a P333 with 64Mb of RAM

This magazine's commitment to the incomparable *Championship Manager* series has been well documented, and the appearance of *Football World Manager* at the beginning of last year did nothing to change it. A world away from the understated elegance of the *CM* interface, in comparison *FWM* proved to be a vulgar eyesore, not to mention a chore to play.

So, apart from the obligatory millennial addendum, what's changed? Not much. The ear-splitting rock music has been replaced by some generic bleeps, and Big Ron Atkinson has seen his endorsement usurped by Leeds boss David O'Leary, much to the dismay of the jewellery trade.

Essentially though, it's the same game, and so features an irksome interface, some uninspiring pre-rendered match highlights, inaccurate data, wrong kits and, for good measure, even a couple of spelling mistakes. Not great then. To the developers' credit, they haven't attempted to copy *Championship Manager*, but unfortunately they have succeeded in creating a game that is inferior in every aspect.

In its favour, you can plough through the matches at a fairly rapid pace, although that's hardly the point. The reason *Champ Man* takes so long is because it's so involving and, crucially, because you care. A close match in *CM* is enough to make you physically buck, whereas if you win, lose or draw in *FWM2000* you might manage a vague shrug.

At best, *Football World Manager 2000* will appeal to someone who has never played a football management game and knows nothing about football. However, for 20 quid you can have *CM 99/00*. You do the math.

Steve Hill

PCZ VERDICT 46%

DIPLOMACY

£34.99 • Hasbro Interactive • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P166MMX **Memory** 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** Not a necessity, but an Internet connection will help you get more out of the game

Diplomacy is one of the finest board games ever created. Set during the tumultuous years prior to the Great War, it's a seven-player game of trust and deceit, where the aim is to take half of Europe by force. The drama, however, lies not in conquest but in negotiation, and because there are no dice and, unlike *Risk*, each territory can only support one military unit, the game can only be won with the help and/or ineptitude of others.

Before moving your units, the early phase of the game is spent negotiating with the other heads of state. If you were playing the board game, you would simply call the Russian President into the corner and offer to support his attack into Prussia if he supports your defence of Constantinople. In this PC version, the same is done via a few mouse clicks, by creating a meeting room and inviting the other players in. And, unlike the board game, seven human players aren't a necessity.

Unfortunately, *Diplomacy* doesn't lend itself too well to playing against computer-controlled opponents. It's a game of wits and wile and negotiating with a PC isn't quite the done thing. While the PC can play a good military game, die-hard diplomats will know that this aspect is only half of the game. Sometimes it's not what you say, but how you say it. Still, for *Diplomacy* students, the PC game is nothing if not a good trainer.

Multiplayer-wise, *Diplomacy* covers all the bases. Offering a Hot Seat mode where players can bicker around the same PC, to full online games either on Microsoft's Gaming Zone or by email. Email games are in fact the closest you'll get to the 'real thing', but the paradox is that you don't need *Diplomacy* to play via email (confused? Check out www.diplom.org).

For those wanting to get into the world of *Diplomacy*, this PC version is a more than accessible first step. After a few games though, its lack of human interaction shines through and the whole game comes across as a shallow conversion of a true board game classic. Buy that instead.

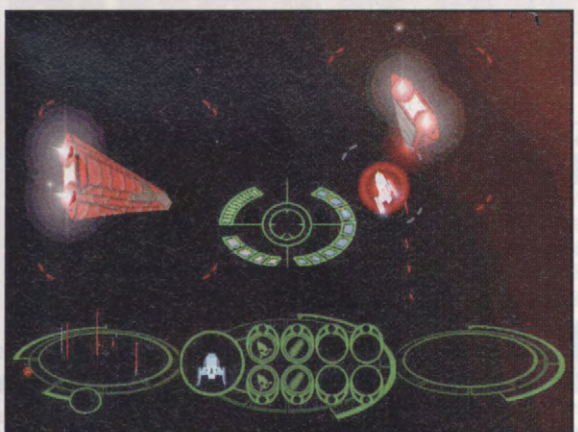
Richie Shoemaker

PCZVERDICT **62%**

"You scratch my back, I'll stab yours. Eh Fritz?"

Support your allies' attacks by sea or land.

Turkey knocking at the gates of Moscow.



You're often called upon to aid your comrades.

Is fighting all that space is good for? Probably.

PHOENIX

Price: £34.99 • Hasbro Interactive • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** PII 266 **Memory** 64Mb RAM **WE SAY** 3D card, although it only supports a 640x480 res (patch promised, of course)

Anyone who found themselves nonplussed by the wealth of commands to learn in genre companion *Freespace 2*, and its ilk, might be happy to note that Team 17 has opted for a simpler model that doesn't require you to lean a brick on the keyboard just to change weapons. Indeed, *Phoenix* comes across as more arcade-like than its predecessors – the shield adjustments and wingmen orders have been dispensed with to make way for the basics of flying and firing. It's probably fitting, then, that having half as many keys should mean it's only half as good.

Although your path through the game can change depending on the outcome of certain missions, don't expect any shocking deviations from the standard escort, transport defending, etc, of other titles. Enemy ships take an age to destroy while, in contrast, your own shield lasts just a few seconds in the face of enemy fire. Taking on more than one ship in a dogfight is sure to lead to a quick death in harder missions. Even worse, in the thick of things your companions constantly radio for help, but because you can't target them or switch to an external view, it's tricky to see who needs you and where. Graphics are nothing to write home about either and the game lacks the atmosphere it sorely strives for.

Special mention must also be made of the plot, which describes itself as "reminiscent of 1940s film noir" and not as the hackneyed, cliché-ridden, sci-fi claptrap it so obviously is. Any pretensions it may have had are drowned in a mixture of bad acting and cheesy dialogue, making it more a case of *The Last Starfighter* than *The Maltese Falcon*.

For what it's worth, *Phoenix* does its job as a simple shooter. However, the game's aspirations and overall lack of quality let it down in the end.

James Lyons

PCZVERDICT **62%**

PRO-PINBALL: FANTASTIC JOURNEY

£19.99 • Empire Interactive • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** 90 or AMD K6-2 **Memory** 16Mb RAM **WE SAY** P200 or AMD K6-3, 32Mb RAM, 8Mb 3D graphics card, 400Mb HD space

We're pinball mad in the office, but the translation to PC never works that well. Empire is persevering though, and its efforts are usually eminently playable. Although there's only one *new* table, *Fantastic Journey*, there is a second table which can be downloaded from the Internet – the award-winning, *The Web*.

Fantastic Journey is a relatively complex table, with a multitude of skilful shots needed to activate bonuses, ball aids and of course the building of and journeying in each vehicle. The multiball bonus is particularly fun, and provides some frenetic action. Several difficulty levels also add to the challenge. Unfortunately, this all sounds rather more interesting than it is. Most of the game is comprised of no more than triggering bonuses and setting yourself up for the next one, which to an extent is the bread and butter of pinball games. However, with the scope provided by a computer, you'd expect something more, something a little cleverer and even a hint of originality, but all of these elements are sadly missing. Even pinball purists will surely soon grow tired of the lack of options.

Graphically, *FJ* looks superb, but the music sounds like it came straight out of an elevator, infecting your mind late at night with its annoying repetition. *The Web*, although not as aesthetically pleasing, is the more entertaining of the two, offering another paddle mid way up the table to add an extra element of control.

For those of you who really love pinball, *PPFJ* will keep you occupied for a while. Its ball physics are spot on and the Internet high-score tables make the whole affair a little more competitive. Sadly, the game lacks either the originality or the diversity (with regard to the number of tables) needed to make it a valid purchase. Although it's cheap and reasonably good fun, you'd be better off spending your 20 quid down the arcades.

Martin Korda

PCZ VERDICT 62%

That deaf, dumb and blind kid isn't very good at playing pinball. Funny that.

SOUTH PARK RALLY

£19.99 • Acclaim • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P166 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 4Mb Direct3D-compatible graphics card **WE SAY** You'll be better off with a 266MHz processor

Crossing the karting antics of Mario with the characters from *South Park* would seem to spell a recipe for success. And there are a few great ideas in this game, most notably the hilarious power-ups that eschew the formulaic missile-based weapons in favour of Saddam Hussein, a prostitute ("five bucks for a lay, ten for a ****") and the stunning vibro-nuke.

Unfortunately, the engine doesn't play ball and after a few races in single or multiplayer mode (there's support for Internet and network play, but strangely no split-screen) boredom levels start to creep towards the 'switch this damn game off' level. Obstacles are for the most part immovable and it's too easy to get stuck and lose the race because of a single mistake.

The tracks are also way too complex and you have to keep watching your car on the map to check you're going in the right direction, rather than spend the time concentrating on slamming your vehicles towards the finish line. It still works as an 'after the pub' game and it's more fun than the terminally dire and unplayable *Ford Racing*, but we still wouldn't recommend it unless you're a huge *South Park* fan.

Dave Woods

PCZ VERDICT 54%

Oh no! You've just been landed with the Saddam power-up.

FORD RACING

£19.99 • Empire • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P200 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 4Mb Direct3D-compatible graphics card **WE SAY** Don't buy it, don't play it

PCZONE PANTS

We were very suspicious about this game, and for good reason. First off we were refused a review copy, which always taints the air with a fishy aroma. Secondly, the shelves of our local shop (for we had to actually go and buy the game to review it) were stuffed with second-hand copies. Surely it can't be that bad?

Oh, yes it can. The graphics on the box bear no resemblance to the shoddy in-game visuals. There's no multiplayer option, either in split-screen or network mode, and the control system for your gamepad (steering and accelerating/braking is done through the direction pad) makes it impossible to control your car.

In fact, the only way to get around the course is to dump your pad and use the keyboard instead, but if you can get around a couple of laps without dying of boredom we'd like to hear from you. We were expecting a fairly good ride with Ford, but we've been cruelly disappointed.

Dave Woods

PCZ VERDICT 19%

Sadly, this game can't be a good advertisement for Ford.

TOY STORY 2

£29.99 • Disney Interactive • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P166 **Memory** 32Mb of RAM **WE SAY** At least a P200 with a decent 3D card

The game of the sequel of the film, in case you were wondering, which – if you've yet to see it – is well worth a look. At least as good as the original, it's a heartwarming affair that mesmerises from the off, managing to provide top entertainment for the kids while throwing in enough cultural references to keep the adults nodding smugly (or guffawing wildly, in the case of some foreigners at a recent press screening).

As for the game, it's a competent platformer in which you assume the role of square-jawed Space Ranger, Buzz Lightyear, one of the leading characters of the films, and patron of the (technically impossible) catchphrase, "To infinity and beyond!". However, unlike the Buzz of the movies, the game character has even greater powers, notably the ability to fire his laser, perform a fancy spin, and even fly for a couple of seconds.

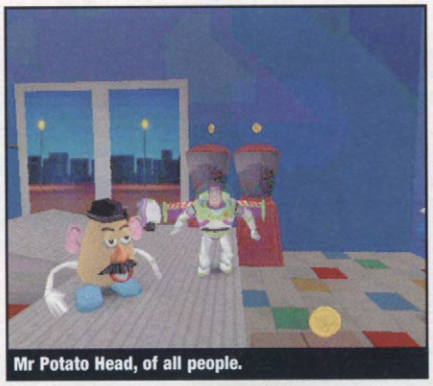
The story only tenuously follows that of the film, as watching a toy spaceman constantly miss a ledge by inches clearly wouldn't make for much of a movie. The action features appearances from much of the cast, including Rex the cowardly dinosaur, Hamm the piggy bank, Slinky Dog and Mr & Mrs Potato Head. New characters from the latest film also crop up, along with numerous video clips, which could prove something of a spoiler if you've not seen it.

We've been waiting for a platform game to come along and reinvigorate the genre for ages and, not surprisingly, *Toy Story 2* didn't exactly set our world alight.

Ultimately, the game was always going to suffer in comparison to the film, although in fairness it is definitely a cut above most merchandising tie-ins. If you buy it for a kid, don't be surprised to find yourself regularly 'helping out'.

Steve Hill

PCZVERDICT 55%



Mr Potato Head, of all people.

Buzz can now swing on bars. Like a monkey.

Buzz Lightyear's in-helmet view.

EARTHWORM JIM 3D

£39.99 • Virgin Interactive • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P200 **Memory** 32Mb **SUPPORTS** DirectX **WE SAY** P266, 64Mb RAM, 8Mb Graphics card.

Earthworm Jim. Sounds more like something Mr Spock from *Star Trek* would've said when giving his opinion on the cause of unexplained holes in a planet's soil, than the title of an action/adventure platform game. But I suppose if *Sonic The Hedgehog* can be a software star, then so can a humble earthworm called Jim.

Unsurprisingly, the story revolves around eponymous hero Jim. Having fallen into a coma, he becomes trapped in his own mind, and in order to bring himself back to consciousness, he must repair the different sections of his brain. This is done over four levels: Memories, Happiness, Fear and Fantasy. Each of these contains between three and five sub-quests to complete, including the likes of underpants retrieval missions and chicken assassination runs.

The game is relatively large, and offers plenty of variety in each level. Many obstacles block your path back to sanity, including rolling barrels, deep pits, quicksand and trigger-happy barn yard animals. In this respect, the game is a great deal of fun. The sense of humour throughout, although not to everyone's taste, is conveyed relatively well, especially with regard to the weapons. Shooting eggs and gnomes at your foes is ludicrous but, for a while at least, is an excellent laugh.

Unfortunately, there's a 'but'. The camera angles which track the character are diabolical, frequently obscuring Jim behind walls. Too often you get shot to bits or fall down a pit because you can't see where you're going. Another huge bug is the collision detection. Jim can be standing well out of the way of a rolling barrel and yet somehow it'll still end up hitting him. At the other extreme, rockets fired at our hero can pass right through the middle of him without even causing a scratch.

Like an alcoholic clown, *Earthworm Jim 3D* is a hoot on the surface, full of fun ideas and jokes, but under the bravado of comedy is just a little bit sad and disappointing. Just like most other platform games we've had to review in the past few months.

Martin Korda

PCZVERDICT 44%

Jim has, quite literally, lost his marbles.

DUCK!! "No, I'm a worm actually."

Aliens Vs Predator

Quake III

Team Fortress Classic

Starsiege Tribes

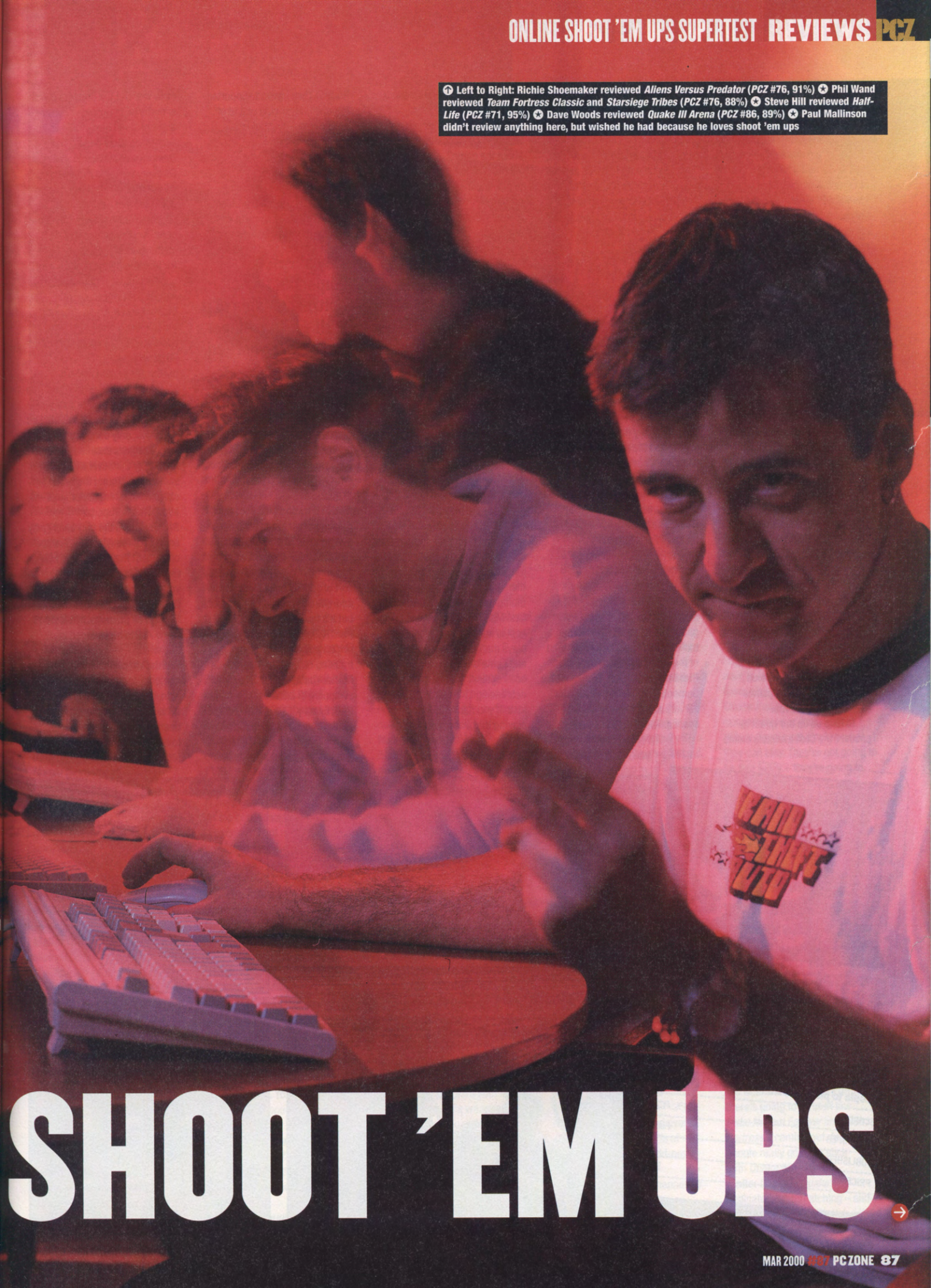
Unreal Tournament

PCZ SUPERTEST

If you're still not sure which online shooter is right for your tastes, sit back and let the *PC ZONE* team go 'down the wire' for you. This month we're testing out the best the first-person variety. Overseer: Paul Mallinson

ONLINE

PHOTOGRAPHY: Simon Clay **VENUE:** Wandy's House



Left to Right: Richie Shoemaker reviewed *Aliens Versus Predator* (*PCZ* #76, 91%) ✪ Phil Wand reviewed *Team Fortress Classic* and *Starsiege Tribes* (*PCZ* #76, 88%) ✪ Steve Hill reviewed *Half-Life* (*PCZ* #71, 95%) ✪ Dave Woods reviewed *Quake III Arena* (*PCZ* #86, 89%) ✪ Paul Mallinson didn't review anything here, but wished he had because he loves shoot 'em ups

SHOOT 'EM UPS

The rapid growth of the Internet has seen a dramatic increase in the number of online shoot 'em ups available for the PC. Currently there are literally hundreds available, all of varying shapes and sizes, some more successful than others. At this particular point in time first-person shooters are entering a new phase in their evolutionary cycle. Bots (computer-controlled players) are now standard, enabling you to practise properly before spending time, and money, online. Client/server software is also improving, but lag (a pause in the action due to a slow connection) is still a problem with even the very latest releases. In spite of the lag, all of the games featured in this month's Supertest are extremely enjoyable to play online, as are many other games that didn't make the shortlist. Like the original *Half-Life*. Or *Opposing Force*. "Why?" you ask. Well, it was felt by the team that (online at least), *Team Fortress Classic* represented the best and most original incarnation of *Half-Life* and that only one version should be included on grounds of fairness. *Rogue Spear, Rainbow Six* and *SWAT 3*, although great online games in their own right, didn't have the purity required to enter into this discussion either. The rest of the games speak for themselves.

To help us on our quest to uncover the best available online shoot 'em up, we enlisted the help of Blast House **(www.blasthouse.com)**, a brand new Internet gaming company with a superfast T1 Internet connection, to set us up with fast PCs and all five games. After hours of 'testing', the team then reconvened to discuss their findings. This is what they reckoned…

ALIENS VERSUS PREDATOR

Richie: *(To Mallo)*: I remember when this first came in I persuaded you and Charlie to have a go at multiplayer and you both said it was f**king crap. You said it was too fast, too unrealistic, too dark… which it is, but that's the thing about *AvP*: it's got the most atmospheric lighting of any first-person shooter on the market.

Mallo: Ah, but what about 'darkmatch' in the original *Unreal*? Remember that? Pitch-black rooms lit up by gunfire?

Dave: The lighting in *AvP* is brilliant. For a 'ground-up' engine – their own engine – it's f**king excellent.

Richie: Online it plays really well… with the patch anyway.

Mallo: Our criticism about the game being too fast was wrong too – you can decrease the speed of the game if it's too high.

Richie: You can't on Gameplay.com because its servers are configured to set speeds. The main problem with *AvP*, playing online, is that you can never find more than three or four people to play against!

Mallo: What, in the whole world?!

Steve: What does that tell you about the game?

Richie: You need 15 people to play the multiplayer game properly – five-a-side, or five marines against the aliens. With one marine and one alien it's all a bit pants. So multiplayer support is a bit shit, to say the least.

"They haven't supported the multiplayer side of it at all. The developers should have worked on it more"

RICHIE SHOEMAKER ON *AvP*

Phil: And it doesn't work on Windows NT. There are a lot of office players up and down the country – we play a lot of *Half-Life* in the evenings – and most of them use NT. But for some reason it simply won't run *AvP* under NT.

Mallo: It's a real pity because there are some brilliant multiplayer options in there. Last Man Standing – where the host is an alien and everyone else plays marines. You kill a marine and come back as an alien, the odds against the marines ever decreasing… that's a fantastic idea. If you had eight people playing that… but you *can't* find eight people to play over the Internet!

Richie: They haven't supported the multiplayer side of it at all. The developers should have worked on it more.

Dave: Is there a master server list?

Richie: The lack of a master server list is the main problem.

Phil: Every other game in this Supertest has a master server list, so that when you go online it pings the master server list and comes back with all the games running, and you pick and choose. With *AvP* you need to know the IP address.

Mallo: Why don't they set up a master server list now? If enough people want to play online…

Richie: I think it's too late. Apparently Fox is releasing some sort of special pack that will address all the multiplayer issues, but it's too little too late.

Phil: It isn't supported by *PingTool* or *GameSpy*, so there's no way of tracking down an online server.

Mallo: You're resigned to swapping IP addresses?

Phil: Exactly.

Mallo: You email 20 friends with your IP address to get a game going?

Phil: Yes. But the problem there is that a lot of people who have dial-ups don't have static IP addresses. Only people like Demon have static addresses. So every time you dial on using BT Internet, or whatever, you're going to have a different IP address. You can't say "meet me here", you have to sort of do it on the spur of the moment.

Richie: The things is, it's a very good multiplayer game, but no-one's playing it.

Mallo: I agree, it's an excellent multiplayer game.

Richie: I'd love to play against 20 people.

Mallo: They could make it massively multiplayer – the game seems simple enough. Imagine playing a 64-player map… It'd be *Alien War*, only done properly. The level design is excellent as well – especially that level with the scaffolding around the bone-shaped ship from the original alien. That is superb.

Richie: That's the only level I play online. It's really cool. There are only about five maps anyway! And there's no support for building – you can't build your own maps. It's a bit of a closed shop.

Steve: Fox presumably wouldn't allow *AvP* to be changed in any way.

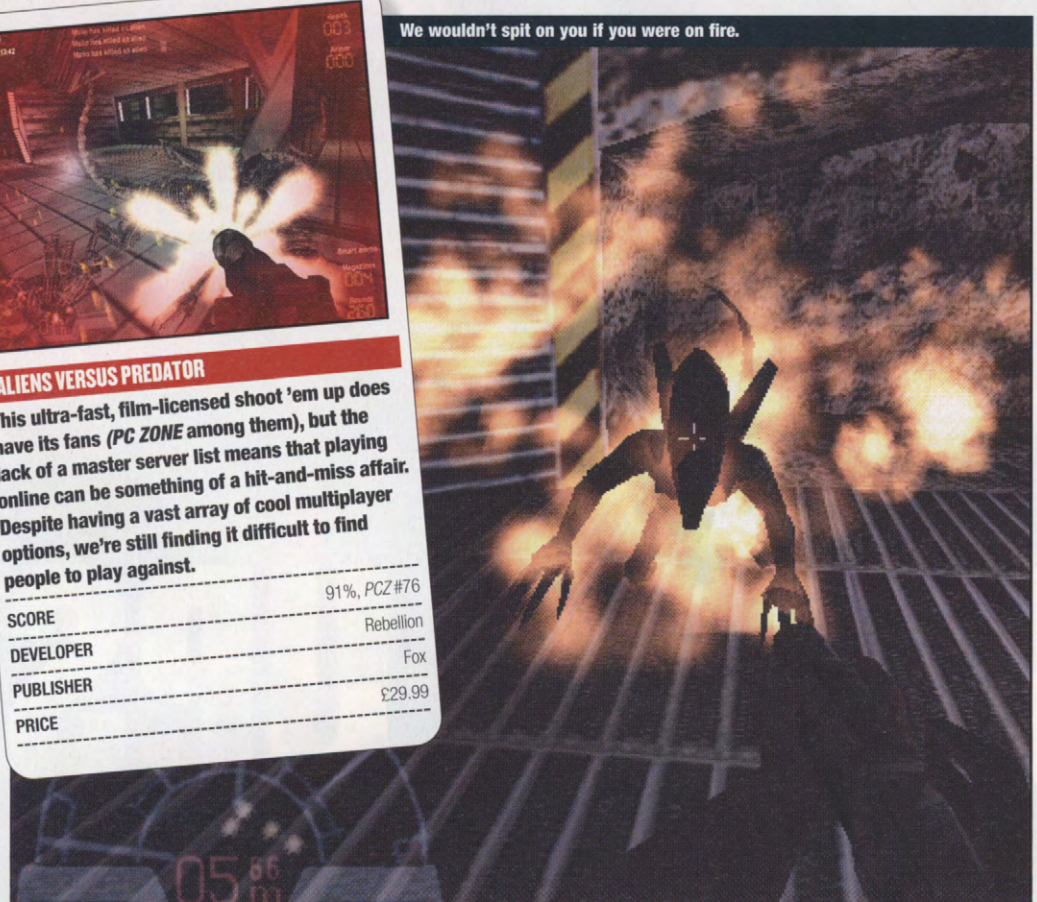
Richie: Yeah, you'd probably have someone incorporating a Batman skin, or something.

Dave: *Quake* and *Unreal* have been around for years and both id and Epic have set the standard for the genre. Rebellion had a

ALIENS VERSUS PREDATOR

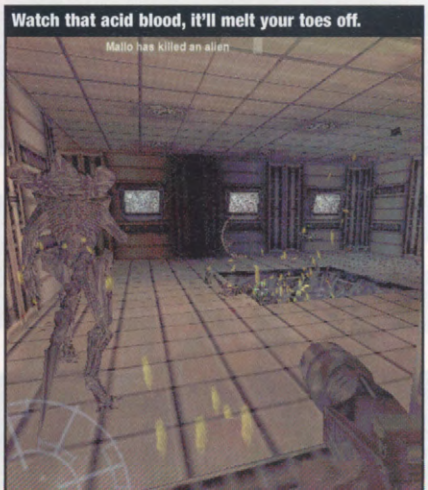
This ultra-fast, film-licensed shoot 'em up does have its fans *(PC ZONE* among them), but the lack of a master server list means that playing online can be something of a hit-and-miss affair. Despite having a vast array of cool multiplayer options, we're still finding it difficult to find people to play against.

SCORE	91%, *PCZ* #76
DEVELOPER	Rebellion
PUBLISHER	Fox
PRICE	£29.99



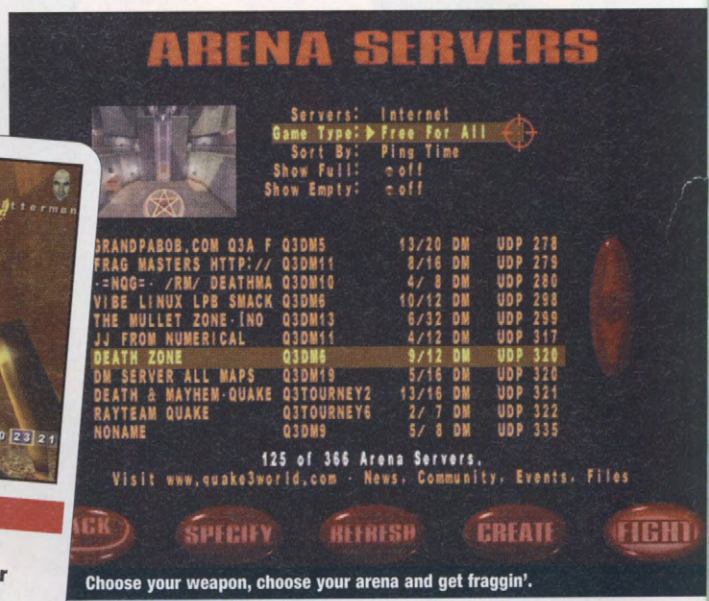
We wouldn't spit on you if you were on fire.

AvP is explosive fun. Honest.



Watch that acid blood, it'll melt your toes off.

Fight! Fight! Fight! Fight!



Choose your weapon, choose your arena and get fraggin'.

QUAKE III ARENA

Quake needs no introduction since it has been the staple diet of first-person shooter junkies for the past five years. id's classic series has maintained its militaristic look and feel throughout, and this third instalment in the series is as fast and pure as Quake has ever been.

SCORE	89%, PCZ#86
DEVELOPER	id
PUBLISHER	Activision
PRICE	£44.99

single-player game, a deadline to meet, and as a result the game has suffered.

Steve: It's a missed opportunity.

Richie: They should definitely re-package it.

Steve: It's too late. What's the point? You've now got *Quake III* and *Unreal Tournament*. Had they got it right at the time – a year ago – yeah, it would have been a contender.

QUAKE III ARENA

Phil: For me, like *Quake II*, *Quake III* has nothing remotely stimulating about it.

Dave: It's the fastest deathmatch game you can play.

Mallo: I'm not sure about that.

Dave: Ping times are lower than *Unreal Tournament*.

Mallo: On a 56K modem they're both pretty much unplayable. You get choppy play in both games. The ping time difference is minuscule.

Richie: Steve plays *Quake III* by email, don't you Steve?

Steve: What?!

Dave: It's the best 3D engine as well.

Mallo: Yeah, it's definitely the slickest out of the few here. The 'look' is grimier than *UT*, which I prefer.

Dave: I do agree that it doesn't really add anything new.

Mallo: It's a bit 'spacey', and the other two were more militaristic. They went a bit overboard – a bit Judge Dredd, with elbow pads and big boots.

Steve: It is!

Phil: And they still look like they're moon walking. In *Half-Life* and *TFC* they do look as though they're plodding along.

Dave: In *Quake III*? I think the animation works really well in *Quake III*.

Steve: You can forget about the animation if you play online.

Mallo: I still think *Quake III* is the ultimate human-to-computer, first-person killing machine.

Phil: Then why aren't more people playing it?

Mallo: Because there's more variation in other, similar games – particularly *Unreal Tournament*.

Phil: People have seen it all before – that's what I said.

Mallo: If they took the gameplay from *UT* and the engine from *Quake III*, then we would have an online shooter to talk about.

Phil: The *Unreal* level we were playing earlier, the one with the rickety walkways and the castle on top of the mountain, that was smart. I got massacred, but it was great fun. You actually had to watch where you were walking…

Mallo: Yeah, it's an excellent level – The Peak Monastery.

Dave: What about *Quake III*'s bounce pad levels?

Mallo: Some of them are a bit over the top.

Steve: Turns the whole thing into a trampoline session.

Dave: Yeah, but once you've played the levels a few times you get to know how to use them to your advantage…

Mallo: That last level – Q3TOURNEY6 The Very End Of You – is ridiculous. You end up losing loads of lives bouncing off pads into deep space.

Richie: Those pads turn *Quake* into *Rise Of The Triad*…

Steve: Yeah, that's what I thought.

Richie: It's 3D shoot 'em up pinball!

Everyone: *(Laughs)*

Dave: There is one that we played for two or three months, and it's in the demo.

Richie: Yeah, that's it: buy *PC ZONE*, install the demo and that's all you need. It's got one of the best levels ever made, and you can play that online.

Mallo: Which level?

Richie: The one with the bouncy pads that came with the demo – it's brilliant.

Mallo: In bouncy pad levels you spend most of the time in mid-air trying to pick people off with a rocket launcher. I'm not too sure about the shotgun either.

Dave: It's not as good as the *Quake II* shotgun.

Mallo: And using the railgun online is a fraught affair. The beam seems to come out, like, seconds afterwards. There's great satisfaction to be had picking people off from a distance with the railgun, but online the only way of fragging people is to rail them when they're right in front of you. Preferably when there are a number of players in a line.

Phil: It's the problem with lag.

Richie: *Quake III*'s weapons are not balanced. You either pick up the rocket launcher or mess about with the railgun. It's a waste of time.

Dave: There's not much rocket jumping either.

Mallo: I like more of *Quake III*'s weapons than any others, but there are a few shit ones.

Richie: *Half-Life* on its own had far better weapons than *Quake III*.

Mallo: The BFG 10K is pretty good, but it's not as spectacular as the original BFG. That's pretty much one-shot kills.

Phil: Has every game got a 'one-shot kills' gun? In *TFC* there's the sniper rifle, which if you get someone between the eyes, bang – they're dead.

Dave: In *UT* you've got the InstaGib mutator.

Phil: And in *Quake III*, the BFG 10K – if you get someone straight on.

Steve: *Quake III* is *Quake II* with a paint job, isn't it? They've just put some fancy arches in…

Mallo: I still think *Quake II* is better than *Quake III*.

Steve: Possibly, yeah.

Mallo: The military setting suits the game more. It's more like 'real' war.

Dave: *Quake II* is more cat-and-mouse than *Quake III*.

Steve: *Quake III* is just a free-for-all.

Mallo: People went mad over *Quake II*, making all sorts of weird and wonderful add-ons and MODs.

Steve: Is that going to happen to *Quake III*?

Dave: It will. In future the *Quake III* engine will become quite widespread.

Phil: And the source code will be available in two or three months. Just before Christmas they released the *Quake II* source code, and they're planning to do the same with this. As soon as they do that they open up the possibility of all manner of modifications.

Mallo: How's it doing online, popularity-wise, anyway?

Phil: Still at number one, where it has been for six or seven months now, is *Half-Life*. *Quake III* on Gameplay.com is ninth out of ten. *Quake II* and *QuakeWorld* are still number three or four.

Steve: People are playing what they can play. They're not going to be that fussy – they're going to play what works.

Phil: According to the game list, there were 436 *Quake III Arena* servers. In *Half-Life* there were 2,200. That gives you some idea of the difference.

Mallo: That's *Opposing Force*, *Half-Life* and *TFC*?

Phil: Yeah, *Half-Life* in various forms of modification. But while the *Quake III* community grows, there's going to be stuff like *Duke Nukem Forever* and *Team Fortress 2* coming out. Are people really going to stick with *Quake III*?

Mallo: *Quake* is *Quake* – dedicated deathmatching – and people who like it will stick with

"I'm convinced that in future the *Quake III* engine will become quite widespread"

DAVE WOODS LOOKS AT THE BIG PICTURE

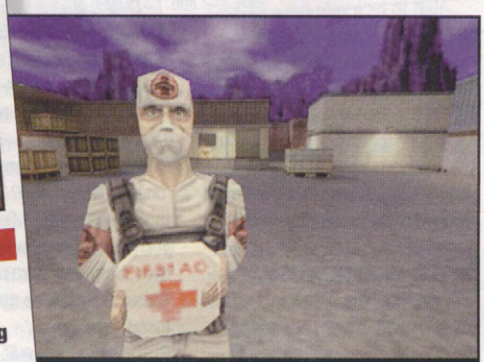
"Where's your tool?"

TFC: team-based warfare par excellence.

TEAM FORTRESS CLASSIC

Available with *Opposing Force*, on magazine coverdiscs and from the Internet, *Team Fortress Classic* must rate as the best gaming freebie ever, released by Valve in celebration of *Half-Life*'s success. *TFC* is about as close to 'real war' as they come, with team work playing a major role in the proceedings.

SCORE	Not reviewed
DEVELOPER	Valve
PUBLISHER	Sierra
PRICE	Free download



A couple of plasters will do the trick.

it. You always rely on *Quake* if you're after a real quick blast.
Dave: When you get into it it's brilliant.

TEAM FORTRESS CLASSIC

Phil: *Team Fortress Classic* takes a lot of getting in to. If you're thrown into it after you've played *Quake III* or *Unreal Tournament*, then you'll definitely find it a bit on the slow side. But the team aspects – the fact that you have to work together, like the medic helping the injured players – make it, and you *do* get used to it over time. As an instant blast it's very low down the gratification scale.
Mallo: I see what you mean, but not once today when I played *TFC* did I feel like I was part of a team. That was my fault though, because I enjoyed running around like a headless chicken. You have to make an effort to play as a team and I couldn't be bothered to make an effort…
Phil: That is true – you *do* need to make an effort – but once the effort is made the rewards are good. You don't need a fast connection to play it either. If you've got a slow connection in *Quake III*, it can ruin the game, but not in *TFC* because the pace is a lot slower.
Richie: Lag compromises your ability to frag people, but it doesn't affect your ability to score points in *TFC*.
Dave: ADSL, when it arrives, will sort out a lot of these lag problems.
Phil: The only problem with ADSL is that it'll shift the bottleneck back up the system. The ADSL connection is about half a meg. If you imagine a million people using ADSL – that's a million people times half a meg. Whoever carries the signal has to have the capacity to do that. It's all very well saying "this is a half meg connection", but it really depends on the main backbone. If lots of people connect at the same time, ADSL will grind to a halt because there's still a limited bandwidth.
Mallo: So ADSL is not the future of online gaming?
Phil: If they invest in the infrastructure. Fibre optics technology has massive connectivity potential, but it has to be put in place first. If you have 100 people in a street using ADSL, that's 100 times half a meg, and that's a serious amount of connectivity that has to go somewhere.
Dave: So get ADSL before the kids find out about it and it grinds to a halt?
Phil: It will clog up. It's like a motorway – you can build it seven lanes wide, but if there's shitloads of traffic on it, then it'll still jam up.
Steve: Bummer.
Mallo: Going back to *Team Fortress Classic*, the slow pace of the game helps in a way because it gives you time to think, which you need when you're playing team games.
Phil: Some of the weapons in *TFC* are crap, like the engineer's railgun and the scout's shotgun, but there are nine classes to choose from and each of those classes has two or three weapons. So there's huge variation.
Mallo: Steve, you whinged all the way through the game we played earlier.
Steve: It was incredibly slow.

"*TFC* takes a lot of getting into... As an instant blast, it's very low down the gratification scale"

PHIL KNOWS THAT *TFC* NEEDS A LARGE HELPING OF TLC

So slow that I thought something was broken.
Mallo: It's probably half the speed of *Quake III*.
Richie: Did anyone play as the scout? He's the fastest out of the nine classes.
Phil: It's because you've been playing *Quake III* and *UT*.
Mallo: We used to play a lot of *Half-Life* deathmatch and I remember it being much faster.
Richie: We've been playing *Opposing Force* deathmatch for the past couple of weeks and it is slower than *Quake* and *UT*.
Phil: *Quake* and *UT* are both a major adrenaline rush and it's no surprise that you're coming into *TFC* and finding it slow.
Mallo: It's all relative. Time flies when you're having fun.
Phil: The bottom line, though, is that *TFC* is the best online team game out there. If you get a bunch of people who know what they are doing and you get a sniper in a corner, a soldier guarding the entrance to your base, and an engineer building guns to protect your flag, you do feel part of a team. You don't get that in any other game. It's a simple as that.
Mallo: *TFC* is also primed for comedy. You get people running around spreading viruses among the enemy…
Phil: Exactly. It's great fun.
Richie: If you've got a shit connection, like I have, it's a great laugh playing as a scout. You zip around, dropping caltrops behind you after nicking the enemy flag.
Mallo: I had serious problems killing people too. How many shots does it take to frag someone? Some take four or five rockets, bounce around and still don't die!
Phil: I would agree with that. I know it sounds a bit silly, but it really is a case of getting used to it.
Dave: They should make it easier to kill people in *Team Fortress II*, unless you're wearing armour. And include 'one-shot kills' as well.
Mallo: And speed the game up. And have better ways of communicating.
Richie: You'd have to have someone in charge.
Mallo: I want to see large-scale wars going on. *Quake II* had some 64-player servers available – that'd be the way to go with *Team Fortress II*. Will they be able to do that?
Phil: I reckon they will, but *Team Fortress* is really about cooperation and communication, once those go

away, what's the point in a team-based game?
Mallo: You've seen *Saving Private Ryan* – how much communication do you think goes on in a battle zone? Most people run around like headless chickens trying to stay alive among the confusion! There's got to be an element of confusion to make it realistic. Soldiers didn't have headphones and a microphone during World War II! Imagine D-Day Normandy landings in a massively multiplayer first-person environment with thousands of players, and using the *Team Fortress II* engine…
Steve: What happens when you get killed?
Mallo: You get put back into another attack wave, like in *TFC*.
Richie: That sounds great – I can't wait to play it.
Dave: *Unreal Tournament*'s assault levels are similar.
Phil: Have you heard about the *Red Alert*-style 'commander' screen in *Team Fortress II*? One person has an overview of the battlefield and directs the troops from HQ. Will anyone do that though?
Mallo: I know people who sit and play air traffic control programs.
Everyone: *(Laughs)*
Mallo: Believe me, there are people out there who want to manage dots on a radar.
Steve: I can believe that.

STARSIEGE TRIBES

Mallo: For all of its faults *Starsiege Tribes* is one of the few games here that has been designed to simulate all-out war. When I was talking earlier about the massively multiplayer war game, at times – when there are tons of troops running over the hills in attack – it really does feel like you're part of something big.
Everyone: *(Laughs of derision)*
Steve: So you can see a few dots in the distance!
Richie: You don't even see dots, you see triangles!
Steve: I'm amazed this game is even in here.
Mallo: It's not that bad.
Steve: It sticks out like a sore thumb. It looks like it was made five years ago. It's too much of a pea-souper…
Everyone: *(Laughs)*
Steve: It's f**king Jack The Ripper!
Mallo: You mean the fog?
Steve: Yeah, it's incredibly foggy.
Dave: The mountains look like patches of water, the way they ripple.
Phil: But the frame rate is very high, and lag is low.
Mallo: *Starsiege Tribes* is a pretty good, relatively massive, multiplayer online first-person shoot 'em up.
Dave: I don't think I've ever found a game so boring.
Steve: It looks like an experiment to see how not to make an online shoot 'em up.
Mallo: You're being too harsh.
Richie: I'd rather play *Tribes* than *Quake III*.
Steve: Really?
Mallo: And what about the flying vehicles in *Tribes*?
Steve: A waste of time. They're impossible to fly.
Mallo: What?! Earlier on I was rocketing you from the sky…
Steve: I know, I was watching you – circling round incredibly slowly.
Dave: Phil picked me up in a ship…
Steve: What is this, a virtual hitchhiking game?
Everyone: *(Laughs)*
Phil: Yeah, then we flew into the side of a hill.
Mallo: The idea with *Tribes* is to attack an enemy base in great numbers. You use the troop ships to ferry your team mates into battle.
Steve: But it takes so long to find the enemy base, because the maps are so big, that you might as well go by car.
Phil: The weapons in *Tribes* are *awful*.
Richie: They are.
Steve: Zero gratification.
Phil: And there aren't that many. Like five at the most. And the heavy armour as well – it weighs you down. I found that on some maps you can fall down a hill and not get back up again. It can sometimes be a real lag trying to jump up to something too. You have to time your jump and not run out of thrust…

Mallo: It'd be a lot better if you had infinite fuel for the jet pack.
Phil: What and be able to pick people off from the air?
Steve: It's almost a flight sim this game. You spend far too much time in the air.
Mallo: I suppose it's a cross between *Quake* and *Magic Carpet*. Well anyway, there are still plenty of people playing it online.
Richie: It's because you don't need a fast connection or a ninja PC to run it.
Mallo: *Tribes* swept across America last year.
Richie: It's still popular.
Phil: I don't know why. The maps are far too big. You get lost. You fall off your base and can't f**king get back up again! Most of your time is spent trudging around the hills.
Richie: Most of the people on the servers I've played don't build space ships, they just go running round on their own. There's none of this: "Hey, I'm gonna build a space ship guys! Hop right on and I'll take you down the front line!" And you have to queue to buy the armour. Usually you'll get people behind shouting "get outta the way!" Or shooting you.

> **"It sticks out like a sore thumb. It looks like it was made five years ago. It's too much of a pea-souper..."**
> STEVE HILL ON *STARSIEGE TRIBES*

Phil: That is exactly the problem with online games – the fact that most people are out for themselves.
Steve: They just want instant gratification.
Phil: Right.
Richie: The best co-op levels have a real incentive. Remember the 'assassin' level in *Half-Life* where you'd get one person playing a crowbar-wielding gang boss and a team of assassins were out to kill him?
Mallo: Yeah, that was brilliant. He'd have a team of bodyguards to protect him.
Phil: Oh, and it's an umbrella he's carrying, not a crowbar.
Richie: As far as *Tribes* goes, though, I enjoyed playing it for a while, but I prefer *TFC* for team games.
Dave: There's always *Tribes II* to look forward to.
Phil: They're thinking of adding submersible vehicles, so you can mount an attack from the sea. It's this vehicle thing again – are you actually gonna find anyone that will help you?
Mallo: I'll tell you one thing: they should get rid of that default pea-shooter. It's the weakest, pissest, shittest gun I've ever seen in a shoot 'em up!
Everyone: *(Laughs)*
Steve: It's f**king rubbish.
Dave: Especially when you have to aim at something a 1,000 metres away.
Mallo: The sound it makes as well – like those bad '70s tom-toms in Kelly Marie's *I Feel Like I'm In Love*… And the wind-up time for the minigun is outrageous! Press fire and two seconds later it whirs into action…
Richie: At the end of the day *Tribes* is a very playable game, and basically it's free if you buy the *Starsiege Universe* pack.
Steve: And how much is that – 40 quid? That's hardly free, is it?
Dave: If it was free I still wouldn't play it.

All together now: "I lost my heart to a Starsiege Tribe."

STARSIEGE TRIBES

This co-operative, multiplayer shoot 'em up recently took the US by storm and is still proving popular even now. With a full complement of players (up to 64 on some maps), *Tribes* is great fun – but log on to a half-empty server and you'll quickly get bored.

SCORE	88%, *PCZ* #76
DEVELOPER	Dynamix
PUBLISHER	Sierra
PRICE	£34.99

HIGH BANDWIDTH

So what's the future of online shooters?

As Internet connections become faster and cheaper, and PC games more advanced, the online gaming phenomenon continues to grow at an alarming rate. In the near future we will all be fighting online wars from the comfort of our own homes. While *UT* and *Quake* fight it out for dominance now, other games wait quietly in the wings for their chance at glory. *Duke Nukem Forever*, for example, may knock them both on their collective arses later this year. And John Romero could also steal a piece of the online deathmatch action with *Daikatana* when that comes out in the spring. The FPS genre evolves ever onwards...

Duke Forever: taking forever, but a sure-fire hit no less.

Soldier Of Fortune: sick, mindless fun. Bring it on!

Team Fortress II: could redefine team-based online warfare.

MEDIUM BANDWIDTH

And here are the fairly solid alternatives...

You can't go wrong with *Half-Life*. Whether it's the original, a bastard relation of, or the add-on pack *Opposing Force*, Valve's classic blaster is still the biggest shoot 'em up online. Next Gen shooter snobs may scoff at the lower pace, but *Half-Life* remains top fun regardless. And how can we forget *Quake II*? Some of us may have removed it from our hard drives, but others are staying loyal, preferring the unrivalled feel of the previous incarnation. And it still remains popular with Internet gamers worldwide. *PingTool* and *GameSpy (The two most popular game server search engines – Ed)* both support the likes of *Shogo, Kingpin, Wheel Of Time, Rogue Spear* and *Turok 2*, all of which are given a new lease of life over the Internet, but not enough of one to worry the likes of those selected for this month's shortlist.

Kingpin is sick and fun, but there's better out there.

Taking *Half-Life* further: *Opposing Force*.

Old but gold: id Software's brilliant *Quake II*.

Rogue Spear: not a mindless shooter.

LOW BANDWIDTH

The online shooters you should give a miss

Believe it or not, *South Park* – the abysmal first-person shooter from Acclaim – is quite popular online. It has to be said that *South Park* works very well as a deathmatch client – in the short term at least. And if you can handle the fact that your default weapon is a snowball, you could end up actually *enjoying* yourself if you take it online using *GameSpy* or similar. Heaven forbid!

South Park: pretty good multiplayer, but no cigar.

UNREAL TOURNAMENT

Dave: *UT* is *superb*.

Mallo: The original *Unreal* was crap – I didn't like it at all. But this... this is something else.

Dave: You can make every game different. Either straight deathmatch, capture the flag, or one of their many variations. The mutators – like InstaGib – are brilliant...

Phil: I like that gravity level. You know the one where you're leaping around? You can actually, like, leap from building to building and launch five rockets as you jump in slow motion.

Mallo: Yeah, you feel like a superhero leaping from skyscraper to skyscraper.

Phil: For me, *UT* is still a little bit too 'jump around quickly'. I earlier encountered Steve in an InstaGib game and we were both leaping around for about five minutes!

Richie: That's what InstaGib is though...

Mallo: What, sheer panic?

Richie: Team deathmatch with InstaGib switched on is brilliant because you face-off, and watching it is like seeing the beginning of *Star Wars* again.

Mallo: The mutators are an inspired idea – they're sort of like plug-ins that you can activate whenever you want. Low gravity is a good laugh in open areas.

Phil: And *UT*'s interface is excellent. However much I like *TFC*, I still think the interface is shit.

Richie: It's a familiar setup – the pull-down menus and windows. As an out-of-the-box deathmatch game, *UT* is brilliant.

Phil: *Quake III*'s menus are a bit 'Fisher Price' compared to those in *UT*.

Mallo: What about lag?

Dave: *UT* does perform a little bit better than *Quake* online, but only because *Quake III* is so fast. On a 56K modem there's little to choose between them.

Steve: You mean they're both unplayable.

Mallo: Or both as playable. InstaGib online is a bit too much though. As for the level design, you can't beat *UT*'s variation of levels, and the weapons are good because you get alternative fire modes.

Dave: I think you can shoot the missiles out of the air as well.

Richie: I tend to just stare at them and wait for them to hit me...

Mallo: There's a bit more imagination in *UT*'s levels.

Phil: They are something special.

Dave: There are a few that don't work, like the pirate ship, or galleon.

Mallo: The assault levels are fantastic. Taking on the frigate in a team deathmatch assault is the best fun I've had in ages. Even in single-player with bots.

Dave: And the Overlord level – the D-Day landing – where you start on a ship and have to fight your way up the beach and into the base.

Mallo: Absolutely brilliant. And the single-player game is great because it helps you improve your skills more than *Quake III*'s does as it doesn't allow you to cheat your way through on 'easy'. With little or no effort at all you can get a team deathmatch going with loads of bots, or whatever. You don't even have to go online to play multiplayer *UT*.

"I never thought I'd be saying that *Unreal Tournament* is better than *Quake*, but it is"

MALLO DEFECTS TO *UNREAL TOURNAMENT*

Richie: The clever thing about the assault missions is that, unlike *TFC*, which has you capturing so many flags, there's a clear objective and a linear way to go through them. You don't have to work with other people, but you've got the same aim.

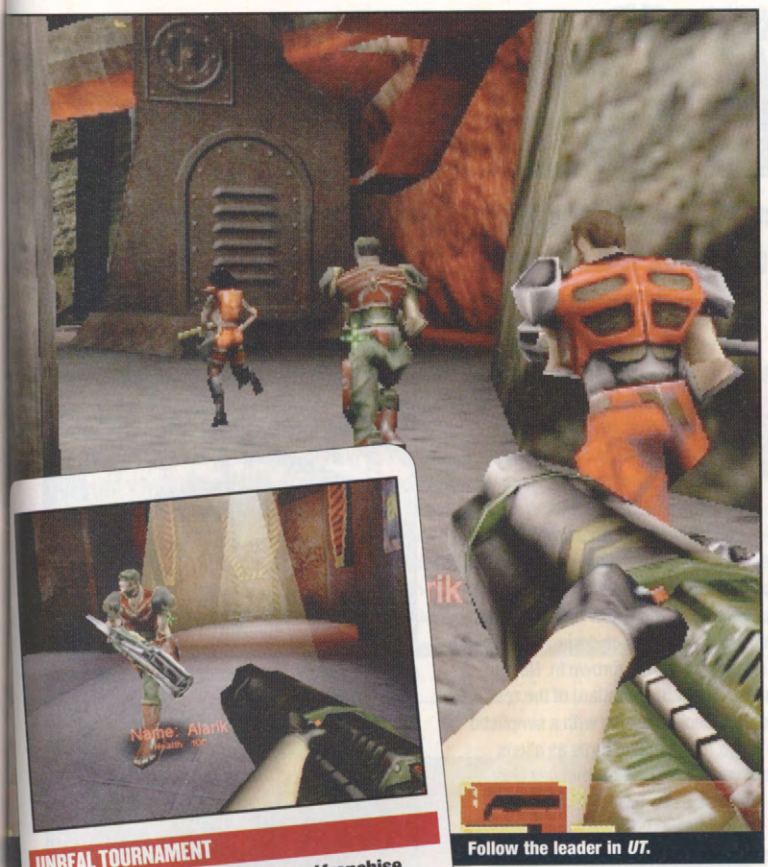
Phil: Certainly when you look at the server lists and you see all the different variations of games being played you think: 'There is a lot to *Unreal Tournament*.'

Mallo: And there are a lot of games up too. Over 900 according to our last game.

Richie: If you look at various websites and magazines, you'll find that *UT* has been getting higher ratings than *Quake III*. The general consensus is that it's better.

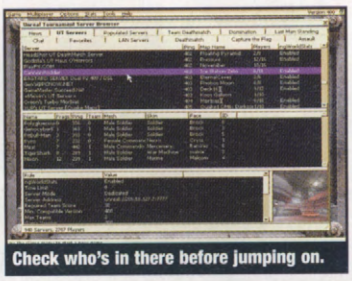
Phil: More people get into *Unreal Tournament* straight away.

Steve: It's very pick-up-and-playable.

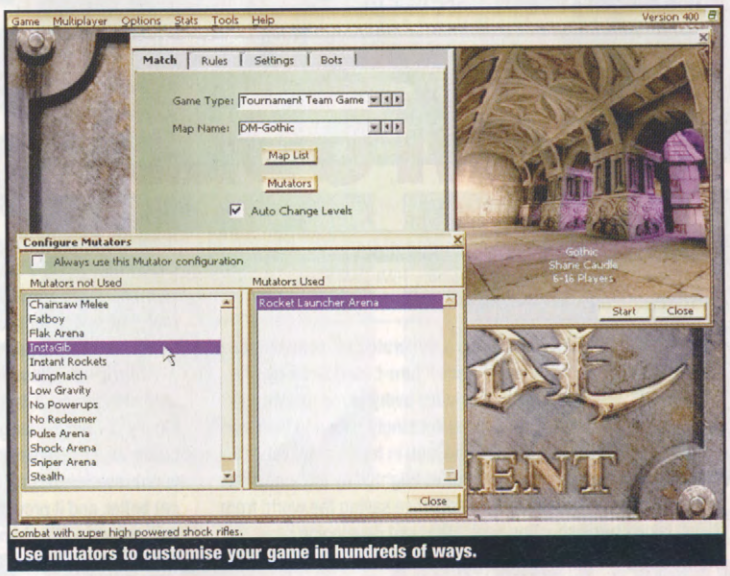


Follow the leader in *UT*.

Girls with big guns can be dangerous.



Check who's in there before jumping on.



Use mutators to customise your game in hundreds of ways.

UNREAL TOURNAMENT

Epic revitalised not only its *Unreal* franchise, but the whole bleedin' genre with *Unreal Tournament*. The simple interface and wealth of options make *UT* a pleasure to play, again and again. Excellent weapons, superb level design and brilliant graphics all conspire to make *UT* an essential online blast.

SCORE	90%, *PCZ* #81
DEVELOPER	Epic
PUBLISHER	GT
PRICE	£34.99

Mallo: I still prefer the look of *Quake III*. *UT*'s a bit too… day-glo. Bright greens and blues – that kind of thing.

Phil: *Quake III*'s Fisher Price. Reds and greys…

Richie: *UT*'s world rankings are a superb idea. Check them out – they're really amazing. You've got these stats, like *Championship Manager*, about each and every *UT* game played. How many shots you've fired, where you are in relation to every other player in the world… Only if you've registered though.

Phil: Do you not find that the *Quake* community is a bit snotty as well? When I play *Quake* online people are very impatient – you can't ask them questions. The moment you ask a question or you stand still, they start insulting you. And that doesn't happen in *UT* or *TFC*.

Dave: It's a younger audience playing *Quake III*.

Phil: I played on *QuakeWorld* for the first time about a week ago, and I'd gone on there and didn't know what the f**k I was doing. You ask a question and they call you an arsehole. You dawdle about a bit longer and the insults start to mount up. And you just think: 'F**k you – I'm off!' It's really friendly.

Mallo: They got it right with *Unreal Tournament*. It's so much more advanced than the original game. The single-player game is also an excellent training device for playing online first-person shooters.

Steve: *Unreal Tournament* is The Daddy. PCZ

AND THE WINNER IS...

A game that really does lead the way forward

Unsurprisingly, *Starsiege Tribes* came last. "If I were reviewing it now I'd give it 30 per cent," hissed Steve, although not everyone felt the same way – Mallo and Richie both stuck up for it. *AvP*, we all agreed, was out of the running because its multiplayer possibilities had not been properly exploited. "It needs a master server," said Phil. *Team Fortress Classic* – a game at the opposite end of the online gaming spectrum, featuring unrivalled server support – was adjudged by the panel as being a bit "too slow" for their tastes (despite a heavy push from Phil, who is a big fan), leaving – surprise, surprise – *Quake III Arena* and *Unreal Tournament* to fight it out for total global domination…

id Software's *Quake* series has long been the *PC ZONE* team's deathmatch yardstick, but now we feel that it has been overtaken by another game. "In terms of gratification, action, and instant fun, *Unreal Tournament* wins out on pretty much every level," said Phil. "I never thought I'd be saying that *Unreal* was better than *Quake*," proclaimed Mallo, "but it is." "It's unanimous," as Steve summed up.

So it's happened: someone's beaten id at its own game (quite literally!) and proved without a shadow of a doubt that there's more to life than *Quake*. Not only that, but overall *UT* is a better, faster, slicker and more exciting game to play than every other game mentioned here – online or otherwise. As far as *PC ZONE* is concerned, *Unreal Tournament* is the king of online shoot 'em ups. For the time being at least…

***Quake* is dead. Long live *Unreal Tournament*. For the time being anyway...**

BUDGET ZONE

Collections aren't just for the poor. This month we present a selection of the latest compilations. After all, why buy one game when you can get a box full of 'em?

DONATING TO A WORTHY CAUSE Mark Hill

X-COM COLLECTION

£19.99 • Hasbro Interactive • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P166 **Memory** 16Mb RAM **WE SAY** A 386 is all you need for *UFO* and everything will work with a P166

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED

The *X-Com* series is venerated as an institution of deep, thoughtful sci-fi turn-based strategy, and this collection includes every game to date. *UFO* and *Terror From The Deep* are, not surprisingly, showing their age now, but can still hold their heads up high in terms of playability. Anyone who hasn't had their memories blighted by too many late nights will tell you how incredibly addictive saving the world from aliens, taking turns shooting each other and developing new technologies can be. They're certainly not fast-paced games, but they're all the more involving for it, almost like an intergalactic warfare version of *Championship Manager*. What *Apocalypse*, the last isometric title in the series, gained in sophistication and graphics, it lost in charm – but it still remains an extremely classy title. Set in a futuristic city rather than the whole world scenario of the previous games, the combat section adds a real-time option for greater versatility and a new legion of fans. Something *Interceptor* is unlikely to have, considering it's a poor *X-Wing* rip-off with a few research features thrown in. Not gut-wrenchingly awful, but nowhere near the standard of the rest. Finally, *X-Com E-mail* goes right back to basics with a simplistic battle, which involves you and a friend taking turns as aliens versus soldiers. It's an almost untapped market that can only get better, and it provides the perfect closure for collection enthusiasts and a chance for people who've never experienced the first three classics to do so.

PCZ VERDICT 84%

***Apocalypse*: real-time arrives to *X-Com*.**

***Interceptor*: not the best in the series.**

***Carmageddon II*: an insurance nightmare.**

VICIOUS PACK

£29.99 • Virgin Interactive • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P166 **Memory** 16Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 3D card for *Res Evil 2* **WE SAY** Should do fine

A mixed bunch of titles this one, with a common theme of nastiness and violence – so it's not one for the kiddies. The prime offender among parents everywhere is *Carmageddon II*, not only for all the media rage it stirred, but because it's a genuinely sick marathon of pedestrian-splattering and arcadey racing. Fortunately, it's also extremely good fun to play, but the car physics could have been more forgiving, especially considering how unrealistic the rest of the game is. *Resident Evil 2*'s goriness makes it one of the scariest games on any platform, ever. It suffers only slightly from being a direct PlayStation port (mainly in the cumbersome control system), but this action/adventure combines intestine-ripping zombies with puzzles so effortlessly the quality still shines through. And, if you're a fan of George A. Romero's *Dead* trilogy this is the closest you can get. Last, and in some people's opinion least, is *Unreal*. More famous for its amazing engine (used to greater effect elsewhere), it is let down by repetitive levels, poor AI and boring weapons. At the time of its original release everyone was blinded (not literally, of course) by the colourful special effects and ignored the fact that the game behind it was hollow. Unless you desperately want all three games, we'd recommend you track down *Res Evil 2* and *Carmageddon II* on their own and save yourself some money.

PCZ VERDICT 71%

TYCOON COLLECTION

£29.99 • Hasbro Interactive • Out now

TECH SPECS

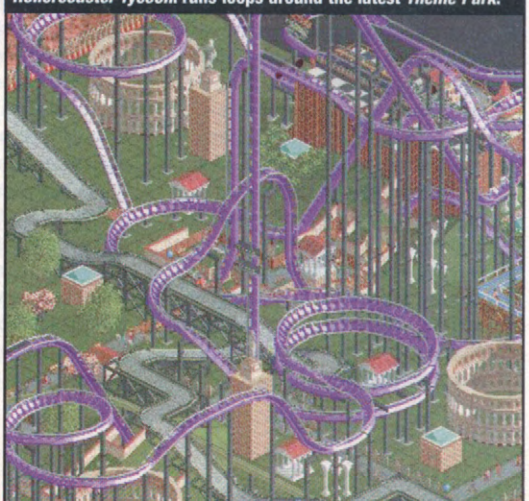
MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P90 **Memory** 16Mb RAM **WE SAY** P200 and loads of RAM recommended for *Rollercoaster Tycoon* and *Railroad Tycoon II*

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED

Although the *Tycoon* games have traditionally been the domain of trainspotting business management students, *Rollercoaster Tycoon* proved to be so popular that you no longer need an anorak to play them. *Rollercoaster* is definitely the best of the bunch completed by *Railroad II* and *Transport Deluxe*. *Rollercoaster* makes the recent *Theme Park World* blush with incompetence, it is more realistic, appealing, enduring and addictive. The other two, while nowhere near as good, are still quality titles. There's enough detail in this box to last you a lifetime.

PCZ VERDICT 82%

***Rollercoaster Tycoon*: runs loops around the latest *Theme Park*.**



STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION COLLECTION

£29.99 • Hasbro Interactive • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P166 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** A 3D card would be nice for *Klingon*

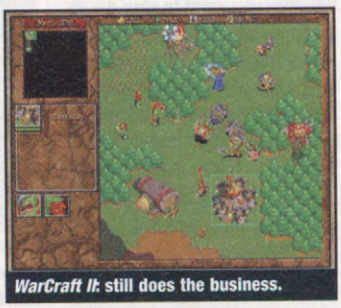
After being sent into a pit of despair by *Hidden Evil*, it's reassuring to see that not all *Star Trek* games are complete crap. This collection has all of the TNG games to date: *A Final Unity*, *Generations*, *Klingon Honour Guard* and *Birth Of The Federation*. *A Final Unity* is still regarded by many as an excellent adventure game, with stylish graphics and all the main cast from the series providing the voices, but it is in fact a tedious, slow-moving affair with a dull plot and pseudo-puzzles. *Generations*, based on the film of the same name, is a first-person action/adventure, with graphics that looked outdated when it was released more than two years ago and a space combat section that is hardly any more satisfying. *KHG* is much better in the graphics section, using the *Unreal* engine, but it still doesn't satisfy. The best by far is *BOTF*, a 'civ-in-space' romp with more than a passing resemblance to *Master Of Orion 2*. The object is to expand by conquest or diplomacy, researching, fighting and psyching in the process. Guaranteed sleepless nights for Trekkies and strategists alike.

PCZVERDICT 74%

***Klingon Honour Guard*: the *Unreal* engine goes trekkie.**

***Diablo*: it may be simple, but it's addictive as hell.**

***StarCraft*: not light years ahead.**



***WarCraft II*: still does the business.**

BLIZZARD TRIPLE PACK

£24.99 • Sierra • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P90 **Memory** 16Mb RAM **WE SAY** More for a decent resolution on *Diablo*

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED

The name Blizzard commands respect from all quarters, in particular America's nerdy online community, who catapulted *Diablo* and *StarCraft* from reasonable selling games to vastly popular Internet money-spinners. Since it's unlikely many of you will be going down the multiplayer road with either of them at this stage, we should concentrate on their single-player aspects. For *Diablo* this translates into monotonous dungeon hack 'n' slashing with a weak coat of RPG painted on. It's good fun and still looks gorgeous, but it's far too shallow for its own good. *StarCraft* is a bit more solid, but never manages to be more than *WarCraft 2* in space. *WarCraft 2* on the ground (albeit a rather heavily goblin and ogre populated one), despite being the oldest, is still the best bet of all three games. If you were disappointed by *TA: Kingdoms*, this is a much better fantasy take on the real-time strategy genre.

PCZVERDICT 80%

THE BIGGEST NAMES, THE BIGGEST GAMES 2

£19.99 • Electronic Arts • Out Now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P166 **Memory** 16Mb Mb RAM
WE SAY That'll do

When you get six games for £20 it's a good idea to furrow your brow in scepticism and have a good think about what the company is trying to flog. First up is *FIFA 98: Road To The World Cup*, a scandalous cash-in prior to releasing the only-slightly-better *World Cup*. Taken as a game in itself, however, this is still one of the best footie games around. *Need For Speed III: Hot Pursuit*, meanwhile, improved one of the world's most popular arcadey driving series with the introduction of some interesting game modes, even though it never quite set the world alight. Which is exactly what *Die Hard Trilogy* failed to do, unable to live up to the classic '90's action films it is based on. As usual, the depth of gameplay suffers from being a PlayStation conversion, but it is essentially three (very average) games in one. *Future Cop* is similar in that it is very much a console title with the saving grace of different playing modes. Not much of a saving grace, though, since they both stink. Although, not quite as much as *Trespasser*, the first-person shooter that suffers from awful graphics and an even worse control system – worth looking at for comedy value alone. Finally, there's *Tiger Woods*, a quality golfing sim with a unique and spectacular follow-that-golf-ball camera. So that's three games and some CD stuffing for £20. You can unfurrow your brows now.

PCZVERDICT 73%

***Road To The World Cup*: money is all that matters in footie.**

FEEDBACK

So what do we think of 21st century games so far? Keith Pullin reveals all...

Goodness gracious, it's great balls of fire. For some, anyway.

IT'S YOUR SHOUT!

Feedback is here to offer you, the player, a platform to voice your opinions on any of the games reviewed in *PC ZONE* over the last three months. Whether you want to sing a game's praises or simply give it a verbal beating, we want to hear from you. Remember to keep your comments between 50 and 150 words and include your name, address and age.

WRITE TO Feedback, *PC ZONE*, Dennis Publishing, 19 Bolsover Street, London W1P 7HJ

EMAIL Alternatively, email them to us at **letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk** with **'Feedback'** in the subject line.

"I don't understand what pleasure anyone can gain from playing *CM99/00*. It's confusing, boring and hyped beyond belief"

TONY WILSTON CAN'T FATHOM THE ATTRACTION OF *CM99/00*

UNREAL TOURNAMENT

REVIEWED Issue 81, October
SCORE 90%

What we thought

PC ZONE CLASSIC **"Without a doubt, *UT*'s greatest triumph is its computer-controlled bot players."**

What you think

"Having played and completed just about every 3D shooter that's been made, I have to say that *Unreal Tournament* is bloody fantastic! Never before has a game grabbed my attention like this: it plays like a dream, the bot AI is superb, the levels are big and imaginative, and the graphics and weapons are far better than *Quake III*. *UT* rocks! It should have scored 95%.

Warren Brunsdon, via email

"I'm running along a corridor and a bot darts out in front of me under heavy fire from another bot behind him. I fire off a rocket but before I get the kill, the pursuing bot obliterates his head. The headless body sways there for a split second before my stray rocket reduces it to mincemeat in a spectacular explosion.

The game? *Unreal Tournament* of course. It's detail like this that makes the game so special. Without doubt, iD has been beaten at its own game."

Tom X, via email

"*Unreal Tournament* is so obviously better than *Quake III*, I feel sorry for the narrow-minded idiots who can't see this. For God's sake, wake up and grow up *Quake* fans, the future is *Unreal*."

Phul Dourcas, London

Comment

Maybe 95% is a little too generous, there's room for improvement yet.

QUAKE III: ARENA

REVIEWED Issue 86, February
SCORE 89%

What we thought

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED **"The fastest and best pure deathmatch game you can buy."**

What you think

"Bloody awesome! The bots are fiendishly difficult, the weapons are excellent, and the arenas are brilliantly designed. This is deathmatching at its best."

Greg Burnell, via email

"The weapons are spot on and the graphics are excellent. *Quake III* is simply the best multiplayer experience I've ever had. Another fragtastic game from iD!"

David Cooper, via email

***Unreal Tournament:* better than *Quake III* or not? We think so, but let us know what *you* think.**

"*Quake III* struggles into the millennium equipped with a triangular machine gun, a rocket launcher (yawn), a grenade launcher that looks like a fat staple gun and some blob-spewing 'energy weapons'. Progress? Don't make me laugh."

John Tapper, via email

Comment

Interesting – we received a lot of praise for *Quake III* and *Unreal Tournament*, however *Quake III* was the only one to actually receive criticism. Is this because you like to slag off whatever's at the top, or is it that *UT* is just faultless? You tell us.

GTA2

REVIEWED Issue 84, Xmas
SCORE 70%

What we thought

"Rather than tone down the violent nastiness, *GTA2* chances its arm by cranking it up to fever pitch."

What you think

"Admittedly, *GTA2* is not as exciting or fast paced as the original, but 70% is a bit harsh. I would have given it 80%. The graphics are superb and the inclusion of gangs just adds to the tension. Petrol bombs are also fun as you can watch crowds of people being disembowelled on the pavement."

Chris Harding, Burton-on-Trent

"How can you slate *GTA2* for being the same as its first incarnation, yet defend *Tiberian Sun* for doing exactly the same?"

Ant Whitlam, via email

"70%? The 'downers' section of your marking scheme only contained one point: it was too much like the original. So, is this the same original that got 92% and a classic rating? And is this the same original that's still number five in your top ten racing games? "Honestly, how can you criticise so harshly when you still rate the original so highly?"

Bob Barrett, via email

Comment

We were merely saying that *GTA* fans are likely to be disappointed when they discover that *GTA2* is basically the same as the original, but with a few 'go-faster stripes'. Anybody who shells out for a full-price game is entitled to some originality, which, incidentally, *Tiberian Sun* delivered far more of.

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 99/00

REVIEWED Issue 84, Xmas
SCORE 92%

What we thought

PC ZONE CLASSIC **"*Championship Manager* is universally perceived as *the* official management game. Buying a different one would only be cheating yourself."**

What you think

"Give a great big thank you to the Collyer Brothers who have done the extraordinary again and produced a football management game of staggering playability. This is truly the greatest management game ever. Bring on *CM4*!"

Mark Blatherwick, via email

"Bang goes my social life again. Still, at least it's winter and I've got a good excuse to stay in."

Pete Brown, Winchester

"I don't understand what pleasure anyone can gain from playing *CM99/00*. It's confusing, boring and hyped beyond belief. I can enjoy all that when I sit on my fat arse watching Newcastle week in, week out. And that's *REAL*!"

Tony Wilston, Newcastle

Comment

There is simply no denying the fact that if you support football, at any level, *CM 99/00* is probably the greatest game ever made. Although, apparently if you're a Newcastle supporter there are better ways to waste your time.

FIFA 2000

REVIEWED Issue 84, Xmas
SCORE 88%

What we thought

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED **"*FIFA 2000* is undeniably superb, but we can't help feeling that somewhere they've got the perfect game."**

What you think

✪ "*FIFA 2000* has restored the excitement factor that was clearly lacking in *FIFA 99*. The new engine is smoother and the players look much more life-like. It should have scored at least 90%!"

Richard Ingram, via email

✪ "Now I see what all the fuss is about. This game is amazing! All my friends agree. The graphics, sound and gameplay kick ass! *FIFA 2000* is by far the best footy game I have ever played!"

Iain Anderson, via email

✪ "*FIFA 2000* is one of the worst games I have played in a while. Firstly, it's impossible to play using the keys (which I had to do because my mate had the joypad) and secondly the AI stinks; players just mince about all over the place. Also, it's almost impossible to score from distance. I hate it. When will someone release a decent football game?"

Ant Whitlam, via email

✪ "*FIFA 2000* is a poor follow-up to the excellent *FIFA 99*. In your review (just one page?) you made no mention of the fact that the passing has been made virtually redundant thanks to a small pitch and lack of player movement."

Colin Webster, via email

Comment

Honestly Ant, you're going to struggle if you use the keys. What a sucker…

***FIFA* keeps getting better and better, but it's still hard to jump around in excitement.**

THEME PARK WORLD

REVIEWED Issue 85, January
SCORE 70%

What we thought

"Even the rides with the highest 'excitement' levels are tamer than a sedated penguin and about as graceful."

What you think

✪ "I think your review of *Theme Park World* was spot on. What was Bullfrog thinking? The graphics are awful. Why didn't they just use an isometric view as in *RollerCoaster Tycoon*? OK, *RCT* completely ripped off *Theme Park*, but at least Chris Sawyer did an excellent job of it. The only thing *Theme Park World* rips off is the consumer."

Andy Challinor, via email

✪ "What was Mark Hill thinking when he reviewed *Theme Park World*? It's rubbish. The gameplay's boring and the graphics are bad and jerky. I can't see how this could get 40% let alone 70%. If you want my advice buy *RollerCoaster Tycoon* instead."

David Jackson, via email

✪ "This is without doubt the second best game available (second only to *CM3*). The graphics are excellent, there are loads of new features and the addictiveness is spot on. A score of 70% is an insult, it should at least be in the low 90s – surely you realise how wrong you were?"

Ken Edwards, Doncaster

Comment

We think we were spot on with that review, and most *Theme Park* fans tend to agree. You're on your own Ken Edwards of Doncaster, or are you?

GABRIEL KNIGHT 3: BLOOD OF THE SACRED, BLOOD OF THE DAMNED

REVIEWED Issue 85, January
SCORE 60%

What we thought

"Surely the last nail in the coffin for adventure games as we know them."

What you think

✪ "*Gabriel Knight III* received an unfair review. The reviewer called the graphics 'rubbish' when in fact they're not that bad. He also failed to concentrate on the game's strong points such as the story and the great gameplay. A longer review would have helped get these points across."

Alex Papadopoulos, via email

✪ "I was shocked by your review, not only because of the uninformative, and almost irrelevant remarks about the interface and graphics, but also because at the end of it, the reader would have no idea what the game is about, how it plays, how long it lasts, etc. This is, without doubt, one of the greatest adventures of all time and I just hope your pitiful review hasn't encouraged your readers to overlook it."

Frew, via email

Comment

Sorry, but to say this is the greatest adventure of all time is showing a woeful lack of knowledge of the adventure genre. Wake up and smell the coffee guys.

HALF-LIFE: OPPOSING FORCE

REVIEWED Issue 85, January
SCORE 85%

What we thought

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED **"The game is basically *Half-Life* all over again. Tense, nerve-wracking stuff."**

What you think

✪ "I have to say how disappointed I am with *Opposing Force*. Why was it so short? I'm not saying it wasn't hard enough (the bits in the dark tunnels where you needed night vision scared the hell out of me at times), it's just that I got it for Christmas and I had finished it within four days."

David Herod, Oldham

✪ "A good weekend of entertainment, but *Opposing Force* doesn't have quite the sparkle that one would have wished for."

Lam Duong, via email

✪ "The game is fantastic in every sense of the word. My social life has already gone down the drain. Valve should be proud of the folk at Gearbox and what they did."

Aaron Last, via email

✪ "I installed it at 2pm on Boxing Day and completed it at 10am this morning (27th). This is surely the crappiest and easiest game ever. And as for those stupid, stupid alien weapons…"

Paul Quinn, Aberdeenshire

Comment

Er, so you're not happy then? It's important to remember that this is just a mission pack. Rest assured *Half-Life 2* will be a very different proposition.

INDIANA JONES AND THE INFERNAL MACHINE

REVIEWED Issue 84, Xmas
SCORE 88%

What we thought

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED **"It doesn't take long to realise that, while there's the odd bit of action, this is primarily a thinking game."**

What you think

✪ "Have you gone stark raving bonkers? A more cynical man than me would ask if that score had anything to do with a double page advert. Let's face it, it's a third-rate rip-off of *Tomb Raider*: moving block puzzles, incessant key finding, jumping, grabbing, bloody shimmying, and all that… What's happening, LucasArts? Wake up and smell the stench of your rotting reputation.

Steve Manthorp, via email

✪ "This game is brilliant. The next *Tomb Raider* will have to be pretty special to beat this. The only downside, like your review said, is that Harrison Ford didn't do the voice."

Paul Reay, via email

Comment

You're a fool, Manthorp. You clearly haven't played past the first couple of levels because if you had you'd realise that this is one of the most playable, original and vastly enjoyable adventure games ever made. LucasArts has absolutely nothing to worry about; it's your own sense that's rotting. PCZ

***Opposing Force*: disappointing, but still fantastic.**

HOW TO...

BECOME A PC GAMES EXPERT

Want to impress your mates with your Titanic-sized knowledge of all things PC and gaming? Let *PC ZONE* teach you how...

WRITER Adam Phillips

Picture the scene. You're in the pub with your mates and they're wittering on about Jon Romero, the merits of *Tiberian Sun* and Lara Croft's impact on pop culture. Then one of them turns to you and asks for your opinion. Everyone falls quiet as they await your choice words of wisdom. You have two options: you can either say "I'll get me coat" and leave, or try to hit back with some searing insights into PC gaming.

Because here at *PC ZONE* we *are* those mates who witter on about games after hours as well as in the office, we'd naturally go for the second option. Honest. And if you're reading this hard-core gamers mag, we suspect you might want to as well. The trouble is that becoming truly knowledgeable about all things to do with PC gaming takes a lot of effort – hours hunched over games mags and the Internet, playing software endlessly, and developing dark rings under your eyes from looking at monitors for too long. To help you jump the queue to enlightenment though, we've put together some handy tips, info and advice on how to stand head and shoulders (and possibly navel) above your gaming comrades when it comes to games buffery *(Is that a word? – Ed)*. Read on...

PHOTO REX Features ADDITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY Simon Clay COMP Angel

"I'VE BEEN TO JAPAN, USA AND... ER... LONDON OLYMPIA"

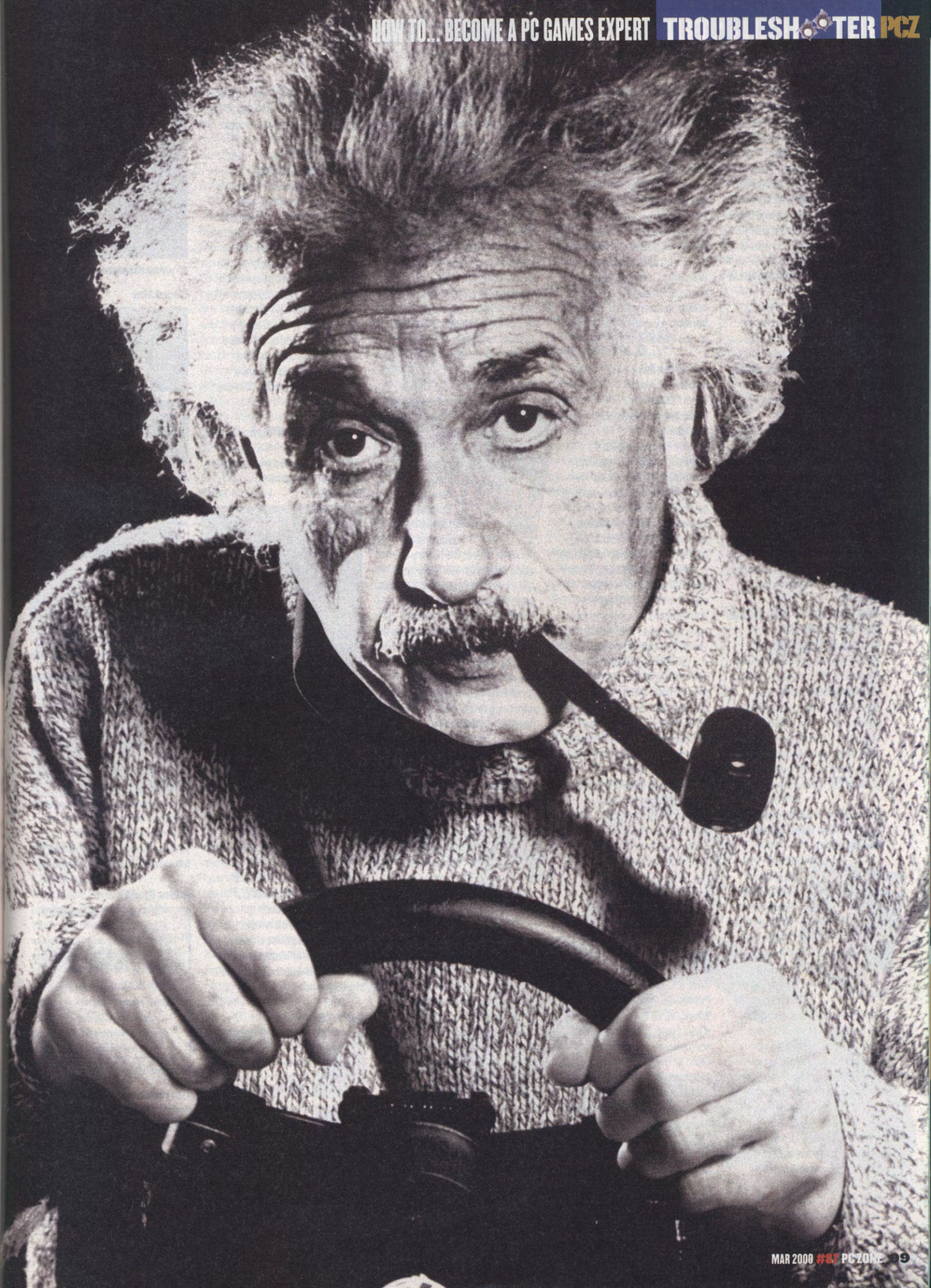
It's the ultimate kudos-grabber for any wannabe games buff – a visit to some of the biggest games shows on earth. While others talk about their trip to Electronic Boutique, you can bang on about Makuhari Messe in Japan and whether this year's Tokyo Game Show was a disappointment or not. Check out the following details on continent-hopping your way to true game buff status:

Name: ECTS
Where: London Olympia
Dates: 3-5 September 2000
What Is It? ECTS is Europe's biggest trade show where the lads from *PC ZONE* can be found trying to blag party tickets to software company bashes, playing the latest and greatest gaming demos, and generally getting drunk and falling over. While it's open only to the 'trade' (ie shopkeepers, publishers, developers, the media, etc) blagging your way in shouldn't be too much of a problem. Create a mock business card to present at the door on the day and remember to rabbit on about all the important meetings you have to get to. Do expect to queue for bleedin' ages though.
Worth Visiting? While not as glitzy as E3 or as outlandish as Tokyo, it's the cheap option for those strapped for cash.
Costs: Head to your nearest rail or coach operator... unless you fancy paying huge parking fees for your motor.
Web site: www.ects.com/

Try to pay a visit to Europe's top software trade show.

Name: E3
Where: Los Angeles Convention Center, Los Angeles, CA
Dates: 11-13 May 2000
What Is It? Basically, it's *the* trade show for the Western world. Last year saw some 55,000 industry bods milling round 1,900 new PC and console titles over a three-day period. As regular readers will know, *PC ZONE* gives you the lowdown each year on what's hot and what's not – and it makes a refreshing change from London. If you are tempted to go, remember that blagging your way in is much more risky. Turning up and trying to convince them that you are indeed a highly respected figure in the industry is a far more worrying prospect considering that you have to cough up for an air ticket in advance. Try pre-registering at E3's website first and take it from there.
Worth Visiting? If you can definitely get in, go for it. Best to make it part of a stay in California though, as well as LA itself (cue theme parks), you've also got San Francisco to the North and Las Vegas to the East. Nice.
Costs: Hotels cost £35-£66.
Airfare: Approximately £354 plus airport tax, if booked well in advance, for a one-week return ticket.
Web site: www.e3expo.com/

It'll cost you to get there but E3 is worth a visit. And remember – California awaits you...



Name: Tokyo Game Show
Where: Makuhari Messe, Tokyo
Dates: Spring: 31 March-1 April; Autumn: September. The first day of both is 'business day'.
What Is It? It's a bit of a trek to get to the land of the rising sun, but you're guaranteed to get into the show – it's the only one of the three listed here that is open to the public. Sadly, this means you'll be swamped by Japanese kids as you make your way round the exhibition.
Worth Visiting? Yes, if you want to see what the Japanese developers are up to, but it is mainly console-orientated stuff. A visit to Japan though is still an excellent opportunity for any broad-minded gaming fan – popping into the bizarre electronics shops and the super up-to-date arcades is a must. You'll be amazed at the gear they have out there, which won't appear on these shores for months. If ever.
Costs: A decent hotel will cost between £60-£70.
Airfare: Approximately £559 plus airport tax, if booked in advance, for a one week return ticket.

"LOOK AT THE SIZE OF MY BOOK COLLECTION..."

What better way to impress your PC gaming chums than to quote or refer to a book about the industry? Having the right books stacked up next to your game boxes can only make you look even more game literate than you really are. *PC ZONE* presents a guide to the must-haves...

Name: Lara's Book: Lara Croft & The Tomb Raider Phenomenon

Author: Douglas Coupland and Kip Ward
Cost: £10.92 (Amazon)
Publisher: Prima Publishing
What: Penned by the bloke who wrote *MicroSerfs*, the novel about self-obsessed programming geeks for self-obsessed programming geeks, *Lara's Book* is an obsessive Croft fan book for... er... obsessive fans. It features a heady mix of essays on the Lara phenomenon, original fiction by Coupland, photos of Croft herself, strategy guides for the first three instalments and more. The general consensus is that the book is a bit of an oddity...
How To Describe It To Your Mates: "An intriguing and eclectic profile of the Lara Croft phenomenon."
What If They Say: "We heard it was pants." Reply with: "The whole notion of Lara as a 'person' is a tempting late 20th century puzzle about what's 'real' and what's not (copyright Douglas Coupland, ahem). Therefore, even if it is a bit pants, it's the first example of a computer game character triggering a mass debate in the media. So there."
Verdict: A worthy novelty item for the bookshelf.

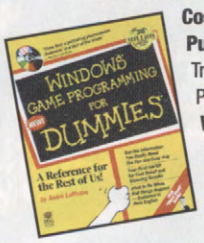
Name: Re: Play
Author: Liz Faber
Cost: £19.99
Publisher: Laurence King Publishing
What: Featuring a potted history of the development of computer game graphics over the ages, Faber's book stands out because of its use of huge screenshots and immaculate presentation. From shoot 'em ups such as *Asteroids* and *Doom* to *SimCity 2000* and *Myth*, Faber does her best to present an overview of the very best in graphics and how gaming genres have developed over the last 25 years. Unfortunately, the writing is a tad 'sketchy' in places – witness the embarrassing plug for Jon Romero's 'up-and-coming' *Daikatana*.
How To Describe It To Your Mates: "A visual treat that pays homage to the evolution of computer graphics."
What If They Say: "It's just full of screenshots and hardly any writing. We can buy *PC Gamer* for that." Reply with: "They're not just screen grabs, they're art, you heathen fools."
Verdict: The ultimate in coffee table books. A must for games buffs.

Name: The Beach
Author: Alex Garland
Cost: £5.99
Publisher: Penguin Books
What: OK, so it's a novel about a backpacker who discovers a secret island paradise off the coast of Thailand and is dragged into a terrifying ordeal as the island inhabitants turn on one another. So why is it here? Apart from mentioning computer gaming on a few occasions and being one of the best books to hit the shelves this decade, it's also penned by Alex Garland, one of Britain's hottest new writers and a self-confessed games head.
How To Describe It To Your Mates: "*Lord Of The Flies* on acid. And Alex Garland's love of gaming can only add kudos to the image computer games have. Unlike crusties like Tom Clancy."
What If They Say: "But it only mentions games a few times. And that's on a Gameboy." Reply with: "Look, the lads who made *Trainspotting* and *Shallow Grave* have made it into a film with Leo DiCaprio. So shut up."
Verdict: OK, so it's not exactly a games book, but the gaming world needs punters like Alex Garland to make it more mainstream and 'hip'. Really.

Other Noteworthy Titles:

Name: Joystick Nation
Author: JC Herz
Cost: £9.99
Publisher: Abacus/Little, Brown & Company UK
What: An amusing and personal look at the history of video games across all formats and the way the scene has affected mainstream culture. It features interviews with key software figures, discussions on violence in video games, and more.
Verdict: While it is US-centric, this rather witty book boasts some keen observations. And it's refreshing to see such a tome penned by a woman.

Name: Windows Game Programming for Dummies
Author: Andre Lamothe



Cost: £19.65
Publisher: Transworld Publishers
What: Andre Lamothe is something of a guru to his fans. He has an uncanny knack of shaping some of the most difficult and mind-bending programming concepts into a palatable form. In his latest effort, Lamothe dishes out all sorts of user-friendly advice for programmers using Windows '95, NT and '98 and has subsequently received rave reviews in the process.
Verdict: Even if you have no intention of becoming a programmer, you should make a point of buying it anyway so your mates think that you not only know all about games but you know how to put them together as well. If you want to have a stab at programming for real, please be warned that you will need some knowledge of 'C' to get the most from this book.

"ME? I'M A CYBERGURU..."

It's very, very simple – if you don't know something about gaming, you'll be able to find it online. Without a doubt. There are hundreds of thousands of poor buggers who seemingly spend hours a day bashing together websites, with varying degrees of success. Here we present the cream of the crop to help you answer all those awkward gaming questions down the pub. Just remember to take your laptop and mobile phone modem along...

"FOR NEWS, I USE..."

For the latest news and views, check out the following:

PC ZONE

www.pczone.co.uk/

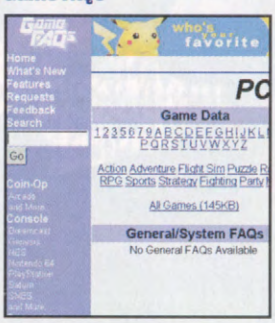
Fastest Game News

www.fgnonline.com

"FOR CHEATS AND STRATEGY GUIDES, I USE..."

Stuck? Flabbergasted? Or just plain pissed off with a particular game? Use cheats if you have to or indulge yourself in a series of walkthroughs and strategy guides:

Game FAQs



www.gamefaqs.com

X-cheater

www.xcheater.com

Cheat.Net

www.cheats.net

Games Domain

www.gamesdomain.co.uk

"FOR PATCHES, DRIVERS AND OTHER TECHIE STUFF, I USE..."

Quelle surprise... the game won't work because it's bugged or you don't have the right drivers for your hardware. Pop along to the following sites, or check out our CD.

Driver Guide

www.driverguide.com/

The Patches

www.patches-scrolls.de

Programmers' Heaven

www.programmersheaven.com

"FOR RETRO GAMING, I USE..."

Ah, bless! You miss playing *Centipede* and *Galaxians*. Or simply want to sound like you've been playing games since you were foetus-shaped. Whatever the case, check out this selection of retro beauties...

Classic Gaming

www.classicgaming.com

Retrogames

www.retrogames.com

"FOR NEWSGROUPS, I USE..."

Trivia, flame wars, over-opinionated debate – you'll find them all on the newsgroups:

comp.sys.ibm.pc.games.strategic
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comp.sys.ibm.pc.games.adventure
comp.sys.ibm.pc.games.rpg
comp.sys.ibm.pc.games.sports
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comp.sys.ibm.pc.games.naval
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"DIDN'T YOU KNOW? I DID..."

So you know your games – the cheats, the secrets, the best strategies – but to really impress, it's best to go along to any gaming conversation armed with some nice, juicy but fundamentally useless trivia to dazzle your mates with. Here are a few choice facts plucked from the world of gaming...

✪ The first game to cause controversy wasn't a gore fest like *Carmageddon* – in fact, it was the humble arcade machine *Space Invaders* which raised heckles on its arrival in the UK many moons ago. A bunch of hysterical MPs decided to call for a blanket ban on the arcade machine, claiming that it would cause youngsters to become addicted to the game, make them skive off from school and, of course, go on a crime spree. Naturally.

***Space Invaders* – evil? Corrupting? Oh, behave!**

✪ id software's programming guru, Jon Carmack owns a whole garage-full of Ferraris – so many in fact that he gave one away in a competition.

✪ Back in 1996, a psychologist claimed that having a quick blast on *Doom* could boost resistance to infection because the number of antibodies found in the player's saliva rose for up to half an hour after having a blast on the top title. While gamers all over the country imagined playing computer games all night and being super-healthy because of it, it was pointed out that levels of antibodies quickly returned to normal after playing...

✪ Some say it was a message from God warning gamers not to play on consoles, but it's a day Phil Hall will never forget. Late this summer, he was sitting in his room playing on his N64 with his window open. Unfortunately, a bolt of lightning shot through the window and struck him. Thankfully, Phil survived to live another day and now, one suspects, plays with his window firmly closed...

✪ Not only has she graced the computer screens of many a PC and the front covers of many a mag but Lara Croft has now been granted Millennium Project Status by the Design council...

✪ Imagine Maxis' surprise when its PC release *SimCopter* was hacked even before it was released. One of their coders inserted graphics of gay men wearing tight swimming trunks who kissed each other and 'smooched' with the player. The programmer was subsequently fired for inserting unauthorised content into the game...

"Is that Dale Winton on top of that building?"

✪ You'd better thank Commodore for some of the world's best games... back in the mid-'80s, the company mistook budding games guru Peter Molyneux's firm for another company and gave him a set of Amigas for free. Molyneux, realising Commodore's mistake, naturally kept stum and went on to code some of the greatest games ever...

✪ If you thought us Brits were a tad uptight about violent video games, think again. Both *Carmageddon* and *Grand Theft Auto* were banned in Brazil because of their violent content. Indeed, anyone found selling the game could have been fined nearly £4,000.

***Carmageddon* – too much for Brazil.**

Peter Molyneux – kept stum and made millions...

✪ One of the Darling brothers (they of Codemasters fame) was profiled last year in the *News Of The World* because he wanted to find that special someone to help spend his fortune with him. No news yet on whether the campaign was successful...

✪ It is believed that *Doom* has been downloaded an estimated 15 million times...

"I OWN THE LARGEST PC GAMES COLLECTION IN THE WORLD..."

Ah, the size of your PC games collection. If you truly want to blow away your friends when it comes to being a bit of a buff, then there's no better way than slapping your games boxes out for the lads and watching them wince (either in humiliation or, more likely, embarrassment). If your collection also includes titles that are relics from the early years, all the better. Here are some of the best places to locate golden oldies and increase your games collection tenfold without filing for bankruptcy:

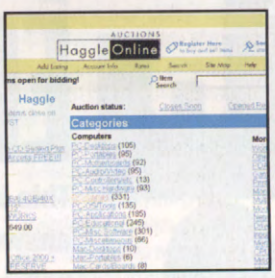
Online Auctions

What? The new breed of auction houses. You can find anything at these places – there were even reports of people trying to sell their kidneys online for a cool mill. Getting your hands on PC games is a tad easier (and far less painful).

Uppers: It's safer than bartering with someone in the newsgroups as most decent auction houses keep a track of each person's sales and purchases, and you can check up on a particular member and their reputation by asking other members.

Downers: The temptation to splash out more than you actually have is possible as you gormlessly watch 'digital' bids mount up.

Where: E-Bay **(www.ebay.com)**, QXL **(www.qxl.com)** and Haggle Online **(www.haggle.com)**

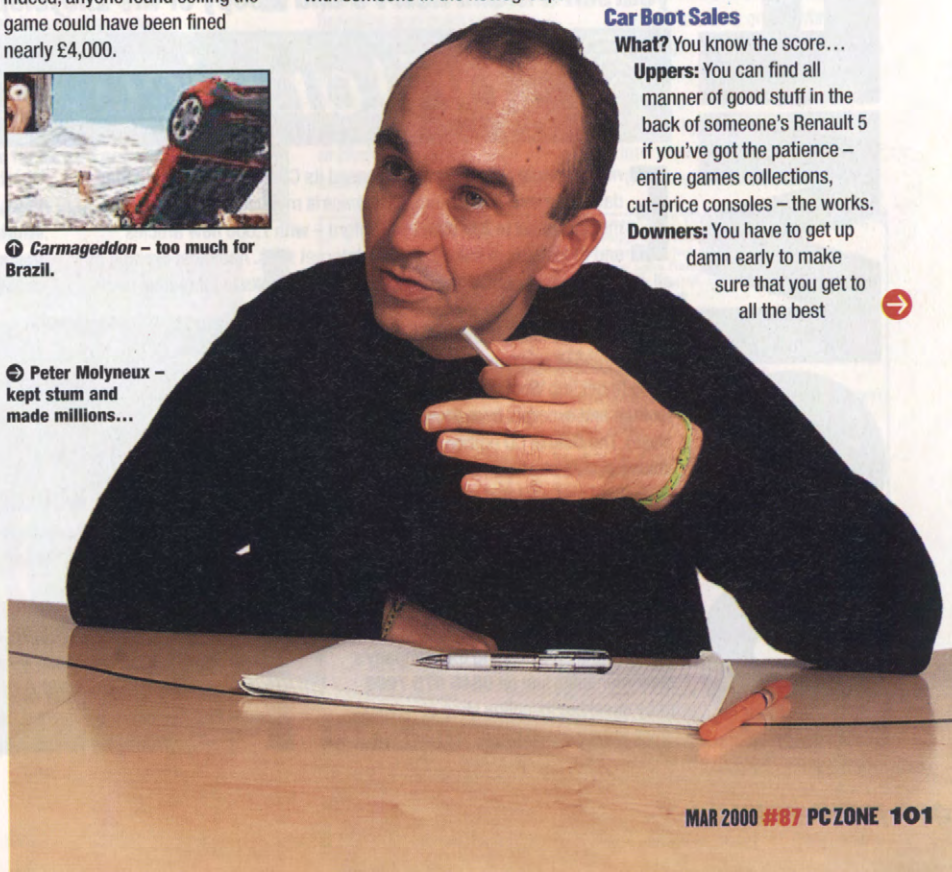


Car Boot Sales

What? You know the score...

Uppers: You can find all manner of good stuff in the back of someone's Renault 5 if you've got the patience – entire games collections, cut-price consoles – the works.

Downers: You have to get up damn early to make sure that you get to all the best



COMPETITION!

WIN A PC

PLUS! THE ALL-NEW DVD ENCYCLOPAEDIA BRITANNICA

This is your chance to prove to the world just how much you know about PC games. Simply answer the questions on the right, then complete the tie-break question for a chance to win yourself a brand new PC and a copy of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* DVD edition to use on it

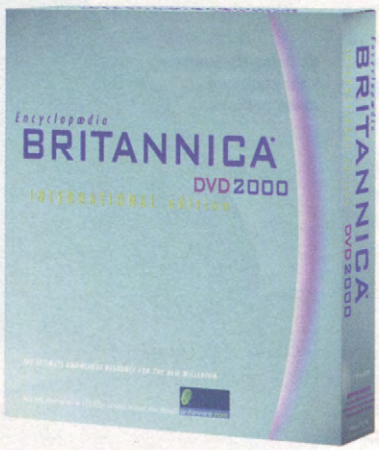
britannica.co.uk

FEAST YOUR EYES ON THESE KILLER SPECS: Carrera Octan m600: AMD Athlon 600, 64Mb SDRAM, 13Gb Hard Disk, nVIDIA TNT2 32Mb, DVD-ROM, 17inch monitor.

Encyclopaedia Britannica has released its CD 2000 to celebrate the dawn of a new millennium. *Britannica* is more comprehensive and more intuitive to use than ever before – with 7,000 new articles and thousands of links to related Internet sites. And most exciting of all, it's even quicker and more enjoyable to use, thanks to incredible new navigation and research tools.

The state-of-the-art DVD edition has 15,000 images and five hours of stunning video (including World War II newsreel footage and excerpts from Shakespearean plays). The Deluxe CD edition has 6,500 photos and illustrations, plus an hour's animation, and a total of 83,000 articles.

Britannica 2000 is available in three formats: *Britannica CD 2000* at £29.99, *Britannica CD 2000 Deluxe* at £49.99 and *Britannica DVD 2000* at £69.99. All are available from retail outlets or direct from Britannica by calling the company's customer sales line on **0845 075 7000** or by checking its online shop at www.britannica.co.uk.



Want to amaze your friends with amazing facts and figures? Or just make them green with envy as you play the latest games on a top-end PC? Whatever your reasons, just answer the questions on the page opposite and send them on a postcard, along with with all the information requested, to the address below

- *Name / Address / Postcode / Daytime phone number / Email / Job title / Company name / Age if under 18*
- *Please tell us if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers or new products from other companies*
- *Are you a current subscriber to* PC ZONE*?*

Send your entry to: Encyclopaedia Britannica Competition, *PC ZONE*, 19 Bolsover Street, London W1P 7HJ, UK. (Closing date: 9 March 2000)

- *Terms and conditions: only entries with all the questions completed and received before the closing date will be entered into the prize draw. Winners will be notified by post. No cash alternative will be offered. Prizes will not necessarily be as shown. No correspondence will be entered into. The Editor's decision is final. All the other usual competition rules, conditions and restrictions apply.*

Whoever gets the most questions right wins. OK?

"I KNOW SO MUCH I WON A PC..."

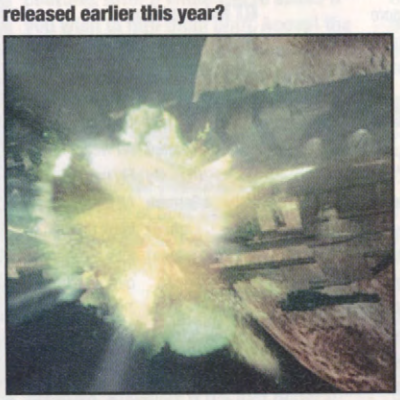
The ultimate challenge for budding game buffs: answer these 25 fiendish questions about PC gaming, which range from the easy peasy to the downright difficult, and you could win yourself a brand spanking new PC!

1 In what year was id Software officially founded?

2. What is the name of the programmer who created *Grand Prix* and *Grand Prix 2*?

3. What was the first commercial game to be distributed as shareware?

4. Who directed the *Wing Commander* movie released earlier this year?



5. Which space game was created by the much online maligned Derek Smart?

6. On which lifestyle/style magazine's cover did Lara Croft first appear?

7. Which game featured a hidden level in which you had to defend your base from flying, farting cows?

8. What was the first God game?

9. Which two driving games generated tabloid coverage because of their controversial content?

10. Which '70s TV dude was featured in *Driver*'s TV commercials?

11. What are the names of the two programmers who created *Elite*?

12. What is the name of the controversial PlayStation emulator for the PC?

13. Which make and model of car did pro PC games player Dennis Fong win in the *Red Annihilation* Tournament back in 1997?

14. Which "interactive movie" starred Margot Kidder (she of *Superman 1 & 2* 'fame') and featured the voice of James Earl Jones?

15. What was the name of the lead character in *Little Big Adventure 1 & 2*?

16. Who is Sierra On-line's infamous 'womanising' lounge lizard?

17. What does the acronym M.A.M.E stand for?

18. Which game did Sensible Software never manage to release because of its 'adult content'?

19. In which game did the planet of Xen feature?

20. Which was the first PC game to introduce a 'moral-based character generation system'?

21. What does G.O.D stand for?

22. Who is head honcho of Shiny Entertainment?

23. Which game features a soundtrack by Cypress Hill?

24. Who was the first model to play the 'real-life' Lara Croft?

25. Which first-person stealth 'em up had a character called Garrett?

TIE-BREAKER QUESTION

Name one thing you'd like to do to Charlie Brooker if you had the chance. Extra points will be awarded for originality...

bargains first. Also, if the games don't work, it's hard to track the previous owner down. Unless you get his registration number and have a friend in the police force.

Where: Look in your local newspaper and cast an eye over the displays in your local shop/supermarket for up-and-coming car boot sales.

Newsgroups

What: A place where anything goes as the public swap opinions, gossip, views and – most importantly for the games collector – sell their software.

Uppers: There's always someone out there who's got what you want or can at least point you in the right direction. Also, it's easier to haggle with one person over a set of emails than to get caught up in a bidding war at an online auction.

Downers: There's bugger-all security. In most cases, the buyer has to send his cash first and the seller then sends the goods. Hardly the most secure of transactions. Try to find out from other newsgroup users if they've had dealings with a particular person. Also, see if any negative messages have been posted about them before in the newsgroups – use **www.deja.com** and type in their name.

Where: comp.sys.ibm.pc.games.marketplace

Shops

What: Independent software stores are a great place to find bargains and golden oldies gathering dust. The big boys such as Electronics Boutique have also got their fair share of budget games, but you're unlikely to find that 1984 classic tucked away on their shelves. Specialists like The Computer Exchange boast a shedload of secondhand games at decent prices and are well worth phoning up.

Uppers: You can look over the box and contents to make sure they are in top nick before parting with your readies (unlike the newsgroups). And you can go back and throw the game at them if it doesn't work.

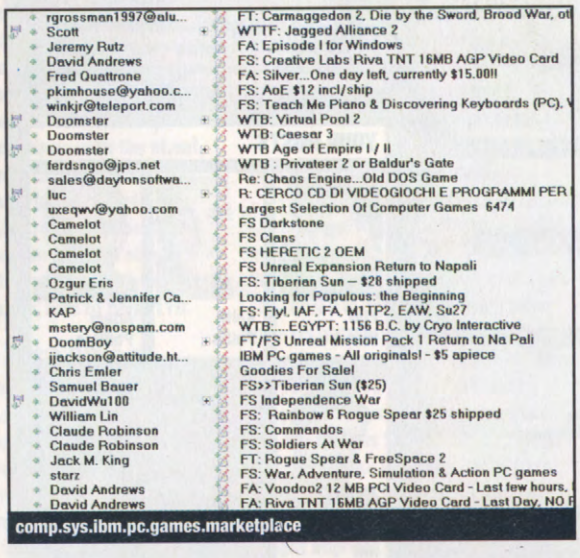
Downers: The small indie software stores are being stamped out by the corporate might of the big chain stores. Which can only be bad news for serious gamers.

Where: Check out your *Yellow Pages* and give them a call to find out what they have.

"I'VE MADE IT!"

So now you've got enough information to begin a glittering career as a games buff. But how do you know when you've really made it? Here are some sure-fire signs:

- When discussing games, all your mates shut up sharpish when you begin to speak because they want to hear all your pearly words of wisdom.
- You grow tired of your aforementioned mates' clueless observations and you start hanging out in Net newsgroups trying to impress other posters.
- After joining the newsgroups, you start to become one of those pedantic posters who has an opinion on everything and anything to do with games.
- You're invited on to news programmes to offer your insightful views on the state of the games industry and its history.
- You get a phone call from us asking if you would like to be interviewed for our regular 'Obsessed' feature... PCZ



TROUBLESHOOTER

Feeling frustrated by your lack of co-ordination? Want to be the best player in the gaming universe? Then you've come to the right place – Cheat Master provides the cure for all your gaming ills, and if you're after a more personal service, look no further than *ZONE*'s answer to Claire Rayner, Mr Keith Pullin...

IN TRUBS THIS MONTH...

104 CHEATMASTER
If at first you don't succeed... cheat. Allow Keith Pullin to show you how it's done.

105 DEAR KEITH
Agonising over how to get past certain levels? Can't sleep at night worrying about how to rescue Princess Tuftina? Then you need to call Uncle Keith.

106 INDIANA JONES AND THE INFERNAL MACHINE
Help the whip-lashing Indy complete all 15 levels of his mission, aided by this cunning walkthrough compiled by fedora fan Keith Pullin.

110 TOMB RAIDER: THE LAST REVELATION
Get into Lara Croft's, er, good books by guiding her through the latest epic title. Mark Hill leads the way in part one of this revealing walkthrough.

114 DEAR WANDY
Need a hand with a technical query that's bugging you? Our tech-head Wandy is here to help.

116 WATCHDOG
Getting your knickers in a twist over that bugged to jiggery PC game you bought last week? Sent a cheque to a company and received no product? Let the consumers' champion Adam Philips guide you through your legal rights...

YOUR HOSTS

Phil Wand

Keith Pullin

Adam Phillips

Mark Hill

CHEAT MASTER

If you're after cheats for the biggest, the best, and the most popular PC games around, you've come to the perfect place...

CHEATMEISTER Keith Pullin

ON THE CD

More cheats, tips and solutions than ever on the cover CD this month. Find out what's in store for you by looking at the Editorial section of your CD-ROM browser.

NEED HELP?

If your problems persist, you can solve them if you...

WRITE TO Dear Keith/CheatMaster, *PC ZONE*, Dennis Publishing, 19 Bolsover Street, London W1P 7HJ

EMAIL letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk with **'Dear Keith'** or **'CheatMaster'** in the subject line.

HALF-LIFE: OPPOSING FORCE

Sierra

Here's a bit of fun to lighten the atmosphere. Run up to the top boss of *Oppo Force* to hear this sentence played backwards: "To win the game you must kill me – Randy Pitchford."

For something slightly more useful, load up the game with the 'hl.exe -dev -console -game gearbox' command line. Now hit '~' to activate the console and then enter the following codes:

/god	God mode
/impulse 101	All weapons with full ammo
/noclip	No clipping mode
/give [item name]	Obtain item
/map [map name]	Map select

INDIANA JONES AND THE INFERNAL MACHINE

LucasArts

When playing the game, press 'F10' to bring up the console. Enter one of the following codes followed by 'Enter' to activate.

taklit_marion on	God mode
urgon_elsa	All weapons
azerim_Sophia	Health items
nub_willie	Hints
framerate	Show frame rate
fixme	Saves Indy when he gets stuck
endcredit	View end credits
makemeapirate	Become pirate

SWAT 3: CLOSE QUARTERS BATTLE

Sierra

Press 'Shift' and '~' during the game to display the console. Then enter one of the following codes:

swatlord	Team God mode
iamleet	Win current mission
biggerpockets	Infinite ammo
doubleshot	Rapid fire
noshades	Night missions played in daytime
hotstuff	Suspects harder to kill
justin	Suspects will not surrender
rabies	Shoot rats to make them rabid
nc17	More gore
johnwoo	Slow motion mode
casual	No pants or shirts

NOCTURNE

Take 2

During play, press 'F10' and then type one of the following codes:

NB: All codes work with the original unpatched version of the game. However, players using a patched or later version may experience difficulties getting certain cheats to work.

godgames	God mode
bandaid	Restore health
gimmecrap	All weapons and ammo
layitonme	Extra ammo
woodenstakegun	Wooden stake crossbow
torchtip	Flaming tip arrows
mercury	500 Mercury bullets
aqua	500 Aqua Vampire bullets
silver	500 Silver bullets
shotgunshell	Shotgun and/or 500 shells
dumbogun	Elephant gun
driveby	Tommy gun
torchmyass	Flame-thrower
amonra	Radiance Emitter
youfarted	Gas mask for stranger
pinkbunny	Recharge battery
keysuper	Skeleton key
t2000	Look like Terminator 2000
bighead	Big heads
oldhat	Stranger wears alternate hat
headofhorrors	Enable 'bigboom' code
bigboom	Kill nearby enemies
ebola	Kill surrounding creatures
thunderstorm	Toggle rain
snowstorm	Toggle snow
reallycold	Toggle enemy AI
Dismember	Toggle gratuitous dismemberment

UNREAL TOURNAMENT

GT Interactive

Bring down the console and then type:

iamtheone	Activate cheat mode
god	God mode
loaded	All weapons
fly	Fly mode
allammo	All ammo
ghost	Walk through walls
killall [class]	Kills all enemies of a certain [class]
playersonly	Toggles time on/off
behindview 0	Normal view
behindview 1	View character from behind
walk	Walk mode
open [mapname]	Jump to any map
summon [item]	Summon item (see following list)

SUMMON items:

Cannon
Eightball
Flakcannon
Nali
Skaarjwarrior
Quad Shot

WHEEL OF TIME
GT Interactive

Bring up the console and enter the following codes:

god	God mode
fly	Fly mode
walk	Walk mode
Allammo	All guns and ammo
ghost	Walk through walls
invisible 1	Invisible
invisible 0	Visible
summon [class]	Creates NPC of the specified [class]
killall [class]	Kills all NPCs of a specified [class]
killpawns	Kills all monsters
playersonly	Toggle time freeze on/off
say [message]	Send [message] to other players
slomo #	Sets game speed to # (1.0 is normal)
behindview 1	View character from behind
behindview 0	Normal View
switchlevel [new level]	Go to [new level]

GRAND THEFT AUTO 2
Take 2

Enter your name as 'GOURANGA' – this activates the cheat mode. Now type the name again as one of the following codes to see the effect during the game.

IAMASUCKER	All levels, weapons, God mode
LIVELONG	God mode
IAMDAVEJ	$9,999,999
CUTIE	199 lives
GODOFGTA	All weapons with full ammo
BLASTBOY	All weapons
VOLTFEST	Electric ray gun
FLAMEON	Flame thrower
UKGAMER	All three cities
BEEFCAKE	Increased brutality
ITSALLUP	Level select
BIGSCORE	10 million points
BUCKFAST	Aggressive pedestrians
MADEMAN	Respect from three gangs
DANISGOD	$200,000
ARSESTAR	Keep weapons after arrest
DESIRES	Maximum wanted level
EATSOUP	Free shopping
FISHFLAP	Small cars
GOREFEST	More gore
HIGHFIVE	5x multiplier
HUNSRUS	Invisible
NEKKID	Naked pedestrians
LASVEGAS	"Elvis clan" people
LOSEFEDS	No police
MEATMAN	Hamster runs across screen
SCHURULZ	Double damage power-up
TUMYFROG	All bonus levels
WUGGLES	Display coordinates

Here's a list of the power-ups you can get when you leave your car at a car dump:

Aniston BD4	Get out of jail free card
Beamer	Flame thrower
B-Type	Invulnerability
Big Bug	Machine gun
Bug	Machine gun
Car	Power-up
Dementia	Invisibility
Miara	Rocket launcher
Minx	Electrofingers
Michelli Roadster	Machine gun
Police Car	Police bribe
Romero	Armour
Schmidt	Health
Shark	Molotov cocktails
Taxi	Double damage
U-Jerk Truck	Machine gun
Z-Type	Silenced machine gun

PHARAOH
Sierra

It's not easy being the ruler of Egypt, but here are a few invocations you can include in your prayers to the gods. Press 'Ctrl'+'Alt'+ 'Shift'+'C' then type: Pharaoh's Tomb to win the current scenario and progress on to the next one; **Fury Of Seth** to enrage Seth and make him destroy all military ships; **Living Large** to upgrade all houses to Fancy Residence.

You can also edit the '**Pharaoh_Model_Normal.txt**' file. But that would be cheating.

CALL OUR TIPS LINE
0207 917 7698
THURS 1.30PM–5.30PM

Neil Valentine here will answer any question you have. Possibly...

Email us for a quick response: Tipszone@hotmail.com

DEAR KEITH

21st century agony uncle, Keith Pullin, cures your gaming hangovers...

ON A ROLL

Q I've heard that there's a way on *Rollercoaster Tycoon* to get this top Einstein type bloke who speeds up your research. Is this true? If so, please tell me how to find him.

Bill Triller, via email

A **OK. There are actually two 'Einsteins'. First, find Guest #1 and rename him 'E=MC2'. Now find guest #2 and rename him 'E=MC3'. The two bump into each other and begin chatting. After a while you're asked if you wish to hire them both. Accept the offer, and then pour your resources into the think tank. Research is now much faster, and to top it off you also get loads of cash. Hurrah!**

SPECIAL NEEDS

Q I'm crap at *Spec Ops 2: US Army Green Berets*. Please help me before my retinas shatter!

Harry Loop, Germany

A **What a frightening thought. It's hard to say what you have to do because you haven't given a specific problem. However, if it's just general tips you're after, then the best thing to do is take it slowly. Remember: this is a strategy game. So treat it as such.**

ENGLISH SCUM

Q *Age Of Empires II* is my headache. I'm having problems on the first scenario – it's those dirty English gits, they whip my ass every time. Tell me how to beat them or I'll mash your spuds.

Matthew Gillies, Chester

A **Hmmm. Will you indeed [sigh]. Well, you better try cheating then. Press Enter to bring up the console and then type 'black death' to kill them all. If you want an actual strategy, you're going to have to ask nicely...**

HIDDEN CHEAT

Q What a completely terrific game! I refer of course to *Star Trek: Hidden Evil*. The atmosphere is unrivalled and I've been suckered in 100 per cent. Unfortunately, I'm not finding it as easy to solve. Are there any cheats or something so I can last a bit longer?

Mary Lewis, Hounslow

A **It's quite simple really, just type 'kirk' anywhere in the game to be rewarded with infinite health.**

IT'S JUST NOT PHARAOH

Q I have a strange problem with *Pharaoh*. I keep getting hassled by hyenas, crocodiles and hippos. They invade my territory, start killing and eating my people and then bugger off when they're stuffed. Is there a way to stop this massacre? Please help because I have to say this is really getting me down now, especially when all my workers die too.

Lucy Boot, Aldershot

A **The best defence really is a tower. Build a 2x2 wall away from houses so that your people don't have a negative attitude towards it. Connect the tower to a recruiter and then sit back. The soldiers in the tower should spear any dangerous creatures that come too close. Ideally set up two or three for extra security.**

ENTOMBED IN STUPIDITY

Q Why the hell haven't you printed any cheats for *Tomb Raider 4: The Last Revelation* yet? The game's been out for about a month now and I just can't make the jump over by the huge chasm...

Rich Ladd, Scarborough

A **Right, I'll stop you there. The entire game is made up of difficult jumps, so unless you're more specific, it's going to be almost impossible to tell you what to do. Considering the rest of your letter talks mainly about Lara's anatomy and doesn't even mention where you're stuck, you're going to have to settle for a level skip.**

Make Lara face exactly north. Access the inventory screen and examine the compass. If the compass is transparent continue with the cheat, if not reposition Lara. Now go to 'Load Game', hold down 'h', 'e', 'l' and 'p' simultaneously, and then release. Close the inventory screen and you should skip to the next level. For the first part of the walkthrough, turn to page 110.

MISSING X FACTOR

Q I have spent well over ten hours on *X: Beyond The Frontier* and have got virtually nowhere. My ship has no weapons and I have few credits. Is there a quicker way of making money, or are there any cheats that can help me with this problem?

James Emberson, via email

A **One of the best ways to progress in this game is to be patient. I suggest you find a trade route and stick to it, especially if it's one where you don't get too much hassle from other pilots. If you build up initial resources this way, you should find the rest of the game just falls into place.**

DETAILED BREAKDOWN

Q I'm on the final level in *Half-Life* and I just can't beat the last boss. I've looked in your walkthrough but I still can't figure out what to do. Can you describe it in more detail perhaps?

Jaspal Singh Virdi, via email

A **I take it you're referring to the giant baby thing? The best way to kill this is by using the bouncy crater things to jump onto the top of his head. When the opening appears there, smash his brains in with a crowbar.**

MAKE HER SMILE...

Q I'm ploughing through *Asheron's Call* and have heard that there's a way to make my character all glittery and do a little dance. Please tell me how to do it, so I can show it to my ballet-dancing sister who says games are boring.

Rob Smith, Hereford

A **Yes quite. Anyway, the dance you're referring to is none other than the famous 'YMCA' by The Village People. To make it happen simply type '*YMCA*' during the game. Somehow I doubt this will impress your sister but it might impress your friends...** PCZ

INDIANA JONES AND THE INFERNAL MACHINE

WALKTHROUGH

Keith Pullin* digs deep to uncover the mystery of the *Infernal Machine

REVIEWED *PCZ* #84 **SCORE** 88%

This ultra-concise guide takes you quickly and efficiently through all 15 levels (except level one – that's just *too* easy) of *Indiana Jones And The Infernal Machine*. Right, let's whip to it then…

BABYLON

Manoeuvre onto radio bunker. Jump onto gate, and then onto next wall. Follow route to water room. Shimmy and jump until you reach the cave at the bottom left of this room. Beware of soldiers. Run down the ledge into the tunnel, through to another tent. Pull the lever, then climb onto the roof and jump onto a passing truck. When the truck stops, jump left and kill soldiers. Traverse courtyard and pull lever in back room to open gate.

Go through and crawl into opening behind crate, enter water and swim right, then left and into the hole. Follow passage along and exit the water. Turn right, walk down the stairs for another cut-scene. Unlock door. Shoot TNT and jump down. Exit water and climb to top. Pull picture slab. Go up into room and use the contraption on left side. Climb onto picture slab and climb onto ledge.

Perform a series of jumps and a whip swing in this final room to find all three pieces of the tablet then return to the big round door, and put the pieces into the frame.

In the final room use your whip to find the stone tablets.

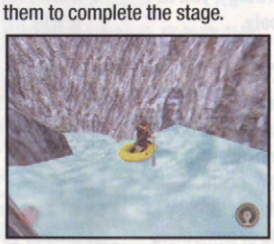
TIAN SHAN RIVER

Approach the border from the ledge. Jump onto the tower and go down the hatch. Search the rooms for a raft. Use it in the water by the grate. Paddle downstream until you see two pine trees, disembark here and continue on foot. When you reach a junction turn right. Run past the shack until you reach the river again.

Board the raft. Take a left at the first and second forks. Dock near the building. Collect the green candle, and get back on the river. Go right at the next fork and the one after. Alight, and find your way into a large room where you have to really work for the violet candle. Get back on the river. In the cavern at the bottom, pull the lever to go up and board your raft, again…

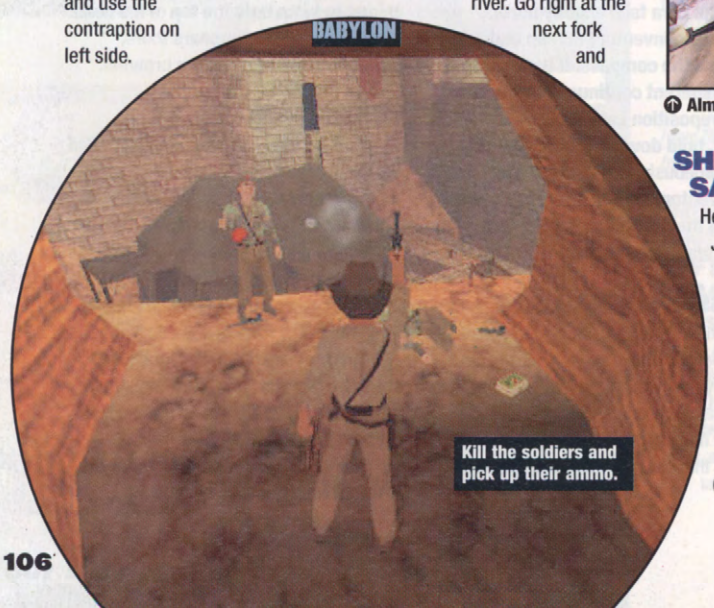
This time, aim left at the first fork, but right at the second. On the left bank is a small opening. Dock raft. Shoot window at bottom of tower. Jump inside, pull lever and go to top of tower for the red candle. Get back on the main flow of the river, where you should see a grove of trees on the right containing the yellow candle.

You can now go and place the candles in their sockets and light them to complete the stage.



If you puncture the raft, dock ASAP to repair it.

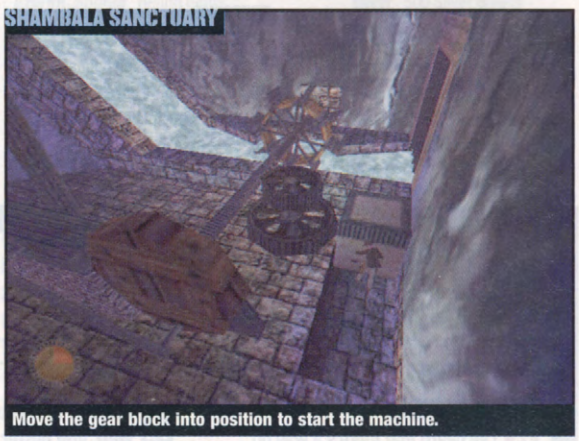
Almost there…



Kill the soldiers and pick up their ammo.

SHAMBALA SANCTUARY

Head left into the courtyard. Jump up to reach a climbable wall to the roof. Fall through roof. Move downwards until you reach the underground river and gear mechanism. Move the gear block into position. Go back to the clock (pushing the gear into position in the sprocket room on the way) and climb up to the lever. Pull the lever to raise the gate. Walk halfway across the bridge and shoot the window. Go through to reach a lever. Keep climbing for yet another lever.



Move the gear block into position to start the machine.

Visit the clock tower for a cut-scene. Drop down right of the statue and pull lever on the right. Run back to the bell tower. When statue starts to spin, pull the lever on your right. A Shaman appears and gives you a key. Use this to open the door at the bottom of the clock tower. Go into the living quarters to find the Monastic Seal.

Go back down to the room at the bottom and push the wooden handle on the statue twice. Head down this passageway to the treasury. In here is a key to use on the lock to reveal a plant bulb. Go back to the statue room and push the nearby button to raise a ladder. Climb ladder. At dead end shoot glass window through grill. Go into other room, shoot window and work your way around the edge of the building to the dead end room. Place the bulb in the cradle. Go down to the statue room and swing onto the ledge by the window. Let the light stream onto the bulb. Take it back to the Shaman and she'll open a path. Run to the other side of the room to find Urgon's

Kill this guy with your brand new toy.

Swing onto the rock and dig between the trees.

machine part. Then use this to kill the beast.

PALAWAN LAGOON

Use the whip to cross the pit. Get machete. Hack web and vines and collect shovel. Swim to the other beach, go through the cave and swim to the ship. Find arming device. Arm torpedo on beach. Swim through hole in ship. Get hammer from door on left. Go through opposite door to find key. Go to the bridge and use key to get a handle. Use handle on crane. Swing across and dig on island to reveal a button. Press button. Swim to crashed plane and remove propeller. Use propeller on underwater door. Swim through, exit water and head upwards to the idol with a button. Press button to open doors.

Nothing quite like a torpedo to liven up proceedings.

PALAWAN VOLCANO

Use Urgon's part to break the wall. Eventually you reach a large, water-filled room. Swim down the underwater tunnel in the middle and take the first passage on the right. This takes you to a precarious ledge, where you'll need to shift around a couple of blocks in order to flick a switch. Go back to the water room and go through the hole on the corner island.

This leads to a room where a boulder smashes a hole in the wall. Go through the hole, press the switch, and then collect the key from the ship. Open the red door with this key. In the next big room push the blocks into position, press the button at the top of the room and deftly bounce across to the exit. Various cut-scenes follow. Take the elevator to the surface where you'll find loads of commies and an aluminium key. Go back to the statue below in the lava and whip his hand. Go through the door. Follow the route to Sophia. Free her and head back to the room with the gate. Once through, go up into the little room with the crates. Push them to reveal a pulley. Use pulley on gondola and the stage ends.

Press down to fall and then press up to grab the ledge below.

Pick up this key to free Sophia.

PALAWAN TEMPLE

Move through to the lava room with jumpable pads. Go to the far right corner and take the ladder up for the shark key. Return to the landing on the far side of the lava room. Use Urgon's part. Continue onwards, and unlock the door with the shark key. Take tiki key, then use whip to avoid the boulder. Use tiki key on door in lava room.

Work your way across rope bridges and caves until you are fired out of a waterfall. Climb the ladder and keep going until you reach a pit trap with stakes. Jump onto the right ledge. Once outside whip swing over and traverse the cave. Leap the broken bridge. Cut the single rope holding the bridge up and head for the small cave at the bottom. Take the monkey key and use it on the big door at the top. In here is the second tiki key.

Keep going past the boulders until you reach the tiki door. Go through to face the lava boss. Grab the machine part in the corner and use it. Go across the rock bridge to the outside lake. Hit the switch to drain the lake. Walk across the hardened lava to the last door.

Classic Indy escapism.

JEEP TREK

Basically, just get in the jeep and go! Kill commies and jump bridges. Easy.

Take a long run up to ensure you make the jump.

TEOTIHUACAN

Take door on right. Find the stone key. When you reach the big door, double back for a cut-scene. Push the button. Go into gear room. Go up to the block before the green head – push it against the door. Push the block by the yellow head towards the centre of the room. At the three-headed door, stand behind the gear and hang down the hole. Drop down and head to the room with the snake statues. Pull them onto glyphs to get a statue to rise.

Back in the gear room, turn the spoke wheel and then the smooth wheel, then the spoke

Run to the lake and then cool this fella down with some water.

let the games begin

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wheel twice, and the smooth one again. Then turn the spoke one more. Return to the doors. Pull the fish door block away from the wall. Push the triple headed block against the door. Move the block by the green door to the centre, and then push the yellow door block up against the door. Turn the wheels in exactly the same order to open these doors.

Go into the fish door and use the stone key. Keep going to find the fish idol and a silver mirror. Next, go through the yellow door for the bird idol, then the green door for the jaguar idol and lastly the three-headed door to use the idols and then the mirror on the statue.

Drop down into the passage beneath the gear room.

Mirrors are handy things, especially when sunlight's involved.

OLMEC VALLEY

Cut vines and continue until you hit a pressure pad to release an Olmec head. Push this into position to connect the first bridge. Cross bridge and explore until you find a room with a switch at the end of a tunnel. Hit switch and then escape the tunnel before the Olmec head crushes you. Push the head onto the pad in the valley. Cross the second bridge and go to the room with the waterfall. Climb above this and hit the button. Push the third Olmec head into the gap and start the water again.

Cross the new bridge, keep going to the large room with an owl statue. Press the switch outside and run to the inside door. Push the bridge down and continue.

At the pyramid, light the lamps to get Azerim's machine part. Use the part to levitate up to the platforms. Skewer the snake by standing on the spike pads at either end of this platform.

Shove the bridge to make a bridge to the other side.

Spike the snake four times in order to kill it.

V.I. PUDOVKIN

Knock on the door. Pull grate down. Knock again, hide in grate, and then run out of the room when the guard isn't looking. Enter first door on left and pull lever. Enter the next room and take Taklit's machine part. Go through the door at the end of the hallway. Use Taklit's part to become invisible. Enter the door to discover your weapons. Move and climb the crates to access the next deck. Enter the single door, run along up the ladder and into the door on your left for Urgon's part.

Return to the hold and enter a door on the other side. Head up to the deck and use Urgon's part to bust into another room. Go up the ladder and find Azerim's part. Go back below. Keep going down until you reach a crane device. Press the button on the left twice, the middle button five times and the button on the right twice. Levitate up and go through the door. Pull the lever at the bottom of the next room. Climb the ladder into the bridge and grab the crank. Use it on the lifeboat.

A little bit of button pushing should lift you to new heights...

Crank up the boat and away you go.

This stage isn't too difficult, but you must explore thoroughly.

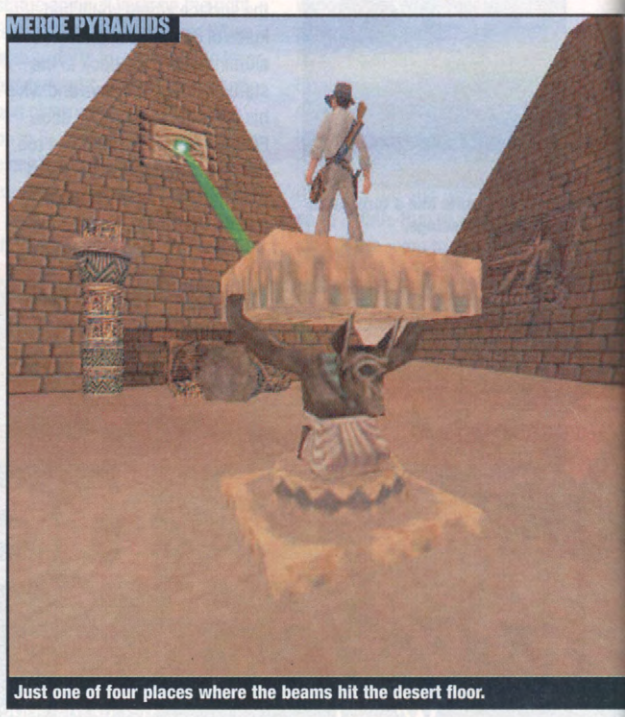
MEROE PYRAMIDS

Shoot the explosives in the shed to get a bucket and drive chain. Use the chain on the mining machine. Climb down for the wheel and watch. The boy gets the eye for you. Climb the pyramid near the shed. Head through until the block is expelled. Use this block to climb up and press the button. Go through the door and into the room with the water mechanism. Use bucket.

You now have to explore the pyramid to light all the fires in the lens rooms. When you are done, go outside and stand on all the points where the lasers hit the ground. Put the eye in every statue to unlock the main door and exit the level on the mine cart.

KING SOLOMON'S MINES

Find the fuse in a crate near an archway. Use it in the control room and switch tracks 1 and 3. Get back in cart. When the three tracks merge into one (just past signal 3), drive up to the door, then reverse into a room with a dual waterfall. Whip-swing behind the waterfall for the pyramid key. Go back and switch to track 2. Get in cart and get the brass key from the room near the electricity flashes. Use this key on the small shed to find an oilcan. Oil signal 4 and then switch it. Go to where there's a hole behind a crate. Collect the red gem and fall in the hole. Drive the cart until you reach a pool. Swim through the hole to find the green gem. Go to signal box 5 and swing over the broken

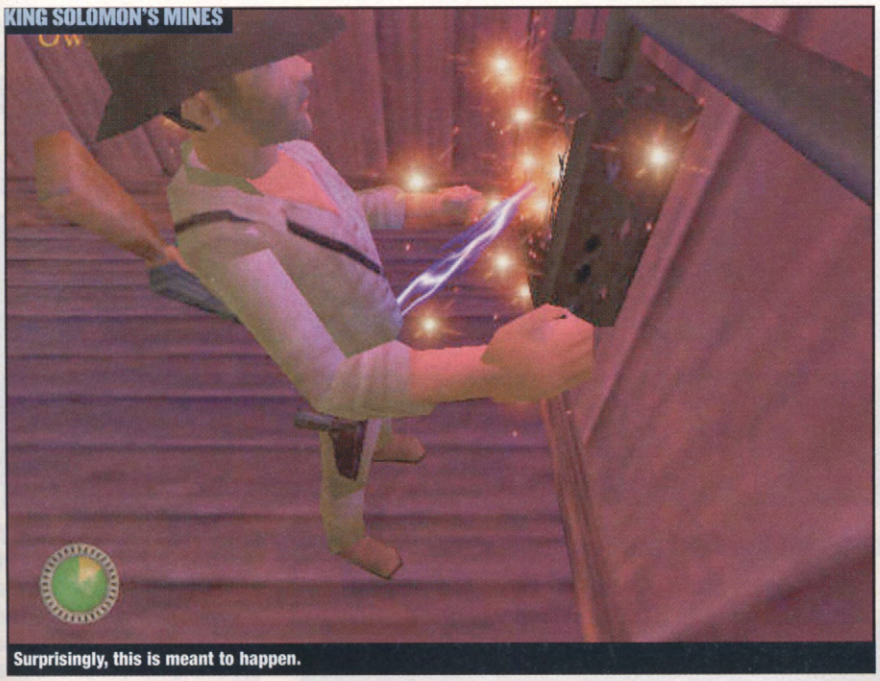


Just one of four places where the beams hit the desert floor.

PERU BONUS STAGE

If you collect more than £2,500 worth of treasure you can access a special Peruvian bonus stage, featuring classic scenes from *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*. All in all, it's a bloody good laugh to say the least.

Remember this scene? We do.



Surprisingly, this is meant to happen.

bridge for the blue gem. Go and explore the area where the fuse was to discover the straightforward way to the exit.

Place the key and the gems in the slots to complete the level.

NUB'S TOMB

Explore until you reach a big statue guarding a door. Push the smaller statue on the left wall to reveal a tapestry. Keep going to the theatre room. Press the button, enter door. Follow passage until you are above this door. Drop onto the ledge and whip the statue's arm. Use the arm on the statue guarding the other door to get through. Use Azerim's part to levitate. Hit the switch on the other side of the room, and again to follow Volodnikov.

Before the chase begins, pull out the block on the left and move it so it covers the levitation pad. Now go into the middle anteroom. Head to the back of this room and block an exit with a statue. Chase Volodnikov into here.

Go back to the big pillar room and slash a tapestry near the keyhole to reveal a block. Pull it and use this to jump up to the next corridor where there is a lever. Keep exploring this area to find a key that goes in the keyhole. Fit the gear and push the block in. Head into the robot room with the red décor. Use the red blocks to jump onto the beams, then work your way across the room to the top. Jump in water, swim down, hit switch and use statue's head to jump to the other side. Enter the lightning room. Ascend to the room above and position the rams' heads around the opening. Push the button inside the alcove. Now press the gold switch once and the silver switch twice.

Go back to the room below and grab Nub's part from the top of the conductor. Use this part to open all the strange switches and head to the final room. Activate the sarcophagus (press 'ctrl'), then use Nub's part on the wall switch. Put red gem in socket and a robot appears. Make it walk over the flashing pad four times. Use its body to jump to the exit.

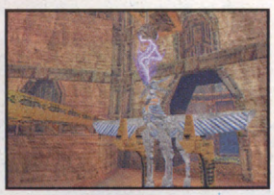
If the robot steps on the glowing pads four times it explodes.

Use the arm here.

INFERNAL MACHINE

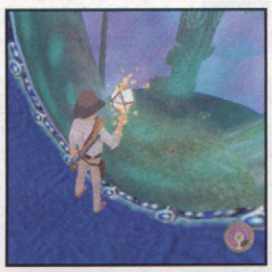
Find all the pieces of the infernal machine and put them in the right slots. You also need to find Marduk's head and affix it to his body. When you fight Turner you can only hurt him if he's visible. Use the machine gun for this. Finally use the Taklit part on the control panel and then press 'ctrl' to work the levers.

Sophia gets into a spot of bother...


When the statue is complete the final conflict is nigh...

AETHERIUM

Swim straight out of the Aetherium and drop down onto the ledge below. Swim into the four sides of the central block in turn (starting with the green stripes and ending with the blue) to find some goodies and the Tool from Beyond. In order to kill Marduk you must use the mirror to reflect his shots right back at him. Then you will need to charge up your whip, so you can whip the silver ball in the corridor. This will lead you up to more silver balls by platforms. Whip all of them, and then go right through the tunnels to find the gems. Place all of the gems you have found in the slots in the main room and then you will need to electro-whip Sophia/Marduk to kill it. Now, run for the exit through the earthquake and it is game over. PCZ


Use the Tool from Beyond to get past the force fields.

Whip the bitch to death.

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TOMB RAIDER: THE LAST REVELATION

WALKTHROUGH—PART 1

5,743 'Lara's have died so that *Mark Hill* could reveal the first part of our guide...

REVIEWED *PCZ* #83 **SCORE** 85%

***The Last Revelation* is a truly epic game, so it's no surprise we couldn't fit the whole guide into four pages. Even spread over two issues, there's just no way of giving you a step-by-step tour of each level, but we can certainly help you through the trickier thinking bits. Just remember: there's no substitute for amazing acrobatic skills. And you're still gonna need plenty of 'em...**

THE TOMB OF SETH

Follow the torch-bearing man until he lowers a block. Stick your hand inside the hole and trace back your steps to collect the golden object. When you arrive at a room with a similar piece, wait until your guide sets off the blade trap to pick it up. Combine both objects in your inventory and slot them in the hole to your right. Carry on to the tiled room and pull the chain. To light the torches in the right order, jump from lighted tile to lighted tile, first right, then up, left, and up again. Join the guide once more until he runs off, place the sand clock you've just picked up into the statue's hands, head back and crawl into the sphinx's mouth.

BURIAL CHAMBERS

Pick up the Hand of Orion and jump through the spike traps and down a slope where you can place the object in a hole in the wall. At the sarcophagus, pick up the Amulet of Thorns and follow the streams of blood into a room with a statue in the centre. Push the statue onto a blue-and-red square on the floor and follow the corridor. Pick up the golden serpent and escape through the open gate on the wall. Slide down and sprint to the left to avoid the spikes and wait until the room fills with sand. Go back to the main cave, head up the stone steps and turn left to cross the bridge. Drop down the hole, head under the spikes, climb the blocks and pull the lever. Go through the freshly opened gate and keep going to the next lever, which rotates the main room. Return there, slide to the floor and pick up the Hand of Sirius. Go where there's a hole in the wall in front and below you, and go in. Pull the lever and head back to climb up to the star-shaped hole. Put the Hand of Sirius there, collect another golden serpent and enter the temple doorway. Use the snakes in the slots to get out.

Jump from one lighted tile to another in the right order.

And next: Lara the cripple. Timing your jumps is essential.

VALLEY OF THE KINGS

Kill every bugger in sight, one of which will drop a set of keys you can use to drive the jeep. It's not a race against the other car, so just follow the track.

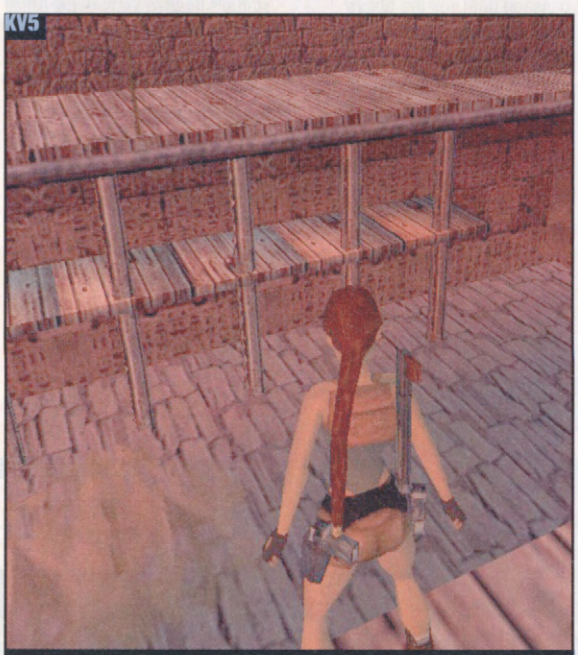
Run over the tuaregs for that satisfying bone-crunching sound.

KV5

Keep driving until you get to the closed gate. Get out of the jeep, kill the tuareg and climb to the top of the right-hand scaffolding. Jump across to the other side using the rope and then jump onto the lever. Get back in the jeep and drive on up a slope, avoiding the spike balls, then carry on, sticking to the right side as much as possible.

TEMPLE OF KARNAK

When Lara looks to her right through the doorway, climb up, press the buttons in the holes in the wall and pick up Canopic jar 1. Head back out into the open and climb the ruins to your left to find an opening in the ground. Shimmy across one of the empty pools and press the button on the raised platform. Go through



About to have a swinging time.

the newly opened door and you'll end up between two statues. Put the jar behind the one on your right, climb through an opening in the wall and head back to the doorway flanked by columns from the beginning. There another door will have opened to the next level.

Go on, stick your hand right in there, dear.

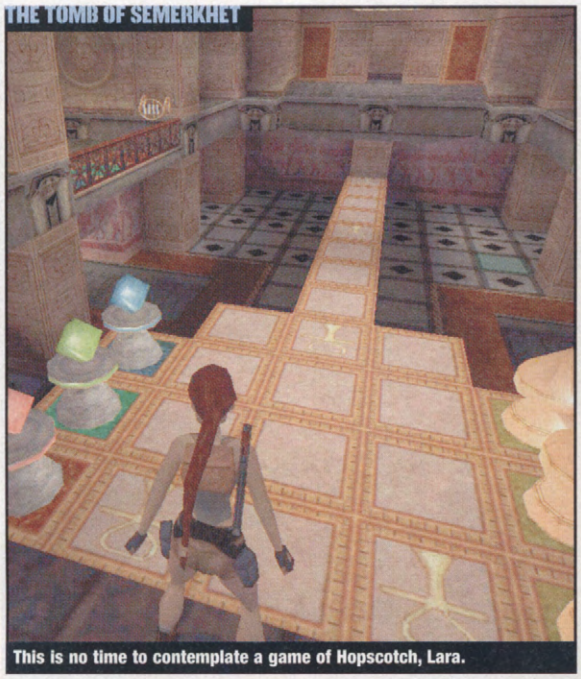
THE GREAT HYPOSTYLE HALL

Run outside, climb through the hole and down the long corridor. Jump over the pit and keep going.

Von Croy is well on his way to get ya.

THE SACRED LAKE

In the water you'll find two holes, go down the one with the slab over it by pulling the lever beneath the gate. In the room with the mirror, swim up to the hole to find Canopic jar 2, then go down the second hole at the bottom of the lake. This takes you back to the Temple of Karnak where you can put the second jar in the back of the other statue. Swim into the tunnel, push the button and get the Sun Goddess statue and the Hypostyle key. Now head all the way back to the tall, thin column and to the Hypostyle Hall. Climb into the narrow tunnel and use your key to enter the next room. Get to the lever on the right-hand wall and go up to the second hall. Go down to the three rooms containing lightning rods. You need to make them all face the spiked pillar. Climb up and make the rods face the central pillar. Go back down, pull the chain and combine the golden rock with the statue you already have. Drop down the hole back to the sacred lake and put the statue in the middle of the island. Enter the middle door.



This is no time to contemplate a game of Hopscotch, Lara.

THE TOMB OF SEMERKHET

Avoid the roaches by hanging on to the ceiling. Take the piece of wood and light it before going down, activating the hole buttons and going back to the centre level. Go down the hole, take steps left, climb up the ladder and then stand in front of the three flames. Do the one on the right, then the centre, then go to the new room, work your way through the buttons and swing out. Get the rules, read them and play by jumping on the tiles of the appropriate colour, moving a piece at a time. Get to the room with three mirrors, go to the room above and block the light by moving the stones onto the corresponding colour tile.

This board game is piss easy. Like brain-surgery.

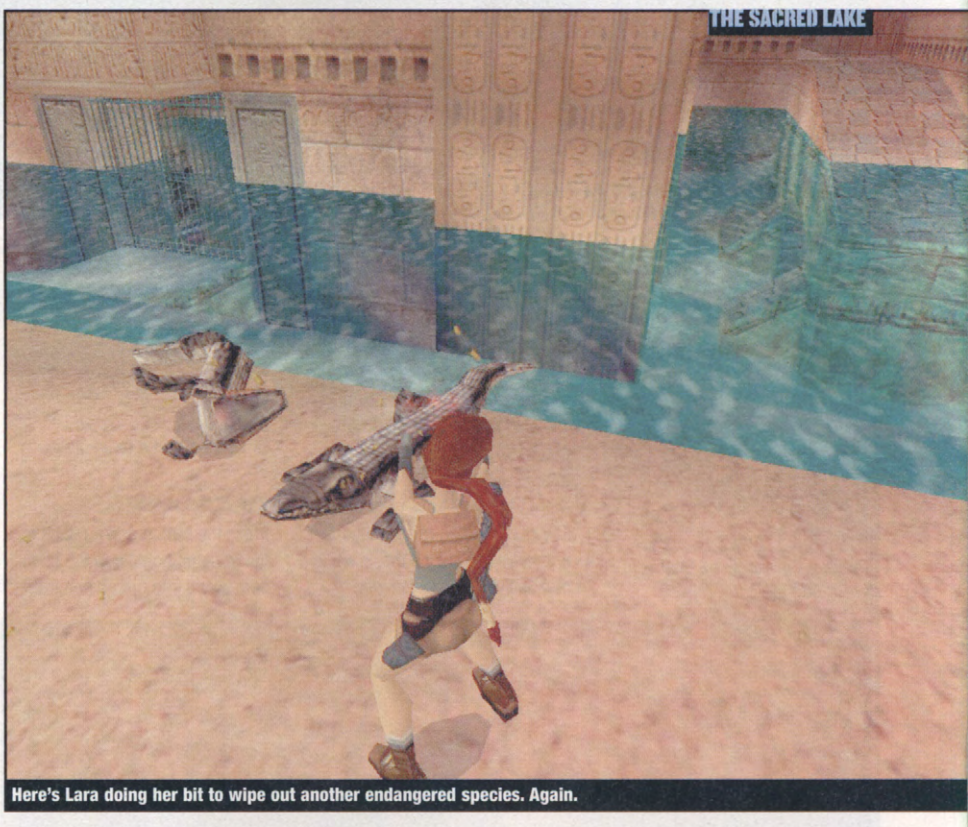
GUARDIAN OF SEMERKHET

Go left in the map room, pull the wheel and run across before the door closes. Get the Golden Vraeus, put in the triangle on the wall of the map room, get the guardian key and use it to get to the corridor below. Pull the lever and get away from the beast, shimmy across the ceiling into the corridor and examine each flame hole twice. Go down and make the beast smash the door by jumping before he hits you, then get him to charge into the pillars.

Remember, just after you have pulled that you need to run like hell.

DESERT RAILROAD

It's a case of jumping across carriages and killing all the ninjas. At the end, use the crowbar on the lever socket.



Here's Lara doing her bit to wipe out another endangered species. Again.

you'll be back

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Riding without a ticket? Tsk, tsk.

ALEXANDRIA

Talk to your friend with the bad French accent in the main house, jump on to the orange tiled roof and drop on to the lever.

"Hey, I'm not just a bimbo. I can read too."

COASTAL RUINS

Shoot your way into the fun house, get the crossbow by looking in the mirror at the floor and use the explosive ammo with it in the shooting range. Grab the coin and use it on the fair machine, go up, take the broom handle and the hook and combine them to get the keys from the keys near the entrance. Go out and keep going past the water and use the key on the gate.

He's a bit of a ropey player...

CATACOMBS

Press the button and go back to the hanging boulder in the level before and into the pit beneath it. Light the torch and enflame the rope. Go down and use the crowbar on the gate. Drag the pillar on to the brown tile and head back to the catacombs. Push the block into the corridor as far as you can, reunite the ghost with its body by running into the other room, climb down the bamboo pole and pull the lever. Swing across and through the water. Keep pulling levers and jumping on to ledges until another ghost attacks you. Exorcise it by swimming into one of the side rooms. Make your way to the Trident (you'll find another one higher up) and follow the tunnel to the start of the level. Climb down and find the third and fourth Trident and use the crowbar on the gate. Get back to the catacombs, slide down and go up the white steps.

This is where you drag a great big column, all by yourself.

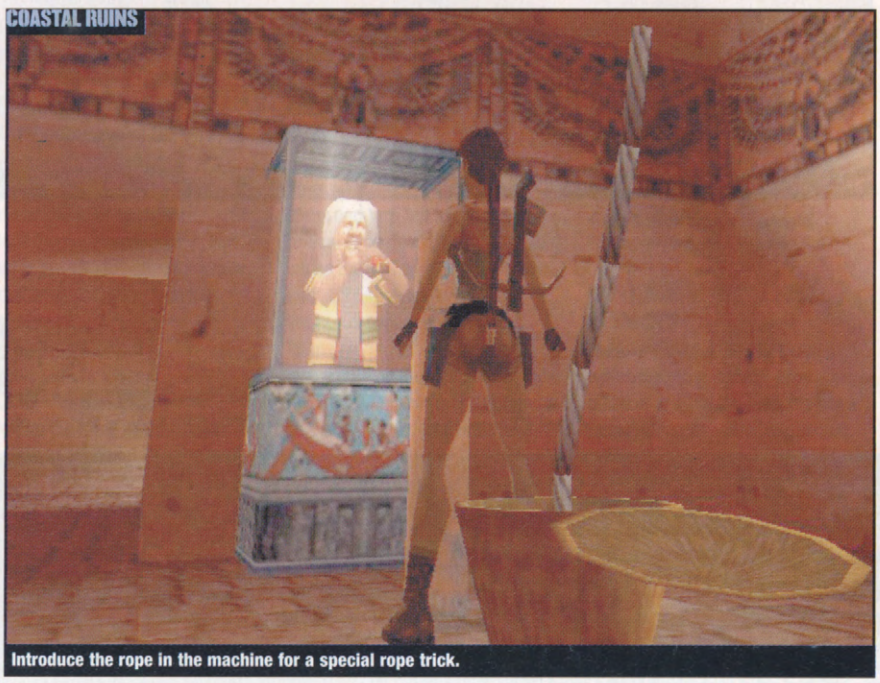
TEMPLE OF POSEIDON

Take the small door straight ahead out of the five to use the Trident on a statue. Do the same with the rest, make it to the coffin chamber and open the middle coffin.

Help this poor god find the top of his trident.

THE LOST LIBRARY

Take the second door on the left and kill all knights by shooting them in their gem hearts. The one on a horse will leave his behind. Take it and put it in the slot a few rooms behind. Now head back, collecting the star from the middle



Introduce the rope in the machine for a special rope trick.

Lara makes another stand against bestiality.

Shoot the knights in the green emerald on their chest.

pillar and take the right-hand door to the room with the big cog and swim down for more stars. Head back to the start of the level and enter the door nearest the giant vase. Put the three stars in their slots and put all the planets in the circles on the floor (blue in the middle, then grey, green, brown and gold in the final ring). Push down the first statue and then walk round clockwise doing the rest, making sure the fire spirit doesn't get you on your way to the balcony of the first room. Go right and drop down the monkey's nose until you're hanging off its lip and go into its mouth. Get the Pharaoh's pillar, stand on the two grates to light the pedestals and light the torch. Throw it on to the wooden floor, grab the music scroll and make your way back to the harp, which you should then play.

HALL OF DEMETRIUS

Drag the lantern in front of the slope. Now go to the coastal ruins and swim through an underwater tunnel into the next level.

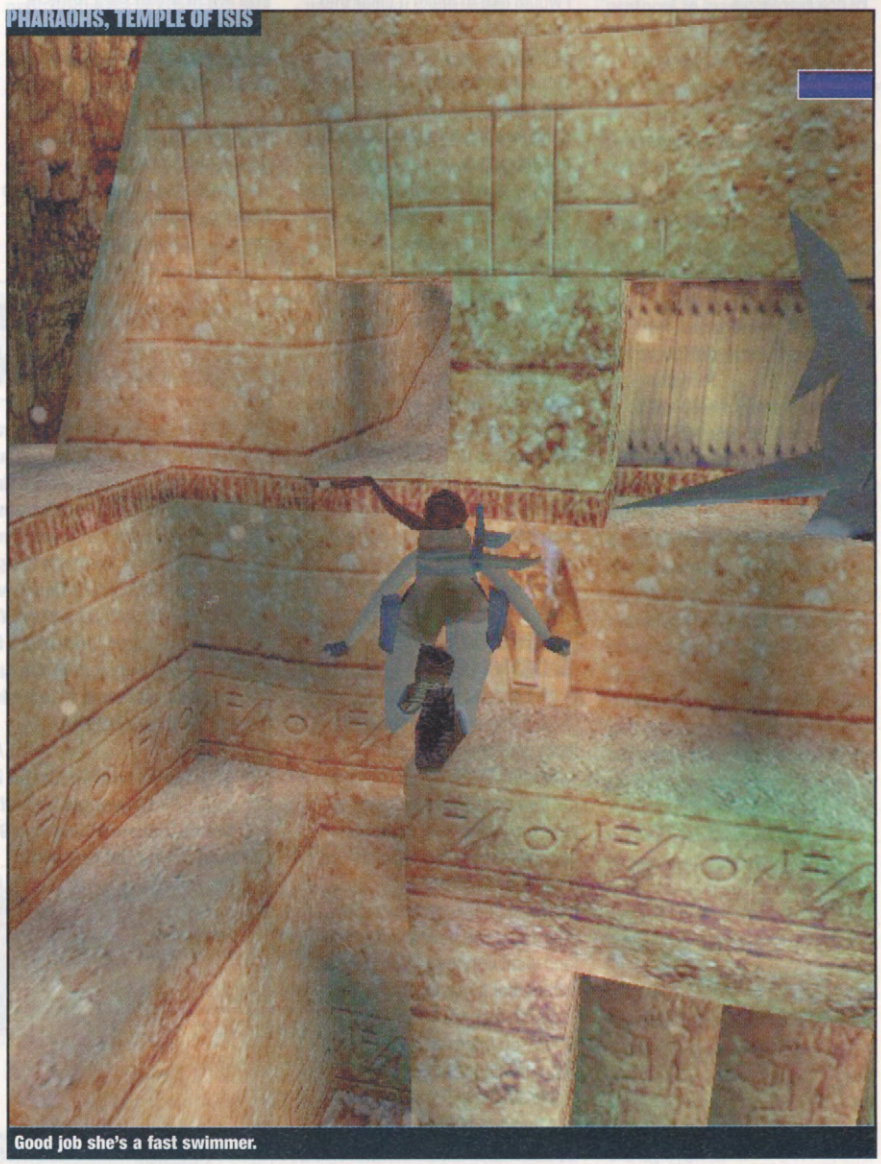
PHARAOHS, TEMPLE OF ISIS

Put the pillar in the left side of the temple and the knot in the right side. Swim down the open door, open the three green doors and use the crowbar on the two beetles in the walls near the big statue. Go down the hole, get the winding key and push the panel on the left. Go back to where you killed a Pharaoh bird and use the beetles on the black pyramid you'll eventually get to. Slide into the gasoline and get two more beetles before you're set alight. Place the unbroken one on the pyramid, collect another beetle and repeat the process, and go to the set of steps near the beginning to get the last scarab. Many acrobatics later, put it in its slot in the pyramid, get the mechanical scarab, combine it with the winding key and go back to where you found the last one.

CLEOPATRA'S PALACE

Put the beetle in the space on the floor and run behind the insect to avoid the spikes. Get it back and pick up the Gauntlet from the casket further on. Head back to the hall and repeat the process with the next set of spikes. Jump and grab on to the lever up on the wall, shimmy along and get the Right Greave from another casket. Go through the doors that have opened and get the Pharaoh's knot from yet another casket. Go out and left to the semicircular steps where you can place the knot. Climb on to the block after the bronze Lara has appeared, and protect it from the bird. Pull the two switches at the top, get the Hathor Effigy and the Ornate Handle, combine them and place the resulting Portal Guardian on top of the pole. After killing the guardians, you'll find the Left Greave and the Breast Plate. PCZ

Push the lantern across the scratches on the floor.



Good job she's a fast swimmer.

THE CHEAT REVELATION

If you're still completely stuck because you can't understand our English or you're just really crap at games, try some of these handy cheats. Be warned, however, that skipping some levels will leave you without the objects necessary to progress later on. Get Lara facing exactly north (the compass will become see through – remember it's the red arrow that should be pointing north) and do the following in the inventory screen:

Skip Level Highlight the Load icon, press down H+E+L+P and let go

Unlimited Items Highlight the small medpack icon, press down G+U+N+S and let go

All weapons Enable the unlimited items first, highlight the large medpack, press down W+E+A+P+O+N+S and let go

DEAR WANDY

Who is General Failure and why is he reading your hard disk? When buying a new mouse, do you need to sell your cat? Fear not, we have the answers

PHYSICIAN Phil Wand

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WRITE TO **Dear Wandy, *PC ZONE*, 19 Bolsover Street, London W1P 7HJ.**

EMAIL Address your letters to us at **letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk** with the subject heading **'Dear Wandy'**.

Please note: while we can assure you that we read *every* techie query sent to us, we are unable to offer personal replies. Also, please do not phone, as you're unlikely to reach someone who can help. Thanks.

NULL MODEM FABLE

Q In reply to the letter about modem-to-modem games playing, I would like to know why computer stores don't know what a serial link is. I have two computers and wanted a serial cable to join them together for playing games. Everywhere I asked, they didn't understand what I was talking about and instead told me I needed to buy a network system.

I eventually managed to buy a serial cable for £13 and can now play games like *Need For Speed Hot Pursuit* and *Road Challenge*. I would like to make it clear that you don't need to use a modem or network for linking two computers together. All you need to spend is £13, without wasting £150 on something that is just not necessary.

Anthony Beaumont

A **The cable you need to ask for is called a Null Modem Cable. It tricks each machine into thinking it's connected to a modem. Of course, a modem link will never be as fast as a network, but it is a lot cheaper. And remember, by using Microsoft's direct cable connection network type (in the Network Control Panel) you can even use the serial connection for games that don't normally support it.**

WINDOWS 95 BODYKIT

Q Loads of people have complained that their PC isn't good enough to run operating systems like Windows 98 and end up saying things such as: "Oh, look at that computer with Windows 98 on it, and here I am with Windows 95!"

Most people probably know this, but if you have Windows 95 and want Windows 98, but are afraid that it may not work on your PC, then try installing Microsoft Internet Explorer 4.x. Your problems will be solved, you'll still have 95, but with all the features of 98.

D-BEC Mantis

A **Yes and no. Both Internet Explorer 4 and 5 will give you pretty much the same look and feel of Windows 98, but underneath you'll still have the palpitating heart of Windows 95. This shouldn't cause you any problems – hey, it might even solve some – but you should still be aware of the shortcomings. For example, Windows 95's support for the increasingly popular Universal Serial Bus (USB) is shaky to say the very least. Second, there are some registry size limitations, which could catch you out. That said, you can still get many of 98's built-in features, such as Dial-Up Networking v1.3, from the Microsoft website.**

OEM TLA

Q A quick question for you: what does OEM mean? I was thinking of buying the Wingman Gaming Mouse and you get OEM *Shogo Mobile Armour Division* with it. I was also thinking of buying an OEM 3D sound card by mail order, but a friend of mine says OEM products sometimes have bits missing, slower components or incompatible drivers! What does OEM mean? And are they safe?

Joe Mealy

A **OEM stands for Original Equipment Manufacturer. For software, this usually means you won't get a manual. When it comes to hardware, it means it'll come in a dull brown box or bubble wrap and you'll almost certainly miss out on bundled games. However, it is absolutely untrue that OEM cards are lower specification than their equivalent retail versions, or that they contain incompatible drivers.**

DIRECTPEST 7

Q I'm having problems with DirectX 7. First, it doesn't work on my computer. After installing it, my PC crashes every time I play several games in turn. For example, if I first play the *Drakan* demo, followed by *Alien Vs Predator* and then run a program or open a folder, my computer crashes. So I have to reboot. In the end I reinstalled Windows 98.

Please tell me what is wrong with my PC. I have an Intel Celeron 466 with 64Mb RAM and a standard graphics card on the motherboard. With DirectX 6.1 the fatal error never happened. I also notice low frame rates with some games (eg *GTA 2* and *Baldur's Gate*, and even one-second gameplay freezes). This can be very annoying. Could it be that my video card is not certified by Microsoft? Would buying a new graphics card help?

Shaobo Hou

A **Unfortunately, you don't say which video chipset the motherboard has. Usually, on-board video is a token offering and fine for general use, but it's not what you really**

"I would like to make it clear that you don't need to use a modem or network for linking two computers together. All you need to spend is £13"

ANTHONY BEAUMONT EXPLAINS HIS LINKING METHOD

£25 WINNERS!

RELIEVING GRIP GRIEF

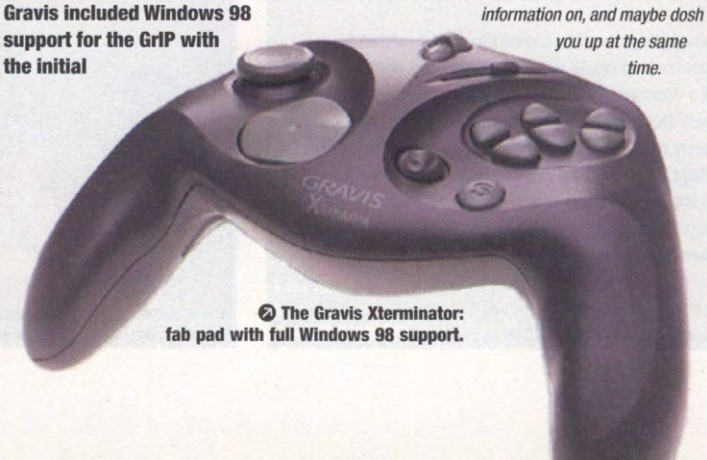
A **Regarding Martin Edwards' letter on GrIP multiport not working in Windows 98, mine works fine: you have to download the patch from the Gravis site. First load the drivers you had with the multiport, then run the patch over the top – and you'll find it works in a different way than before. You have to go to the Game Controllers Control Panel and select it. If you have two joypads, you need to include it twice. I hope this is helpful.**

Michael Locke

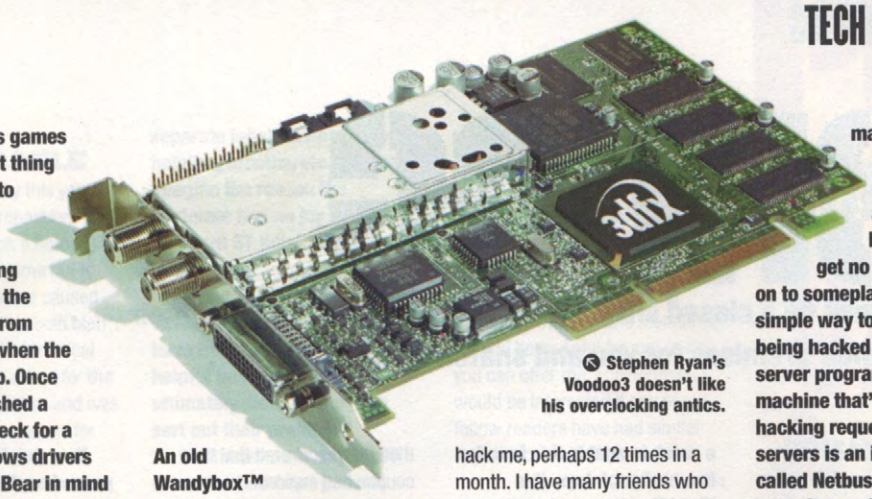
A **The answer to Martin Edwards' letter is very simple, if a little odd. Gravis included Windows 98 support for the GrIP with the initial Xterminator drivers. The file he needs is x20ftp.zip and it's the one that is 4,817Kb in size. The address is www.gravis.com/support/su_general.html#pcstick_xperience. He needs to choose the Xterminator during the driver setup and then go back to the Control Panel and change it to the Gravis GrIP.**

Carl Willetts

For being such helpful chaps, you each get a half slice of the £50 cake. Remember, if you know the solution to someone's problem, please write in and let us know. We'll be happy to pass the information on, and maybe dosh you up at the same time.



The Gravis Xterminator: fab pad with full Windows 98 support.



Stephen Ryan's Voodoo3 doesn't like his overclocking antics.

need for a serious games machine. The best thing you can do is try to identify the video chipset, either from reading the manual, from the BIOS screens or from the text you see when the machine boots up. Once you have established a manufacturer, check for a later set of Windows drivers on their website. Bear in mind that DirectX 7 has proven unstable with some video cards and there may not be a simple solution.

As for buying a new graphics card, it may indeed cure all ills and it'll also enhance your gameplay no end. If you decide to take this route, do make sure you disable the onboard video first in the BIOS. And remember it's best to spend a few extra pennies on a known brand, such as Voodoo or NVIDIA, because you're far more likely to get support if you have any problems. You'll also have a lot more real users to question in the newsgroups.

TOO FAST FOR VOODOO

Q I have a bit of a problem and I think you're the ones to ask. My PC is a Pentium II 266MHz, 64Mb of SDRAM, SoundBlaster 16, 3dfx Voodoo3 3000TV with Windows 98. However, with my Voodoo2 I could clock up my processor to 300MHz but now with the Voodoo3 I can't any more. I hear Windows boot, but I can't see a bloody thing! Any ideas? I miss those 300MHz days, you see.

Stephen Ryan Stretford

A Who's a naughty boy then? Intel want you to pay for that extra speed! But anyway. Overclocking can often be a lot more luck than judgement. If you can 'up' the clock multiplier and the processor will swallow it, you're laughing. Thing is, you often have to push the front side bus (FSB) speed up, which alters a lot of the clocks on the motherboard – not just the one on the processor. So, as this is dependant on the type of motherboard you have, you'll probably find the clock speed to the PCI and AGP cards sneaking up too. PCI should run at 33MHz, AGP at 66MHz – your Voodoo3 simply gave you the finger when it found the AGP clock running at an odd speed. An old Wandybox™ used to pelt along with an AMD K6-2-300, running a 75MHz bus with a 5 multiplier (factory settings are 66MHz with a 4.5 multiplier). The PCI Voodoo Banshee and every other PCI card didn't bat an eyelid, and there were big grins all round. But when the video was updated to AGP, the bus speed had to be set back to 66MHz for exactly the same reason you have just found.

Note: overclocking should only be attempted if you have a very large processor fan and a large box of spare parts with which to repair the smouldering remains.

INTRUDER ALERT

Q I agree totally with Alan Colson, and I believe that hacking is a widespread problem. I got *LockDown 2000* about a month ago and since then have found different people trying to hack me, perhaps 12 times in a month. I have many friends who also say they experience this problem, although we do all have one thing in common – we all use BT Internet as our ISP, with free calls all weekend. I don't know whether this is related or not.

Stuart Ayling

A Having your home PC hacked is pretty unlikely, although those of you with static IP addresses (eg Demon Internet customers) are certainly more at risk than others. You are more likely to pick up a nasty virus from infected applications that people unwittingly email you either as a joke or to wish you Happy Birthday – you know the ones we mean.

But if someone *does* attempt to gain access to your PC when you're logged onto the Internet, their program will send a small connection request to a socket on your machine. If you have no socket to provide an answer, all that happens is they get no answer and move on to someplace else. So the simple way to find out if you're being hacked is to search for a server program on your machine that's answering the hacking requests. One of these servers is an infamous Trojan called Netbus that hides itself away in your Windows directory and provides an entry point to hackers. Get yourself a copy of ***Norton Anti-Virus 5*** and you'll be able to track them down and get rid of them for good.

NETWORK NO WORK

Q I'm having trouble playing games over a network. Nearly every game crashes back to Windows for no obvious reason. I normally play games like *Kingpin*, *Alien Vs Predator*, *GTA 2* and *Starfleet Commander*. My network is made up of three computers, all running Windows 98, all with the same network card connected to a hub. All have modems installed but only one is connected to a phone line. Each computer has both TCP/IP and IPX protocols with some file sharing. If it happened with just one or two games it wouldn't be so bad, but it's with all the games we play except *Starcraft*. We've tried using patches but they don't help.

Steve Davis

A This could be caused by so many things that you're going to have to narrow things down a bit.

Try the game in single-player mode. Make sure it works without problems. Next, check you're using the very latest drivers for all the network cards – visit the manufacturer's website to find out. Then try removing the IPX protocol to leave you with just TCP/IP, then try it vice versa.

Most hubs have traffic indicators: look for flashing LEDs.

Now try two of the machines connected directly using a crossover cable (reverse twisted pair) to cut out the hub. If it only works on two of the machines and one of them causes trouble, swap the network cards and see if the fault 'follows' the card: if it does, bin the card and get a new one. If not, it's something specific to that machine.

If the direct connection works fine with all the machines two at a time, try moving the cables about in the hub, and check for dodgy cables. It's possible that it's the hub, so check the lights on the front for traffic activity and also the lights on the back of the network cards. Are they flashing?

Another thing: power spikes can cause havoc. Try to suppress the 240V power to all the machines and the hub. You'd be surprised at the number of weird things we have seen that were miraculously cured by a suppressed power block. PCZ

A quick message to the people who wrote in correcting my goof in the first Dear Wandy (PCZ #84). *Yes, it's true, Creative haven't had anything to do with 3dfx cards since Voodoo2. So you should visit www.3dfx.com for Voodoo3 drivers, and not www.creaf.com. Call it first night nerves.*

LockDown 2000 is designed to keep hackers at bay, but your home PC is more likely to be at risk from viruses.

WATCHDOG

The software industry can sometimes be a closed shop when it comes to punters and their complaints. Let *PC ZONE* ramraid their premises for you and snatch some answers...

ANSWERED BY Adam Phillips

LIVING IN A WORLD OF HURT?

We're here to help. If you've got a consumer issue that needs addressing, then drop us a line. But please remember that technical issues are not covered by Watchdog – if you have a techie problem, write to Dear Wandy (page 114).

WRITE TO Watchdog, *PC ZONE*, Dennis Publishing, 19 Bolsover Street, London W1P 7HJ.

EMAIL us at letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk with the subject heading **'Watchdog'.**

YOUR DETAILS PLEASE...

If you are writing in to complain about a product, whether it be a ropey piece of software or a shoddy PC, please furbish us with your full name, address and contact number. With PCs especially, make sure that you also include all purchasing details such as reference and invoice numbers. It means that we can resolve your problems much quicker.

"A month ago I ordered kit from www.jungle.com and I've had sod all from them. Imagine being charged £165 for something you never received"

ROB MEDLOCK, RAILING AGAINST WWW.JUNGLE.COM

GTA GRIEVANCE

Q I have a problem. The game in question? *Grand Theft Auto 2*. On finding out that you could play *GTA 2* over a modem, I was very excited so I bought the game. I then found out that each member of a network or modem game needed a copy of the disc to play. I went to the same store with a friend and bought another copy so he could play against me. I then went home expecting to be able to play hours of exciting and tense multi-player games in the way I had done with the original *GTA*. Wrong! I discovered you could not play over a modem. Annoyed and frustrated, I sent this email to Take 2, the game's publishers.

"Could you please tell me how to initiate a modem game? In the manual it says that 'provided you have network options enabled', you can play over a modem. How do you enable the network options? It does not say in the readme or the manual. Also, can you play a modem game using just the manager?"

And this is the reply I received: "I am sorry but the modem connection option does not function. When you connect to another player, you will have to use the TCP/IP connection. Thank You."

Does Not Function? What is going on? Is it a case of us being fobbed off by the 'big companies' who don't care about customer relations? When I buy a game I expect all the functions to work. What has happened to this feature and why was an incomplete game released? Apart from this, the game is great but I think it has been let down by the fact that it has been released without all the proper functions ready and working!

Gimingo

A **Take 2 admitted that there is a problem: "Thanks to one of your readers, it has come to light that, unfortunately, the direct modem connection in *GTA 2* does not work," commented a spokesperson for the company. "As soon as the fault was discovered and verified, we started to fix the problem. We anticipate having a patch to enable this function in a matter of days. It is likely that the problem was introduced in the late stages of fixing the Internet link game. We are very sorry for any inconvenience this may have caused people."**

They went on to offer the following suggestions for indulging in PC to PC gaming until the patch is available:

1. Play on a LAN.

2. If the PCs are close to each other, connect them using a null-modem cable (eg as sold in Tandy as a 'Laplink' cable for £15.99), then use the 'Serial Connection for DirectPlay' option in *GTA 2 Manager*. This is the best option for those who do not have access to a LAN.

3. Log on to the Internet on both machines and then use the 'Internet TCP/IP Connection For DirectPlay' option in *GTA 2 Manager*. The box in *GTA 2 Manager* saying 'Protocol Connection' should be filled in with the IP address of the other person's PC. Because of the time lags inherent on the Internet, this option will give slow gameplay and is not ideal. We hope that the Modem Connection option, when fixed, will be much better.

Hope this helps, Gimingo...

UNREAL DEAL?

Q After nearly two years of owning a Packard Bell Pulsar 24/A, I decided to upgrade it. I was aware that 3dfx cards were the best for compatibility (ie Glide), so I decided to go out and buy one.

I popped into my local Electronics Boutique on Tuesday 9 November and saw the Voodoo3 3000, which was a bit expensive but had plenty of power. I chose it over the 2000 because it had an excellent choice of games and most notably offered a free upgrade to *Unreal Tournament*.

Excellent, I thought, until I got home... I opened the box and all the stuff was there, including the coupon that I expected to be inside, despite the fact that it was not mentioned on the box. On further inspection, though, I discovered that the coupon had expired.

I was gutted after saving for ages and even trading in a game to get this upgrade for my dying PC: the expiry date was 29 October and there was no mention of this on the box. I took it back to the shop and asked them about it. They told me to ring up 3dfx tech support as EB had nothing to do with the promotion.

So I rang 3dfx and the chaps there said it wasn't up to them as it was GTi's game, so I was given their number. Then I was given two subsequent ones by each number I rang – I even had a rummage around on the Internet. After all that trouble, the person on one of the GTi helplines said that if the promotion had ended, it was tough.

I'm not going to stand for this and have decided to keep my receipt and coupon as I do not trust GTi or 3dfx to sort it out as all they have to do is tear up my receipt and coupon and say they never received it – and then I would not be able to prove that I had bought the card.

Help!

Nathan

A **Easy tiger! Sounds like you've been the victim of the ancient game "Let's Pass The Buck Hopefully Until The Consumer Doesn't Give A F**k". Fret not, however, because GTi were far more receptive when we got on the blower to them. "Due to the ever-changing release date of *Unreal Tournament*, it was originally meant to be out on sale well before this promotion finished," offered Matt Broughton at GTi. "The fact that stores are still using stock with this out-of-date promotion is down to them rather than us, but this remains the simple reason that the helpline would have looked up the promotion and reported it as over."**

Matt went on to say: "Obviously this is not something the consumer should be punished for, so all we can offer him is a copy of *Unreal Tournament*."

Your details have been passed on, Nathan. So enjoy the game...

LOST IN THE JUNGLE

Q I recently ordered (well, I say recently, but it was bloody ages ago) a CD-RW drive and a funky laser mouse from www.jungle.com. I received one email saying my order had been accepted, and then heard nothing. I waited the quoted 'three to five days' and then turned to the online tracking server. Hmm, "Your order is currently being processed," it told me.

I checked back on this every few days, until three days ago, when my order magically disappeared. I emailed them again – the answer to my previous enquiry was met with "it's in the warehouse for processing" and this time I have heard that they have no record of my order. Well, I've got a bloody record of it, the fact that they confirmed it, and also the fact they've charged 165 quid to my dad's bloody credit card!

A month ago I ordered that little lot and I've had sod all from them. Please sort this out for us – imagine being charged £165 for something you never ordered.

Rob Medlock

A **Hmm. We dropped jungle.com a line and their Customer Care Team Leader, Claire Hollier, told us the following: "I called Mr Medlock *(Ed's dad, we assume – Ed)* on 3 December 1999 and spoke to his wife. I explained that the product he had ordered had been made non-reorderable by our suppliers. Mr Medlock had been emailed by our customer care department on 4 November to inform him of this and they advised him of a similar product that we have available. His credit card was also refunded on the same day and again he was informed of this."**

Your mum in the meantime accepted this explanation and said that she would inform your dad. Let us know what he says...

TA NON-COMMENDABLE

Q Way back in May this year, I bought *TA Commander Pack* from PC World. I took it home, installed it, ran the game but it came back with "ta.exe caused an invalid page fault in blah blah". I then phoned the GTi technical support desk. I was asked for the game's bar code number and was told that there is no support for imported games!

I explained that it had been bought in the UK, and was eventually given a phone and reference number. When I rang this number, I was told I would be sent a new set of UK discs which would take approximately 28 days to arrive. Lo and behold, no discs appeared. I have since contacted GTi on several occasions to be told: "We are chasing it up." I wrote to an address I was given for GTi in Watford and have yet to receive a reply.

It is now getting on for six months since I bought the game and I would really appreciate any help you may be able to give me on this matter.

Andrew Mack

A **Frustration unbound by the sounds of it – that sinking feeling of parting with your readies and being greeted with error messages is one of the worst for any gamer. No worries, we thought. The folk at GTi are normally a helpful bunch of geezers. "It's not so much the fact that it was imported that has caused the problem, but that *TA Commander Pack* is a GT Value release (rather than a usual GT Interactive release)," explained GTi's Matt Broughton. "Up until recently, GT Value existed as a separate label, having its own helpline, identity, etc. I would imagine the reason the customer had no joy on the standard GT Helpline is simply because they wouldn't be equipped to deal with this title. Whoever took the call must have tried their best to be helpful but – obviously – ultimately didn't manage to sort out their problem."**

Matt went on to say that if the caller had been passed from pillar to post since, then it was simply not an acceptable state of affairs: "Ironically enough, GT Value is now integrated into front-line GT releases so it should prove less confusing in the future. All I can offer here is to send a brand new, UK-released *TA Commander Pack* to the reader with a full apology."

Your details have been passed on to them, Andrew. Expect an apology in the post any day soon.

DVD DOLDRUMS

Q On 2/4/99, I purchased an Advent 8594 PII 400 that cost £1,000 from Dixons of Brent Cross, London. I was led to believe, visually by point of sale material and verbally by a sales assistant, that my system would include a DVD-ROM drive. Last week, I decided to test my DVD drive out and discovered it didn't work.

After calling the Dixons service line, I was informed that my model did not include DVD when it was sent out. I took this up with both customer services and the store in question and was told by the Store Manager that, six months later, his sales assistant was able to remember advising me nothing of the sort. As a result, Dixons has refused any help in this matter.

Can you please advise me as to what my next course of action should be? I am also seeking advice from my local Trading Standards office. In the meantime, I would be grateful for any advice you can offer me. Furthermore, I would be interested if any of my fellow readers have had similar experiences with Dixons.

Gordon Fenton

A **Off Watchdog trotted to the bods at the Dixons Group to present them with Gordon's DVD woes. Before we knew it, Gordon was back in touch. "What a result!" he exclaimed. "Following your communication with Dixons, I received a letter last Saturday from their corporate affairs liaison person. In short, she admitted that they did display a point of sale telling the customer the system would include DVD. As a result they have refunded me £150 for the difference between what I paid then and what it is worth now and they will also give me a new system with a new 6x DVD drive. I was asked to visit the store to finalise the situation. I currently have a PII 400MHz processor with a 10.1Gb hard drive with Lotus. I have now got, at no extra cost, a PIII 500MHz processor and a 13Gb hard drive with *Microsoft Office 97* fully installed. What an excellent result – all down to Watchdog!"**

Yep, and Gordon? You're right – you owe us a large pint. Send a can or two of Stella Artois to the usual address... PCZ

Total Annihilation Commander Pack: imported value?

PC ZONE

COMING NEXT ISSUE

VAMPIRE & QUAKE III ADD-ONS

We were supposed to have a review of *Vampire* in this issue, but the code we received wasn't quite finished. Well, as they say, all good things are worth waiting for and next month we're going to have the world exclusive review of what promises to be the scariest and most in-depth role-playing game, ever. In addition to this, we're going to stick as many quality *Quake III* add-ons on the cover CD that we possibly can. Forget trawling the Internet and wave goodbye to those huge phone bills – if it's any good it'll be on our disc.

HONEST REVIEWS

That's what we're all about. And next month you can expect to see a full exclusive review of *Vampire*, along with our verdict on the sneaky *Thief II*. What else? How about the controversial *Soldier Of Fortune*, the UK version of *Ultima IX: Ascension*, and the low-down on *Euro League Football*, *Metal Fatigue*, *Sudden Strike* and *Star Trek: Armada*. If you're lucky, you might even get *Star Wars Force Commander*, but don't hold your breath.

TIPS, CHEATS AND WALKTHROUGHS

We've got a real treat next month. As well as revealing the second half of Lara Croft in *Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation*, we're giving you a full walkthrough for what we consider to be the best RPG to come from the Black Isle stable – *Planescape: Torment*. Keith Pullin will be on hand to help you through any gaming problems and we'll show you how to save loads of money by shopping on the Internet.

INSIGHTFUL PREVIEWS

***Klingon Academy* could be the game that makes up for all the second-rate *Star Trek* games that have been released over the past few years. We'll have the inside scoop on this superb space simulation.**

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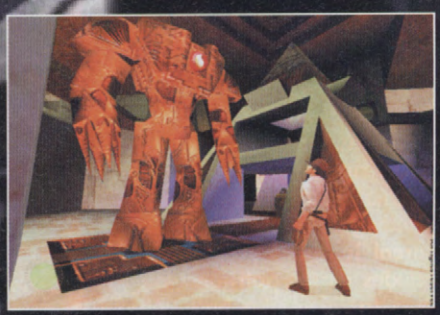

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Hint Books

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Asherons Call Official Secrets	£14.99
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Dungeon Keeper 2 Guide	£15.99
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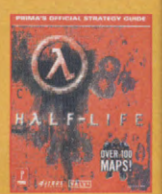

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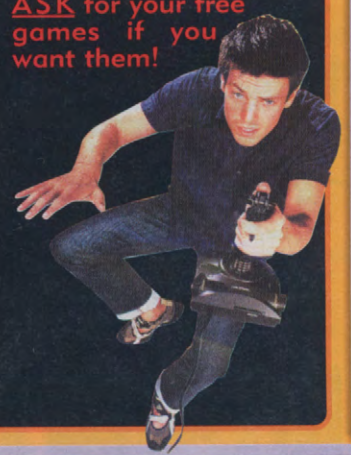

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Half-Life Opposing Force
3D Adventure shooter
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An official expansion pack for the best selling Half Life, Opposing Force casts you as one of the government soldiers. A new alien race has appeared amid the chaos, and it is down to you to deal with this deadly threat. Opposing Force shows you Half Life from a whole new angle!

Gabriel Knight 3
Occult Adventure
£24.99 rrp 34.99

The world famous series returns with an all new game engine. Now presented in stunning 3D, the game once again follows Gabriel Knight as he seeks out the truth of another bizarre mystery. With an atmospheric soundtrack, beautiful graphics and an engrossing storyline. Gabriel Knight 3 is not to be missed.

Daikatana
3D Shooter
£25.99 rrp 34.99

Set across 4 different time zones, from ancient Greece to futuristic Japan, each with their own individual weaponry, enemies and missions, Daikatana aims to reinvent the 3D genre. Incredibly varied weapons and a strong plot with an incredible time travelling story will leave you breathless.

Fifa 2000
Classic Football Sim
£26.99 rrp 34.99

The best selling football sim returns for its annual outing, with a whole host of improved features. New team strips and stats, updated graphics and all new music are just some of the many new additions to the popular series.

Quake 3
The godfather of 1st person Shooters
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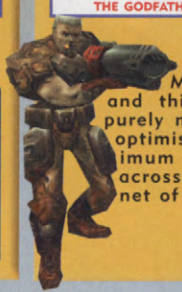

More quake and this time it's purely multi-player, optimised for maximum enjoyment across the internet of LAN

Theme Park 2
Theme Park 'Up Em
£26.99 rrp 34.99

One of the best selling games of all time finally receives a long awaited sequel. Create the ultimate rollercoaster then ride it yourself in full 3D! Four different themes (eg Jungle) plus you can download additional attractions from themeparkworld.com. Keep your punters happy with ever more extravagant and dangerous rides!

Unreal Tournament
3D shooter
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Designed to recreate the thrill of multiplayer gaming for one player, it has advanced artificial intelligence to simulate playing against devious human opponants. New modes of play include Capture the Flag and Assault, where players have to defend or attack a fortress. 35 brand new arenas, 3 new weapons and numerous snenarios to increase replay value. You can program how you want your computer controlled adversaries to react or behave when their getting beaten to easily. A perfect game for polishing your first person shooter prowess. (Demo on our free online gaming Cd)

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3D Adventure

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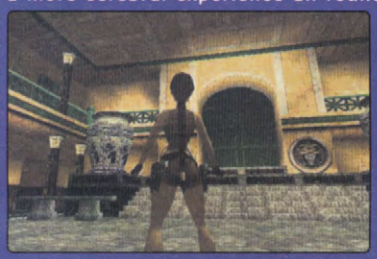
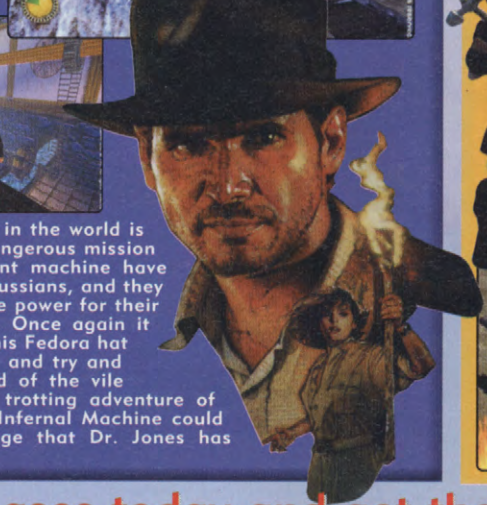
Once again Lara Croft is chest deep in trouble, as she uncovers an ancient prophecy regarding the alignment of the stars at the millennium, which surely spells trouble for the rest of the world. Lucky she's about really. Set entirely in Egypt, and shifting away from the gun blazing action of the last two instalments, The Last Revelation returns to the puzzle solving and exploration of the original, making for a more cerebral experience all round.



Indiana Jones 'The Infernal Machine'
3D Adventure

£24.99 rrp 34.99



The greatest adventurer in the world is back and on his most dangerous mission yet. Pieces of an ancient machine have been uncovered by the Russians, and they plan to use its incredible power for their own nefarious means. Once again it falls to Indy to don his Fedora hat and trusty bullwhip, and try and keep one step ahead of the vile communists. A globe trotting adventure of epic proportions, The Infernal Machine could be the trickiest challenge that Dr. Jones has ever faced.

Baldurs Gate & Tales from the Sword Coast
Roleplaying adventure

£14.99 rrp 54.98

Traverse a huge landscape as you uncover your secret past. The story unfolds across 7 huge chapters, with missions and sub-plots. Guide your party of up to 5 players or enlist some help from allies on the internet. And if that's not enough then plunge yourself into more perilous missions with Tales from the Sword Coast, the official add-on chapter. (Not for the faint hearted)

Rollercoaster Tycoon
Build'em up

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Diablo II
Roleplaying Adventure

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Return to the world of Britannia for the greatest adventure yet. A rich fantasy enviroment awaits you, as you journey through Britannia interacting with over 200 characters and battle 60 diffrent monsters using 45 incredible spells and a huge selection of weapons.

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3D real Time Strategy — £24.99 rrp 34.99

Featuring a full 3D terrain, day and night missions with very diffrent rules of engagement, a slew of new fully 3D units. You have complete control over your troops actions with an improved interface that allows for creation of squads controlled with tactical orders.The game comes with a complete integral map editor and multiplayer support.

Star Trek Starfleet Command
3D space Combat — £17.99 rrp 34.99

Join the Starfleet for a 30 year campaign rising through the ranks as you gain experiance and power. 100 unique missions are available to play, with over 50 different ships to control. Choose from Klingons, Federation, Romulans and more in an epic battle for the stars.

Interstate 82'
Combat Driving — £24.99 rrp 34.99

Following on from the madness that was Interstate 76, again you take to the road in an assortment of dangerously insane vehicles, all armed to the eyeballs and ready for serious open road conflict.

Grand Theft Auto 2
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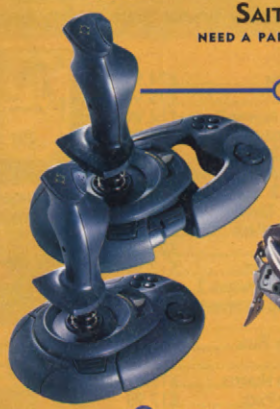

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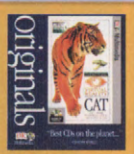

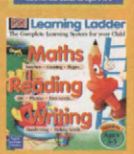

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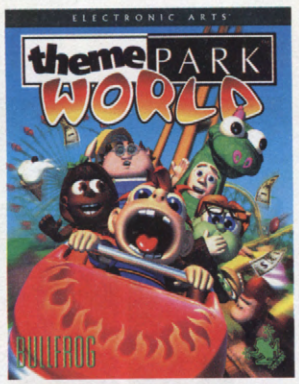

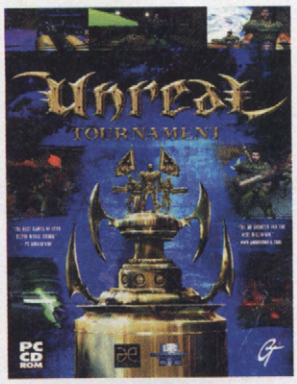

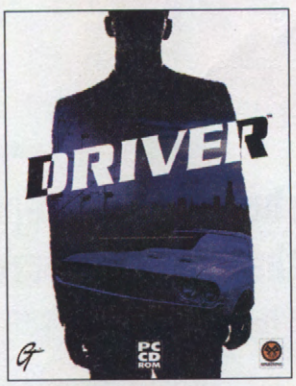

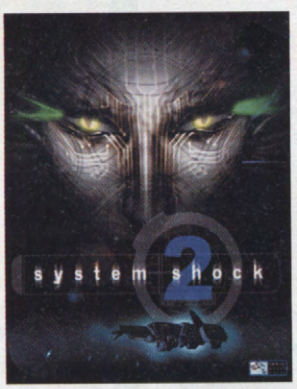

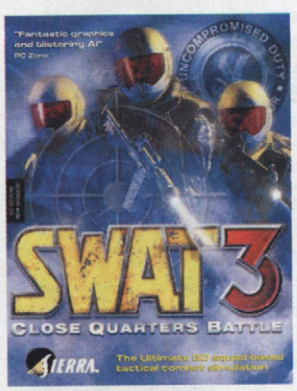

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PCZONE TOP100

Welcome to the definitive buyers' guide for all discerning PC gamers. The games that grace these pages represent the best titles across all genres. Check here for regular updates

This is the new *PC ZONE* Top 100. Within it you will find the best games you can currently buy for your PC. All the games here deserve a place in our illustrious Top 100 as we go to print, but that could all change next month when newer titles come in and older games receive new ratings to reflect where they stand in the great scheme of things. Shrewd buyers will always check here first before parting with their money.

BENCHMARK GAME

Benchmark titles are the games that you simply must have if you are a fan of the genre. They are considered by the *PC ZONE* team to be absolute classics and should be bought without hesitation. All new games are compared to their genre's benchmark title when they are reviewed. Bear this in mind before writing into Mailbox complaining that the latest 3D shooter didn't automatically get 90 per cent; check here first to see what it's up against! Additionally, all games in that genre will receive a new rating every time a new benchmark title comes along.

NEW ENTRY

In the wonderful world of PC gaming, new titles come in every month that are often better than some of the games in the Top 100. When this happens, they will gain their rightful place in the Top 100, and a lesser title will drop out to make room for it.

BUDGET

If a game in the Top 100 is available on budget, it will be tagged accordingly. Games that are lower in price than other titles in their genre do not necessarily receive a new score to reflect this. The latest score the game received will still apply; it is up to you to decide whether or not the game is worth buying at its new price point.

GAME OF THE MOMENT

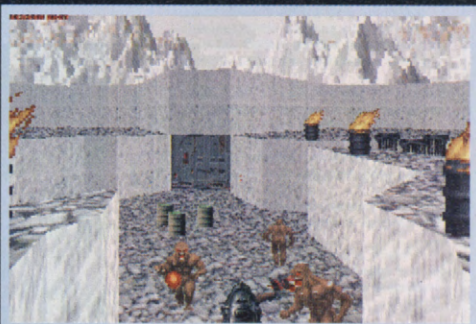
These are the games currently residing on *our* hard drives

CHRIS *PLANESCAPE: TORMENT*

DAVE *PLANESCAPE: TORMENT*

RICHIE *CM 99/00*

MARK *OPPOSING FORCE*



Under the new *ZONE* scoring system, new games will have to be pretty spectacular to receive this award. They will have to take their genre to unprecedented new heights, and represent a major step forward for PC gaming. As you can see from the *PC ZONE* hall of fame on page 65, there are now very few titles that can justifiably be described as *PC ZONE* Classics. This trend will continue across all genres. Generally speaking, all *ZONE* Classics are must-have titles (the benchmark title being the definitive game of the genre), but that does not mean you should discount games that score 80+ per cent. We consider all recommended titles to be excellent examples of their genre, and you should only dismiss them if the subject matter is not to your taste. Classics, on the other hand, are games we think will appeal to everyone who likes that particular genre. There will not be many of them. When we say a game is a classic, we mean it!

FIRST-PERSON SHOOTERS

HALF-LIFE

PCZ #71 • 95%

✪ It's over a year old, but that doesn't detract from the fact that *Half-Life* is still probably the best game you can install on your PC. Taking the first-person shooter as its starting point, *Half-Life* redefines the genre with an engrossing story, cracking atmosphere and some of the best AI ever coded.

PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 9209 100

UNREAL TOURNAMENT — PCZ #81 • 90%

✪ Played over a network or the Internet, *Unreal Tournament* is more than a match for *Quake II*'s multiplayer, with a combination of well-designed maps and diverse gameplay. The single-player mode might be too short, but it's still going to be more than a challenge for most.

PUBLISHER GT Interactive • 0171 258 3791

QUAKE III ARENA — PCZ #87 • 89%

NEW ENTRY The biggest brand name in PC gaming is back. The sheer speed, intensity and unrelenting action of *Quake III* make it an essential purchase for all shoot 'em up fans, but lack of variety prevents it from topping *Unreal Tournament*.

PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700

ALIENS VS PREDATOR — PCZ #77 • 87%

✪ It might not be the best, but it's definitely the scariest FPS you can buy. *Aliens Vs Predator* is also the only game that offers three distinct ways of playing through the game, so if you're looking for a solid single-player blast this provides excellent value for money.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

QUAKE II: QUAD DAMAGE — PCZ #59 • 86%

✪ The sequel to 'the most important PC game ever' turns out to be more than worth the wait. Single player might be a let-down, but if you've got access to a network or fast Internet connection you'll be in heaven. Now available as a pack with all the official mission packs.

PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700

THIEF: THE DARK PROJECT — PCZ #72 • 84%

✪ Forget about going in with all guns blazing, *Thief* is set in medieval times and the object of the game is to fill your pockets with treasure without being caught. The fact that the guards can hear you coming means that you've got to learn new tactics to get out alive.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 0181 636 3000

SHOGO: MOBILE ARMOUR DIVISION — PCZ #71 • 81%

✪ Half *Quake*, half *MechWarrior*, this game breathes fresh air into a stale genre. Great graphics and storyline, its only faults are an iffy AI and the fact that it's a bit too easy for hardcore *Quake* fans.

PUBLISHER Microids • 00 33 1 4601 5401

KINGPIN: LIFE OF CRIME — PCZ #77 • 80%

✪ This controversial title should be talked about for its excellent gameplay and graphics rather than its violence and swearing. Because, quite frankly, that side of the game was crap. We still stand by the game though – it's "classic adult entertainment".

PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666

SIN — PCZ #70 • 80%

✪ Releasing *Sin* at the same time as the vastly superior *Half-Life* was commercial suicide. But you can now bag this title for less than a tenner, which gives you the perfect excuse to find out just how good it actually is. No classic, but an excellent game in its own right.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 0181 636 3000

JEDI KNIGHT / MYSTERIES OF THE SITH — PCZ #74 • 77%

✪ As a double pack, this ageing 3D shooter and its expansion disc represents outstanding value for money. Dated graphics, but the level design is superb and the missions are some of the best ever made.

PUBLISHER LucasArts/Activision • 01895 456 7000

STRATEGY

AGE OF EMPIRES II

PCZ #84 • 90%

✪ It might not be radically different from the original, but sometimes evolution is just as good as revolution. In *Age II*, gameplay has been honed to perfection with balanced units, and strong single and multiplayer campaigns. Forget the hype of *Tib Sun* and enjoy this classic RTS instead.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000

CIVILIZATION II: TEST OF TIME — PCZ #00 • 89%

✪ A title that lives up to its name, *Civ II* is probably the oldest game in the Top 100 that will still be around in years to come. Turn-based and in 2D, it offers unlimited replayability and depth. One of the few games that everyone should own.

PUBLISHER Hasbro • 0181 569 1234

HOMEWORLD — PCZ #82 • 85%

✪ *Homeworld* delivers the dream of millions of PC strategists the world over: a fully three-dimensional, strategic experience. The vast expanse of space is the battleground, the hundreds of ships at your command the weapon, and the only limits are your imagination.

PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 920 9100

IMPERIUM GALACTICA II — PCZ #85 • 83%

Space expansion and empire building has never looked so good. The depth of a turn-based strategy game with the immediate action of real-time, plus a great interface and tutorial, so you'll know your way around in no time.

PUBLISHER GT Interactive • 0171 258 3791

C&C: TIBERIAN SUN — PCZ #81 • 82%

✪ Perhaps not as stunning as one might have hoped after a three-year wait, *Tiberian Sun* is nevertheless a truly great game. Pushing the *Command & Conquer* genre to its limits, it offers PC strategists immense depth, detail and variety.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

TOTAL ANNIHILATION — PCZ #56 • 82%

✪ With a ridiculous number of units and unrivalled pace, the original *TA* still stands head and shoulders above more recent efforts. No story to speak of and weak single player action, but still, for a tenner, no-one should be without a copy.

PUBLISHER GT Interactive • 0171 258 3791

DUNGEON KEEPER 2 — PCZ #79 • 81%

✪ *Dungeon Keeper* was a great idea. *DK2* plucks the essence of the original game, corrects all the mistakes, vastly improves the graphics, and takes the excellent concept introduced by its predecessor to the next dimension.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

STARCRAFT — PCZ #64 • 80%

✪ Still one of the most popular games online, *StarCraft* offered three distinct races and one of the most involving stories yet seen in real-time strategy. It may look a bit old hat nowadays, but it runs like a dream if you're still doggedly hanging on to your P90.

PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 920 9100

WARZONE 2100 — PCZ #75 • 78%

✪ The first proper 3D real-time strategy game to be any good, this sci-fi effort offered almost unlimited variety thanks to a semi-dynamic campaign and masses of research. Might take some getting used to, but it's worth the effort.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 0181 636 3000

POPULOUS: THE BEGINNING — PCZ #70 • 75%

✪ The original *Populous* was the game that put Bullfrog into orbit and made Peter Molyneux one of the biggest names in the industry. Now Peterless, the new Bullfrog team show that they can do just as well without him.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

SYSTEM SHOCK 2

PCZ #80 • 93%

✪ Definitely one of the most compelling, original and disturbing games to hit the PC, *System Shock 2* mixes role-playing, action and adventure into one. Play it in the house on your own with the lights off to prove how hard you are. In short, it's a title that's absolutely indispensable.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

PLANESCAPE: TORMENT — PCZ #87 • 87%

NEW ENTRY An incredible game from Black Isle, creators of *Baldur's Gate*. It's a dark, adult, scorcher of an RPG. Character development is the best we've seen in any game of its kind – and the story is compelling, with well-scripted dialogue.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666

FINAL FANTASY VII — PCZ #66 • 87%

✪ Fearsomely addictive gem of a game of truly epic proportions. Great graphics, plenty of hidden surprises and massive levels will keep you totally absorbed if you forgive the risible dialogue and turn-based combat.

PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 0181 636 3000

BALDUR'S GATE — PCZ #73 • 85%

✪ With every developer "going 3D" these days, it's refreshing to find an old-school RPG that combines traditional D&D role-playing with sumptuous 2D graphics. *Baldur's Gate* is intelligent and involving in equal measures.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666

FALLOUT 2 — PCZ #71 • 83%

✪ Does exactly what it says on the tin. Twice as big as the original, but utilising the exact same engine. If you liked the first game, you'll love this – not twice as much, but certainly for twice as long. A real life-sapper and one of the best RPGs money can buy.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666

LANDS OF LORE III — PCZ #74 • 80%

✪ Westwood knows how to tell a good story, and this latest in the series is the best of the lot. Combine that with ease of use and some highly polished artwork, and you'll find *LOLIII* a great alternative to more traditional RPG efforts.

PUBLISHER Westwood/EA • 01753 549442

DIABLO — PCZ #48 • 78%

✪ Standard hack 'n' slash fare, but pulled off with such style that it's addictive. A great storyline compensates for repetitive arcade combat and supremely detailed animation makes it a superb coffee-table game. A budget bargain.

PUBLISHER Zablac/Blizzard • 01626 332233

REVENANT — PCZ #84 • 78%

✪ Imagine a blend of *Diablo* and *Baldur's Gate* and you've got *Revenant*. It might have a trite and clichéd storyline, but that doesn't detract from a highly competent role-playing game, with real-time combat and refined graphics.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 0181 636 3000

SILVER — PCZ #75• 75%

✪ If you've finished *Final Fantasy VII* and you're looking for more of the same, *Silver* could fit the bill. Excellent combat and some truly spectacular spells help disguise the fact that it hasn't got an ounce of the imagination that makes the *FF* games so good.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0181 738 8199

RETURN TO KRONDOR — PCZ #76 • 72%

✪ It wasn't worth the five-year wait, but *Return To Krondor* is an entertaining romp nevertheless. The turn-based combat is well executed and the gaming environment is huge, involving and atmospheric. Cool music as well...

PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 920 9100

ACTION/ADVENTURES

GRIM FANDANGO

PCZ #71 • 90%

✪ If you've followed LucasArts through *Monkey Island*, *Sam & Max* and *Day Of The Tentacle*, this is a must-buy. Sublime graphics and genuine humour ensure it's a classic. A word of warning: it's bloody hard and if your mind doesn't work laterally you'll be playing it until the day you die.

PUBLISHER LucasArts • 0171 368 2255

DISCWORLD NOIR — PCZ #79 • 89%

✪ Although the point-and-click adventure genre is dying, *Discworld Noir* is very much alive. It's darker in style than previous *Discworld* games, and is all the better for it in our opinion, particularly if you're not a fan of Pratchett's off-the-wall humour. Don't miss it.

PUBLISHER GT Interactive • 0171 258 3791

INDIANA JONES AND THE INFERNAL MACHINE — PCZ #84• 88%

✪ LucasArts moves away from the point-and-click genre and into *Tomb Raider* territory for the latest Indy outing. Thankfully the adventure elements are still in place in this whip-cracking romp.

PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456 7000

THE NOMAD SOUL — PCZ #83 • 87%

✪ Distinctly odd, but also refreshingly original, *The Nomad Soul* is a huge, intricate world populated by lap-dancers and (gulp) David Bowie. At turns adventure, beat 'em up and platformer, it's insanely ambitious and almost pulls it off.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 0181 636 3000

NOCTURNE — PCZ #84 • 86%

✪ Why would you pay good money to be scared? Because it's damn good fun that's why, and if you find the average PC game laughable, we dare you to sit through *Nocturne* with your curtains drawn. It's a beautiful exercise in computer-generated fear.

PUBLISHER Take 2 • 01753 722 900

MESSIAH — PCZ #85 • 85%

Shiny's wonderful shooter features a chubby cherub, but also whores and gratuitous swearing. As Bob, under-age agent of God, you must possess people's bodies and, like a good Christian, kill everything that gets in your way.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666

TOMB RAIDER: THE LAST REVELATION — PCZ#83 85%

✪ Lara's back in her fourth (and best) adventure so far. More moves, better looks, intricate puzzles and a well-developed plot. It's not going to win over the cynics but it's still a damn fine game.

PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 0181 636 3000

RESIDENT EVIL II — PCZ #75 • 82%

✪ Not quite as attractive as it could have been, *Resident Evil II* remains one of the most tensely gripping adventure games of recent years. A modicum of simple puzzles, offset by liberal and gratuitous gore make for top entertainment.

PUBLISHER Virgin • 0171 368 2255

MONKEY ISLAND BOUNTY PACK — PCZ #74 • 80%

✪ *Monkey Island 1* and *2* are perhaps the finest point-and-clickers ever to grace the PC. The third outing may have been disappointing, but it would be a sin to exclude it from this excellent triple pack.

PUBLISHER LucasArts/Activision • 01985 456 7000

SAM & MAX AND DAY OF THE TENTACLE — NOT REVIEWED• 78%

✪ Two of the finest adventure games in the world ever are now available in a single pack for a bargain price. They still match most titles that are released today so go and buy them. Now.

PUBLISHER LucasArts/Activision • 01985 456 7000

RACING GAMES

COLIN MCRAE RALLY

PCZ #68 • 91%

Sporting an updated *TOCA* engine, *Colin McRae* is still the benchmark in rally simulations. Realistic handling, car customisation and stacks of multiplayer options keep it ahead of the competition. The fact that it's now available as a budget title makes it an absolute steal.

PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132

MIDTOWN MADNESS — PCZ #79 • 89%

Drive around Chicago participating in races, annoying the police, or just cruising around. Not quite *Grand Theft Auto 3D*, but just as much fun, this is definitely the best all-out arcade racer you can currently buy on PC.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000

MOTOCROSS MADNESS — PCZ #67 • 85%

An astoundingly addictive game. Loads of game and race options and tremendous fun, especially when played with a Microsoft Freestyle Pro pad over a network. Available with the pad for around 50 quid. A must-buy.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000

LE MANS 24 HOURS — PCZ #87 • 83%

NEW ENTRY Although not quite as challenging as the race it's based on, *Le Mans* is a driving game for skillful players who know their brakes from their elbows. Get involved in a rewarding career mode culminating in the famous race itself.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0181 738 8199

RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP — PCZ #84 • 82%

Close, but no *McRae*. That was the verdict from the boy Hill on this new racer. It looks fantastic and the on-screen Ordnance Survey map is a nice touch, but it's let down by some poor camera angles and unnecessarily solid obstacles. Ouch.

PUBLISHER Actualise • 01625 855015

TOCA 2 — PCZ #76 • 82%

Predictably, Codemasters have done it again. More cars, more tracks and the same stunning attention to detail make *TOCA 2* an essential purchase for petrol heads. Graphically it may not be a massive improvement, but gameplay-wise it most certainly is.

PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132

MONACO GRAND PRIX — PCZ #69 • 81%

Essentially this is *F1 Racing Simulation 2*, and an F1 fan's wet dream come true. It looks beautiful, plays even better, and the AI is second to none. You need a hefty machine to have it looking its best though.

PUBLISHER Ubi Soft • 0181 944 9000

DRIVER — PCZ #82 • 80%

Criticised for lacking the depth of *Midtown Madness* (it is a PlayStation conversion after all), this is still a good game. A pumping '70s soundtrack helps to recreate that 'Starsky And Hutch' feeling. A wheel, an afro haircut and a false moustache are, of course, essential.

PUBLISHER GT Interactive • 0171 258 3791

SEGA RALLY 2 — PCZ #84 • 79%

Not as good as hooking up with five of your mates down the local arcade, but this is a damn good conversion of a damn fine game. Forget realism and concentrate on flinging your car round the track as fast as you can. Who needs depth when racing is this much fun?

PUBLISHER Sega • 0181 995 3399

CARMAGEDDON II — PCZ #69 • 77%

It's *that* game again, this time with full 3D pedestrians. More blood, more cars, more tracks – and now with added missions. If you liked the first game, you'll love this one. If you don't, you can just bog off.

PUBLISHER SCI • 0171 585 3308

FLIGHT SIMULATORS

FALCON 4

PCZ #72 • 92%

We waited patiently for years, and for once we weren't disappointed. *Falcon 4* sports beautiful 3D-accelerated graphics and a dynamic campaign structure that leaves the competition standing. If you're going to buy one flight sim, make it this one. You won't be disappointed.

PUBLISHER MicroProse • 01454 893893

F-22 TOTAL AIR WAR — PCZ #68 • 89%

This full-price new version of DID's masterpiece is perhaps a bit of a rip-off for anyone who already owns *F-22 ADF*, but those of you looking to buy one of the greatest combat sims of recent years should seriously consider this one.

PUBLISHER Ocean/DID • 0161 832 6633

F/A 18E SUPER HORNET — PCZ #83 • 88%

If you like your flight sims to be realistic with a great, big, capital 'R', then look no further. In fact this game is so lifelike, the US Navy have adopted it for promotional work and ground-based familiarity training. Watch out for friendly fire.

PUBLISHER Titus Software • 0171 700 2119

MIG ALLEY — PCZ #80 • 87%

MiG Alley gives hardcore flight simmers' piloting skills a run for their money, but don't be put off. If you're willing to put in the work, it will repay you with excellent in-flight graphics and brilliant mission planning elements.

PUBLISHER Empire Interactive • 0181 343 7337

APACHE HAVOC — PCZ #73 • 85%

Of the three main chopper sims available, *Longbow 2* is the one if you're a hard-core sim head, *Team Apache* is the choice for fans whose preference swings the other way, and *Apache Havoc* straddles the gap. And the graphics are to die for.

PUBLISHER Empire Interactive • 0181 343 7337

FLIGHT UNLIMITED III — PCZ #82 • 86%

For all those who enjoy the experience of flying for its own sake rather than as a lame excuse for blasting other flying things to bits, this is (along with the *Flight Sim* series) an object of worship and devotion. It deserves high praise.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

FLANKER 2.0 — PCZ #85 • 86%

Hardcore pilots with a taste for Yank blood need look no further. Extremely hard to fly, but very rewarding, *Flanker 2.0* recreates the real thing in minute detail. Hours of practice are needed before you go off shooting stuff.

PUBLISHER SSI • 01293 651300

TEAM ALLIGATOR — PCZ #85 • 84%

Helicopter sims are rare but, when they appear on the scene, they are usually superb. *Team Alligator* doesn't quite surpass the cheaper *Apache/Havoc*, but has beautiful graphics and feels great to fly. The best Russian chopper sim around.

PUBLISHER GT Interactive • 0171 258 3791

FLIGHT SIM 2000 — PCZ #85 • 80%

Not a huge step forward from *Flight Sim 98*, but still the choice of millions of high-flyers. There is a price to pay for its incredible looks, however – you'll need a NASA PC to run the thing. Expect a load of expansion packs to follow.

PUBLISHER Microsoft• 0345 002000

JANE'S WORLD WAR II FIGHTERS — PCZ #72 • 83%

It's been a fierce dogfight to see who rules the WWII flight sim skies. *Jane's* combines realism with accessibility and ease and, although the game doesn't have a dynamic campaign feature, its graphics make it a clear winner.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

SPORTS

FIFA 2000

PCZ #84 • 88%

✪ The *FIFA* franchise has been rolling on for years, and it certainly gets better each time. Although it missed a classic rating by a whisker, it's still the best conversion of the finest sport known to man. If you're into your football, then you should own *FIFA 2000*. It's as simple as that.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

SUPREME SNOWBOARDING — PCZ #85 • 86%

Snowboarding is not a sport you'd expect to captivate a PC audience, but this game gives as exhilarating an experience as you could hope for without breaking a leg. All the streetwise attitude you'd expect is here, of course.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0181 738 8199

NBA LIVE 2000 — PCZ #85 • 83%

As slick as always, but what makes the 2K edition special is the inclusion of teams from the 1950s onwards, comedy haircuts *et al*. Although not quite as immediate as *Inside Drive*, it's a more complete simulation of the sport all round.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

NBA: INSIDE DRIVE — PCZ #82 • 82%

✪ While not exactly the most popular sport in this country, *Inside Drive* manages to suck you in with its supreme playability. Its presentation is not quite up to EA standards (what is?), but when the gameplay is this good, who cares?

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002 000

PGA CHAMPIONSHIP GOLF — PCZ #80 • 82%

✪ Knocking *Links* off the office golfing perch is no mean feat, but *PGA*'s gameplay is so addictive all other contenders can tee off. Our very own Keith Pullin took the entire summer off to design his own courses for it. But he has got a hole in one in the head.

PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 920 9100

VIRTUAL POOL 2 — PCZ #58 • 82%

✪ OK, so *Virtual Pool 2* scored one per cent less than its predecessor, but this follow-up beats it hands down. 3dfx support goes some way to pushing the series further, and the inclusion of English Pub rules make it a more essential purchase than before.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666

JIMMY WHITE'S CUEBALL 2 — PCZ #68 • 81%

✪ The finest snooker simulation on the PC. Chalk your cue and take on the PC or your mates, and when you're tired of the baize you can move round and have a go on the fully featured darts board instead. Saves going down the Working Men's Club

PUBLISHER Virgin Interactive • 0171 368 2255

ACTUA SOCCER 3 — PCZ #72 • 80%

✪ If you can't get on with *FIFA*, then *Actua* is the second port of call for footie fans. It plays a faster game and there's a good range of options and a huge number of teams to play against, which helps to maintain its shelf life.

PUBLISHER Gremlin Interactive • 0114 273 8601

BRIAN LARA CRICKET — PCZ #75 • 78%

✪ Cricket isn't the easiest game to convert to the PC but Codemasters have done the best job, despite the fact that *Brian* has obviously been ported straight over from the PlayStation. For aspiring country-dwellers everywhere.

PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132

NHL 2000 — PCZ #83 • 77%

✪ EA's hockey series has improved graphics and AI, fast-paced addictive gameplay and you can now graft your digitised face onto a player, then watch it beaten with a stick to a bloody pulp. Now that's family entertainment.

PUBLISHER EA Sports • 01753 549442

SPACE COMBAT

X - BEYOND THE FRONTIER

PCZ #82 • 89%

✪ The spirit of *Elite* lives on in this massive trading epic from Germany where you must buy and fight your way back home to Earth. The combat side may not be the best on offer, but with goods to trade and races to discover, it rewards patience with variety and months of play. Deeply hypnotic and beautiful, rather than tense and frenetic.

PUBLISHER THQ • 01483 767656

FREESPACE 2 — PCZ #84 • 85%

✪ Completely different from *X*, *Freespace 2* offers fast-paced dogfighting action all the way. It boasts a superb interface, epic story and amazing graphics, but it's a bit short-lived if you don't play online.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 0171 551 4222

X WING: ALLIANCE — PCZ #77 • 83%

✪ At last! Fly the Millennium Falcon in the final episode in the long-running *X-Wing* series. Certainly the best-looking *X-Wing* game to date, *Alliance* is slow at first, but boy does it pick up later on.

PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700

PRIVATEER 2 — PCZ #44 • 80%

✪ Not as open-ended as *Elite*, but far more rewarding as an overall experience. Great graphics even today, and hey it's on budget so it's better value for money than ever.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

WING COMMANDER PROPHECY GOLD — PCZ #59 • 77%

✪ The graphics look a bit dated now, but this is still a great game by anyone's standards. *Wing* neophytes start here.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

MANAGEMENT

CM 99/2000

PCZ #84 • 92%

✪ More than a game… it's a way of life. So say fans of the best football management game in existence. If you dare to play it you can kiss goodbye to your social life, and expect to spend hours each and every day poring over unknown players in a bid to discover the next Ronaldo. The word 'benchmark' doesn't really describe how much better than the competition this game is.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 0181 636 3000

CAESAR III — PCZ #70 • 88%

✪ Starting from scratch you've got to build a majestic Roman city and ensure a harmonious life for your citizens. So what? So it's utterly absorbing and probably the most addictive god sim in existence.

PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 920 9100

SIMCITY 3000 — PCZ #74 • 85%

✪ Ten years on, *SimCity* remains as addictive as it ever was. Little was broken, and little was fixed. With new buildings to try out and an enhanced transport system, *SimCity 3000* is a must for old-timers and newbies alike.

PUBLISHER Maxis/EA • 01753 549442

ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON — PCZ #75 • 83%

✪ Pack out your own theme park with the most fiendish rides your imagination can conjure up. From rickety wooden 'dippers, to Nemesis-style, white-knuckle gurners, *RT* is hugely addictive.

PUBLISHER Hasbro • 0181 569 1234

PREMIER MANAGER 99 — PCZ #76 • 80%

✪ It's no *Champ Manager*, but this is the only other football management game on the PC worth bothering about. Decent graphics set it apart from Eidos' masterpiece, but *PM99* doesn't have the depth or detail.

PUBLISHER Gremlin Interactive • 0114 273 8601

ONLINE ONLY

ULTIMA ONLINE

PCZ #80 • 92%

In many ways an old-school RPG, but with amazing freedom, depth and open-endedness. So addictive that *ZONE* editor Chris has sold his car, his house and his soul to finance a permanent Web connection. The best thing about *Ultima Online* is that your world is constantly changing and evolving, and it's populated by real people, just like you.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

EVERQUEST — PCZ #80 • 85%

If you find *Ultima Online* too vast, *EverQuest* may be the online RPG for you. It's far more combat-orientated than *Ultima*, and more linear as a result. Repetitive at higher levels but worth checking out all the same.

PUBLISHER Sony (sold at Electronic Boutique only) • 0171 428 5961

NETSTORM — PCZ #59 • 73%

A curious blend of chess, *Red Alert* and Baron Munchausen, *NetStorm* is also an elegant and addictive multiplayer game that works beautifully across a standard modem.

PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700

WARBIRDS — PCZ #70 • 72%

The original WWII online dogfighting sim and still one of the best. With over 48 different aircraft to chose from, this should keep anyone with a passing interest in air combat very happy indeed.

PUBLISHER Interactive Magic • 01344 409399

DAWN OF ACES — PCZ #77 • 60%

Not entirely dissimilar to *Warbirds*, but set in WWI. Not as fast or as hectic, which some might say is a good thing. We happen to like our action hectic and that's why we gave *Dawn* a lower score. That's life, bud.

PUBLISHER Interactive Magic • 01344 409399

3D ACTION/STRATEGY

HIDDEN & DANGEROUS

PCZ #79 • 91%

You don't get a second chance in a real war, and *Hidden & Dangerous* is the game that's come closest to putting you in the middle of hell on earth. From the very first mission, it grabs you by the balls and doesn't let up until you're dead, with a bullet in the head. As a strategic shoot 'em up, games don't get any harder, or more compelling and atmospheric.

PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900

SWAT 3 — PCZ #85 • 89%

AI doesn't get any better than *SWAT 3*'s. Add to this some spectacular graphics, an ingenious command interface and edge-of-your-seat gameplay, and you've got a top title.

PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 920 9100

BATTLEZONE 2 — PCZ #84 • 87%

Stunning graphics and a winning blend of strategy and first-person action in this sequel to the highly acclaimed *Battlezone*. The fight for world domination has never looked so good.

PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700

ROGUE SPEAR — PCZ #84 • 86%

We loved *Rainbow Six* and although this follow-up can't match *Hidden & Dangerous* for intensity, it's a superb romp through the world of terrorism. Pick your team, kit them out and plan your missions carefully.

PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900

SPEC OPS 2 — PCZ #84 • 84%

Challenging *Hidden & Dangerous* for the top spot, *Spec Ops 2* puts you in charge of a four-man green beret squad intent on staying alive and shooting the enemy in the head. Incredibly realistic, with top-notch sound.

PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900

PCZONE ALL-TIME CLASSICS

DOOM

This is the game that needs no introduction. Without *Doom* we wouldn't have had *Quake*, *Unreal Tournament* or (gulp) *Half-Life*. Every time you play a first-person shooter you should pay homage to the game that changed the world as we know it. *Doom*, we thank you.

ULTIMA VII

Still the best of all the *Ultima* games, and probably the finest RPG ever seen on a PC. The graphics might be old-hat, but the gameplay isn't. *Ultima VII* blends exploration and character interaction, and it's the last in the *Ultima* series to give complete party control.

ULTIMA UNDERWORLD

We reviewed this game back in the very first issue of *PC ZONE*. It was a landmark RPG then and it's still a landmark RPG now, although the graphics obviously look a bit dated. Do we think it's the best RPG ever? Almost, but not quite. Cast your eyes up the mag a couple of inches for the answer to that question.

DUNE II

If you know your strategy, you'll know that *Dune II* is the game that's done more to define the genre as we know it today. The 2000 update was disappointing, but only because it didn't add anything new. The fact that it still plays better than a lot of new titles is testament to its staying power.

SENSIBLE WORLD OF SOCCER

EA's *FIFA* series might look the part, but we're convinced that *Sensible Soccer* was and is the ultimate example of gameplay over presentation. With its famous top-down view, *Sensible* offers fast frantic action that does more to replicate the real-life game than any of its predecessors.

UFO: ENEMY UNKNOWN

This game came out of nowhere and took the world by storm. Compelling strategy, tense turn-based battles, and a myriad of research options made this the most addictive game ever on its arrival. Subsequent sequels were just as addictive, but this is the game that originally captured our hearts.

MAGIC CARPET

Drawing gasps of amazement from everyone who saw it, Bullfrog's *Magic Carpet* was one of the most original and inventive games released in the early days of 3D. So original in fact, that it never got the recognition it deserved. We still think the blend of action and strategy was spot-on.

WING COMMANDER

The original space combat game spawned the first big-budget PC series. In fact, the *Wing Commander* series was so successful, they made a film. Inevitably, this was absolute rubbish and people stayed away in their millions. Will these people never learn?

TOMB RAIDER

She might be getting a bit rusty round the gills, but when Lara first bounced onto the small screen we fell in love with her instantly. 3D action adventure games haven't been the same since and at the time nothing could touch it. Do you remember your first encounter with the T-Rex?

CIVILIZATION

The original and some say the best turn-based strategy game. When *Civ* first appeared, it was hailed correctly as the first game that changed and evolved depending on how you played it. Recent versions have presented more of the same, but in this case that is definitely no bad thing.

ON THE CD

This month we have the world exclusive demo of *Thief II* and over 200 *Unreal Tournament* levels for you

INSTRUCTOR: Martin Korda **DISCMEISTER:** Daniel Emery

HELP!

CD trouble? Don't worry – phone our helpline and sort yourself out pronto!

CD-ROM HELP Phone ABT on 01708 250250 any weekday between 9.30am and 5pm, and Saturday from 10am to 2pm, **or email pczone@abt-net.demon.co.uk**. Please do NOT phone the *PC ZONE* office. Thanks.

BEFORE YOU DIAL... If you are calling the helpline, please take note of the following points:

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

MINIMUM SPECIFICATION

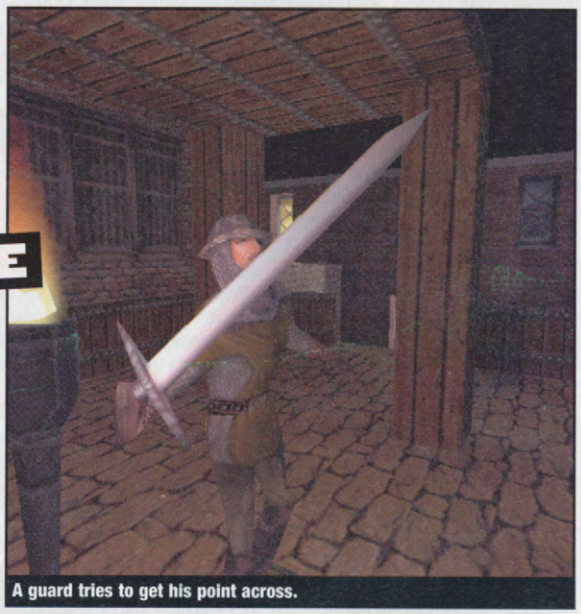
- You need at least a Pentium 133 with 16Mb RAM to run the software on this month's CD-ROM.
- Many of the programs on our cover CD-ROM are designed to run under Windows 95 and, as a result, some of them may require a Pentium 166 with 32Mb RAM to run satisfactorily. Please note that some games also require a 3D accelerator card to run.
- Use the browser and menu system to see which demos are Windows 95, DOS and 3D accelerator only.

ON THE CD DEMOS + SHAREWARE

THIEF II: THE METAL AGE

Eidos

WORLD EXCLUSIVE



A guard tries to get his point across.

That'll learn ya.

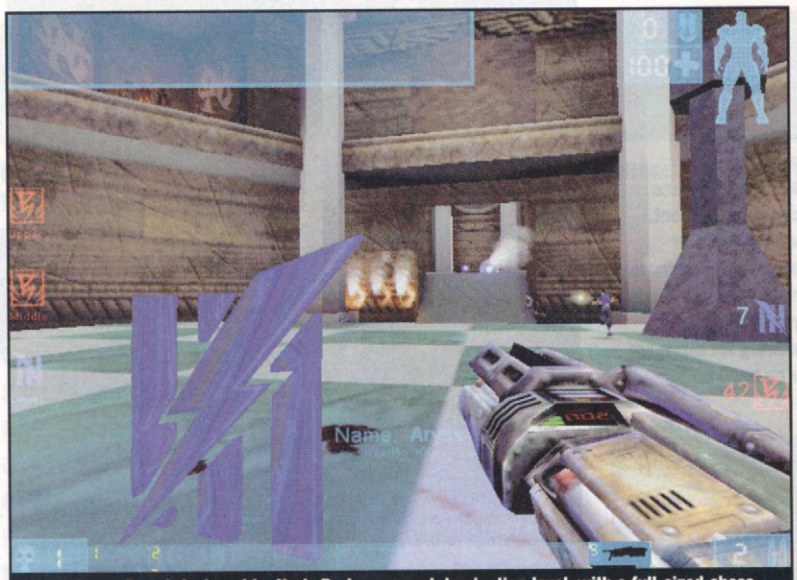
As a thief, you'll have to avoid the thin blue line.

Take out guards from range with your bow.

Thief II **is the fantastic sequel to the sublime Looking Glass hit of 1998. We've got the world exclusive demo and rather tasty it is too. Not only that, but it's one of the longest demos we've ever played through. If you get the feeling that you're playing the main game, pinch yourself and get a grip.**

To help keep yourself inconspicuous, you can snuff out torches with water arrows and create softer floor surfaces with the moss ones. The Demo features the rooftop level *The Unwelcome Guest*, which will thoroughly test all your thieving skills, but if you want to know more about the game you can read our in-depth preview starting on page 42.

F1 – F9	Selects inventory items
1	Draws sword
2 – 9	Loads bow with different types of arrow
Q	Lean left
E	Lean right
W	Run
S	Walk
B	Sword Parry
Space	Jump
2 Button Mouse	
Button 1 (left)	Use weapon
Button 2 (right)	Use item
3 Button Mouse	
Button 1 (left)	Use weapon
Button 2 (right)	Use item
Button 3 (middle)	Sword Parry



This is *Chess Board*, designed by NarkyBark: a surreal domination level, with a full-sized chess game being played out on the bottom level. Cool.

Here's *Twin Valley*, a CTF map designed by Mark 'Oz' Austin: it's our favourite of all the new CTF levels on the CD and we reckon it's as good as the official maps.

UNREAL TOURNAMENT

GT Interactive

OVER 200 ADD-ONS

This one needs no introduction whatsoever – unless you've been living on the moon for the past few months you'll know all about *Unreal Tournament*. Proclaimed as the best first-person shooter in this month's Supertest (see page 86), and seeing off the likes of *Quake III* in the process, *UT* offers some of the most lifelike artificial intelligence ever seen in a computer game.

One of the best aspects of the game is that it's very easy to make your own levels – the fact that we've managed to collect over 200 new levels for this CD is living proof. In a forthcoming 'How To...' feature we will outline what you need to do to come up with your own levels, but in the meantime you can sample the delights of our ultimate collection.

We've got the very best new assault, domination and CTF levels, along with over 100 new deathmatch arenas to keep you in fragging heaven.

To install the new maps, just bring up the CD interface, navigate to the *Unreal Tournament* section in Extended Play and double-click on the map you want to play. By default the maps will be unzipped into the *C:\Unreal Tournament* directory (note the space between the words). If your copy of *UT* is installed in a different directory you'll need to manually adjust this.

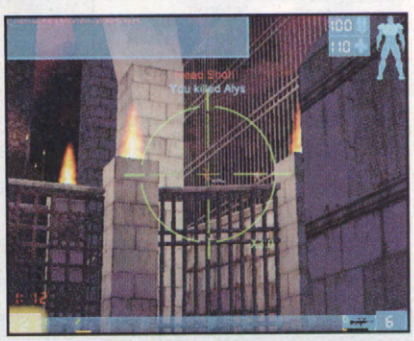
Some maps also come with their own textures and sounds (.utx and .aux files), which you'll need to drag from the maps folder into the textures and sounds folders respectively. Enjoy...

ASSAULT

New assault levels – such as Resurrection Of The Warlock – prove *UT* is the best

The new assault levels show why *Unreal Tournament* is most definitely the king of the hill. Each one comes complete with detailed mission objectives that you can check before you go into battle. Talk about professional looking.

Getting into the Warlock's castle isn't at all easy. The best thing to do is organise your team and set up a sniper to pick off the opponents. This should allow you to get close enough to open the gates without being slaughtered.



The idyllic English countryside. Lush green fields, grazing sheep and lots of fresh air...

FINAL FANTASY VIII

Eidos

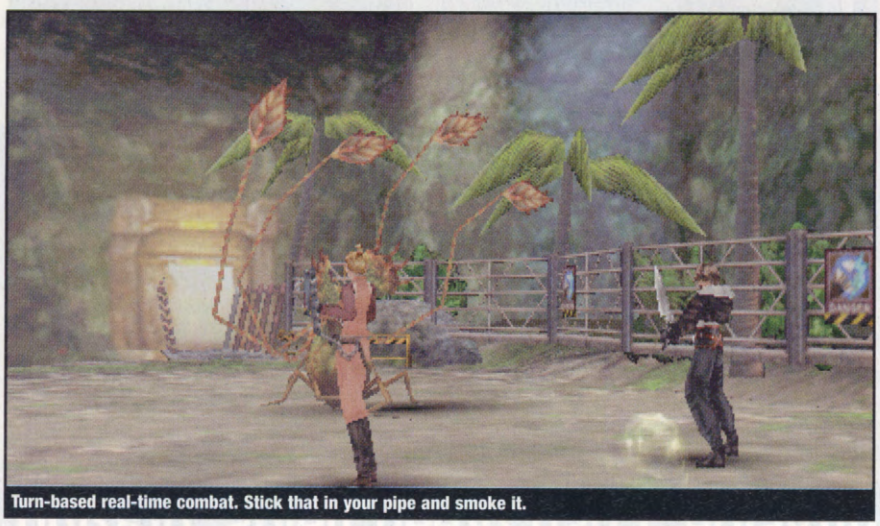
The game series with the most contradictory title in gaming history enters into its eighth episode. Walk round the futuristic backdrops, meet a variety of characters and kick a load of monster arse in this stunning RPG. The combat, as with the previous games, is turn-based with a bit of real-time thrown in for good measure, but *FFVIII* has incorporated a new junction system. This allows you to use and draw magic from various sources and summon huge guardian forces.

The story unfolds through excellent cut-scenes, drawing you into the experience and allowing superb character development. As the game progresses, each character's individual personality becomes more and more apparent. This demo gives a solid introduction to several of the game's key characters, and will definitely leave you hankering for more. Check out Dave's full review on page 66 for the full picture.

Did the earth move for you darling?

Directional Arrows	Movement
X	Confirm action
W	Cancels last action
A	View party status
D	Switch characters during battle
Q	Bring up target select window
E	Trigger button
Z & C (together)	Escape from battle
Alt & F4	Quit game

Nah, I'm very busy drinking actually.



Turn-based real-time combat. Stick that in your pipe and smoke it.

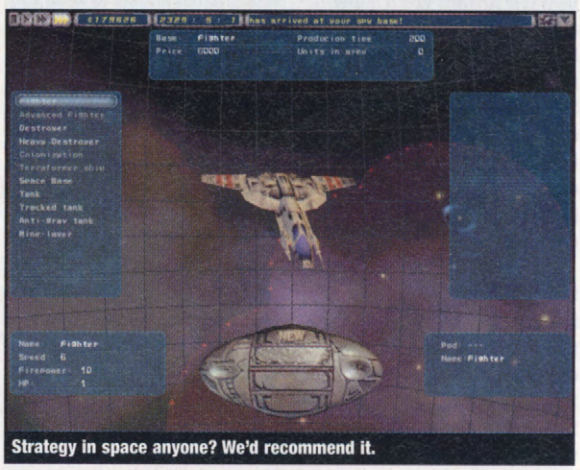
Could I just take this for a test drive?

INTERSTATE '82

Activision

Race across Las Vegas in this mission-driven combat driving game. You must get from one point on the map to the other, using a combination of driving and running to get to the designated check point.

Along the way you must avoid or blow up anyone who gets in your way. Definitely one for all you nostalgic '80s fans, and those of you who loved the fire fight car chase sequences in the *Mad Max* movies.



Strategy in space anyone? We'd recommend it.

IMPERIUM GALACTICA II

GT Interactive

With luscious graphics backing up a fantastic empire building element, *Imperium Galactica II* is one of the most appealing strategy games currently on the market. Although turn-based, the game has immense depth to it, and is incredibly playable due to its user-friendly interface. With research, diplomacy, spying and trade being just a few of the in-game features available, *IGII* offers a huge spectrum of options. The combat element allows you to choose formations and fire off devastating weapons, while also giving direct orders to your fighters. This demo includes a single-player campaign, as well as an excellent five-part tutorial.

ON THE CD PATCHES

Don't miss out on all the new patches that have been released. See our CD browser for explanations of what they do

3D Ultra Cool Pool
Age Of Wonders v1.2
Armored Fist 3 Update
Armored Fist 3 Update ReadMe
C&C Tiberian Sun v.1.17
Close Combat IV v4.01
Close Combat IV v4.01 ReadMe
Codename Eagle v1.12
Codename Eagle v1.12 ReadMe
Cutthroats v6.0
Cutthroats v6.0 ReadMe
Flight Simulator 2000 Standard
Flight Simulator Pro
Flight Simulator 2000 Standard/Pro ReadMe
Jagged Alliance II v1.06
Jagged Alliance II v1.06 ReadMe
Mig Alley v1.1
Mig Alley v1.1 ReadMe
NHL Championship 2000 v1.1
NHL Championship v1.1 ReadMe
Rally Championship 2000 v5.27.1
Rally Championship 2000 v5.27.1 ReadMe
Revenant v1.11e
Revenant v1.11e Readme
Re-Volt
Re-Volt ReadMe
Septerra Core
Septerra Core ReadMe
Shadow Company
Shadow Company ReadMe
Sim Theme Park
Slave Zero
Slave Zero ReadMe
Starfleet Command v1.00.01 to v1.02
Starfleet Command v1.01.00 to v1.02
Starfleet Command v1.02 ReadMe
The Settlers III v1.38 or older to v1.56
The Settlers III v1.50 or newer to v1.56
The Settlers III v1.56 ReadMe
Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation
Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation ReadMe
Ultima IX: Ascension v1.07
Ultima IX: Ascension v1.07 ReadMe
Unreal Tournament v402
Unreal Tournament v402 ReadMe
Warbirds 2.75 (Beta)
Warbirds 2.75 ReadMe
Warbirds 2.75 High Rez Artwork

ON THE CD EXTENDED PLAY

For a full run-down on what each one does, turn to page 140

Gamespy v2.18 (New version)
Find the fastest servers playing your favourite games

NeoTrace 2.12 (New Version)
A high-speed graphical traceroute with integrated whois and ping.

PingTool 2.6a (New Version)
Helps find the best online game servers on the Net.

AND FINALLY... This one's the only one left without a category, so we're just going to put it here.

FREEUK
Who said that nothing in life is free? They were lying. Get free access to the Internet right here, right now.

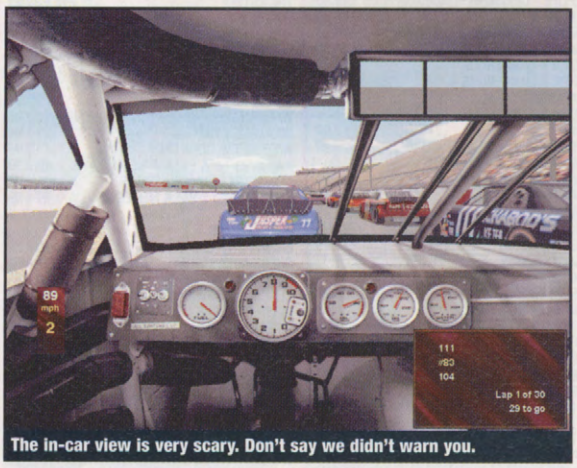
NASCAR RACING 3

Sierra

If you've got a phobia about right-turns, then you can't go far wrong with *NASCAR Racing 3*. The demo has both a single and multiplayer option, so you can try playing against your friends as well as taking on computer-controlled drivers.

Recreate those scenes from *Days Of Thunder* and then watch them back with the excellent replay option. Car pile-ups are a regularity and the excitement of the whole affair will make you totally dizzy.

Turn right! Turn right! Only joking...



The in-car view is very scary. Don't say we didn't warn you.

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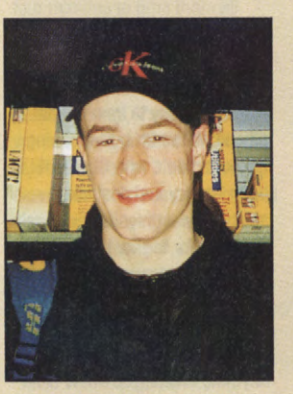
WHAT'S ON YOUR HARD DRIVE?

Once again *PC ZONE* corners a few punters to find out which games are eating into their leisure time

WORDS AND PHOTOS Craig Vaughan **LOCATION** Birmingham City Centre, West Midlands. Again...



GARETH FINLEY
19, Data inputter

What's on your hard drive?
"Quake III, Alien Versus Predator, GTA 2, Worms Armageddon and *Final Fantasy 7."*
That's quite a good mix of game styles.
"Well, they do say variety is the spice of life."
What's your current favourite?
"Tricky, but I really can't believe how low you rated *GTA 2*. I loved the original and the mission pack. I honestly think the sequel gives you a tremendous feeling of freedom."

STEWART WALSH
22, IT professional

What's on your hard drive?
"I'm still wading through *Civilization 2* and the original *Age Of Empires* – I like to get value from my games."
Do you play them multiplayer over the Internet?
"Not yet – there are still cost and speed issues that need to be addressed. Although, I do sometimes dabble with online text adventures and I think non-graphic adventures are an extremely neglected area of gaming."

DAVID SMITH
18, Student

What's on your hard drive?
"Baldur's Gate, Final Fantasy 7 and *8, Fallout 2, Quake II* and *Sanatorium."*
So where do you do your gaming?
"Mainly at college. I own a low spec machine, but we get free Internet access at college, so I often frag the day away. It's just a shame my budget doesn't run to a machine that is capable of running *Quake III* – it would save me having to get out of bed."

MARK SHERGOLD
23, Graphic designer

What's on your hard drive?
"System Shock 2, Hidden And Dangerous, Half-Life (*Redemption* and *Opposing Force*), *Unreal Tournament* and *F22 ADF."*
Are you buying today?
"I'm considering *Tiberian Sun*, but I'm a bit concerned that it is going to be too similar to the prequels."
They do say 'if it's not broken, don't fix it.'
"Indeed, but £35 is a lot of cash to spend on a game you have already played."

DIANE MARSHALL
22, Baker

What's on your hard drive?
"Nothing – I'm actually a computer widow. Why is it that men spend all day playing games, ignoring the rest of the world? And how is it that they can drink a cup of coffee, use a joystick, speak to someone on the phone and save the world – all at the same time?"
It's an inbred male talent.
"It must be, because you don't really find many women who are that sad."

ADAM NICKLESS
14, Student

What's on your hard drive?
"Men In Black, Rogue Spear, Unreal Tournament and *Hidden And Dangerous."*
Surely you're too young to be exposed to that sort of violence?
"No, I don't think so, I know what's real and what's not – it's just a bit of harmless fun."
What's on your wish list?
"I've seen all the fuss over *Quake III*, so I'll probably be buying that. I just hope it lives up to the hype."

NEIL NICKLESS
14, Student

What's... hang on, we spoke to you earlier!
"Nope, you probably saw my brother. I'm meeting him here."
Right, now assuming that's true, you look and dress the same.
"It's a 'twin thing', but our gaming tastes are very differnt. I'm currently playing *Homeworld*, I love real-time strategy games."
Are you buying or browsing?
"I'm after *Jagged Alliance 2*... 'a rough diamond,' I think you said."
Indeed. Now, where's your mythical brother?

JASON DUFFY
27, Technical support

What's on your hard drive?
GTA 2, FIFA 99, all the *Lemmings* games and *Fritz 2.*
Fritz 2?
Yeah, it's a cracking chess simulation.
Right, very snooze worthy. What's the most stupid technical support question you've ever been asked?
Why does my cup holder (the CD-ROM drive) keep closing?
And your most common advice?
"RTBM – that is 'read the bloody manual.'"

DAVE PROSSER
18, Office worker

What's on your hard drive?
"Theme Park World, Age Of Empires 2, Tiberian Sun, Age Of Kings, Dungeon Keeper 2 and *Kingpin.* I thought you were over generous with *Tiberian Sun* – it left me with a feeling of 'been there and done that'. Come to think of it, I wasn't too partial to *Command And Conquer* either."
But you still bought them?
"Well, I'm easily led – they do say a fool and his money are easily parted."

JASPER GARNER
29, Warehouse supervisor

What's on your hard drive?
"Nocturne, Half-Life (*Redemption* and *Opposing Force*), *Mortyr* and *Rally Championship.*
I have been quite busy recently. I've just polished off *System Shock 2, Alien Versus Predator, Kingpin, Carmageddon 2* and *GTA.* I thought I would actually have a bit of a clear out, so that I could start the new millennium with a nice clean hard drive – the perfect excuse for months and months of carefree gaming."

EXTENDED PLAY

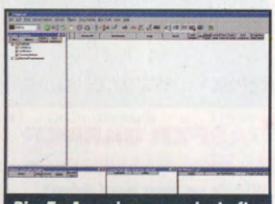
Two online game finders go head to head in a ferocious duel: old stalwart *GameSpy 3D* versus young upstart *PingTool*. Which program ends up sniffling for its mum?

WORDS Phil Wand

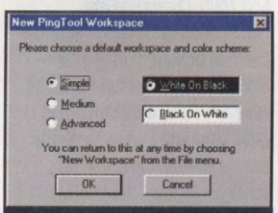
TRY IT YOURSELF

On this month's cover CD we've got all the official patches, bug fixes, utilities and map editors we could find, including all the ones mentioned in these pages. To track them down, use the CD browser to go to the Patches section. All the patches are listed with a brief description and any relevant documentation. Make sure you read any associated README files for information on how to install individual patches. For further help, turn to our CD pages, starting on page 134.

"*PingTool* has been freeware since last December and, what's more, the main *PingTool* website is refreshingly easy to navigate and free of any marketing gimmicks"



***PingTool*'s main screen, just after you run it for the very first time.**



We think it's a good idea to use *PingTool*'s Advanced workspace, as it provides you with maximum information.

Quick, think of a Windows utility that makes ZIP files. You thought of *WinZip*, right? Now, think of something to help you write a letter. Almost certainly, *Microsoft Word* will have leapt to mind. But what about a program to help you find and connect to an online games server? Chances are you'll have heard of *GameSpy* – after all, it's been lurking in a corner of our coverdisc for months – but have you ever used it? If not, have you any idea of what it can actually do for you? And what about its lesser known but equally talented rival, *PingTool*? Do you really need either of them?

Multiplayer games over the Internet are an easy concept made even easier by the likes of *GameSpy* and *PingTool*. Both programs make getting connected to an active server a real doddle, allowing you to update, browse, manage and keep an eye on any number of games sessions from all over the planet. Even if you're playing *Quake III* or *Unreal Tournament*, which come with their own Master Server lists, one of these is an essential utility. But which one?

DOWNLOAD

The first thing that hits you when you go to download *GameSpy 3D* is the shareware notice. Look around the website and you'll discover that in order to get to the program's more noteworthy features – SmartSpy, Buddy List, integrated chat client and shared server lists – you're going to have to spend $20 (about £12) on registration fees. Alright, so this isn't a major amount of money but it is slightly annoying, considering the way GameSpy Industries litter their websites with advertising.

In contrast, *PingTool* has been freeware since last December – not that previous shareware versions were crippled in any way. What's more, the main *PingTool* website is refreshingly easy to navigate and free of any marketing gimmicks, although how long it'll stay that way is anyone's guess.

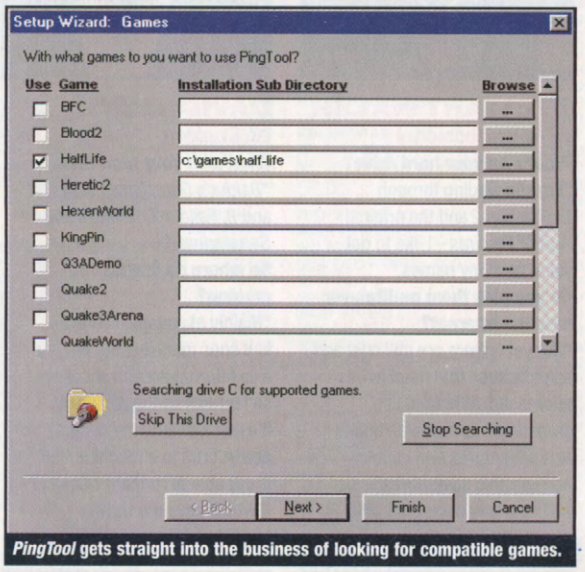
NET ADDRESSES

Get your server finders here

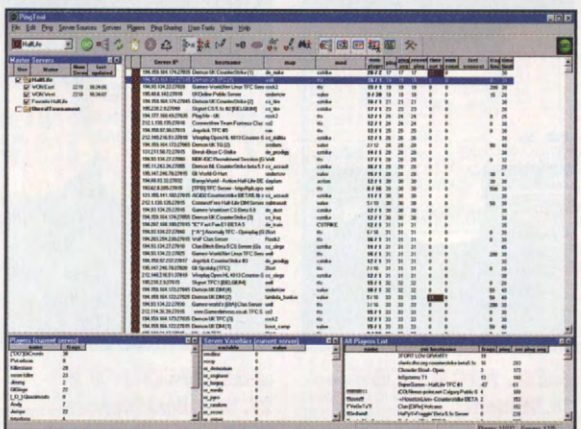
SITE NAME web address

GAMESPY 3D www.gamespy3d.com

PINGTOOL www.pingtool.com



***PingTool* gets straight into the business of looking for compatible games.**



Hit the Go button and wait for the servers to appear in *PingTool*.

INSTALL AND SETUP

Both products weigh in at around 1.5Mb to download, and install after a few clicks of the mouse. One thing you'll notice about the *PingTool* setup program is that you have the option to install the software in any of five different languages: English, Spanish, French, Italian and German. While that's of little interest to most *PC ZONE* readers, you soon start to see why it's the obvious choice for European users.

GameSpy's setup routine is essentially a standalone version of its options screen. When you run the program for the very first time, you're presented with over 60 different switches and game flags, all crammed into one tiny dialog box. Almost all are irrelevant to virgin users – the best advice we can give at this stage is simply to ignore them all and hit the OK button. Being asked to fiddle with CL_NODELTA, push latency and post client start delay settings is needlessly daunting for the vast majority of game players, and it just asks for trouble – screwing with these values can drastically affect your online play. So don't touch anything unless you know what you're doing.

The next step for the *GameSpy* user is a search of your hard disk to discover what software you have installed (see the panel on supported games titles). To manually enter information here, check the box next to the name of the game you want *GameSpy* to handle, and then browse to its directory. Another dialog box awaits requesting your player name, and a box after that asking you to log in.

PingTool is a lot easier and a lot faster to get into as it requires far less button pushing, and presents everything in the form of a simple wizard. It also gets straight from the business of searching for games to the business of looking for games servers, and hides you from most of the technical mumbo jumbo. Newcomers should be able to get up and running with all supported games in under five minutes.

SERVER SEARCHING

The ultimate test for both these programs is the way they handle and display information from online games. In simple terms, they retrieve a master list of active servers, and then query each session in turn to determine which are the fastest connections, what maps are being run, what mods are being used, how many players are active, and so on.

We'll turn to *PingTool* first. In our example, we'll query the WON master server and get details on all the *Half-Life* games. *Half-Life* is by far and away the most popular online game of the moment, with over 2,000 active servers and close to 12,000

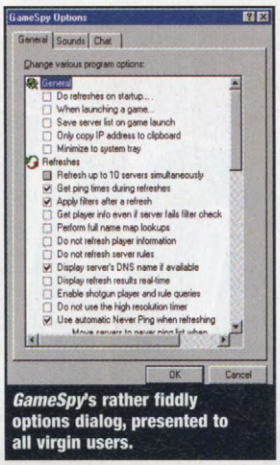
players, and should thus be a good test for our duellists.

Once the *PingTool* main screen has been displayed, tickle the big green Go button on the toolbar with a left click of the mouse and then sit back. In our test, it took just over 2.5 minutes to poll each of the 2,200 *Half-Life* games servers, and then a further four minutes to time them all (ie gauge their relative speeds by calculating their ping). While most people will choose to skip this particular step, it's actually rather valuable as it gives an accurate representation of the fastest server and of how much lag you'll experience playing there. Once the information is in, click on the column marked 'ping' to sort all the games into order, with the speedy at the top and the sluggish at the bottom.

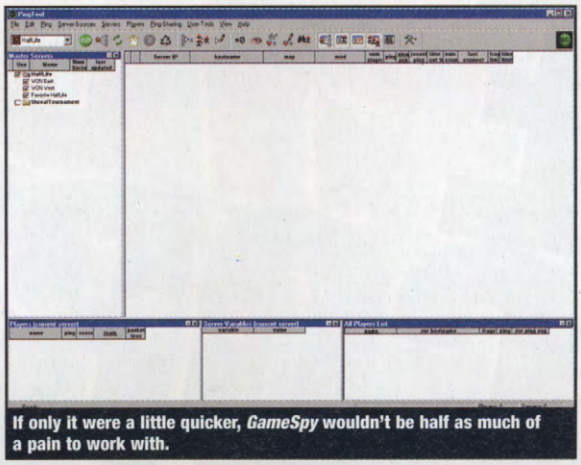
As the list populates in *PingTool*, the list of players fills up. This allows you to see at a glance which players are online, where they're playing, and how they're doing. Simply double-click on a player's name to see the details of the server they're using.

Over to *GameSpy* now, and just 4.5 minutes saw over 2,000 servers refreshed, including testing their lag. By including the ping timing step as part of the refresh, time is cut dramatically, but it does mean you get a latency (ie delay) time that isn't quite as accurate as the one in *PingTool*. Whether this is of any relevance to the average game player is highly debatable. However, one noticeable difference between *PingTool* and *GameSpy* is the way the latter won't display server details as they arrive, instead waiting for all the information to download before displaying it right at the end. Certainly this isn't as slick as *PingTool*.

One major gripe with both programs is their speed of execution. Listing all the servers in *GameSpy* can take anything upwards of 15 seconds on a fast Pentium III – heaven only knows what it's like on an old AMD donkey. What makes things worse is the way *GameSpy* repopulates the main list each and every time you make any change to the program's options or filters. Try flicking between the different server filters on the toolbar and it'll take a full 10 seconds to do anything, thrashing your CPU and hogging most of your processor time in the interim period. Totally infuriating.



***GameSpy*'s rather fiddly options dialog, presented to all virgin users.**



If only it were a little quicker, *GameSpy* wouldn't be half as much of a pain to work with.

> **"One major gripe with both programs is their speed of execution – heaven knows how long they'd take on an old AMD donkey"**

USE

Once the information has been collected, both programs function in pretty much the same way. Browse the list of servers, sort them by clicking on the various column headings, and then double-click any one session to automatically launch the relevant title and then connect to the highlighted game.

And it's here that *PingTool* stretches its lead. For a start, the package colour-codes the main list to show you which sessions contain stale data, so you know whether you're looking at out-of-date information or at stuff you just downloaded; it also won't join a server unless it knows for sure that there's a free spot for you.

Better still, *PingTool* will by default continuously ping a highlighted server until a slot becomes available, and then automatically launch the relevant game when it knows there's room. *GameSpy* can perform the same useful trick with its Busy Server Redial feature, but unless you keep reminding yourself to use it by pressing Ctrl + B, double-clicking a game of *Team Fortress Classic* when there's no room to play will mean you end up with a 'Server full' error and annoyed jabs at the quit button.

You can also assign any number of favourite servers in both programs, allowing you to gather and control information on a specific number of games. This speeds up execution considerably; our recommendation is to choose between 10 and 20 of the fastest servers and keep them tucked away in your favourites. Next time you update your servers, both programs will only look at the ones you've got in your 'shortlist' and not repopulate the full 2,000 different sessions (most of which are too slow to be of any use to you).

FILTERS

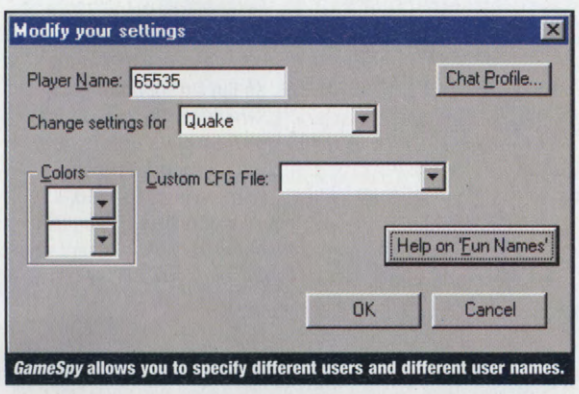
As with favourites, filters are one of the most powerful functions of an online games finder, in that they give you the power to display only the games relevant to you. You can cut out slow servers, full servers, servers with people you don't like on them, and so on. You could then decide to show only games running the *Counter-Strike* mod, games containing fewer than two low ping bastards (LPBs), and indeed any number of similar variations. Basically, filters mean that you can start up your favourite game and be absolutely sure of having a blast each and every time.

Unfortunately for *GameSpy*, its filter support (or 'custom tabs') is an absolute disgrace. Once you've used the quick, easy and powerful filtering system in *PingTool*, you'll wonder what on earth the *GameSpy* programmers were thinking – and, more importantly, why they haven't bothered updating the way their software works. We've been through the setup procedure countless times trying to figure out how to show only those servers running the *Team Fortress Classic* mod, but to no avail. We simply couldn't get it to work. Eventually we went back to the GameSpy Industries home page and downloaded a custom tab to do the job.

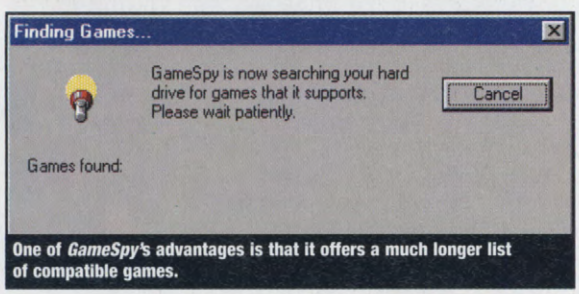
VERDICTS

PingTool wins this hands down. It is a better, more accomplished product in so many ways, and it has the added advantage of being freeware. You download it, it does what it says on the tin, and it won't keep pestering you for 20 bucks.

Its filters are a dream and they actually work, which is more than can be said for the clumsy tabs in *GameSpy*. It's also a lot quicker, better packaged, with a slicker interface to boot. PCZ



***GameSpy* allows you to specify different users and different user names.**



One of *GameSpy*'s advantages is that it offers a much longer list of compatible games.

PCZ VERDICT

PINGTOOL

UPPERS Freeware • Brilliant filters that actually work • All players list • Highly customisable interface

DOWNERS Slow update of main list • Lack of game options and settings

90 Wanna play games online? Get *PingTool*

GAMESPY 3D

UPPERS Quick server updates • Supports a very wide range of games

DOWNERS Massively slow • Naff interface • Shabby icons • Filters and tabs a nightmare • Shareware version lacks crucial features

77 Feels a little awkward alongside its rival

GAMES SUPPORT

Check out the titles each program supports:

GAMESPY 3D

Quake, Quake II, Hexen 2, Unreal, Sin, Shogo, Blood 2, Heretic 2, Half-Life, Turok 2, South Park, Baldur's Gate, Descent 3, Dark Vengeance, Redline, Tribes, Q3Test, Kingpin, Drakan, Deer Hunter 3, Unreal Tournament, Nerf ArenaBlast, WOT, Rogue Spear, Battlezone

PINGTOOL V2.6

BFC, Blood 2, Half-Life, Heretic 2, HexenWorld, Kingpin, Q3Test, Quake II, Quake III: Arena, QuakeWorld, Shogo, Sin, Tribes, Unreal, Unreal Tournament, Unreal Tournament Demo

THE WORLD ACCORDING TO...

DAVE PERRY

Whether it's an earthworm called Jim or an angel called Bob, Dave Perry certainly does things differently. And as Steve Hill discovered, his life's a total beach

It's a long way from Northern Ireland to Laguna Beach, California, but it's a journey Dave Perry made over a decade ago. He's been there ever since, and as President of Shiny Entertainment he made himself a sizeable wedge when he sold a majority sharehold to Interplay. He now lives in an "electronically gated compound" on the Pacific Coast, which has increased in value by 50 per cent since he picked it up for a trifling US$2 million. He is extraordinarily tall, has film star looks (film star Jeff Goldblum to be precise), a model girlfriend and has brushed shoulders with the likes of Kevin Costner. He drives BMW's finest vehicle, complete with personalised plates, auto-router and a voice-activated phone. Cruising around the perennially sun-kissed streets of Laguna with him, it's safe to say that he's done all right for himself, living the ultimate dream of every kid who was told to stop wasting their time playing games.

However, it's a widely known fact that Perry's ex-wife took him for half of everything he owned, filing for divorce on the very day that she became eligible to his fortune. He's clearly still got a few quid, though, but rarely shirks an opportunity to make more. He is in the process of finalising a roulette system that he intends to publish on the Internet when complete (a trial run in Vegas yielded US$5,000 profit from a US$20,000 stake) and he charges his employees to use the office pinball machines.

Despite mainly conversing in Californian dudespeak, Perry occasionally lapses into a discernible Irish twang, particularly with the word "game", which is as good a subject to start with as any. Shiny's first big PC game was *MDK*, which despite some 55 magazine covers, sold only a middling 500,000 copies.

© PHOTOGRAPHY Eddie Sanderson

Were you disappointed with *MDK*'s performance?
"The thing that's tricky in our business is when you're making stuff that's completely fresh and different, like you've got this black guy running around, you know a guy in a black suit and you can't see him at all. It's hard to market that and to say to people 'Hey you really want to be this guy'. If you make something very classical it looks like something they're very familiar with, like if you get a big Rambo guy that's super tough with big weapons people feel safe, they know what it is. But when you've got this stealthy, black rubber-suited guy they don't quite know what to do. But *Messiah*'s going to have exactly the same problem, trying to convince people it's cool to be a baby. So, basically the game sells by word of mouth. The problem is when you go from console to PC it's a whole different market. It absolutely changed the dynamics. We learnt a lot from it."

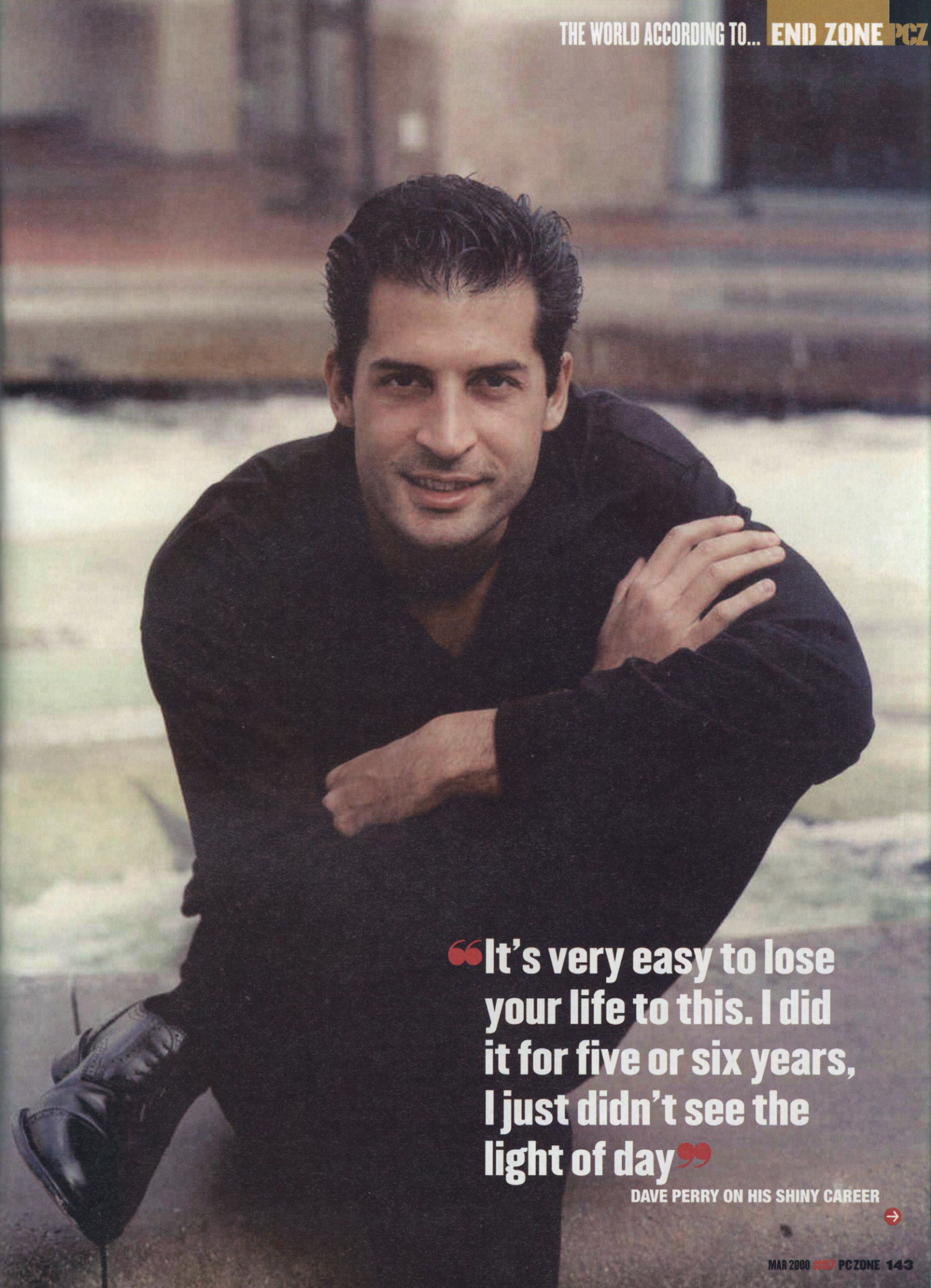
How closely do you think about marketing when you come up with original ideas?
"We don't think about it at all, then it bites us in the butt later on because we have to find a clever way to somehow convince someone that this is a good idea. We do things here because we know that it hasn't been done before and it's kinda creative and interesting. But it's a nightmare for a marketing guy."

Do you think the games market is stuck in a rut?
"It's like the movies. Did you see *The Blair Witch Project*? It's a great example of being different from your typical Hollywood movie. To actually go and do something really different, it's hard to then market it. Word of mouth is what sells it. It'll never be a *Titanic*, or it'll never be something that everyone can hold onto and say 'I know what this is,' but y'know, you can still cause a stir as long as it's cool..."

Did you make a lot of money out of the Interplay buyout?
"Yeah. I did good. At that time we were a strong 2D company, so we were making *Earthworm Jim*my kind of stuff. And the business was going 3D and I was starting to write cheques for Silicon Graphics and motion capture systems and PlayStation development systems. So I'm sitting there going '$100,000 for a Silicon Graphics! OK, how much is this software? $25,000 for a piece of software! OK, take it.' Then we go, 'OK, we need three development systems, that's going to be $60,000!' and I'm just writing these cheques going 'I don't like this, it is gonna cost a lot of money.' And it actually cost millions for us to go from 2D to 3D. So that's when I said 'I'm not interested.'

How much do Interplay get involved?
"They give complete freedom, totally and absolutely. They bought into the whole idea. This is an investment for them because they wanted to be sure to get high-end creative stuff, as well as doing all the basketball and baseball games they do. They wanted to get some 'out there' titles and that's what we're doing for them."

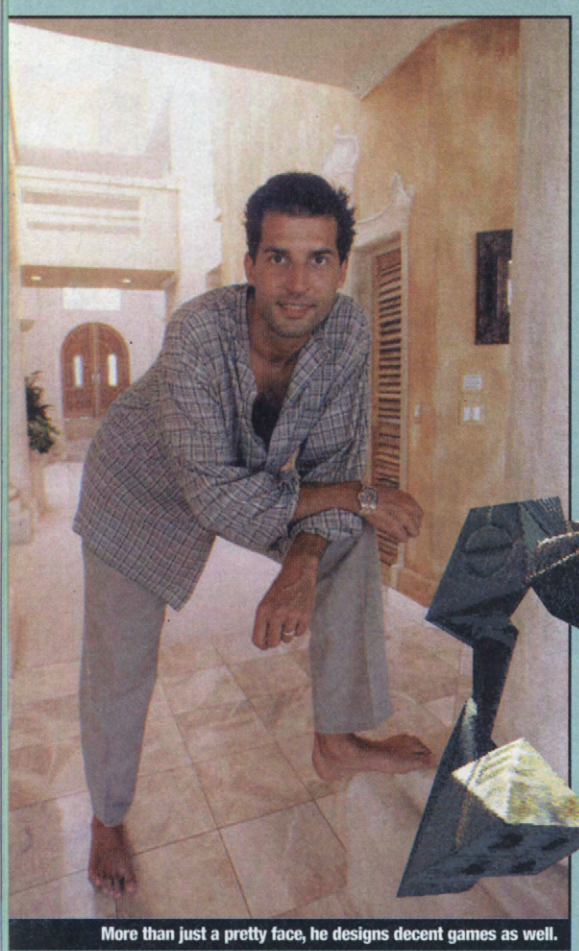
Can you see any other areas you'd like to expand in, apart from games?
"Yeah, ideally in the long term I'd like to get more involved in designing future consoles and design



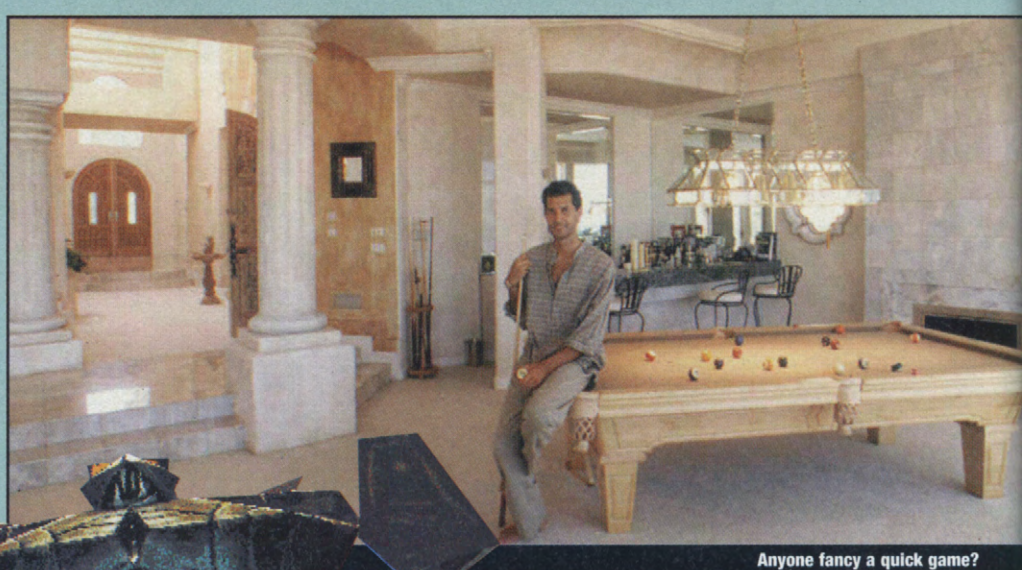
"It's very easy to lose your life to this. I did it for five or six years, I just didn't see the light of day"

DAVE PERRY ON HIS SHINY CAREER

Handsome,, successful, filthy rich and with a house by the beach in sunny California. Ahh, yes, Dave Perry certainly does seem to leading a very tough life.



More than just a pretty face, he designs decent games as well.



Anyone fancy a quick game?

***MDK*: rave reviews and loads of media coverage didn't translate into sales**

Playing a chubby angel is certainly "out there".

some other cool things. I'm into electronics and technology and all that stuff. Most stuff that we come up with, like, when I'm driving in my car, we end up having, so I'm like, 'Damn! I wish I had more time to try and make things happen.' Ideally I would like to do some research into that area. I'd love to solve this problem of mass market. The big goal right now would be, how can I entertain my mother? What do I have to do to entertain my mother? If my mother's waiting for *Coronation Street* to come on, how can I entertain her with a piece of electronics? And if someone can crack that... My mother doesn't set the timer on her VCR, so it's got to be easier than setting your clock on a VCR. In a video game, how many times have you seen 'Press any key' come up? A million times, it's in all the games, 'Press any key'. People go 'Where's any key?' That happens all the time. You have to make it so simple that it's thinking for them."

"The big goal right now would be, how can I entertain my mother? If she's waiting for *Coronation Street*, how can I entertain her with a piece of electronics?"

DAVE PERRY ON CORNERING THE MASS MARKET

Like turning on a TV...

"Exactly. When you operate something like this *(my dictaphone)* you're expecting a volume control, start, stop. When it starts getting 'hold' buttons to stop buttons getting pressed accidentally and tape speeds, my mother wouldn't know how to operate it, because it's more complicated than she would expect it to be.

There's a really great thing up in Canada where they meet every year, it's like a think tank and people sit and talk. I met a designer there who was creating an answering machine that when a call comes in, a marble rolls out of it, and that marble is the phone call. And if you want to delete the message you drop the marble in a trash can, and if I want to hear the call you just place the marble by the phone and it'll play the message and call the person back, if you want to call him back. No buttons at all, it's completely physical and simple, no LED read-outs."

Do you think that's the way forward, simpler rather than more complicated?

"Oh yeah, absolutely. Intelligently knowing what the person might want. Don't offer them all the options. With video games right now you've all these installation problems and video cards and drivers. All of that has to just go away and we have to find ways to do that. I'm on the board of the video game developers conference and I give speeches. Every year 10,000 developers meet in San José and they pay US$1,000 to go, so it's pretty amazing you know. They're pretty serious, they really want to learn. Right now, for this year's speech, I'm studying psychology – playing with people's minds basically. What is this person when they're looking at the screen thinking, and how can I manipulate them? And it's a whole topic once you start thinking about it."

Where would you like to see Shiny in ten years time?

"I'd like to see us sitting in our yachts out on the ocean, designing games at our leisure versus designing games because we have to get them done by a certain time. It's a dream of all designers I think, to let the game be finished properly and the way to do that is to shoot for the stars and then get the time to do it. Because by the time it all levels out you should end up with impressive technology and a good game. I'd love to put that level of detail into a game."

You've got a bit of a reputation as an 'Action Man'. How do you find the time?

"Yeah, actually I used to be a scuba diving instructor as well as snowboarding. I was also flying helicopters, but I stopped because I think I was a liability."

Do you think that's at odds with the typical game developer's image?

"It's very easy to lose your life to this. I did for about five or six years, I just didn't see the light of day. Then I made a positive decision, I'm going to start getting a life back here. It makes it a lot more fun, that nice balance. I used to work seven days a week when I formed Shiny, nine in the morning until two in the morning, every single day. And I would be driving home at two, all tired and down and I'd drive past the bars here. There's all these cool bars and all these girls and guys and everyone's having fun, you'd see them laughing with their beers and I'd be sitting at the traffic lights going 'Doesn't this suck.' It seems great, you know, I've got my own company, I'm making games and all the rest of it, but here I am sitting in my car, two in the morning, all these people having so much fun, this isn't fair. But then a month later I'm standing on a tropical island, in a five star hotel, with the wind in my hair going, 'Those people are never going to see this.' So I travel and I do the things that I remember. The way I deal with it is I class this as being how many things you can remember. You know, like when you're in a bar, what was your conversation about last time you were in a bar? You tend to forget, right, it's just time. But when you actually go and do something really cool like fly a helicopter for the first time, trust me, you never forget it. What I do is I go through brochures, and if I see a picture that's just stunning then I go, 'I gotta do this.' So I end up standing in that picture. And when you actually achieve a goal like that, and you're standing in the most beautiful picture you've seen in a year then you can not really complain."

So you have to constantly remind yourself how good things are?

"Absolutely. You basically collect a lot of cool memories, so this is definitely not a normal business. I think probably the biggest difference between this business and everything else is that I can't fire people who are good, no matter how badly they behave. Most of the employees in this building right now could double their salaries this afternoon if they wanted to. They could make two or three calls and they could easily get double their salaries and leave. So it's not like running McDonald's here. I can't just say to someone, 'There's a spot on the window, you're out of here, I told you to clean that window!'"

What gives them an allegiance to you?

"They like the culture. I sometimes hire people that are new to the business. I don't think they realise what they have here, it's very relaxed, it's so laidback. It's just like 'Enjoy yourself, we're making games for fun.' And it's not corporate, you don't have to have five signatures to go buy a lightbulb. The people who worked elsewhere love it, and they would never leave. I think that's the culture, and being by the beach is cool as well."

So how does it compare with Northern Ireland?

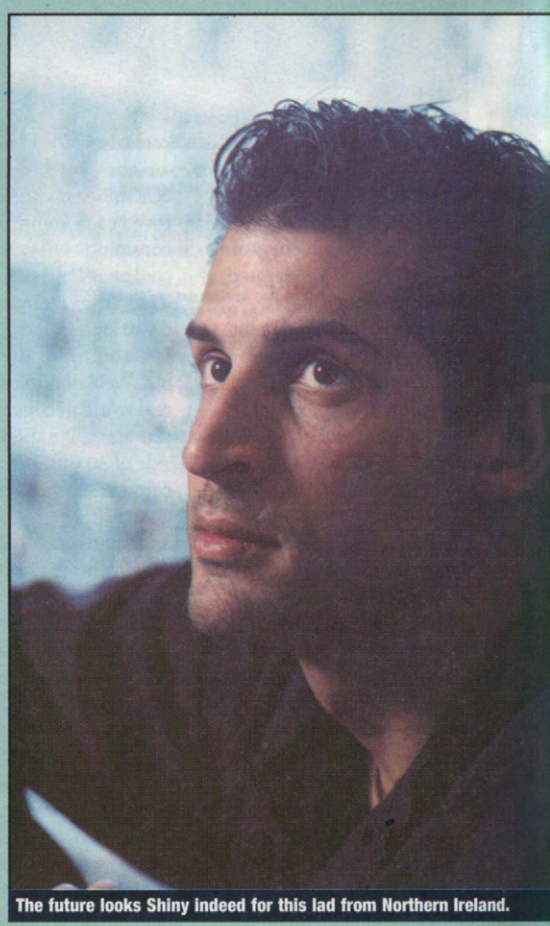
"It's funny 'cos I just went back to Ireland to check that out because I haven't been there for quite a while. I've only been twice in ten years, so I thought I would go back and see, and it was funny. I was in the taxi from the airport and the taxi driver says to me, 'Oh what do you do?' I said 'Oh I make video games' and he goes 'Oh we have a famous guy from Ireland that makes video games.' *(Laughs)* It was so funny."

What did you do? Did you keep quiet?

'Yeah, I just kept quiet. It was so funny. I also met the President of Ireland recently. She came and did a tour here, just to kind of say, if you're from Ireland and you're doing something cool, thanks very much. It was really good.

"I lived in the countryside in Northern Ireland, and when I went back and I looked at where I lived, I realised I don't miss it. Not at all.

While quaffing fine wines at an exclusive ocean-side restaurant, with the midwinter sun beating down, it's not difficult to see why the peat bogs of his homeland would lose their appeal. Perry has certainly come a long way, with years of hard work rewarded by untold riches and a playboy lifestyle. And they said games would never catch on... PCZ



The future looks Shiny indeed for this lad from Northern Ireland.

COMMENT

In an effort to test his online *Quake*-ability *Charlie Brooker* logged on but was very quickly fragged off. Although, he thinks he may have devised a cunning plan to help improve his game...

QUAKE GURU Charlie Brooker

Hmmm, maybe if I try the old 'but i'm just an elderly priest' trick they'll feel sorry for me and leave me alone.

FRAGGED OFF

OK: time to 'fess up. Over the festive season (which, given our ludicrously accelerated modern lives, probably feels like a dim and distant memory to those of you reading these words now), I went online for a couple of games of *Quake III*. Using a 36.6K modem. And I was rubbish at it.

Well, maybe not rubbish (I've had plenty of network *Quake II* experience, so I'm not a complete pussy), but not very good either. I regularly ended up somewhere in the middle of the scoreboard, just ahead of the clueless newbies who play with the cursor keys and spend most of the time firing rocket launchers at their shoes.

No matter how hard I tried, I just couldn't match the maestros – the dashing *Quake* cavaliers with MuLtI-cOlOuReD nIcKnAmEz that roved each arena, dealing constant death with all the cool emotionless dexterity of a Las Vegas croupier. And, d'you know what? It made me feel a bit... old. But I'm not old. Well, not that old. In the real world of concrete-and-piss-stains I'm still the right side of 30 (just), but in the carnage-sodden domain of *Quake III*, I feel like a confused and faintly angry old man, shaking his fist at a gang of unruly teenagers intent on kicking over his dustbins.

Of course, I could blame my connection. The best players tend to be the ones with fancy cables and pipes and that. Wait until I get ADSL, then I'll show 'em. Except of course, by the time I get hooked up, they'll still be way beyond me. I can't catch up. It'll be frag after frag after frag. I'm a fish in a barrel, and they're all toting gatling guns. But I do have a plan.

MY BRILLIANT PLAN

I reckon I'm just going to get killed over and over again, unless... unless I can somehow elicit sympathy. And I can only think of two ways of achieving this: 1) appear in some way likeable (I'm not), or 2) be a girl.

First, being likeable. My plan is to design a fantastic *Quake III* model of an elderly priest with a kind face, but ever so slightly sorrowful and limpid eyes. And maybe a bit of a limping animation. Hopefully, even the most hardened frag-chaser's going to think twice before twitching the trigger finger.

If necessary, I'll even work out how to replace the traditional *Quake*-a-riffic taunting gestures with a touching 50-minute scripted sequence in which I receive a telegram informing me of the death of my wife, shortly before discovering a baby bird with a broken wing dragging itself along the floor, slowly nursing it back to health, and finally looking on with glistening eyes as it flies away chirruping happily, leaving me behind to continue my life alone. No-one's going to feel entirely comfortable taking my head off with the rail gun in the middle of that.

If that doesn't work, I'll pretend to be a girl. I'll swap email addresses with the other players, send them photos of 'myself' (actually wholesome snaps of some anonymous American teenager I'll find on a homepage or something) and I'll attempt to ensnare them in a doomed 'friendship', during which I perpetually refer to them being 'just like a brother to me' while they, secretly, construct elaborate romantic fantasies in their heads. At the height of all this, I'll accompany them on the *Quake* servers. It'll be just like having a bodyguard.

And again, I'd come up with a protracted sequence to replace the taunt. Maybe something where I go for a drink with them, get a little tipsy and ask if I can go back to theirs, and in the cab on the way back try to give them a hug and a kiss, then suddenly and inexplicably fall, start crying and saying "I can't do this – I don't want to risk losing you as a friend," and wind up sleeping in their bed while they lie wide awake on the sofa all night with a dangerous priapism.

Of course, there's always the danger that things could get out of hand, and I'd end up having to meet them in person disguised as said female, but I'll cross that bridge when I come to it. Besides, you'd be surprised how easy it is to fool a desperate male virgin in a dark room, using cunning, determination, a high voice and a very convincing wig.

"You'd be surprised how easy it is to fool a male virgin in a dark room, using cunning, a high voice and a convincing wig"

You didn't read that last bit, by the way.

I suppose if I ever get truly cunning, I'll combine the two, and pretend to be a teenage female priest. Or, a baby bird with a broken wing, a dog collar and heaving bosoms.

Then no-one'll want to frag me. Or sit next to me on the tube, come to think of it. PCZ

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