

18 **REVIEWS:** Final Fantasy VII • X-COM Interceptor • X-Files • MechCommander

PC GAMER

Solo Edition

To find out how you can get free game demos, including *Final Fantasy VII*, turn to page 8.

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SICK of SEQUELS? Tired of LAME CLONES? Then quit your bellyaching and brace yourself for *PC Gamer's* EXCLUSIVE first-ever look at...

the top 10 games of 1999



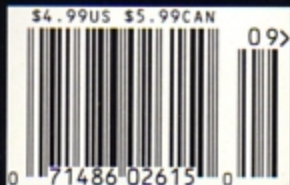
PLUS... MASSIVE FOOTBALL PREVIEW!

The PC Gamer Sports Network is back with an in-depth look at all the gridiron action, including *Madden NFL 99*, *Sierra Sports Football Pro 99*, *NCAA Football 99*, *NFL Blitz*, *NFL Gameday 99*, and more!

SCORCHING STRATEGY

Red-hot guides to *Unreal*, *StarCraft*, *Might and Magic VI*, *Total Annihilation: The Core Contingency* — and truckloads of cheat codes! No oil, no MSG!

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Vol. 5 No. 9 • SEPTEMBER 1998



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Cover Story

The Top 10 Games of 1999

1999 MAY SEEM LIKE A LONG WAY AWAY, but the hottest games of next year are already taking shape. These titles are just too exciting to sit on, so we tracked down the inside info on these future gems. You can become the envy of all your friends and neighbors as they wonder how you know so much about games that are merely rumors and vague descriptions to everyone else.

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Feature

ARE YOU READY FOR SOME FOOTBALL?

THE WACKY CREW OF PCGSN is back for a look at this year's upcoming gridiron games. Find out which of these titles has the features you need to satisfy your pigskin pinings. Join our hosts Gary Whitta and Billy



"Snowball" Harms as they traverse the country to get the latest news on the big games from our illustrious correspondents. If you wind up with the wrong football game this year, it won't be our fault!

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Hardware

183 The Hard Stuff

Tech boy Greg has been up late doing his homework on the new trend in PC sound, digital audio, and presents to you his findings on this exciting technology. He also takes an early look at the new 3Dfx Banshee, and brings you all the other news on the cutting-edge hardware you crave.

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Wow, another hefty disc full of awesome game demos... just how do we do it? We'll never tell!



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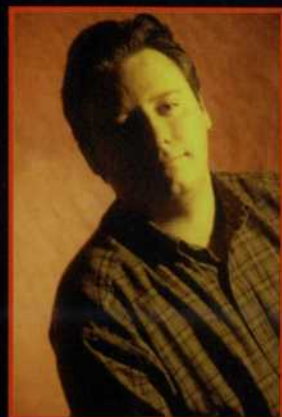
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A look at the first *Quake II* mission pack, and a second look at *Seven Kingdoms* are the entrées on Tom's plate.
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Jason is all for *Quake III's* new direction, but he wants to make sure id addresses certain areas.
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You knew that Thresh would be putting in his two cents on the *Quake III* issue, but you may be surprised with what the king of multi-play has to say.
- 227 **Alternate Lives** Michael Wolf
Mike rounds up the brightest lights on the horizon in the adventure and role-playing genres.
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The Colonel was doing a bit of web-surfing one day...and we haven't heard from him since! Find out which site has sated his thirst for wargaming knowledge.

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SSI is serious about getting into the sim market, and Dan's conversation with Carl Norman will fill you in on the details.

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Take a minute to send us your comments. We may even read them.

- 296 **Next Issue**
Are you ready for the 50 Best Games of All Time? We sure as heck are!



We're gonna party like it's 1999!

Since you're most likely reading this edition of *PC Gamer* in August, you might think it a little premature of us to be presenting you with a preview of the hottest games of next year. But you'd be wrong. The fact is, 1999 is going to be a banner year for PC gaming, and the fact that 10 of next year's most amazing and innovative games have already reared their heads makes us drool at the prospect of what else the year might hold in store for us.

Beneath, Good & Evil, Black and White, Giants, Fleet Command, Max Payne, Wargasm, Anachronox, Urban Chaos, and X-COM Alliance all look set to break new ground in their various genres, and in some cases even create whole new genres. But this is only the beginning. Let's not forget that 1999 will also bring us a whole new multi-player paradigm with *Quake III: Arena* (about which much can be read in this month's issue), some amazing original titles from the likes of Bullfrog and Cavedog (more on these soon), and even LucasArts' first official Star Wars game tied into the all-new movie trilogy!

Of course, nothing is guaranteed, and a year from now I may well be writing an editorial on what a stinker of a year 1999 is turning out to be — but I doubt it. I've never seen so many positive signs, so early on, that the coming year is going to be a great one.

If you're still in doubt, head on over to our cover story on page 50 and see for yourself. And don't forget to sample the rest of this month's morsels along the way, including the long-awaited return of our award-winning *PC Gamer Sports Network* team and its definitive 98/99 pro and collegiate football preview. You'll be oh so very glad you did...

Gary Whitta, Editor-in-Chief



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WINDOWS 95



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CM Lands First Starring Role!

HOLLYWOOD (PCGNN)

Sources in Tinseltown have confirmed that venerable thespian Coconut Monkey has landed the lead in what will surely go down as the greatest action movie of all time.

Details of the plot are a carefully guarded secret, but PCGNN has learned a few details: CM will play Dr. Nick "Nick" McClure, a radioactive astronaut with a shady past. After a series of cattle-breeding tests goes horribly awry, McClure must stop the mutated cow-beasts from trampling the countryside and save his ex-girlfriend from the cow-beasts' horrible offspring. Just as the action reaches its pinnacle, it is discovered that a giant round thing is rushing toward the Earth; this round thing will destroy all life, even bacteria. So CM must rocket off into space and deal with the giant round thing. Not to be outdone, the cow-beasts take off in a rocket of their own. Looks like this flick could have an ending to end all endings.

The estimated budget for this as-yet-untitled movie is \$10. Look for it to be released next summer.

Quick Start for The CD

1. Insert the CD.
2. If Autorun does not start the CD, click the Start button and choose Run. Type X:\PCGAMER.COM where X is the letter of your CD-ROM drive.
3. This will run *The CD*.

System Requirements

Windows 95; 486/33; 4MB RAM; Mouse

NOTE: These requirements are for loading our front-end program only. Each game demo will have its own additional requirements, so be sure to read them carefully.

Attention Win3.1 Users

The *PC Gamer* front end was created for Windows 95. If you run Windows 3.1, you will have to install Win 3.1 demos separately.

Get Demos for Free!

Newsstand buyers have the choice of purchasing either the CD-ROM Edition of *PC Gamer* for \$7.99, or *PC Gamer* without a CD-ROM for \$4.99. If you purchase the edition without a disc, you can still get free game demos in a couple of different ways:

1. Download demos and check out *PC Gamer's* web site at www.pcgamer.com on the Internet. Our web site also features a special Strategy Plus section, links to other hot web pages, and daily gaming news.
2. Call PFC at (800) 865-7240 (between the hours of 7 a.m. and 11 p.m. CST, Mon. - Fri.) to have *The CD* mailed to you for only \$7.99 shipping and handling.

Disc Editors' Note

If you receive a "Dispatcher initialization error 11" message while starting our interface, you can download a new version of the front end from our web site, or you can install the demos manually using the commands listed below.

CONTENTS / MANUAL INSTALLATION COMMANDS

Installation Shortcuts

In the event our interface doesn't load or run properly on your machine, you can still install each demo, bypassing our front end altogether.

To manually install a demo, take a look at the Command Box located to the right. This box contains a list of demos along with their directories and installation commands.

To get up and running using the Command Box, simply use the Start-Run command for Windows 95, or the File-Run command from the Program Manager for Windows 3.1. When the dialog box appears, type in the letter of your CD-ROM drive, followed by the directory and install command listed at the right.

For example, to install the *Moto Racer 2* demo type X:\MOTO2SETUP.EXE where X is the letter of your CD drive, and press Enter. The setup program for *Moto Racer 2* will then run. You can also use the File Manager or Explorer to find the appropriate directory on *The CD*, and then double-click on the installation command.

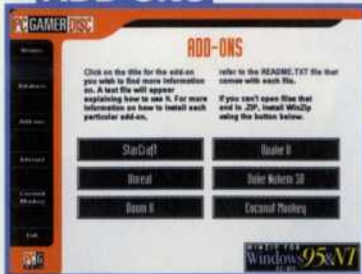
Please remember that if you're using Windows 3.1, you cannot run most Windows 95 demos or our front end.

* Indicates that the demo requires DirectX to run. Install DirectX by running DXSETUP.EXE in the \DIRECTX directory on *The CD*.

Demo	Directory	Install Command	Page	OS
Grim Fandango*		GRIM.EXE	10	WIN95
Final Fantasy VII*	\FF7DEMO	SETUP.EXE	13	WIN95
Incubation*	\INCUDemo	INCUDemo.EXE	14	WIN95
SWAT 2	\SWAT2	SWAT2DEMO.EXE	18	WIN95
Kuba	\KUBADEMO	KUBADEMO.EXE	19	WIN95
Golden Tee Golf*	\GTGOLF	SETUP.EXE	20	WIN95
Golf 1998*	\MSGOLF	MSGOLF98.EXE	20	WIN95
International Rally*	\RALLY	RALE.XE	22	WIN95
Brunswick Circuit Bowling*	\THQ_BOWL	BOLWING.EXE	22	WIN95
Moto Racer 2*	\MOTO2	SETUP.EXE	23	WIN95
EarthLink	\EARTHLink	SETUP.EXE	24	WIN95
MindSpring	\MSPRING	SETUP.EXE	24	WIN95
Kick Ass Game Add-ons	\Addons		24	WIN95
Doom2	\DOOM2			
Duke 3D	\DUKE3D			
Quake 2	\QUAKE2			
StarCraft	\STARCRAFT			
Unreal	\UNREAL			
Patches	\PATCHES		219	

FINDING YOUR WAY AROUND

ADD-ONS



All the add-ons on *The CD* are located here, with instructions for use.

INTERNET



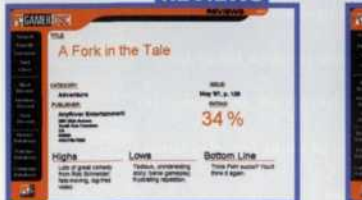
If you want to get online fast, this is the place to go. Get your Internet fix here!

COCONUT MONKEY



What's our lovable companion up to now? Click this button to find out!

REVIEWS



What rating did that game you found in the bargain bin get when it was new? The Reviews Database contains handy summaries of all the reviews we've ever published.

DEMOS



Which month's CD had that demo you've been meaning to try? The Demos Database tells you everything you need to know about demos that have appeared on *The CD*.

PATCHES



Looking for a patch for that ailing game? Check out our Patches Database, listing every fix and update we've covered in the Extended Play column and included on *The CD*.

COMPANY



Wondering how to reach a game's publisher? Here's the place to go. Whether you want their street address, tech support number, or web site address, we've got it all here.

DEMOS



The menu screen lets you go to any demo at any time. To access demos not available on the opening screen, just click "More Demos."

The "Install the Demo" does just what you'd expect. Most demos come with README files that further explain game-play. If you want a hard-copy of the game's README.TXT file, click "Print README.TXT."

If you don't want to print the README.TXT file, you can scroll through this window and get detailed information on your selected demo.

PC GAMER DISC

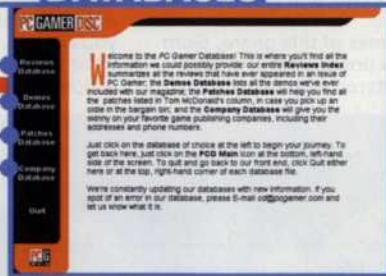
Created with NeoBook for Windows 95

Welcome to The CD!

Set down and get ready for the ride of your life. This month's demos will knock your socks off. We've got LucasArts' eagerly anticipated *Grim Fandango* for all you adventure fans. Continuing the adventure / roleplaying theme, we managed to get a new, updated *Final Fantasy VII* demo from Eidos. This time, it supports a variety of 3D cards, and there's a software-only mode, too. We also got our hands on Blue Byte's *Incubation: The Wilderness*

Missions, a demo of the add-on pack for last year's best turn-based strategy game. For racing fans, we picked up *Moto Racer 2* from Electronic Arts. It's hard to find a motorcycle racing game as fun as this one! And that's not all! Check out some Coconut Monkey memorabilia you won't find on any other CD anywhere! Along with our usual assortment of excellent add-ons for your favorite games, we deliver the Gaming Goodness(TM) you've come to love and expect!

DATABASES



Grim Fandango

INSTALL VGRIM.EXE

TECH SUPPORT (415) 507-4545

CATEGORY: Adventure

COMPANY: LucasArts

REQUIRED: Windows 95; Pentium; 16MB RAM;
4MB hard-drive space; 2MB PCI graphics card;
DirectX

It's hard being dead. Just ask Manny Calavera. Stuck in his own personal purgatory, Manny is a travel agent in the Land of the Dead. Employed by the Department of Death, he has to pick up people in the Land of the Living, bring them to the Land of the Dead, and set them off on their four-year journeys across the underworld — a trot that all souls must enjoy before coming to their eternal resting places. Unlike the rest of the souls, however, Manny can't move on until he meets his sales quota — unfortunately, he's caught up in the middle of an embezzlement ring that's preventing him from getting the right clients. In this demo of *Grim Fandango*, you must help Manny right the wrongs and determine the eternal destiny of his soul. No pressure there!

An adventure game like no other, *Grim Fandango* takes the Mexican Day of the Dead and mixes it with a classic film noir style. The demo gives you a glimpse into Manny's world, as you begin to unravel the truth about what's really going on. To accomplish this, you'll need to interact with the dead people that populate the world — some are none too eager to talk, so you'll need to coax information out of them. Some will also give you items that could come in handy later.

Like most games of this genre, *Grim Fandango* has you doing a lot of exploring. Clues are scattered everywhere, and



Ah, life at sea. This highly anticipated game will have you exploring the Land of the Dead in no time.

it's only through serious adventuring that you'll discover them. The beginning of the demo will find you setting out on a mission to collect carrier-pigeon eggs. Speak with the two "revolutionaries" in the room with you, then head on out through the elevator. To speak to someone or use an item, simply use the movement keys to walk over to them (or it), and press the action key (Enter). If you're holding an item, you'll automatically use it upon pressing the action key. If you're speaking with someone, you'll enter a menu that offers you a list of questions you can ask them. Simply scroll down to what you want to say and press the action key — a conversation will follow,

then you'll have the option of speaking some more, or leaving.

SPECIAL NOTE: In order to play the nifty *Grim Fandango* demo, you must have *The CD* in your CD-ROM drive. Have fun!



The dead aren't the only ones wandering around this fantastic world. Look at that orange thing!

CONTROL KEYS

Move Forward	NUMBERPAD 8
Move Backward	NUMBERPAD 2
Turn Right	NUMBERPAD 6
Turn Left	NUMBERPAD 4
Run	SHIFT + 8
Examine Item	NUMBERPAD 5
Inventory	NUMBERPAD Ins
Scroll Through Inventory	4 + 6
Put Item in Hand	Enter
Pick up Item	NUMBERPAD +
Return Item to Inventory	NUMBERPAD -
Use Item/Talk to Character	Enter
Look at Next Nearby Item	NUMBERPAD Del
Pause	Pause
Skip Dialogue Line	.
Skip Cut Scenes	ESC
Quit Game	Alt + X



Odds of landing this move: 10 to 1.

Odds of fathering children afterwards: 1,000,000 to 1.



Sick stunts and even sicker crashes. 16 get-some-serious-air stunts, like the outrageous Heel Clicker and insane Nac-Nac. Loads of notify-your-next-of-kin wipeouts. Either way you land it, you're a crowd favorite.



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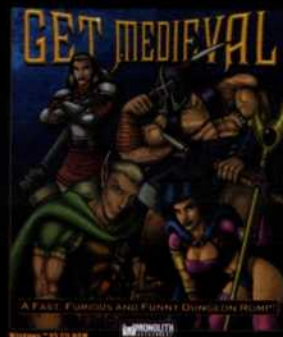
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Final Fantasy VII

INSTALL FF7/DEMO/SETUP.EXE

TECH SUPPORT (415) 547-1244

CATEGORY: Roleplaying

COMPANY: Eidos Interactive

REQUIRED: Windows 95; Pentium; 32MB RAM; 78MB hard-drive space; DirectX; DirectMedia

Remember watching those killer *Final Fantasy VII* commercials on TV last year and cursing PlayStation owners everywhere because the game was not available on the PC? ("Only On PlayStation," the ads said, and you shook with righteous anger.) Well, chums, your prayers have been answered: Eidos has released the PC version of the game. When a game is released, a demo can't be far behind — and here it is!

Final Fantasy VII deals with an evil company called Shinra, which has found a way to mine the planet's life energy, draining it in an effort to control the universe. Some people are none too pleased with this, so they form a group called Avalanche to try and stop this lunacy. You play as Cloud, an ex-soldier of Shinra who teams with Avalanche. And off you go, fighting all sorts of creatures along the way.

The demo lets you explore some of the area of Mt. Corel and interact with the citizens of North Corel. When you encounter someone you wish to speak with, use the Action key (Enter) and chat it up. As with any roleplaying game, make sure you gather every bit of information you can — it could be critical later on.

Combat happens at random spots in the game; when it does, you have several options, including using magic, summoning a monster, or using an item in your inventory. Simply scroll down to your choice and press Enter. For a visual treat, try summoning a monster, then step back and enjoy the show.

You'll also notice that when you're fighting, three characters appear on the screen: Cloud and his two travelling companions. You control them in combat, too. Each character needs time to prepare for his or her turn; as combat progresses, the game will automatically take you to the next person who's ready to fight.

For even more tantalizing details regarding the *FF VII* demo, be sure to check out the game's README FILE.

SPECIAL NOTE: Unlike the *FF VII* demo which ran in the June issue of *PCG*, this demo supports several different 3D accelerators (not just Voodoo Graphics), and it also works in an unaccelerated, software-only mode.

CONTROL KEYS

Forward	
Backward	
Left	
Right	
Action (OK Button)	
Cancel/Run	
Menu	
Switch	
Highlight Target	
Pause During Battle	
Help	
Quit	



Here comes a battle! Cloud and his buddy look ready to fight. Say your prayers, sucker!

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GENX SERIES

Incubation: The Wilderness Missions

INSTALL: \UNCUDEMO\UNCUDEMO.EXE

TECH SUPPORT: (847) 995-9981

CATEGORY: Strategy

COMPANY: Blue Byte

REQUIRED: Win95; Pentium; 16MB RAM; 37MB hard-drive space; 2MB video card; DirectX

Something went horribly awry during a recovery mission on the planet Scayra, and now you're stranded with only a few soldiers and no means to radio for help. Desperate to find a way out of this hellhole, you journey into the jungle (cue spooky music), where you find horrors that will make you wish you'd stayed put.

Blue Byte follows its excellent *Incubation* (PC Gamer's choice for Turn-Based Strategy Game of 1997) with *Incubation: The Wilderness Missions*, an expansion pack that provides even more turn-based, alien-fighting, 3D action.

The demo gives you one mission from the new expansion pack: The Jungle. When you start the demo, you're given the choice of playing in either software mode, or with 3Dfx-compatible 3D acceleration, depending on your system. Before getting to the action, you need to decide how you wish to play the level. There are two ways to get into it: Instant Action or Load Game. With Instant Action, you get to enter your name and outfit your squad with the weapons of your choice. In Load Game, you jump straight into the level with the default settings and weapons already selected.

Once in the game, you'll find yourself in the jungle of Scayra, surrounded



See your boys, there? They're all that stands between you and a horde of aliens.

on all sides by strange architecture and the extremely vicious Scay'Ger. Since the game is turn-based, you can only move one soldier at a time. Click on a soldier, and he'll be surrounded by a field of white circles with numbers; these represent the amount of action points needed to move the unit to that location. If you move a unit to 0, then all points are used, and you can't do anything else with him for that turn. Moving to a 2 allows for more moving, shooting, or going into defensive mode. (To use

defensive mode, you must have two action points. Click on the shield icon at the bottom of the screen, and that unit will fire at any nearby baddies.) Keep in mind that if a unit still has action points available and you click on a different unit, all points from the first unit are lost — so be sure you're done before you go click-happy.

On both sides of the screen are rows of icons — simply move the mouse over each, and a small description will appear, telling you that icon's function. You can also change the camera angle by pressing and holding the right mouse button and moving the mouse to the position that gives you the view you're looking for.

SPECIAL NOTE: Although the demo for *Incubation: The Wilderness Missions* will work without the original game, the final product will require the full, registered version of *Incubation: Time is Running Out* in order to work.



Each player only gets so many action points per turn — use them wisely.



They may look like innocent little bugs, but they are capable of frying your ass up good.

Voodoo Banshee™



Contest URL: www.3dfx.com/win-a-banshee

Go to www.pcgamer.com/request Product #773

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Police Quest: SWAT 2

INSTALL \SWAT2\SWAT2DEMO.EXE

TECH SUPPORT (206) 644-4343

CATEGORY: Strategy

COMPANY: Sierra

REQUIRED: Windows 95; Pentium; 16MB RAM;
44MB hard-drive space; sound card; SVGA

The demo gives you one mission from the full game — a bank robbery-turned-hostage-situation. We're told it's loosely based on the North Hollywood robbery that took place on February 28, 1997, in which guys with body armor and automatic weapons shot up the town.

A similar situation takes place here: A robbery goes awry when a silent alarm alerts the police. Now the would-be robbers have taken the employees hostage. As the leader of the SWAT team called to the scene, you must free the hostages



As you storm the bank, you need to take out any robbers that stand in your way.



You start off next to the bus, but you need to work your way up to the bank. Make it quick!

and arrest the bad guys. Of course, you may have to read them their rights to the tune of a Heckler & Koch MP5.

When the demo starts up, click on Quick Mission, then Play Scenario. Add the Active Elements by pressing the Add button, then hit OK. This will take you into the game — you start out beside the

SWAT bus, and you must make your way to the bank, which is two buildings up from your current location. At the bottom of the screen (in the center) is a space where you receive communications. The robbers already have a demand — they want a phone. It's up to you whether you'll give in to this demand or tell them to slag off. But remember: your decisions have an effect on how the mission plays out, and carelessness could cost some innocent people their lives.

If you decide to grant the phone request, select your leader (the one with EL above him). To the right, a phone will appear. Click on the phone, then on the location where you want to drop it. After the drop occurs, pull your man back behind some cover.

From this point, you're on your own. Each member of the team carries different weapons — select a member, and his inventory will appear in the window on the right-hand side. Just to the left of this is a menu; right-click on each icon to get an explanation of what it does.

To fire at one of the robbers, select the weapon of choice; the cursor will turn into a scope. Move the scope over the baddie, then click to open fire.

BILLY'S TIP

A booby trap is hidden in the bank, and you'll have to disarm it. Of course, you can't do that until you find it. One of your men is equipped with a mirror designed to let him look under things — like a door, for instance. Use it, and watch your step!



Make sure you secure each area before moving on, or you'll take some unexpected hits.

Kuba

INSTALL: KUBADEMO\KUBADEMO.EXE
TECH SUPPORT: www.patchproducts.com
CATEGORY: Puzzle
COMPANY: Patch Products
REQUIRED: Windows 95; 486; 8MB RAM; 20MB hard-drive space; 1MB SVGA

In this PC version of the "classic push-to-play boardgame," you'll be clanking marbles and dominating the board in nothing flat. Don't like the look of those red marbles? Then do something about it by knocking them into the abyss.

The *Kuba* demo gives you one board to play. Once play begins, you'll need to move your marbles out and knock the red marbles from the board so you can collect 'em. You can only move in two directions: horizontally or vertically (diagonals aren't allowed); you can't jump over any marbles; and the space behind the marble you wish to push must be free. Keep in mind that if you — or your opponent — push a single marble (or a row of marbles at the end), then you must wait one turn before you can push back.

You capture other marbles by pushing them into the gutter. The game is over when you have filled your slots with marbles.

BILLY'S CHALLENGE

How many marbles can you klick-klack in one move? Billy managed to get eight marbles in one hold move! Beat that!

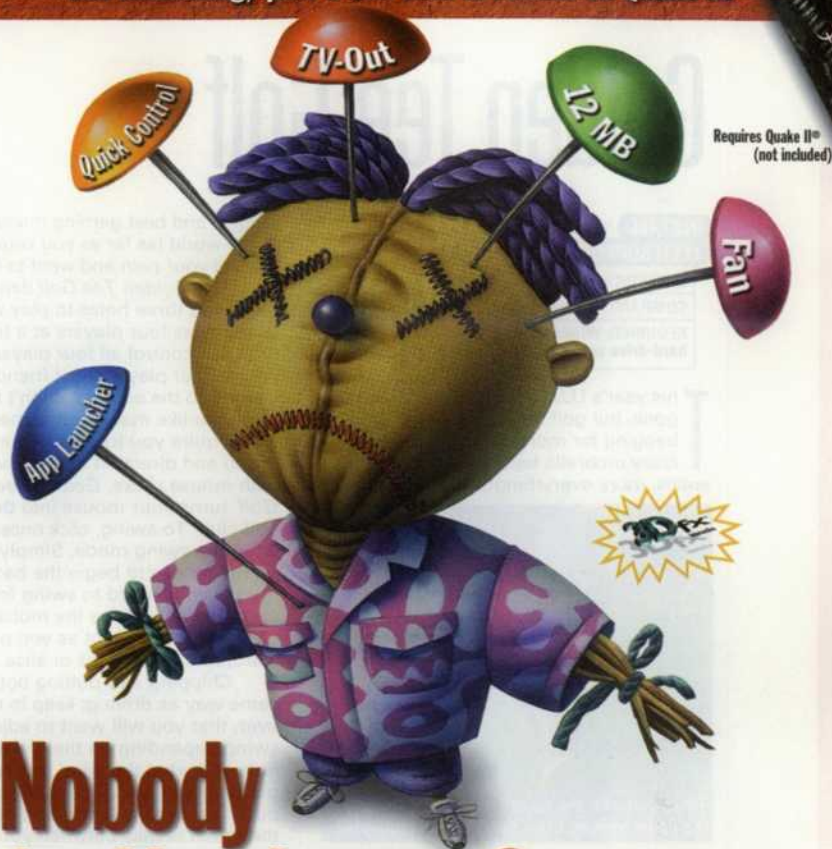


This simple, yet addictive, game will give you hours and hours of gaming lunacy. Klick-klack!



What's this, *Kuba* over a manhole? Will the madness never stop?

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Golden Tee Golf

INSTALL VGTGOLFSETUP.EXE

TECH SUPPORT (714) 553-6678

CATEGORY: Sports

COMPANY: Incredible Technologies

REQUIRED: Windows 95; 16MB RAM; 30MB hard-drive space; mouse; DirectX

This year's U.S. Open has come and gone, but golf fanatics everywhere are begging for more. (More golf, more crazy umbrella hats, more insane antics, more everything!) Well, as the



There's one for the record books! Oh, wait — it's in the bunker. Crap, can I have a mulligan?

biggest and best gaming magazine in the world (as far as you know), we feel your pain and want to help.

The *Golden Tee Golf* demo gives you three holes to play with as many as four players at a time (you can control all four players yourself, or play against friends). Getting to the action couldn't be easier; unlike many golf games that require you to control the speed and direction of your swing with mouse clicks, *Golden Tee Golf* turns your mouse into the golf club. To swing, click once, and you'll enter the swing mode. Simply pull back on the mouse to begin the back-swing, then push forward to swing forward and strike the ball. Move the mouse the least bit to the left or right as you push forward, and you'll hook or slice.

Chipping and putting both work the same way as driving; keep in mind, however, that you will want to adjust your swing depending on the distance to the hole and what the wind is doing. Once on the green, you'll need to adjust your putt right or left, depending on the way the green breaks between you and the



The graphic to the left shows how far your shot will travel; simply move the mouse back until the bars line up.

cup. Simply push the mouse right or left when pushing forward, and you'll be good to go.

The demo also includes a feature called Shadow Player; you record a round and save it, then restart the demo using the Shadow Player, which simply plays back your previous round, letting you compete against yourself.

BILLY'S CHALLENGE

On this three-hole course, Billy shot a four under par his first time out. Can you beat that?

Microsoft Golf 1998

INSTALL MSGOLF\MMSGOLF98.EXE

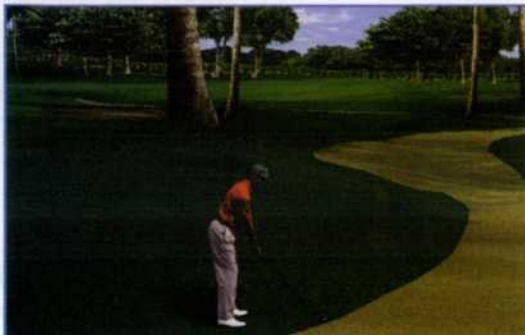
TECH SUPPORT (206) 637-9308

CATEGORY: Sports

COMPANY: Microsoft

REQUIRED: Windows 95; Pentium; 16MB RAM; 55MB hard-drive space; mouse; DirectX

Could this be *more* golfing madness? And from those craaaazy folks at Microsoft, no less? Surely they must own the entire free world by now — with the sole exception of America's golf courses, the last bastion of democracy and freedom (at least for rich folks).



The scenery is so real-looking that you'll feel like you're really standing on a fairway out on a course.

Only there, among the green grass and security gates can freedom live.

All kidding aside (We love Microsoft! No, really — please don't squash us like lowly worms, Mr. Gates!), *Microsoft Golf 1998* continues Microsoft's long-lived series of links simulations. The demo lets you play two in different modes: stroke play (with one or two players), and Bingo Bango Bongo, a stroke game that includes bets for various play options. Be the first on the green, and you win some cash (not real cash, unfortunately — this is the same virtual stuff you lost a bundle of in *Casino Deluxe*).

To start the demo, click "Check Out the Trial Version" on the startup screen. This will take you to a menu, where you'll choose the type of game you wish to play. Make your choice, and you're all set.

Microsoft Golf 1998 uses a traditional mouse-click interface to control the speed and direction of your swing. At the beginning of the hole, a golfer will appear — to change the direction of his stance, click to the right of him. When you're ready to



Watch that meter when taking your shot — screw up, and you're in the drink.

swing, move your mouse over the semi-circle floating over the player. Click with the mouse to start the backswing — be sure to hold down the mouse button as the line moves up the bar. To start the forward swing, release the button, then click once again (near the yellow bar) to determine whether or not the ball slices or hooks. Try to get it right on the yellow line to hit the ball straight.

If you don't like the default club selection, simply click the club icon in the bottom right corner of the screen, then select the club you wish to use. If you don't like your shot, you can always take a mulligan and try again.

SCORE
-1600
LIVES
170



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DIAMOND
MULTIMEDIA

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International Rally Championship

INSTALL RALLYRAL.EXE

TECH SUPPORT (818) 591-1310 x2

CATEGORY: Racing

COMPANY: THQ

REQUIRED: Windows 95; Pentium; 16MB RAM; DirectX

You probably already knew this, but racing is cool. Punch down on the accelerator and let that baby roll as the landscape rushes past you at unimaginable speeds...one mistake and you're toast, nothing but a skid-mark and a scrap of cloth (and maybe a shoe). Avoid the face-plant, though, and you'll obtain glory, power, and riches beyond your wildest dreams.

Okay, that's a stretch. But racing games for the PC are enjoying a real renaissance because they let us do things we'd never get away with in real life. And the demo for *International Rally Championship* takes that one step further, letting you race a really fast car in a beautiful and exotic foreign land full of strange and wonderful sights and shallow women who speak with accents and like sports cars.



Oh, yeah! Look at me drive like a lunatic across this foreign country. No wonder everyone hates Americans!

When you start the demo, you'll be presented with the main menu. Click on Options to enter the setup menu, where you can choose your controller, the amount of visual detail, etc. Once everything suits you, click Done and you'll return to the main menu. Now click on

dle of the screen to let you know which way you'll be wrenching the wheel in a few split-seconds.

SPECIAL NOTE: The demo runs directly off of the CD and doesn't install any files on your system. Neat, huh?

Race, baby!

You're allowed one lap around the course. Driving is pretty simple — accelerate, steer, and mind you don't touch the brakes unless you want to slow down. The road is a mix of asphalt and grass — the grassy areas slow you down as traction decreases. A helpful announcer will warn you of upcoming curves, and an arrow will pop up in the mid-

Brunswick Circuit Pro Bowling

INSTALL THQ_BOWL\BOWLING.EXE

TECH SUPPORT (818) 591-1310 x2

CATEGORY: Sports

COMPANY: THQ

REQUIRED: Windows 95; Pentium; 16MB RAM; DirectX

One of the few remaining sports that have yet to see a full-fledged rush onto the PC is bowling — but THQ is looking to remedy that situation with the upcoming release of *Brunswick Circuit Pro Bowling*. And since everyone is champing at the bit to roll that big, black ball across their computer screens,



Make sure you get both meters in the green, or that ball will be visiting the gutter.

we've managed to score the demo.

The demo lets you bowl seven frames — just enough to whet your appetite and give you a feel for the virtual lanes. To start a new game, click New Game, and then select Exhibition. The bowler registry lists all the bowlers who will be competing. To add a human player (your player) click Add Player, then "Brunswick Pro" to pick which person you wish to play as. You can compete against one computer opponent — simply click Add CPU Bowler, and you'll have a bit of competition while you play.

To play, move the mouse over to the left-hand side of the screen, where you'll see an overhead view of the lane. Put the cursor on the green arrow and left-click; this will let you change the direction the ball will follow. Below the lane are two arrows — these will determine the spin of the ball. Move them until you get the shot you're looking for, then click on the bowling ball.

This will take you to the actual



Use the mouse to move the green arrow; this will adjust your shot.

bowling sequence. Two bars will appear; one is for power, and the other is for accuracy. The meter will move up through the bar; click when the meter reaches the green section of the bar. Once this done, the computer will take over and do the rest.

SPECIAL NOTE: The demo runs directly from *The CD* and doesn't install files on your system.

Moto Racer 2

INSTALL \MOTO2SETUP.EXE

TECH SUPPORT (650) 571-7171

CATEGORY: Racing

COMPANY: Electronic Arts

REQUIRED: Windows 95; Pentium; 16MB RAM; 100MB hard-drive space; D3D video card; DirectX

Ah, yes, motorcycle racing — is there anything quite like the feeling of hurling yourself down a hill at more than 100 miles an hour, knowing full well that on the next hill you're going to catch big air and probably crash and burn? Not that we know of.

Of course, no one here at *PC Gamer* actually knows that feeling — racing a real motorcycle would mean having to go *outside*, into the sunlight — so we rely on Electronic Arts to help us out. The *Moto Racer 2* demo is a preview of the sequel to the most excellent *Moto Racer*, and this newer version looks to carry on that fine racing tradition.

The demo gives you two tracks to choose from: Flying Jump and Soft Ring.



This is going to be good. Hang on!

After starting the demo, you'll go through a series of set-up screens that let you set up your bike and your controller. Work your way through these until you reach the track-selection screen. On the right-hand side of this screen are a couple of icons that determine the weather conditions and

whether you're racing at night or in daylight. Play with these until you're satisfied, then you're all set. For a real hoot, race at night, in the snow!

Racing is pretty straightforward — you steer, accelerate, and brake using your chosen controller. There's also a turbo button that will give you a big, wheelie-popping boost and let you pull some rad stunts while in the air.

You get two laps during each race, so don't waste time. Put the hammer down and let 'er roll!

SPECIAL NOTE: To play the *Moto Racer 2* demo, you must have a D3D video card installed on your system.



What could be more fun than racing at night while some beautiful snow is falling? Not a thing, baby!



Yee-haw! We're catching some big air on this track! You better hope your cup is in place, brother, or this is going to hurt you more than it hurts the bike — we guarantee it.



QUESTION:

There's two outs with a runner on third, count is two and two, and the game

is on the line. As the pitcher winds up, you see your teammate barreling towards home and you step away from the plate. The

ump yells "Strike Three," at the same time your teammate touches home.

The run scores?

TRUE

Go to Page 185

or

FALSE

Go to Page 251

MindSpring

INSTALL \MSPRING\SETUP.EXE

TECH SUPPORT (800) 719-4660

CATEGORY: Online service

COMPANY: MindSpring

REQUIRED: 486; 8MB RAM; 25MB HD space;
SVGA; Windows 3.1+; 14.4Kbps or faster modem

MindSpring will launch you onto the Internet with all sorts of goodies at your disposal — you can use E-mail, the World Wide Web, read Usenet newsgroups, and even gain access to free news, stock information, and web support.

The pricing is competitive, too: the Light service gives you five hours of service a month for \$6.95 and \$2 per each additional hour, along with 5MB of web space for your own web page. The Standard plan is \$14.95 a month for 20 hours, with each additional hour costing one dollar. You also get 5MB of web space with this one. The Unlimited service gives you unlimited hours for \$19.95 a month (without web space), while The Works service gives you unlimited hours, along with two extra E-mail boxes and ten megabytes of web space for \$26.95 a month!

MindSpring uses its Pipeline+ software to give Windows 95 users a direct TCP/IP connection to the Internet, using the Microsoft Dial-Up Adapter. That means any of those online games that say they require a TCP/IP connection will work beautifully with MindSpring. If you use Windows 3.1, MindSpring uses Connect rather than the Dial-Up Adapter, which gives you a 16-bit TCP/IP connection, so you can still play those online games (as long as they don't require a 32-bit connection). For the online gamer, MindSpring offers all you need to start fragging your friends!

With its realistic pricing and a whole slew of services available, MindSpring is a good starting point for getting onto the Internet. Best of all, if you install the software from *The CD*, the \$25 launching fee will be waived. Talk about service!

HAVING PROBLEMS?

We cannot provide technical support for problems you may encounter with the demos on *The CD*. Please use the tech support numbers listed with the demos. You can also go to <http://support.imagine-media.com> or www.pcgamer.com for a FAQ.

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Earthlink

INSTALL \EARTH\SETUP.EXE

TECH SUPPORT (800) 395-8410

CATEGORY: Online service

COMPANY: Earthlink

REQUIRED: 486; 8MB RAM; 15MB HD space;
SVGA; Windows 3.1 or higher; 9600bps modem

EarthLink Network, winner of the 1997 *PC Magazine* Editors' Choice Award for Best Internet Service Provider, supports all kinds of Internet games and even has its own online gaming site (www.thearena.com). EarthLink membership includes unlimited Internet access, unlimited E-mail, a free 6MB of space for your own web site, a free subscription to *bLink*, EarthLink's newsletter, and your choice of browser. We've got two ways for you to connect: a standard three-day trial or a special 14-day trial with a discount subscription to your favorite mag, *PC Gamer*.

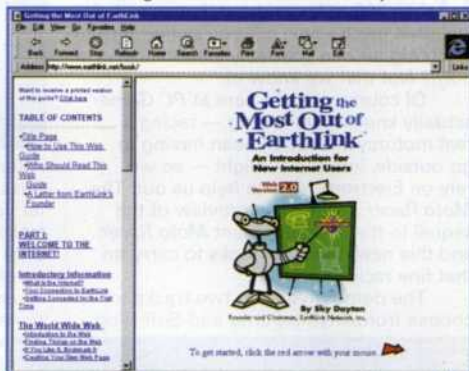
For the three-day trial, just install the software and enter all the information you're prompted for. You can test the service for three days; after that, you'll be billed for \$19.95 a month unless you cancel.

The 14-day trial is a bit different. Subscribe to *PC Gamer* at a

special low price, and you'll get two weeks to check out EarthLink. If you've already got a subscription and take advantage of this offer, you'll get an extra year added to your account.

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So what are you waiting for? Load up the goodies and get ready to start surfing the Internet Earthlink style!



Earthlink offers a virtual plethora of online support features, and it's all only a click away.

Kick Ass Game Add-Ons

Since Blizzard included a level editor with *StarCraft*, it was only a matter of time before killer levels and scenarios began to find their way onto PCs everywhere. Some of the most popular scenarios take a cue from the much-loved *Starship Troopers* and feature an all-out bug-hunt as the Zerg try to crush the Terrans. One of these, "Starship Troopers 2," is a multi-player scenario that lets one side play as the Zerg while the other side plays as the Terrans. This one is a blast — be sure to check out the readme file for some important tips and hints.

And what would a disc be without *Quake II* levels? How about a new level designed by Neil Manke, the genius behind our own well-received "Coconut Monkey" *Quake II* level? Our good buddy Neil is back with "Slaughtership," a horrific level designed to baffle you at every possible turn. It's excellent work from one of the best designers around.

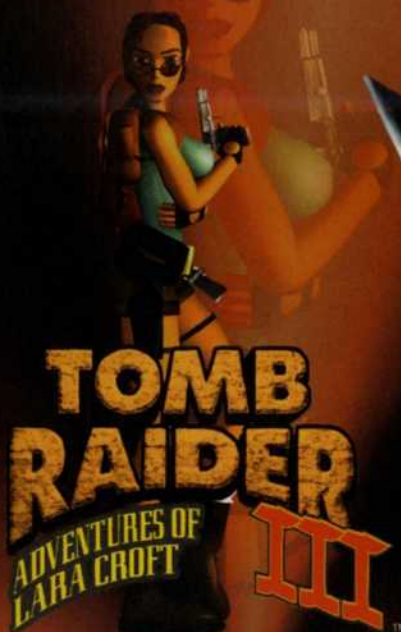
And that's not all —

we've rounded up a horde of *Doom II* levels that should bring a nostalgic tear to your eye (or maybe just a bloodthirsty gleam), and there are also a couple of nifty *Duke Nukem 3D* levels tossed in for good measure. Have fun, and remember: play nice!



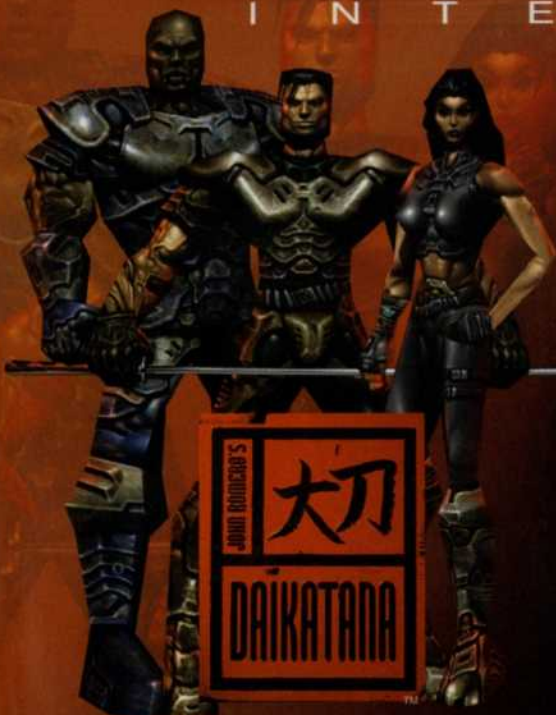
This is just a sample of what awaits on you aboard "Slaughtership." Better hold onto your britches and say your prayers!

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Others, to seek the fellowship
of the congregation.

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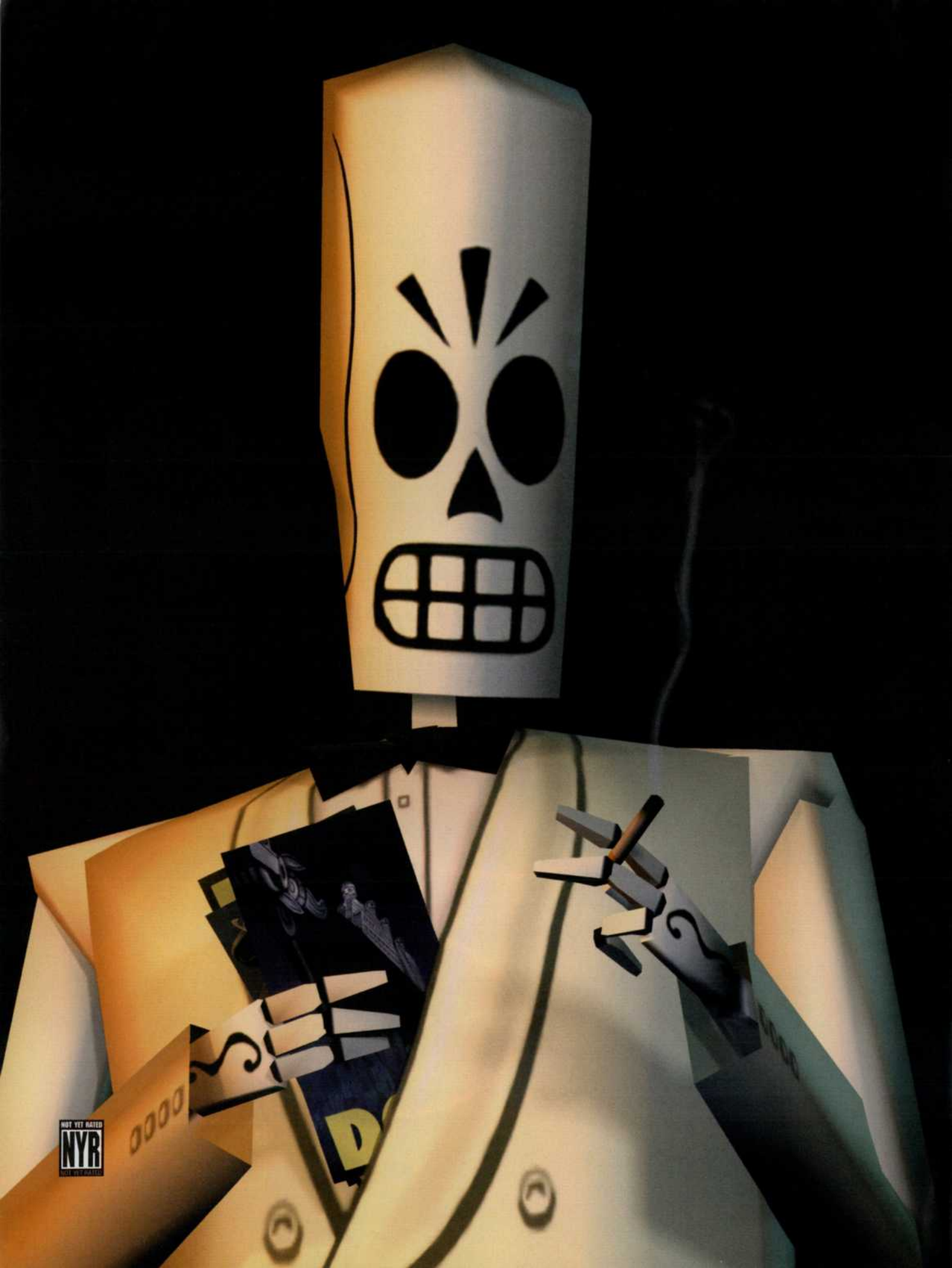


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Revisiting the Lands

Westwood's popular roleplaying series continues with *Lands of Lore III*

The third installment in the *Lands of Lore* series from Westwood Studios is in the works. After a somewhat lukewarm reception from gamers toward *Lands of Lore II: Guardians of Destiny* because of the aging technology of the game engine, Westwood is making sure that *Lands of Lore III* is up to current standards. The engine will support 3D accelerator cards, and the interface has been redesigned to be more intuitive and streamlined.

The story starts out in the familiar kingdom of Gladstone. You assume the role of Copper, the sixteen-year-old illegitimate son of King Richard and a Dracoid. Your entire life has been spent living the life of a commoner, until one day the King and his two sons are attacked and killed by supernatural dogs coming through a dimensional

portal. You narrowly escape being taken out yourself, being saved by a magic spell from an old friend. Since the spell only stays effective for a limited time, you must hurry to close the five portals through which the dogs entered, or else you'll lose your soul.

Westwood's goal is to make *Lands of Lore III* much less linear than the previous titles, letting players have leeway to do things their own way while keeping the plot tight. Louis Castle, executive vice-president of Westwood Studios, says, "I think the trick is to give the player clear goals and objectives, but give him lots and lots of choices about how to achieve them. No two players should get to the end of the game in exactly the same way. In fact, the ultimate satisfaction for us as game creators is to hear from fans who completed the game in a way that even we didn't think of. If we can create a world where it feels as if anything can happen, that would be the ultimate for us."

Lands of Lore III will feature six vast areas to explore through a first-person perspective. These will include the town of Gladstone (including the Keep and the Draracle Caves), a shattered desert land torn apart by nuclear war, a volcanic island, an arctic land inhabited by barbarian women, a gothic



The five portals you need to close all lead to different worlds, with monsters that reflect their environs.

underworld, and the Ruloi homeworld. Throughout your journeys, you will encounter more than 100 non-player characters to interact with, 50 weapons to wield, 65 spells to cast, and 24 new alchemical items to experiment with.

So that the player will be able to mold Cotton to the style of play they prefer, *Lands of Lore III* will have a guild system. By joining a guild, you'll be able to modify your skills by learning the ways of the Warrior, Wizard, Cleric, and Thief. Each guild joined will also provide the player with a choice of taking on a familiar — a helper creature that aids the player with unique special abilities. Depending

on the guild in question, you will be able to choose an Iron Golem (Warrior), Homunculus (Wizard), Glitterfay (Cleric), or Shadow (Thief). A familiar will not appear as a member of the player's party, but they will have hit points and can be injured or killed.

Things are shaping up nicely for *Lands of Lore III* to bring this series back to respectability. The graphics, using Westwood's new voxel technology, are a big step up from the dated and dreary look of the previous title, and the deep story and slick interface should please even the most demanding PC role-players when *Lands of Lore III* is released this winter.



The graphics engine in the new game will be a vast improvement over *Lands of Lore II*, especially if you have a 3D accelerator.

Enter the Arena

"Quake III" to concentrate on multi-player

In a gutsy move, id Software's John Carmack, the man most responsible for the first-person shooter craze, has announced that the next title in the extremely popular Quake series will be a strictly multi-player affair.

The new game (which is still officially untitled, but may be called *Quake III: Arena*) will have a single player element, but it will be limited to a ranking ladder system against artificially intelligent bots. The heart of the game will be the multi-player features, including classic deathmatch style gaming as well as the many derivatives that it has spawned, such as capture the flag.

This latest move by id came as a surprise to industry observers, considering that many of the companies that have licensed the *Quake II* engine are concentrating more on the single-player experience. Carmack feels that it is in his company's best interest to focus on the one area that has given *Quake* and



Quake II their incredibly long life spans (at least in terms of computer games, where the "next big thing" usually signifies a quick end to even the most popular title). He says that the two types of games have conflicting goals, and that design time spent on one is time taken away from the other. He feels that by focusing purely on the multi-player aspects, it will allow the company to make significant advances in this area.

"The emphasis will be on making every aspect as robust and high-quality as possible, rather than trying to add every conceivable option anyone could want," says Carmack, which means there will still be plenty of room for the mod makers out there to build on to the game. He says, "The graphics engine will still be OpenGL only, with significant new features not seen anywhere before, but it will also have fallback modes to render at roughly *Quake II* quality and speed."

We'll find out if this move to multi-player was a wise decision when *Quake III: Arena* hits store shelves this holiday season. In the meantime, *PC Gamer* columnists Dennis Fong and Jason Bates volunteer their opinions about id's decision in this month's issue.

Free and Clear

New Wing Commander game to be distributed over Internet for free

The next installment in the *Wing Commander* series will be available toward the end of the summer. What's even more exciting for fans is that it will be available online for free — all you need is a connection to the Internet, and you'll be able to download a new episode every week.

The new game will be called *Wing Commander: Secret Ops*, and the story will pick up where *Wing Commander: Prophecy* left off. Ownership of the previous title is not a requirement though, as *Secret Ops* will be a stand-alone product with an all-new game engine and cinematics. There will be a total of 56 missions split up into seven episodes. Leading up to the release of each new episode, Origin will be posting a background story on the web site that will prepare players for the upcoming missions. The action-packed gameplay of *Prophecy* will



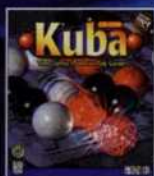
All you need to get your hands on the next *Wing Commander* game is an Internet connection.

remain intact, but *Secret Ops* promises new weapons, larger, more intense battles, new Confederation bases and remote stations to explore, and cameos from past *Wing Commander* ships.

Origin says that the reason it is giving away *Secret Ops* for free is because the company wanted to say "thank you" to its customers and supporters, according to Rod Nakamoto, executive producer of the project.

To see a preview of *Wing Commander: Secret Ops*, go to www.secretops.com and bookmark it so you can return later this summer to enjoy the one thing that everybody says you'll never get — something for nothing.

I Can Quit Any Time I Want To.



Kuba — Push seven neutral marbles off the board first and win. I beat the A.I.'s first level after five minutes. Level two spanked me. So I figured I'd try my luck against some humans! You know how many of those there are out there?! Now I play this guy over the Internet, my sister in Reno, and the accountant at work crushes me over our LAN while taunting me with the chat feature no less! Did I mention that I beat the first level?

ZD NET gave *Kuba* a "*****" rating. I gave it five minutes — just to try it — that was three days ago.

The *KUBA* people also make **Play This, Play That** featuring **Air Hockey**. Now don't get me started. The "real physics programming" equates to realistic puck and paddle motion. I'm talking seamless. If I blink — I'm busted.



And just to ruin me, they put five other games on the disk with *Air Hockey*. Including *Skeet Shooter*. Trust me, after losing in the final round of a 64-player tournament you'll want to blow away some sporting clays. The other 4 games? I haven't even GOTTEN to 'em yet. They're probably not any more addictive than the others. I'm just not ready to quit... that's all.

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Panasonic



Duke Dumps Quake

Next Duke Nukem game moves to Unreal engine

3D Realms has announced that its highly anticipated shooter, *Duke Nukem Forever*, which was originally touted to use the *Quake II* engine, will be converted over to the *Unreal* engine. This turnabout shouldn't cause too many problems though, since the work that has been done in terms of art and textures should transfer smoothly to the new engine. George Broussard, the president of 3D Realms as well as the project leader on *Duke Nukem Forever*, estimates that it will only



Duke Nukem Forever was looking good already, but big things are in store with the move to the *Unreal* engine.

take four to six weeks to accomplish the task.

Broussard says the decision to change engines mid-stream was based on what made sense for the game's design. "The switch to the *Unreal* engine was simply a business decision, and it came down to what we wanted to do with *Duke Nukem Forever* and how best to achieve it. It's important to note that this decision has nothing to do with id Software or our relationship with them, which still remains very strong," said Broussard. Strong relationship or not, the rights to produce games based on the *Quake II* engine

have been lost to 3D Realms by making the switch.

The biggest delay Broussard envisions the change causing is the time it will take for his programmers to learn the new engine and how to best exploit it. 3D Realms also addressed concerns regarding *Unreal*'s high system requirements and Internet play problems. Broussard said that Epic MegaGames (the designers of the *Unreal* engine) is working hard on the Internet play and that fixes are forthcoming. He says all should be in place by the time *Duke Nukem Forever* is ready for public consumption in early 1999.

Hackers Hijack The Realm

30-day free trials suspended

What's being described as a "digital plague" has caused Sierra to temporarily suspend the 30-day free trial period for new users who want to try out the company's online multi-player world, *The Realm*.

The game, which has nearly 20,000 subscribers, can accommodate as many as 3,000 players simultaneously, and features more

than 5,000 rooms and locations, and 11 towns. Since its inception, interested gamers were allowed a free trial period before having to shell out the \$49.95 fee for unlimited access for one full year.

However, a significant number of these free trial users have hacked into the game recently, causing all kinds of chaos for Sierra, as well as to the existing paying customers. The company had no other choice but to suspend the free accounts until it could get to grips with the hackers.

Project manager Mark Zechiel says, "We found no other way was swift and strong enough to deal with this serious problem. Therefore, we have suspended issuance of 30-day accounts until this 'plague' can be quashed. We do not take lightly the destruction these unprincipled users have caused, and cannot overstate how serious we are about protecting *The Realm* and its community of users from this type of 'disease'."

Lead designer and system architect Steve Nichols says, "We have been dealing with serious hacking issues from 'anonymous' 30-day account holders. Whilst we feel we have fixed the majority of the issues, we will continue to monitor the system and handle problems as they arise."

The free trial period may be resumed by the time you read this, but there was no timetable announced. To find out more about *The Realm*, visit www.realmserver.com.



The tranquil and serene world of *The Realm* has been under attack from rogue hackers, causing the free trial period to be suspended.

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Nocturne

In development from Terminal Reality, *Nocturne* is a graphic adventure set in an early 19th century world where ghosts, vampires, zombies, and werewolves really do exist. The existence of these creatures is not public knowledge, and it's up to you, in the role of Josh Rogan, supernatural investigator, to keep it that way. You'll travel around the world investigating supernatural occurrences, and hopefully, cleaning them up. "The *Nocturne* engine features 32-bit color, real-time volumetric lighting and fogging, and even a kitchen sink," says Mark Randel, the lead developer and president of Terminal Reality. Mike Wilson, the founder of the game's publisher, Gathering of Developers, says, "*Nocturne* will help the adventure game genre technologically surpass games in the 3D action market." Bold words for sure, but we'll have to wait until late next year to see the results.



This early screenshot of *Nocturne* gives you a good idea of the mood that the developers are shooting for.

Tribal Lore

Take your pick from one of four tribes and do battle across the mystical pseudo-Celtic land known as, er, um... "Land." You'll need to manage the environment to obtain wealth and technological resources, which will in turn allow you to build the structures necessary for obtaining victory, such as temples, strongholds, and fortresses. As you explore Land, you'll come across magical sites that you can tap and perform feats like

..... Continued on page 36

Continued from page 35

morphing the terrain, affecting the weather, and smiting your foes. The terrain will feature animated whirlpools and waterfalls, deep forests, snow-capped mountains, and island archipelagos. A campaign with an unfolding story line will be included for each of the races, as well as four-player network capability. *Tribal Lore* is due to be released sometime in the fourth quarter of this year and is being developed and published by Gremlin Interactive.



The architecture in *Tribal Lore's* Land is based on a Celtic theme.

Aliens vs. Predator

Take two of Twentieth Century Fox's most popular licenses, combine them, then add a 3D game engine to the mix, and what do you get? One correct answer might be a game featuring Mulder and Scully investigating the mysterious goings on at Moe's Tavern, but not in this case. What we're referring to is a new first-person shooter from Fox Interactive called *Aliens vs. Predator*. The setting for the game is an outlying planet used by military and corporate interests for biological warfare research. Three very different gaming experiences will be offered, depending on which character the player chooses: Alien, Predator, or Marine. Each will have its own objectives, view perspectives, and weapons. Multi-play should be fun too, with the distinct elements of each character adding to the strategy. *Aliens vs. Predator* will be available at the end of the year.

Heavy Metal: F.A.K.K. 2

Late next summer, fans of the

Continued on page 40

Digging Even Deeper

Bullfrog caters to your bad side with *Dungeon Keeper 2*

One of the favorite games of last year here at the PC Gamer office was Bullfrog's *Dungeon Keeper*. This twisted little game offered a unique take on the battle between good and evil by giving the player the chance to be as bad as they wanted to be. So it's not much of a surprise that we can't wait to get our hands on *Dungeon Keeper 2*, scheduled to be released this winter.

Dungeon Keeper 2 will support hardware acceleration right out of the box through Direct3D. This should allow the designers to

make the first-person perspective much slicker than the original. The gameplay will be refined, and a host of new additions will give you more tools for building the ultimate dungeon and



thwarting those pesky heroes.

New rooms will include the Casino, a place for your minions to spend their wages and be entertained in various depraved ways. New monsters will be available for defending your lair, such as the vicious Maidens of the Nest. The number and type of spells at your disposal will be increased, and a wider

selection of traps will give you all you need to make any adventurer's trip through your domain a living hell.

If you have access to the Internet, not only can you enjoy some multi-player mayhem, but you'll be able to download new levels, creatures, and spells as they are made available. Network play will also be supported, but the number of players has yet to be decided. It'll be interesting to see how this sequel fares without the input of the original's creator Peter Molyneux, though. More news on this one soon.

Power to Pandemic

Activision makes good on its promise to fund former internal development teams

Last month we reported that Activision was planning to set up some of its internal development teams as independent studios. We now have received word that the company has made an equity investment in Pandemic Studios, a new start-up venture founded by Josh Resnick and Andrew Goldman, two long-time Activision employees.

In addition to the investment, Activision has signed Pandemic to a five-title deal. The first two games from the new start-up will be sequels to previous Activision titles: *Battlezone* and *Dark Reign*. Both Resnick and Goldman worked on these two properties while with Activision, so the series' are in good hands. Resnick was the director of *Dark Reign* and also

was the producer on *MechWarrior 2*. Goldman served as director on the *Battlezone* project and previously held the directorial duties on *Spycraft: The Great Game*.

PANDEMIC
STUDIOS

Most new development companies have a tough time in the early going, having to deal with finding a publisher that believes in the new company's vision and will provide funding — but not Pandemic, who obviously already has a huge publishing backer in the form of Activision. "I can't imagine a better way to start a company," says Josh Resnick, president of Pandemic. "We're only a week old, yet we've got incredible talent and technology that's worked together

to produce some of the industry's biggest hits. The opportunity is even more exciting knowing that Activision's powerful marketing, sales, and distribution organizations are behind us."

Robert Kotick, CEO of Activision, says, "Over the past few years, we have created an infrastructure to help set up newly formed development teams. We are excited to be able to extend this opportunity

to Josh and Andrew, who have exhibited strong leadership and clear vision in production management and product development. Under their supervision, we believe that Pandemic will emerge as one of the finest developers in the business, and we look forward to a long and successful relationship."

Pandemic Studios will be located in Santa Monica, CA, the same city as its parent company. The first game will be available sometime in the summer of 1999.



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Continued from page 36

1981 cult classic movie *Heavy Metal* will be treated to a big-screen sequel as well as a PC game that continues the story from the new film. In development by Ritual Entertainment, *Heavy Metal: F.A.K.K. 2* (Federation Assigned Ketogenic Killzone) will be an all-out action title using a new engine designed specifically for the game. Details on gameplay are slim, but we do know that Ritual has access to the film's soundtrack and artwork (conceptualized by British artist Simon Bisley). Gathering of Developers will publish the game.



New York is one of the 25 individually detailed cities you can bring to its knees in Blue Byte's upcoming game *Shadowpact*.

Shadowpact

This combination real-time strategy/roleplaying game will let the player take charge of one of 16 cabals vying for domination of a world steeped in historical conspiracies and secret societies. Through the use of agents (choose from 40 individuals, each with his own personality and developing story in the game) you must manage your resources and plot your strategy to achieve a new world order...with you on top. Using the 3D graphics engine from *Incubation*, you'll be able to make your long-range plans on a global view while zooming in to one of the 25 detailed cities when you want to get more personally involved in the missions. LAN and Internet play will accommodate as many as four players, and the game will use its own communications technology developed so that a dedicated server is not required. *Shadowpact* is being developed by Murder of Crows and published by Blue Byte Software. The game should be available sometime this fourth quarter.

PCG

Burnout Gets Better

Fans get their say in this update to the drag-racing hit

Bethesda Softworks is set to give drag racing fans more of what they want with the release of *Burnout: Championship Drag Racing Player's Choice Edition*. This new release will contain the top ten most requested features that were received from gamers who purchased the original title.

"The *Player's Choice Edition* is more than just an add-on pack," says Brent Erickson, director of development for MTL West, the designers of *Burnout: Championship Drag Racing*. "This follow-up title will have substantial enhancements like cockpit views that give you a completely new way to play the game. Plus, there will be lots more cars."

The ten new cars that will be part of the package include a '97 Ford Mustang, '69 Chevy

Camaro, '72 El Camino, and a '78 Chevy Impala. There will be gameplay enhancements too, such as the addition of Nitrous Oxide fuel for powering your missile-like vehicles. There will also be a Paint Shop that lets you alter your car's exterior appearance to your liking. The *Player's Choice Edition* is scheduled for release this September, and may be available by the time you read this.

Whatever edition of *Burnout* you own, you'll be able to join your fellow dragsters online in the Simulated Hot Rod Association (SHRA). Created by *Hot Rod* magazine and Bethesda Softworks, the SHRA is an online league complete with sponsors, prizes, and rankings. The first season of the SHRA began in June, and it expects to have as many as 2,000



After tweaking your engine to perfection, head on over to the paint shop and become an artiste.

participants by the end of the season (as of press time, the current member count was at 981). Several sponsors, including Thrustmaster and Mplayer, are involved, and the SHRA is working with developer MTL West to create enhancements to improve the online experience, such as ways to discourage cheating. To join in on the fun go to www.shra.com, or to find out more, check out Bethesda's website at www.bethsoft.com.

The Not So Friendly Skies

NovaLogic allows owners of different products to fly together online

Gamers who own any of NovaLogic's "Lockheed Martin Fighter Series" flight sims will soon be able to go online and compete against one another on NovaWorld, a free online gaming environment that supports more than 100 players simultaneously.

Currently, the only game supported is *F-22 Raptor*, released last December, but the virtual skies are about to get more crowded this September when two more products from NovaLogic are released. These titles are *F-16 Multi-Role Fighter* and *MiG29 Fulcrum*, but even more vehicles are promised for the future.

The technology that allows these titles to work together is being called Integrated Battle Space (IBS). John Garcia, president and CEO of NovaLogic says, "*F-22 Raptor* set a new standard for

smooth, large-scale Internet play, and we have learned a lot since its release. We have made the servers extremely stable and upgraded the systems considerably. In the near future, we will be expanding the choice of vehicles that can operate with IBS. This is the beginning of something very exciting."

F-16 Multi-Role Fighter will feature 3Dfx-enhanced graphics, and more than 40 single-player

missions taking place in diverse regions throughout the world. It will also come with a mission design tool that lets the player create custom scenarios by choosing which enemies and weapons to go up against, and can also be used to build new structures and objects.

MiG-29 Fulcrum will have 40 single/cooperative missions, and will also come with a scenario designer. The missions and the flight model should be pretty authentic, thanks to the assistance of a former Russian cosmonaut and test pilot who is contributing his expertise.



NovaLogic's "Lockheed Martin Fighter Series" will let flight-sim fans fly with and against one another regardless of which title they own, the *F-16 Multi-Role Fighter*, left, or the *MiG-29 Fulcrum*, right.

Holy Hedgehogs!

Sega announces a slew of PC games due out later this year

PC release announcements from Sega are nothing new — but what *is* new is that, for the first time, the company's line-up isn't comprised entirely of arcade or console ports; there's some original content aimed squarely at the hard-core PC gamer. Here's a round-up:



Be sure to protect your "head of state" in *Conflict of Nations* since you won't be able to replace him (or her).

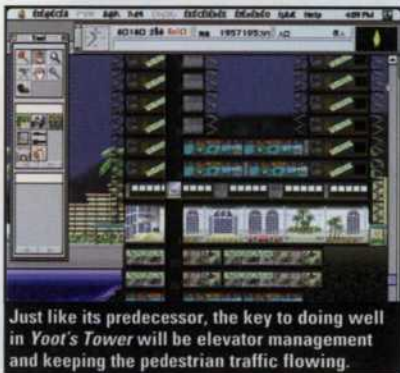
CONFLICT OF NATIONS

This real-time strategy/adventure game promises deep gameplay combined with satirical humor. Players will be launched into an all-out war between six nations, as they take on the role of "head of state," a role that has a double meaning since huge-headed caricatures are used to represent the player on the battlefield. But there's a lot more to the game than big heads — you'll do combat over land, sea, and air with 40 unit types, 18 different buildings, and eight resources to regulate. The multi-player game should be interesting, with as many as 36 players participating in Internet games. With a full group of players, you'll not only have to deal with other countries, but you need to be aware of your lower ranked countrymen as they may be planning a coup for your position. We're not sure if the world needs another real-time strategy game, but at least *Conflict of Nations* sounds more intriguing than the avalanche of clones that have been released so far, especially when you consider the multi-player options that allow for six players per side. Look for *Conflict of Nations* to be out later this fall.

YOOT'S TOWER

If you enjoyed Maxis' skyscraper-building game *SimTower*, you'll be happy to hear about

the coming of *Yoot's Tower*, a follow-up created by Yoot Saito (hence the name), the man behind the original game. New locations to build upon will be included, and the game will feature "plug-in modules" that will add new gameplay elements. As before, the goal will be to keep the people happy — no easy task, since they'll react realistically to factors such as stress, high prices, and bad service. The player will have more control over their towers too, being able to decide everything from restaurant menus to which movies are shown in the multiplexes. *Yoot's Tower* will also have many "Easter eggs" for the player to find, including things like VIP rock stars coming to visit your establishment. The release date is scheduled for the fall.



Just like its predecessor, the key to doing well in *Yoot's Tower* will be elevator management and keeping the pedestrian traffic flowing.

SONIC R

A list of Sega releases would feel incomplete without that little hedgehog rearing his pesky head. This 3D racing game will feature Sonic, Tails, Knuckles, and Amy in competition to find the stolen Chaos Emeralds, collect gold rings, and be first to the finish line. *Sonic R* will have hidden opponents, multiple short cuts, tons of power-ups, and network play for as many as four participants. Get set for this new take on an old favorite this fall.

THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD

This first-person shooter is a port of the popular arcade game that puts the player in the role of a special agent who must rescue captured

Continued on page 43:

See Sega



HONOR IS A
SHAM WHEN IT STANDS
ON A PLATFORM OF
SLAVERY. HERE ON MARS, WE'LL
NEVER BOW OUR
HEADS FOR THE IMPERIAL
CHAIN — NEVER! IN THE END,
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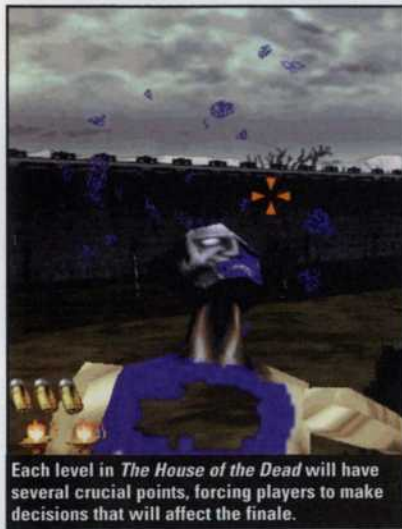
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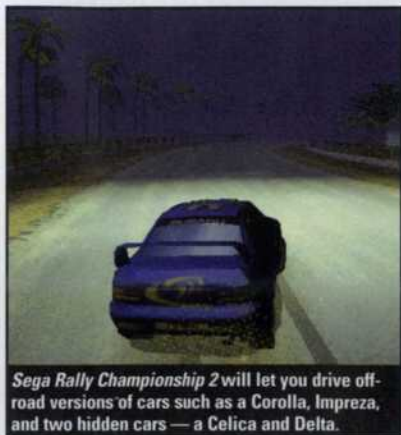
Sega

Continued from page 41

workers from a mansion while fighting off hordes of mutant zombies. This oh-so original premise will be backed up by accelerated graphics, new enemies exclusive to the PC version, and a branching story line that will vary the degree of difficulty depending on the choices the player makes. Look for a full review of *The House of the Dead* next issue.



Each level in *The House of the Dead* will have several crucial points, forcing players to make decisions that will affect the finale.



Sega Rally Championship 2 will let you drive off-road versions of cars such as a Corolla, Impreza, and two hidden cars — a Celica and Delta.

SEGA RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP 2

Sounding much more exciting than the bland arcade port that was the first *Sega Rally Championship*, this sequel will have a little more depth. A new 3D engine, weather effects affecting the track conditions (such as snow piling up as the storm continues), and multi-player capabilities for as many as eight drivers will be among the new features. Force feedback peripherals will be supported, and a new 10-year Championship mode will keep you coming back for more. There will be seven tracks and a larger selection of cars that can be fine-tuned to your liking. *Sega Rally Championship 2* is scheduled for a fall release.

The PC Gamer Playlist

What's hot at the magazine's offices this month.

As we get closer to the end of the millennium, the breakneck pace of technological advancement continues unabated. At the *PC Gamer* office, we had fallen a bit behind the curve recently, but a few system failures prompted some new computers finding their way onto several editors' desks. Smoke and Billy were the first to reap the benefits, as their aging P166s coughed and sputtered their way to a sorry end. The old and tired machines were retired to the scrap heap to be replaced by shiny new PII 400s. Todd and Gary, whose P166s are still running fine, eyed the newcomers' machines with a combination of envy and hatred. The veteran staff members started com-

ing up with ways that they too could get a much-needed upgrade. Gary was caught spreading Marmite (a vile smelling/tasting substance from merrie olde England that's best described as beef jelly) on his motherboard, while Todd took to jamming a screwdriver into the cooling fan to try and overheat the ancient machine. Unfortunately (for them), neither method produced the desired result, and they will have to suffer just a little longer. Don't worry though — even when everyone is equipped with the latest in high-tech gear, we plan on keeping a few of these older machines in good working order so we can test current games on them to let you know if your PC will be able to cut the mustard.

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| 1. <i>Motocross Madness</i> | Everybody |
| 2. <i>Grim Fandango</i> | Everybody |
| 3. <i>Duke Nukem Forever</i> | Gary, Dean, Billy, Todd |
| 4. <i>StarCraft</i> | Gary, Billy, Lisa |
| 5. <i>NCAA Football '99</i> | Rob |
| 6. <i>Descent: Freespace</i> | Todd |
| 7. <i>Final Fantasy VII</i> | Mike W., Dan, Dean |
| 8. <i>The Operational Art of War</i> | Dan |
| 9. <i>Quake II</i> | Mike L., Jason |
| 10. <i>Barbie Fashion Designer</i> | Greg "My Dad's a Doctor" Vederman |

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THE EMPIRE STANDS

BETWEEN HER AND THE CYBRID

DARKNESS. THOSE WHO

UNDERMINE THE EMPIRE BETRAY

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HAS BROKEN HIS

HOLY OATH AND LEADS

THE REBELLION. I WILL

STRIKE HIM DOWN IN HUMANITY'S

NAME. FOR I AM THE




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(out of five stars)

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“Amazing! *XXXXX*”

-C/NET Gamecenter.com

“StarCraft is the best
real-time strategy game
yet seen.”

-Next Generation Magazine

“Pure, unadulterated,
unhindered fun.”

-Adrenaline Vault

“Starcraft is simply
a great game.”

-Online Gaming Review

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ANACHRONOX / P. 52



BLACK AND WHITE / P. 58



GIANTS / P. 66



MAX PAYNE / P. 74



WARGASM / P. 82

The Top Games of 1999

10 Games

In a gaming world depressingly dominated by sequels and clones, innovation has become the most precious commodity of all. But 10 stunning new games due out next year are poised to show the power of A Few Good Ideas....

BY THE EDITORS OF PC GAMER



BENEATH / P. 54



FLEET COMMAND / P. 60



GOOD & EVIL / P. 69



URBAN CHAOS / P. 77



X-COM ALLIANCE / P. 85

ANACHRONOX

Galaxy-
roleplaying

.....

ION Storm's Tom Hall plans to shoe-horn *Anachronox*, a Texas-sized roleplaying game, into the *Quake II* engine, multi-player options and all. The kicker is, he's just crazy enough to pull it off....

.....

After revealing bits and pieces of *Anachronox* to the gaming press at the Electronic Entertainment Expo this past May, it was obvious that John Romero's *Daikatana* wasn't the only ION Storm title with the power to turn heads. With just a few minutes of video tape and some early code running on a demo machine, the behind-closed-doors sampling of ION's *Anachronox* quickly became one of the handful of must-see titles at the show.

The reason for the fuss, of course, is that *Anachronox* is the creation of ION Storm co-founder Tom Hall, who, along with a design team of artists, level makers, and programmers, is attempting to turn the *Quake II* engine into a 3D person party-based roleplaying game filled to the brim with NPCs, exotic



With the power of the *Quake II* engine under the hood, it's safe to say that roleplaying never looked this good.

locations, and reams of juicy dialogue. And from what we've seen, it just might work.

Describing *Anachronox*'s story line is a bit like looking at the Grand Canyon — it's nearly impossible to absorb it all in one go. The back story for *Anachronox* is a complex tale of alien technology, time-travel portals, and alternate dimensions. The player is introduced to it all through the lead character, Sylvester "Sly" Boots, a hard-bitten detective stuck in a seedy bar known as The Bricks.

The game begins as Sly takes on an unusual job for an unusual character, which ultimately sends him on a quest throughout the galaxy and through several dimensions. Throughout his travels, Sly can be joined by new characters (up to three in a party), gain new

weaponry, and learn about ancient alien technology that can be combined in strange and powerful ways. Suffice it to say, *Anachronox* is a science-fiction roleplaying game that hopes to merge well-defined characters, amazing graphics, and a mind-boggling storyline together in ways that haven't been done on the PC before.

Powering it all is the highly-prized *Quake II* engine, which gives Hall's team the chance to make a roleplaying game that looks and plays better than anything else on the market. Ask the developers of any roleplaying game to list the biggest dilemma they face, and chances are they'll come back with the same answer — they take a long time to develop and get right.

This lengthy development is needed to ensure the characters,



The unusual aliens and wildly stylized environments of *Anachronox* are some of the best yet for a roleplaying game.

-class



objects, and quests all work the way they should, yet this often proves to have a painful catch — by the time the game is actually released, the rendering engine has usually been outpaced by far superior technology. With the *Quake II* engine running the show, along with a number of added extras from the *Anachronox* team, ION Storm should have that problem licked. The result should give players the best of both worlds — a slick, flashy 3D-accelerated game that's easy on the eyes, and a deep, involving roleplaying game good for hours upon hours of gaming.

While gamers might think it's a match made in heaven, Hall explains that they've got their work cut out for them when it comes to making *Anachronox* more than just an expensive-looking *Quake II* mod. "The challenge was to take this very familiar engine, make it even better, and do very different level design with it, so people say 'That's the *Quake II* engine?'" he says. "I think we've done a pretty decent job so far. And of course, it's an RPG, so

the content will obviously be staggeringly more than a shooter.

As Larry Miller once said, "That's like the difference between shooting a bullet and throwing it."

Consider how much larger a roleplaying game environment is compared to a 3D shooter, and you'll get a sense of just how much content there is to generate. Yet behind all of the lovely 3D graphics, Hall assures us that *Anachronox* will rely on good old fashioned story-telling, character development, and most certainly, a healthy dose of action. The action element will remain true to the console RPG influence, with time-based combat (kinda like a turn, only each character is tracked with a timer; some characters have to wait a long time between attacks, others can attack quicker) and jaw-dropping cinematic angles. From what we've seen so far it looks like it's more than enough to get even the most jaded roleplaying fan's heart racing.

There's even enough left for

Though the science-fiction setting rules out traditional fantasy-style magic, the alien technology of *Mystec* can be used in different combinations to create different spell-like weapon effects.

more *Anachronox* games. When writing the original design document for *Anachronox*, Hall says that a trilogy was a result of too much too soon for his original game design. "Well, I made the original story for *Anachronox*, then realized I was rushing people through the end of the game, which was sort of unfair. So I broke it into three logical pieces. I also sketched a big universe, and explored other ideas, including possibilities for six other games." Though the first chapter of *Anachronox* will be a complete and self-contained story, Hall says it was important to leave the players wanting more. "Making the first act exciting was very important. The player needs to feel they've had a complete experience ('Woo! The Death Star blew up!'), but yearn for more ('What happened to Vader? Where's the Emperor? Why didn't Chewy get a medal?'). Once you finish the game, you will know where the next two games will go."

"Right now I feel like the Price/Waterhouse guys at the Oscars — I wish I didn't know [the full story of the game] so I could fully enjoy the show!"

**TOM HALL,
CO-FOUNDER,
ION STORM**



Outside the dingy walls of The Bricks, Sylvester will have to make friends when ever he can, and always be ready for a fight.



This impressive fog effect is just one of the technical tweaks to the *Quake II* engine.



Beneath's hero Jack Wells will have a much larger array of moves than Lara Croft, including rappelling and rope-swinging.

Has Lara met her match?

Powered by amazing technology and fresh ideas, Activision's *Beneath* looks set to beat the mighty *Tomb Raider* series at its own game.

After the incredible success of *Tomb Raider* and its sequel, it was inevitable that a succession of uninspired clones and cash-ins would surely follow. And follow they have — truckloads of lackluster third-person romps, all of them attempting to emulate *Tomb Raider's* successful mix of action and adventure (and, in particularly unoriginal cases, even using busy female characters to piggy-back on the popularity of Lara Croft), but none have managed to pull off the formula with the same intelligence and verve as *Tomb Raider* itself.

Until now, maybe.

With concerns arising that the *Tomb Raider* franchise may be

There'll be no shortage of subterranean bad boys for Jack to deal with — good thing he's packing that six-shooter!

stagnating (the sequel was, frankly, not as good as, the original, and on early inspection the imminent third installment looks like merely more of the same), the time is ripe for a gutsy, original and superior game to eat Lara's lunch — and Activision's *Beneath* may be just that game.

Developed by Presto Studios (the guys who gave us the Journeyman Project games), *Beneath* is perhaps 1999's most unashamed effort to cut into the Lara Croft market — but while Presto's Creative Director Phil Saunders admits that *Tomb Raider* was a major inspiration, he says what that game achieved is only the starting point for *Beneath*. "One of the things that disappointed me about *Tomb Raider*," he says, "was that not too far into the game, I had completely forgotten what I was doing there. It

came as a surprise to me when I found the first artifact piece, like 'Oh yeah, I remember that from the intro movie'. What you ended up with was a string of relatively disconnected puzzles, with the only evident goal being to get to the exit of a series of narratively isolated levels. I didn't feel compelled to move on to the next level and ended up playing the game in bits and pieces instead of pulling all-nighters to play all the way through in one sitting. With *Beneath*, that's one of the first things we're trying to address. You should never feel removed from the motivations of the hero or feel that the obstacles in your way are arbitrary or contrived. They should feel as though they emerge naturally from the environment and have some purpose in the story. There should always be something compelling you to move forward. To me, that's what makes a game you just can't put down."

And so, Presto is pulling out the stops to come up with a story for *Beneath* that evolves throughout the game itself, not just in cut-scenes. Set in 1906, the game casts you as rugged adventurer Jack Wells, who arrives at the site of his father's archeological dig in the Arctic to find that the entire expedition has disappeared without trace. Anxious to find them, Jack explores a mysterious subterranean fissure that's the only clue to their disappearance — and discovers an



BENEATH



(Above) This gravity-defying gymnastic leap over a lake of molten lava is all part of a day's work for Jack Wells.



(Left) Giant scorpion creatures provide handy target practice.

incredible underground civilization that poses a significant threat to the world above. "I've always wanted to do a game with the fantastical spirit of a Jules Verne or H.G. Wells story, with all the clever industrial revolution machinery and that whole aesthetic, so this seemed like a good opportunity," says Saunders.

At first glance, *Beneath* looks remarkably similar to *Tomb Raider* — a subterranean explore-and-fight romp viewed from a third-person perspective — but Saunders is anxious to point out that there's a lot more going on (forgive the pun) under the surface. "I think what will set *Beneath* apart is just how active the world is," he says. "This is not a dead civilization you are exploring, but one very much alive. It was important to us to have characters that would interact with you, as well as a robust navigation model and a dynamic environment.

Of course, we're also counting on the beauty of our graphics and audio and our attention to detail to give us an edge."

Even with the inevitable 3D hardware acceleration code still to be implemented, *Beneath* is already looking staggeringly beautiful and cinematic in its standard software-only mode. A sophisticated lighting model allows for dark and moody vistas illuminated only by the caving lantern strapped to Wells' shoulder. "The engine under *Beneath* is supporting some great effects — 16-bit color, dynamic light-mapping, fog, high-resolution textures — and it's supporting them at good frame rates in software," says Saunders. "Everything we've done has been to create a strong sense of immersion in the world. I was pretty excited after E3 — in a lot of ways, *Beneath* was looking better in software than a lot of the competition

looked with 3D acceleration. As well, we're using a non-BSP based hidden-surface removal technique, so our world geometry is completely arbitrary. We can animate deforming geometry in the environment. Jack is also a fully skinned, deforming mesh, so he looks a lot smoother and more realistic."

The results are impressive. Even at this early stage, the *Beneath* world, and how Jack interacts with it, is light years ahead of anything we've so far seen in *Tomb Raider* or any of its copycat games. A retracting rappel and grappling hook allows Jack to hook onto objects protruding from the environment and pull off dynamic swings and deep descents, for example, while even with just his bare hands he can execute stunning gymnastic moves like 360-degree spinning dismounts.

Beneath has been in development for a little more than a year and is due for release via Activision in the spring. Even at this early stage, with much of the graphic work, design, and code optimization still to be done, this is looking like an extremely hot property, and could well set a new standard for anybody else thinking about playing in this genre — Lara included.

"I think what will set *Beneath* apart is just how active the world is. This is not a dead civilization you're exploring, but one very much alive. It was important to us to have characters that would interact with you, as well as a robust navigation model and a dynamic environment. Everything we've done has been to create a strong sense of immersion in the world."

**PHIL SAUNDERS,
CREATIVE DIRECTOR,
PRESTO STUDIOS**



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Name	Russell Hancock
A.K.A.	Inferno
Nationality	British
Primary Skill	Explosives/munitions
Background	Very quiet demeanor. Keeps to himself. Explosive temper can result in unpredictable behavior.

Name	Sir Francis Woolridge
A.K.A.	Duke
Nationality	British
Primary Skill	Marksman
Background	Cold and calculating character. His commitment to the team intensified after his sister was killed in a German bombing raid.

Name	Jerry McHale
A.K.A.	Tiny
Nationality	American
Primary Skill	Use of blades/close combat
Background	Extremely violent temper when provoked. Loves to read poetry to relax. Afraid of dogs.

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Name	Sid Perkins
A.K.A.	Tread
Nationality	American
Special Skill	Vehicle mechanic/driver
Background	Mistrustful character. Has poor relationships with teammates. Loves a fine Cuban between raids.

Name	Rene Duchamp
A.K.A.	Spooky
Nationality	French
Primary Skill	Linguist
Background	Aside from an absolute hatred toward Nazis, quite an amiable character. Speaks five languages fluently. Great with women.

Name	James Blackwood
A.K.A.	Fins
Nationality	Australian
Primary Skill	Champion swimmer/sailer
Background	Dissolute character. Vows to have alcohol problem under control. Could figure out a way to make an anvil float.

Detonating this summer

COMMANDOS

BEHIND ENEMY LINES

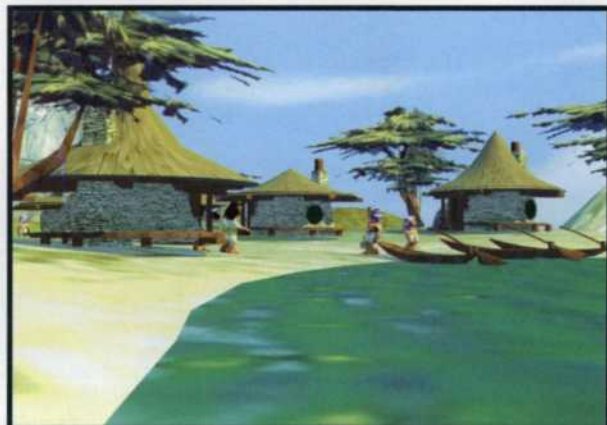
BLACK AND WHITE

Smarter than
the average
game

Peter Molyneux's first game since leaving Bullfrog is *Black and White*, an outrageously ambitious tale of good and evil, unbridled power, magic, monsters, and millions of little people. Just don't call it a "God-game"....

When Peter Molyneux made the surprising announcement that he was leaving Bullfrog Productions, the revolutionary game company that he founded, everybody wondered what he would do next. Though it was soon announced that Molyneux was to found a new venture, Lionhead Studios, the real beef — what his first game under the new banner would be — continued to be shrouded in secrecy for more than a year.

Now, with still a full year to go before it's due to be finished, Molyneux has taken the wraps off the enigmatically titled *Black and White* — and doing so has made him just a little nervous. "This is the first game I've done outside of Bullfrog, and rightfully so the whole world will judge just how good I am without their support," he says, adding once again that this, more than *Populous*, more than *Theme Park*, more than *Dungeon Keeper*,



Black and White's graphics engine will allow players to view their village's progress from ground level.

is his most ambitious project ever. "The design of *Black and White* contains so much more than I have done before," he says. "In many ways, it represents the culmination of all my previous games."

Fans of Molyneux's previous games will be familiar with aspects of *Black and White*: the player takes on the role of a God-like presence who presides over a mythical island paradise inhabited by a number of tribes. Placed in charge of the growth and evolution of one of those tribes, the player can observe and stimulate their daily activities, create and train magical creatures to do their bidding, gain magical power from their worship and, of course, send them

into combat against rival tribes. It all sounds very similar to the kind of "God-game" that Molyneux pioneered in the late 1980s, although he doesn't see it as simply as that. "Obviously, I draw on the experiences of all my previous games," he says, "and it's true there are elements of previous games within *Black and White* — but these are like foundation stones, rather than the central part of the game. I think it will be hard to compare *Black and White* to any game, it really has elements of all game genres — I'd hesitate to call it a God-game."



When viewed up-close, the game will sport some amazing terrain features like realistic tides and rippling water effects.



This huge stone ogre is just one of the thousands of creatures that players can create and train to do their bidding. Run, little people, run!

The elements that Molyneux claims will set *Black and White* apart from other games include a pioneering artificial intelligence model that constantly checks on the players' actions to decide whether or not those actions are fundamentally good or evil, and then tailors the game to suit that personality. "All the AI I've done before is basically child's play compared to my ambitions for *Black and White*," says Molyneux. "This is because we want the gameplay to actually change and to reflect the type of game that the gamer wants to play. Not only that, but the creatures in *Black and White* need to learn, and by that I

mean *really* learn, not just 'cheat-learn' as I have done before. I really believe what we are doing is the most ambitious AI in any game — and the mere thought of it scares me senseless."

In addition, the game features the ability to create and train creatures as in Molyneux's last game *Dungeon Keeper* — but in a much more elaborate way. The player can take practically any living thing in the game and evolve it into anything else via a process of careful training and conditioning. "If I had to pick the single most important element in the game, it would have to be the creatures," he says. "It's just so cool being able to create a creature in your own image. It can be as mean, vicious and as downright nasty as you like, or be

friendly and caring — and the fact that the graphics change to reflect this is very very cool."

On the technical side, no punches are being pulled. "We're trying to achieve something really special, and our coders are working as hard as they can to make *Black and White* look like no game has looked before. Part of the reason it will look so special is that we had to start from scratch on everything — 3D tools, physics model, everything — which meant we could approach the whole thing from afresh. We are hoping that the game will run okay on a P166 with a 3D card, but for the best performance you'd be looking at a P200."

From the screenshots on this page, it's pretty evident that *Black and White* is getting set to look amazing. But as with any Molyneux game, the real juicy stuff lies not on the surface but far under it, with those incredible gameplay designs that have become his trademark. *Black and White* has the potential to be bigger and better than anything he's done before, and perhaps the most incredible game of 1999. We'll know for sure next summer....

This budding village, populated by Egyptian-type folk, shows just how detailed the in-game graphics of *Black and White* are expected to be.



"What we are doing is the most ambitious artificial intelligence in any game — and the mere thought of it scares me senseless."

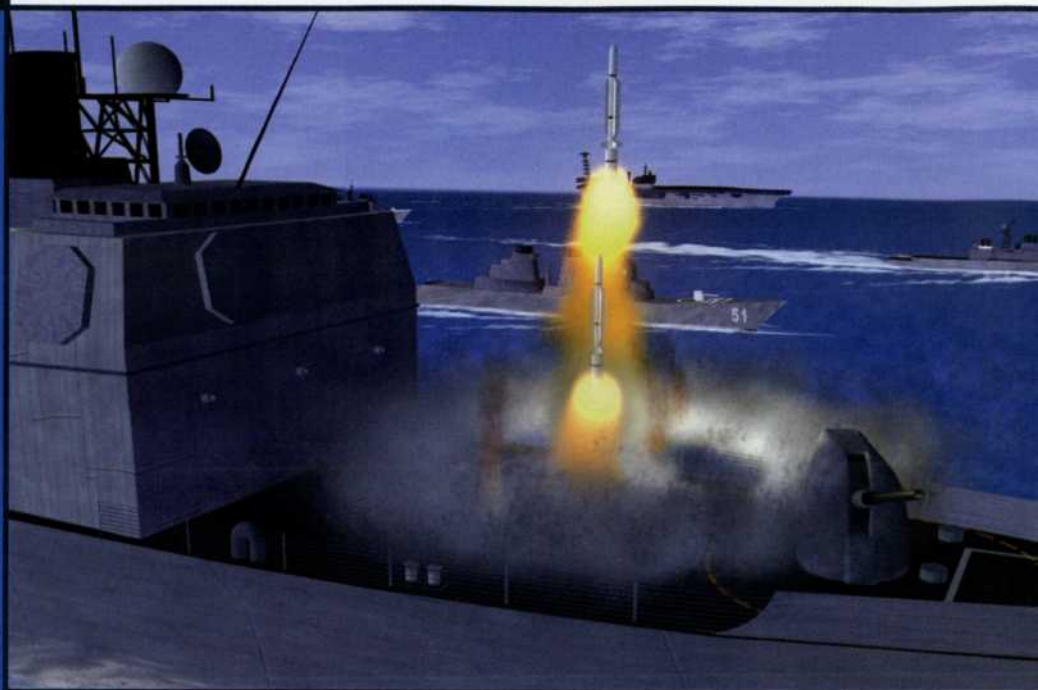
**PETER MOLYNEUX,
FOUNDER,
LIONHEAD STUDIOS**



These concept sketches show how, through careful training, an innocent cow (above) can be turned into an evil beast (below).



FLEET COMMAND



Jane's fighting ships

.....
The first strategy game from Jane's Combat Simulations portrays modern naval combat on the largest possible stage: the whole world.

In just a couple of years, Jane's Combat Simulations has established itself as a premier creator of modern and historical combat sims, building a can't-miss reputation with games like *Advanced Tactical Fighters*, *AH-64D Longbow* and *Longbow 2*, *688(I) Hunter/Killer*, and *Jane's F-15* — and as the folks at Jane's prepare to release *Fighter Legends* and *World Air Power* before the end of the year, it's clear they're not about to abandon the hardcore

sim fans who love them best. But the company's first game of 1999 won't really be a sim at all; instead, it'll be a naval wargame.

Tentatively titled *Fleet Command*, the game began life as a simulation of a modern missile cruiser, focusing on the state-of-the-art AEGIS radar and fire control system. It was to be developed by Sonalysts, the firm that gave us *688(I)*, the wonderfully detailed and complex attack submarine simulation. *Fleet Command* is still in Sonalysts' very capable hands, but as Producer Ed Gwynn explains, it's undergone a considerable transformation.

"We determined very early on that the only good AEGIS game would be a 'systems' game, which, unfortunately, has limited appeal," Gwynn says. "As much as we enjoy doing hardcore simulations, we decided we wanted to try and design a naval combat game that was more accessible to more game players. We eventually settled on commanding an entire fleet."

The move from specific to general has also meant a move from simulation to gameplay that more closely resembles wargames.

"Ships' systems are definitely simulated in *Fleet Command*," Gwynn says, "but the player

doesn't have to learn system after system. Most of the systems



Rather than concentrating on the details of one ship's systems, *Fleet Command* will challenge you to take charge of an entire task force.

work automatically. These systems are modeled and simulated accurately, but the player won't have to spend any time learning them; the commands are more like those of a strategy game than those of a hardcore simulation."

The result is a huge, real-time game with 3D, simulation-style graphics and a truly grand scale. The game's world is just that — the whole world — and it's populated by just about every naval weapons platform you could ask for.

"We're modeling more than ten countries' navies — enough ships, subs, and planes to hold anyone's interest," Gwynn says.

Of course, comparisons to *Harpoon* and *Harpoon II* are inevitable for any wargame that tackles present-day naval combat at a worldwide level. And comparison could turn to competition when SSI releases *Harpoon 4*, its thorough modernization of the series. But Gwynn takes it in stride:

"Sure, the comparisons will be made," he says. "We expect this. However, *Fleet Command* is not *Harpoon*. Undoubtedly, the most noticeable difference would be the look; you can watch *Fleet Command* in a 3D world — 3D

models, smoke trails, wakes, beautiful terrain, explosions, clouds, weather, sinking ships — all of this in 3D.

"*Fleet Command* also uses realistic Naval symbology on a 2D tactical map, or rendered icons for those who find symbology confusing," Gwynn says. "So, graphically, *Fleet Command* is heads above anything players have seen to date. We've concentrated on developing a game with intriguing strategy that's a lot of fun — without being an arcade game."

Gwynn says *Fleet Command* will ship with a "very complete mission editor," and since the game

covers so many different countries and systems, do-it-yourself gamers should be able to simulate practically any kind of conflict, be it an all-too-real skirmish inspired by tomorrow's headlines or an

unthinkable third world war. Ready-made scenarios will include training, single missions, and a globe-hopping campaign. Projected multi-player plans include support for as many as eight players in cooperative or competitive modes.

Developer Sonalysts wasn't born yesterday, and it's not just another game company; it was



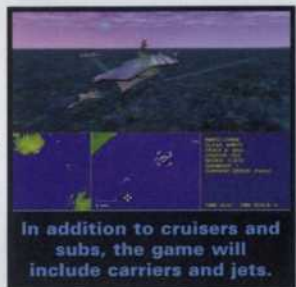
This is bad news for the *Thomas S. Gates* — and everyone counting on the protection of its AEGIS system.

founded in 1973 as a "technical service company providing support to the United States Navy." Over the decades, that support has included doing Cost and Operational Effectiveness analyses for the U.S. Navy, compiling a CD-ROM edition of *The Naval Institute Guide to Combat Fleets of the World*, and helping to develop the Naval Surface Warfare Center's AEGIS training course. In other words, this is a company that knows a hell of a lot about naval warfare. And if *688(I) Hunter/Killer* is any indication, Sonalysts also knows how to turn out an entertaining sim. All of this bodes very well for *Fleet Command* becoming one of the best strategy/wargames of the coming year.

And what about that AEGIS sim? As hardcore sim fans, we just had to ask.

"We haven't decided the fate of the AEGIS sim yet," Gwynn says. "Stay tuned...."

In *Fleet Command*, you'll issue orders via a series of small windows, then watch the action unfold in a big 3D view.



In addition to cruisers and subs, the game will include carriers and jets.

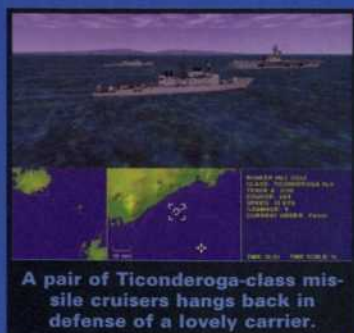


F/A-18 Hornet
CLASS: Fighter/Attack
TRACK #: 0016
COURSE: 049
SPEED: 401 KTS/M 0.6
ALTITUDE: 0.6 KFT
%DAMAGE: 0
%FUEL: 98
CURRENT ORDER: Transit

TIME: 12:08 TIME SCALE: 1x

"As much as we enjoy doing hardcore simulations, we decided we wanted to try and design a naval combat game that was more accessible to more game players. We eventually settled on commanding an entire fleet."

ED GWYNN,
PRODUCER,
JANE'S COMBAT
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CAMERA.02 CAMERA.03 CAMERA.03 CAMERA.03

WAREHOUSE, AREA 18 09:01.31 9.27.99 WAREHOUSE, AREA 18 09:01.32 9.27.99 WAREHOUSE, AREA 18 09:01.32 9.27.99 WAREHOUSE, AREA 18 09:01.32 9.27.99

09:00.00 hrs. Enter warehouse. Maintain stealth.....



CAMERA.05 CAMERA.10 CAMERA.10 CAMERA.10

MONASTERY, AREA 1 01:11.02 9.27.99 MONASTERY, AREA 1 01:11.02 9.27.99 MONASTERY, AREA 1 01:11.02 9.27.99 MONASTERY, AREA 1 01:11.02 9.27.99

Sanction Level Alpha..... Primary objective:



CAMERA.22 CAMERA.21 CAMERA.21 CAMERA.31

DEPOT, AREA 7 10:30.31 9.27.99 DEPOT, AREA 7 10:30.31 9.27.99 DEPOT, AREA 7 10:30.31 9.27.99 DEPOT, AREA 7 10:30.38 9.27.99

Sanction Level Omega..... Search and destroy

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CAMERA.20 CAMERA.20 CAMERA.20 CAMERA.20

RECON, AREA 7 11:12.59 9.27.99 RECON, AREA 7 11:13.30 9.27.99 RECON, AREA 7 11:13.36 9.27.99 RECON, AREA 7 11:13.36 9.27.99

Recon munitions and depot..... Determine preparedness level of target....



Operative is sanctioned to terminate resistance with extreme prejudice.....



Intelligence gathering..... Avoid enemy contact if at all possible.....



Records, armaments, personnel..... Inflict maximum possible damage at key target areas.....

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GIANTS

Giants takes place on a huge, beautiful hunk of shattered planet floating in the heart of a nebula.

Three forces vie for control of this paradise: the planet's magical native species, known as the Sea Reapers; the Meccaryns, space travelers who made the mistake of stopping on the planet for repairs; and Kabuto, a hulking monster that has turned on its Sea Reaper creators and just wants to be left alone.

Battles take place on the planet-fragment's 40 islands, and gamers can play them out as the Meccaryns or the Sea Reapers — or as Kabuto himself. Each side of the conflict presents its own unique tactical advantages: the Meccs are armed with technology and futuristic weapons; the Sea Reapers have elemental powers that let them call on the planet itself for help; and

Kabuto — well, he's big enough to scoop up any of the other characters and swallow them whole, so he's got sheer, brute strength going for him. Imagine playing *Unreal* as a Stone Titan, and you begin to get the slightest whiff of a notion of what it should be like to play *Giants* as Kabuto. (The other characters are cool, too, but who's going to pass up a chance to be an angry giant?) In first-person mode, the player's viewpoint

The Sea Reapers created the giant Kabuto to protect them, but like all good monsters, he turned on them. Now he divides his time between killing, eating, and thinking about killing and eating.

changes depending on the chosen character. *Giants*' "camera" can also be shifted to play the game from a third-person perspective. And, of course, multiplayer support will be included.

Giants, originally titled *Citizen Kabuto*, is the first creation of Purple Moon, a group of developers who split from Shiny after turning out *MDK* (Purple Moon President Nick Bruty and Vice President Andy Astor also worked on the first two *Earthworm Jim* games, so they're extra-cool in our book). And while *Giants* is without question a different kind of game, its gameplay and amazing animation give it a look and feel — and a



The Sea Reapers have elemental powers. Here, one of them summons a tornado to sweep up a herd of sheep-creatures.

y cloud!

sense of humor — very much reminiscent of the designers' previous work.

"We really let our imaginations run wild when we began to put the story and game design together," Bruty says. And even in an early video clip, the team's off-kilter influence is evident: The gigantic Kabuto swats the Meccaryns out of the air like a Japanese movie monster harried by fighter planes; the five members of the Meccaryn squad camouflage themselves as five harmless boulders, wait for Kabuto to walk by, then convert themselves into a single huge robot and bash the unsuspecting monster from behind; and the Sea Reavers destroy Kabuto's food source by summoning a twister to gracefully swirl a herd of the sheep-like creatures into the sky, then drop them to be pulped on the hard ground.



A squad of Meccaryns attacks one of the Sea Reavers' boats.



Meccaryns blast up some sheep for food.

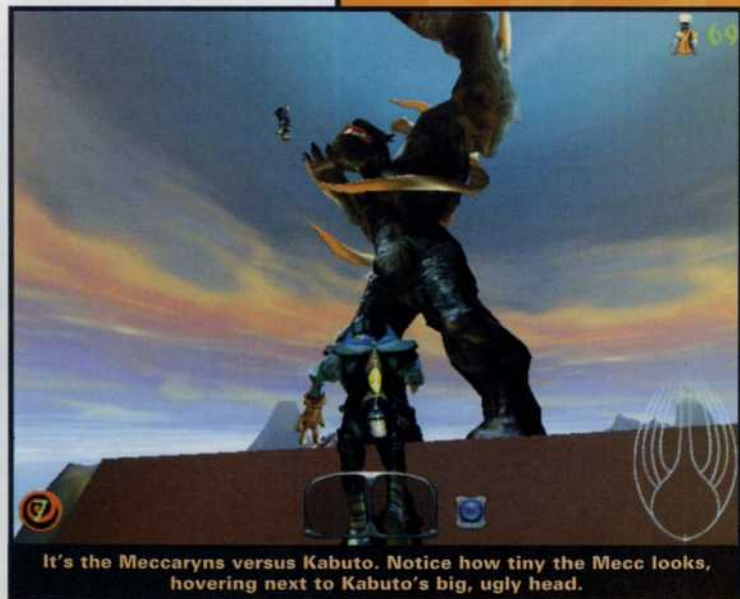
A fourth race — the tiny, timid Smarties — acts essentially as a source of power-ups. Protect and feed enough of them, and they'll thank you by building increasingly sophisticated "presents" for you, which can include weapons, vehicles, or traps. The game's terrain, rendered in real-time 3D graphics, morphs and deforms in response to your actions, letting you create obstacles for your opponents — or simply blast the ground out from under their feet.

We won't know just how good *Giants* is until

it's released next year, but judging from what we've seen so far, *Purple Moon* is well on its way to creating a game as unique, original, and visually stunning as the original *Wing Commander* and *Magic Carpet* were in their days. Multi-player *Giants* should be even more fun — as long as you don't have to decide who gets to be Kabuto.

"We really let our imaginations run wild when we began to put the story and game design together."

**NICK BRUTY,
PRESIDENT,
PURPLE MOON**



It's the Meccaryns versus Kabuto. Notice how tiny the Mecc looks, hovering next to Kabuto's big, ugly head.

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Ron Gilbert's all grown up (again)

"I don't think it's really a new genre," says Ron Gilbert of *Good & Evil*, "Just an evolution and combination of several.

Good & Evil is really a combination of a fantasy roleplaying game, a real-time strategy game, and an adventure game. I took the elements I liked from each of these categories and combined them."

Real-time strategy, roleplaying and adventure, all wrapped up in a single neat, seamless game design? That sounds like a lofty, almost impossible ambition for any game designer to realize — and indeed, were it any other game designer, we'd be tempted to take the words above with a pinch of salt. But this is Ron Gilbert we're talking about. The Ron Gilbert who single-handedly pioneered the graphic adventure genre with *Maniac Mansion* and its revolutionary SCUMM engine. And the same

Ron Gilbert who took it to new heights with *The Secret of Monkey Island*.

After setting LucasArts on the path to software superstardom, Gilbert disappeared off the mainstream map in 1992 to found Humongous Entertainment and spent five years designing adventures for young children. "You learn a lot about game design when doing it for kids," he says. "They're not interested in fancy graphics, polygons-per-second, or how many bits of audio you have. They want story and characters and gameplay. It forces you to focus on design."

Gilbert has enjoyed success in the kids' realm, but Humongous' recent branching out with the Cavedog brand and its success with *Total Annihilation* has given him the perfect excuse to once

After five years of writing for children, the creator of *Maniac Mansion* and *Monkey Island* is making his return to mainstream gaming with *Good & Evil*, a real-time role playing adventure starring 1930s mobsters, medieval knights, cowboys, kung-fu fighters, and evil clowns. And that's only the beginning....

again get his hands dirty with some serious hard-core gaming — and the result is *Good & Evil*, an epic roleplaying adventure.

Although he is keeping the story under wraps for now ("Let's just say it has to do with Good and Evil and some stuff happens," he says), he's excited to talk about the design. "*Good & Evil* came about through a long evolution," he says. "It began as a traditional adventure game with a completely different story. I knew I wanted to have a lot of fantasy roleplaying elements in the game, but I've never been a big fan of FRPs. I never liked the way the interfaces worked or the whole paradigm for controlling your 'party' of characters. The revelation came when I started to play *Command & Conquer*. I loved the way you controlled the units and scolded around the map. I dusted off the *Good & Evil* design and started to apply some of the real-time strategy interface elements to the design."

Early looks at the game may give the impression that *Good & Evil* has been inspired by Japanese-style console FRPs like *Final Fantasy VII*, but Gilbert rejects the comparison. "I'm not a big FRP

Good & Evil's scalable 3D engine will allow the player to zoom in close or pull out for a look at the outlying terrain.



Even though they're not yet optimized, the graphics of *Good & Evil* easily rival anything we've seen so far this year.

GOOD & EVIL



"I started designing adventure games because I didn't really like them.

The whole concept of an adventure game sounded great, but once I sat down to play, I became bored and frustrated.

I designed *Maniac Mansion* as an adventure game I would want to play. *Good & Evil* is a similar approach to fantasy role-playing games, with other elements thrown in."

**RON GILBERT,
DESIGNER,
CAVEDOG**



(Above) You'll face barbarian warriors, cowboys from the Old West, and even medieval knights in *Good & Evil*.

(Below) Be prepared to set sail on the high seas.

fan," he says. "I started designing adventure games because I didn't really like them. The whole concept of an adventure game sounded great, but once I sat down to play, I became bored and frustrated. I designed *Maniac Mansion* as an adventure game I would want to play. *Good & Evil* is a similar approach to FRP games, with other elements thrown in."

Gilbert says his past adventure experience with *Maniac Mansion* and *Monkey Island* has been invaluable on *Good & Evil*. "An important part of *Good & Evil* is going to be the story and puzzle-solving," he says. "Unlike the traditional real-time strategy game, which is really just a bunch of missions hung together with a scenario, the story for *Good & Evil* unfolds as you play the game. Knowing the story is key to understanding what you need to do.

"It's not played from the traditional adventure game side-view perspective," Gilbert says, "but it will involve hunting down objects, solving puzzles and talking to people you meet. The big difference between *Good & Evil* and traditional adventure games is the combat. A big part of it is finding the right weapons, armor, and hooligans to help out."

Gilbert says he hasn't quite nailed down the size of the game yet. "It's made up of different 'Quests,' each with its own world. I'm currently figuring on 50 different quests, but that could change. There will



be a large and diverse group of characters to meet and play with. Everything ranging from knights in armor, cowboys, kung-fu fighters, mobsters, space aliens, and even clowns — evil clowns, of course."

One of the most impressive things about *Good & Evil* is its 3D engine, which is zoomable and flexible on a scale never before seen. Gilbert says he's proud of what he's trying to achieve with the game's look. "The sad fact of doing run-time 3D games is that they are all made out of polygons. I wanted to create a style of art that took advantage of this fact, rather than struggling with it as a weakness. When we created the concept art, it was all done with lots of angles, points and peaks. Since we started out with that look, it translated to 3D very

Since Ron Gilbert won't talk about *Good & Evil*'s storyline, we have no idea what this glowing portal does. But it sure does look purdy.

well, and it didn't look like we were trying to be something we couldn't. I also wanted the camera to be able to pull way back and the player to be able to see a lot in the world at once. So, it also had to be simple. It's also important to realize that much like *Monkey Island*, *Good & Evil* is comedy. The game is being written as a parody of sorts, and the art needs to reflect this, without being silly."

If you still feel a little in the dark after reading this, it's because Gilbert is keen not to reveal too much at this stage — *Good & Evil* isn't due for release until late 1999, after all. But if you want one last hint as to the tone of the game, Gilbert did reveal that its original working title was... *My Fluffy Pony*.



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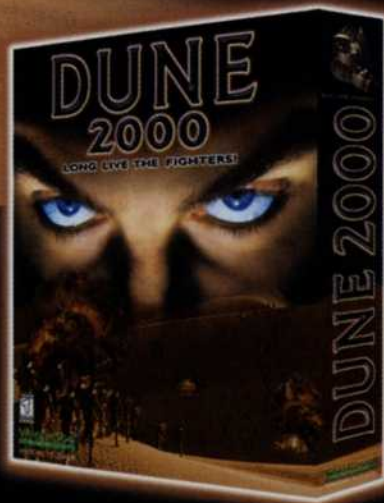


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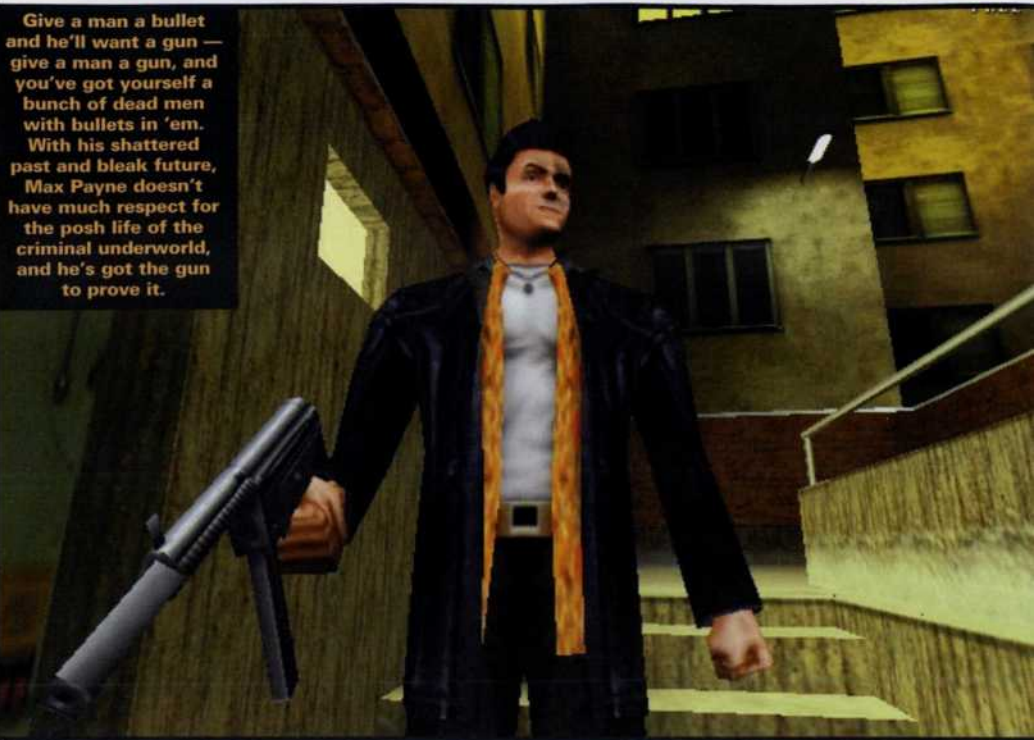
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Max Payne's gritty realism and violent action is sure to cause a stir on and off computer screens.

Give a man a bullet and he'll want a gun — give a man a gun, and you've got yourself a bunch of dead men with bullets in 'em. With his shattered past and bleak future, Max Payne doesn't have much respect for the posh life of the criminal underworld, and he's got the gun to prove it.



MAX PAYNE

Always bet on black

3D Realms and Remedy Entertainment join forces to create an ultra-violent third-person thriller starring a dark, edgy hero.

While the incredible success of the *Tomb Raider* franchise probably prompted a number of publishers to rush

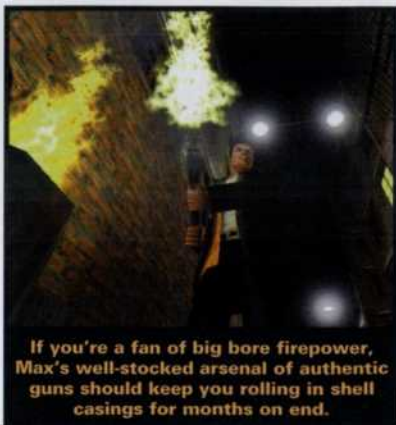
headlong into the third-person action genre, we doubt that Lara Croft had anything to do with 3DRealms' decision to greenlight its third-person action game — *Max Payne*. Nope, it was probably inspired by one too many of those gritty cop-on-the-edge movies, like *Serpico*, *Walking Tall*, and *Cruisin'* (okay, maybe just the first two), and the realization that all of the trademark qualities that worked so well in *Duke Nukem 3D* — a well-defined

central character, a strong story line and guns-a-plenty — were a perfect match with a gritty urban tale of crime and punishment.

While most publishers would take the idea and do the obvious

— grab the latest 3D engine, crank out a few urban levels, toss in some baddies, and lots of weapons — *Max Payne* takes the concept several steps further by wrapping it all together with a true late-night thriller story line.

The eponymous hero is an undercover cop with a very personal axe to grind — his family was murdered under mysterious circumstances, and he's out on the streets busting criminals, not because it's his civic duty, but for revenge. Like any good cop, Max takes his day job seriously, keeping his anger in check. Yet, when he's framed for the murder of his boss and plunged into a shadowy gov-



If you're a fan of big bore firepower, Max's well-stocked arsenal of authentic guns should keep you rolling in shell casings for months on end.

ernment conspiracy, Max's deadly skills and no-nonsense attitude take center stage. He's a lawnmower looking for some grass. Swathed in a chic black leather coat and sporting the baddest attitude this side of Charles Manson, Max Payne hits the streets to lead a one-man assault against a sea of crime, corruption, and murder.

Though the game is played out in linear fashion, in between each mission, the story is continued via stylized comic book panels that tell the tale of those who got whacked, and those who should be. It's the closest thing to Charles Bronson's *Death Wish* persona as you're likely to find on the PC, and once you see it in action you'll agree, Max Payne is no Lara Croft — not even close.

Max Payne is being co-developed by 3D Realms and Remedy Entertainment with the bulk of the design work taking place at Remedy's home office in Enslo, Finland. Using a proprietary rendering engine known as E2 — which borrows the same rendering engine core from the *Final Reality* benchmark program (also developed by Remedy) — *Max Payne* brings the ultimate urban nightmare to life with incredible textures, detailed character animations, and massive levels.

More importantly, though, the designers aren't letting the power of the engine go to waste. The level of detail in the game is striking in both the environments and the characters, with subtle details accentuating everything from the graffiti-stained walls and dilapidated buildings to villainous thick-necked bruisers and



scrawny stool pigeons.

Additionally, *Max Payne* will feature photo-realistic lighting and shadows thanks to a full radiosity lighting model (a fancy name for Very Cool Lighting Effects™), native hardware accelerator support and Direct3D support and full multi-player options. There's even plans to include the MaxEd — the game's level editor — for end-user level creation.

Even the best technology would be worthless without a good gameplay to back it up, but *Max* looks to have its bases covered in this department. The mission-based gameplay is linear, but the environments are expansive enough that players can choose their own path through a given level, opting to stick to the shadows for stealth, or head out in the open for up-close-and-personal attacks. And unlike the behind-the-bum camera system of *Tomb Raider*, *Max Payne's* system allows the camera to track the player from behind for standard

Comic book-style cutscenes maintain the game's gritty look and carry the storyline through its various twists and turns.

exploration and switch seamlessly to dramatic shots of Max putting a hurt on those nasty drug dealers.

Where *Duke Nukem 3D* raised eyebrows with testosterone-induced quips and a girl-happy lifestyle, the vendetta-fueled exploits and impersonal violence of *Max Payne's* are so chilling that 3D Realms is sure to have Senators squealing. However, 3D Realms is already prepared to deal with that particular problem — *Max Payne* will ship with a "Mature Audience" label, and judging from what we've seen, that's no joke. This could easily be one of the darkest, and most adult, action games ever conceived for the PC, and we say more power to 'em.

Rumor has it that gangsters like to hang out in this big, empty tunnel. Who knows, if you keep staring at it, they might even show themselves.

While Duke Nukem raised a few eyebrows with his testosterone charged quips, alien bashing violence, and girl-happy lifestyle, *Max Payne's* vendetta-fueled exploits and shocking amount of violence are likely to have Senators squealing.



Once Max becomes framed for murder by corrupt government official, he'll have to fight hired goons, merciless assassins, and wild-eyed murderers to clear his name.



ALLISON
IS HAVING
THE ULTIMATE
BAD HARE
DAY.



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If you've always wanted re-live the rooftop chase scene from *The Enforcer*, *Urban Chaos*' go anywhere interface should be right up your alley.

When Bullfrog alumni Mike Diskett, Guy Simmons, and Fin McGeachie left to form their own startup devel-

opment house, the giddy rush of press releases, .plan updates, and technology demos that usually occupy a new developer's time never came. It's been more than a year since the company has been in business, and we still haven't received a single T-shirt, bumper sticker, or coffee mug bearing the Mucky Foot logo (at least, we think there's a logo). Just what do these guys think they're doing? Apparently, the folks at Mucky Foot felt that building the technology and defining the gameplay of its first title — *Urban Chaos* — was more important than building hype. As crazy as it sounds, the strategy seems to have paid off. When *Urban Chaos* debuted at the Electronic Entertainment Expo this past May, it drew crowds of curious onlookers, not because it was hyped long before it need be, but because it was cool and inventive.

Urban Chaos is a third-person action game that takes place

in a sprawling city environment, complete with towering skyscrapers and forbidding alleyways, and like most games due out next year, it boasts an impressive 3D rendering engine that supports hardware acceleration and special environment effects like volumetric fogging and wall-hugging shadows.

But beyond the glitz, the environment's extra features really shine through: believable physics for all of the objects and characters, unprecedented freedom to explore and interact with the environment, and tasty hand-to-hand combat. As you take control of one of the two player



With former Bullfrog veterans cracking the whip, Mucky Foot's big city brawler should set a new high water mark for streetwise destruction and fun.

characters (Darci and Roper) you decide how to complete each mission objective the way you see fit, using any means necessary to get the job done — this is not a linear maze, and there are virtually no restrictions on where you can go.

Diskett says that *Urban Chaos* came from the desire to recreate the excitement of beat-'em-ups in an expansive and believable world. "It kind of evolved from the concept of a beat-'em-up set in a small 3D area where the fighting takes place using the scenery — jumping off cars, climbing up drain pipes, swinging off fire escapes," Diskett says. "From there it developed into what we have now — a 3D platform beat-'em-up in a realistic city environment with mission-based gameplay. The player will be able to go inside buildings, jump from rooftop to rooftop, climb fire escapes, use a variety of cars, trucks, and motorbikes, climb down into the sewer system, use electricity cables to move hand over hand across big gaps, and jump through skylights."

As players head out on missions, they'll find that *Urban Chaos* is filled with plenty of good

URBAN CHAOS

"The player will be able to go inside buildings, jump from rooftop to rooftop, climb fire escapes, use a variety of cars, trucks and motor-bikes, climb down into the sewer system, use electricity cables to move hand over hand across big gaps, and jump through skylights."

MIKE DISKETT,
CO-FOUNDER,
MUCKY FOOT



With its devotion to real world usability, players can use the environment of *Urban Chaos* to their benefit, swinging off lampposts, post boxes, and even unfriendly policemen.

old-fashioned street-brawls against multiple characters, but the objective-based gameplay may lead many players to weave their way through the environment, picking and choosing their battles with care. However, when it comes time to pound on someone, Diskett says the environment is your best friend. "You can use the scenery in your combat moves," he says, "like spinning around a lamppost, kicking a door into someone's face, dropping from above onto someone, and pivoting over and under a fire escape to kick someone in the head."

While the third-person perspective is sure to bring about inevitable comparisons to *Tomb Raider*, Diskett isn't worried.

"Third-person games have always been around — in a sense all the original side-on or plan view 8-bit sprite games were third-person," Diskett says. "With a 3D game there are only two choices; first-

person or third-person. The great thing about third-person is it allows you to do more atmospheric camera views. For example, climbing up a skyscraper can be made to look really ominous and scary if the camera is placed at the base of the building looking straight up, giving the player a heightened sense of perspective with the building looming over you.

"*Tomb Raider* was the first really successful third-person game, it has done for third-person what *Doom* did for first-person," he says, "but it didn't really make great use of the camera — we're hoping to really maximize the benefits of the third-person view."

As we closed our interview, we were puzzled only by one thing: Why do game companies get saddled with such unusual names?



Mucky Foot's *Urban Chaos* not only delivers tasty 3D accelerated visuals and impressive effects, but it also gives players a full blown city to explore.

"We spent a drunken late night — into the small hours, and on into the medium-sized hours — trying to think of a name, some serious, some foolish, all useless," says Diskett, "Early the next day, while recovering from a hangover, we started watching *Asterix Conquers America*. In it there's a Red Indian tribe called The Mucky Foot tribe. Three light bulbs instantly lit above our heads. And just to confirm the choice, Mother Nature chose that moment to shine a ray of sunshine through the patio door, illuminating a large greasy foot print, by the size of it probably planted there by Fin the night before..."

Though the attacks are still being worked out, *Urban Chaos* should feature all of the basic fighting game moves with a few extra surprises.



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Here's one of DID's neat graphical tricks — rain droplets splash onto and run down your monitor during inclement weather.

Warfare reaches its climax

.....
 Considered by most to be the world's best flight sim creator, Digital Image Design is now going all-out to create its own "electronic battlefield" with *Wargasm*, quite possibly the biggest military combat game ever devised....



.....
 fighting vehicle. In a nutshell, it has strategy, tactics and 3D action so it should appeal to all types of gamers."

Wargasm began life four years ago as a technology demo for DID's 3DREAM graphics engine, then grew into a testbed for a possible tank sim that the team was considering... but then it just kept on growing, to encompass more vehicles types and much broader design ambitions. "Tanks are not big sellers and don't capture the imagination like flight sims," says Kenwright, "and although it was looking good it didn't, for me, evoke a reaction or emotion, something that would stir the soul. So we put it into redesign, and we now believe we have achieved the balance that will make it a smash hit — we call it 'emotion against the backdrop of spectacle!'"

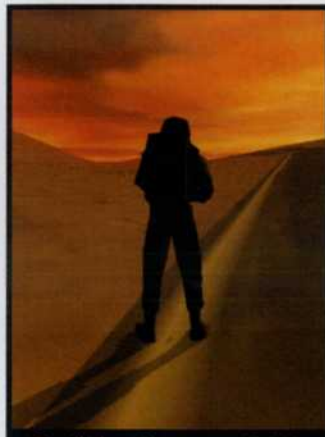
Wargasm's story is more science-fiction than the hard-core military backdrops DID has favored in the past. "It's thirty years into an alternate future, and mankind has practically built itself out of existence," says Kenwright. "WWW, the World Wide War Web, has gained control of the planet. It makes and controls all wars. It is the master of man. You play a hacker who must penetrate the Web, create a virtual army, and conquer an enemy who cannot die and cannot surrender. You

What would a game like *Wargasm* be without lots of destruction on a mass scale to satisfy the bloodthirsty needs of PC wargamers?

First of all, the title. Okay, so it's a little cheeky, but as Digital Image Design founder Martin Kenwright insists, "It is an actual military term, meaning when all the superpowers go mad in an all-out nuclear war." In that case, *Wargasm* is certainly an appropriate title, as DID's latest aims to pull no punches in its attempt to simulate war on a scale never before seen.

Wargasm is primarily a real-time strategy game, but don't let that dog-eared description put you off — while your brain will be kept busy with standard RTS duties like troop movements and resource gathering, *Wargasm's* meat lies in the action department, with the player able to directly control any of the game's numerous land, sea, or air assets. "A fine balance exists," says Kenwright. "You can play top-down to coordinate the battlefield, manage resources, choose what

forces you need to get the job done, and call for resupply and air strikes. You can then either sit back and watch the 3D action unfold or you can jump into any



You'll be able to step inside and control any fighting unit — including the combat boots of a standard infantryman.

WARGASM



must give it something it cannot give itself... a wargasm!"

Wargasm will feature 30 different battlefields set across seven regions of its virtual world, including desert, temperate, and mountain areas. "We've built a state-of-the-art physical modeling

system which gives outstanding response and feel," says Kenwright. "You can see every wheel and track link move, and you'll feel soft mud, firm road, bumpy rock — all with force-feedback compatibility. Our engine sets a new standard on the PC for graphics, violence, dirt, mud... and horror."

The single-player *Wargasm* will offer plenty of challenge, but the real heart of the game is its multi-player component, known as *Multiple Wargasm*. "*Wargasm* has been a network game for nearly two years now," says Kenwright. "So we've been playing with each other long before we played with ourselves." *Multiple Wargasm* will be accessible over any standard TCP/IP Internet connection, and DID is considering

This rendered promotional shot illustrates the multi-role nature of *Wargasm's* electronic battlefield — armored land vehicles, infantry and combat aircraft all have their unique part to play.

setting up its own dedicated servers along the lines of *battle.net*, and promises lots of support and activity via its web site at www.did.com. Local area network gaming will also be supported, but no user limit has yet been set.

Wargasm has yet to attach itself to a publisher, but given what we've seen so far, it seems likely DID will not be short on offers once the time comes to shop this title around. The game is scheduled to reach beta-test stage in September and be completed in November in time for a U.S. release early next year.

And in the meantime, if you have any reservations about the game's rather controversial title, Digital Image Design is inviting *PC Gamer* readers to vote on it. Nothing is set in stone yet, so you can send your thumbs-up or thumbs-down on the *Wargasm* name, or even contribute a suggestion of your own, by sending E-mail to wargasm@did.com.

In *Wargasm*, heavy rainfall will make moving armored land vehicles like this tank across hostile terrain even tougher.

"We've built a state-of-the-art physical modeling system. Our engine sets a new standard on the PC for graphics, violence, dirt, mud... and horror."

**MARTIN KENWRIGHT,
FOUNDER,
DIGITAL IMAGE DESIGN**



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Not just another bug-hunt

With a little help from the *Unreal* engine, the latest installment in MicroProse's X-COM series promises to put gamers in the thick of the fight.

Since the release of the sleeper hit *X-COM: UFO Defense* in 1994, the X-COM name has been synonymous with challenging, addictive, squad-level combat. More recently, though, the series has branched out to include *Wing Commander*-style space combat with *X-COM Interceptor*, and now MicroProse is getting set to release the first 3D shoot-'em-up based on the X-COM franchise. God knows a straightforward first-person shooter based on the *Unreal* engine and populated with those creepy sectoids and chrysalids would've sold pretty well — but the developers of *X-COM Alliance* weren't about to be satisfied with that. They've got bigger plans, which is why we're betting *Alliance* will be one of the best games of 1999.

"We're determined not to make 'X-COM meets *Quake*,'" says MicroProse UK Producer John Broomhall, "which is why we're spending so much time and effort modifying the *Unreal* engine to make an original title that's true to X-COM. MicroProse isn't deserting the isometric, squad-based, strategy-style X-COM games — we've just always



thought that the brand was strong enough to support many types of game, and this is just a different flavor which we think people will get really excited about."

So exactly how do you make a first-person shooter true to the X-COM series? Broomhall's team has it figured out: You spice up the 3D firefights with some tactical touches, for starters, and you throw in some strategic planning between battles. The perfect 3D shooter set in the X-COM universe would play just like the original game — but with real-time, first-person combat in place of the top-down, turn-based skirmishes — and it looks like that's where *X-COM Alliance* is headed.

"We have the management and strategic deployment of up to three other troopers in the missions," Broomhall says. "Then there's the familiar X-COM threads:

The ability to command as many as three other squad members means you'll do some real tactical thinking. Here, two of your buds have taken up positions behind pillars, ready to cover you as you move down the hallway.

squad selection, arming, psi-training, hospitalization, and research. Though not as deep in strategy as games like *X-COM Terror from the Deep* and *X-COM Apocalypse*, nevertheless, it feels right to have these elements, and it certainly makes the game stand apart."

In a typical session of *Alliance*, you'll get a mission briefing, check your trusty old UFOpedia for pertinent information on the bug-eyed monsters you're about to face, select a squad, arm them to the teeth, and jump into battle. There'll be lots of lovely shoot-'em-up action, but the key to success will be wise use of the other

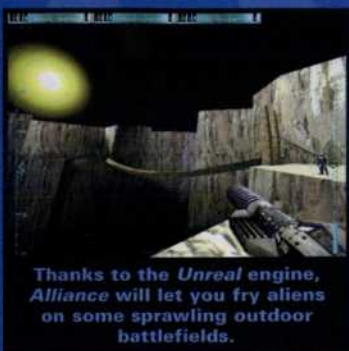
X-COM ALLIANCE



In *Alliance*, you'll use waypoints and simple keyboard commands to control a squad of four X-COM operatives.

"We're determined not to make 'X-COM meets *Quake*,' which is why we're spending so much time and effort modifying the *Unreal* engine to make an original title that's true to X-COM."

**JOHN BROOMHALL,
PRODUCER,
MICROPROSE**



Thanks to the *Unreal* engine, *Alliance* will let you fry aliens on some sprawling outdoor battlefields.



Looks like the dreaded chrysalid is about to turn poor Jo Taylor into a hideous mutant. You can see the tragedy from her point of view in the middle window at the top of the screen.

members of your squad, which you command via a 2D map and a simple set of keyboard commands and waypoints (if your psi-strength is high enough, you may even be able to "possess" other characters — a nice nod to longtime X-COM fans).

All the extraterrestrial beasts you learned to hate in previous X-COM games are here to haunt your nightmares again — but this time around, they're right in your face in glorious 3D. Multi-player support is planned, of course: "In addition to the usual stuff," Broomhall says, "we're planning to have a co-op mode where four players take on the roles of troopers in a single squad playing against the alien scum."

As versatile and powerful as

the *Unreal* engine is, Broomhall says his team had to make some significant modifications before it was ready to serve as the foundation for *X-COM Alliance*.

"The engine is awesome, and it would have been easy to use it 'out of the box,'" he says, "but we're determined to deliver our vision of a first-person X-COM game, so we've had to add and integrate a lot of our own code to an engine still in development! That's been problematic at times, but the results are well worthwhile, because *Alliance* includes many features not seen in other first-person games."

In addition to the strategic, between-missions shell and provisions for squad-based combat, the *Alliance* team threw in some features that would be welcome in just about any first-person shooter — including an automap and the ability to see the action from other



One nice thing about those sectoids: They blow up real good. Your buddy Mallory's got the one on the left, and the other one's all yours.

characters' viewpoints:

"We've added a fully adjustable 2D map (reveals as you explore), which you can even overlay on top of the 3D view," Broomhall says. "At any time, you can view either the mini map or the 3D view from the other troopers' shoulder cams. These multiple views are unique, and everyone says it looks very cool."

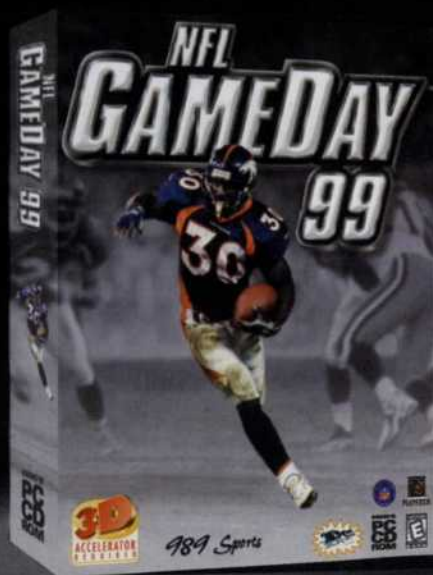
Yes, it does. The screen shots you see here — sharp as they are — can't do justice to the real thing. *Alliance* looks like it has the right stuff to captivate action and strategy gamers alike when it comes out in the first half of next year.

PCG

You'll get up close and personal with your old nemesis, the sectoid — and finally understand why your soldiers panicked so often in the original *X-COM*. He doesn't look quite so cute with that big gun leveled at your breadbasket, does he?



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A stylized, high-contrast illustration of a woman's face, likely Lara Croft, rendered in shades of orange and yellow. The face is composed of large, flat areas with sharp black outlines. A large, dark blue circular logo is positioned over the eye area. The logo contains the text 'TOMB RAIDER' in large, textured, gold-colored letters, 'ADVENTURES OF LARA CROFT' in smaller, white, sans-serif letters below it, and the Roman numeral 'III' in a large, red, stylized font to the right.

**TOMB
RAIDER**
ADVENTURES OF
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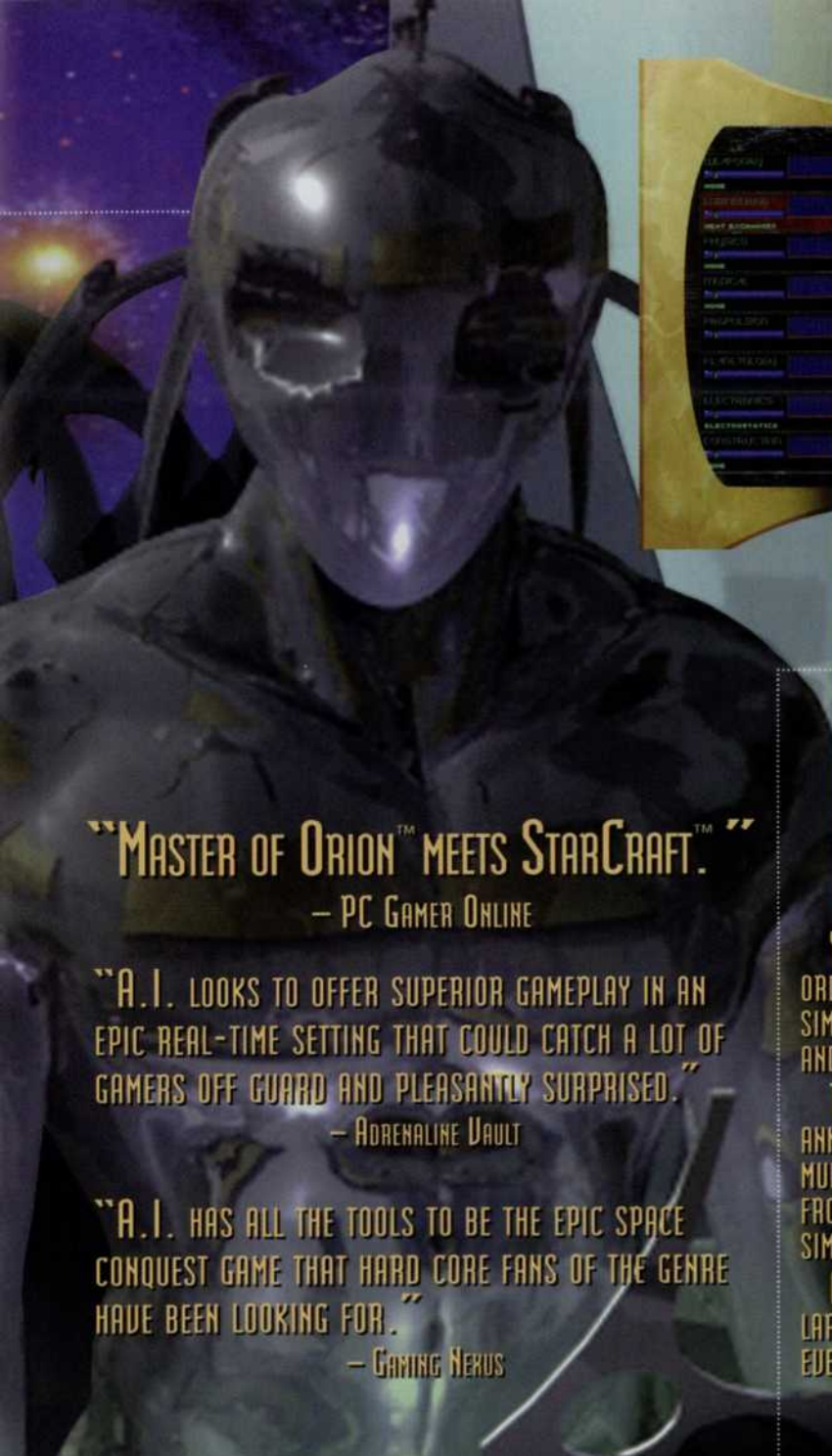


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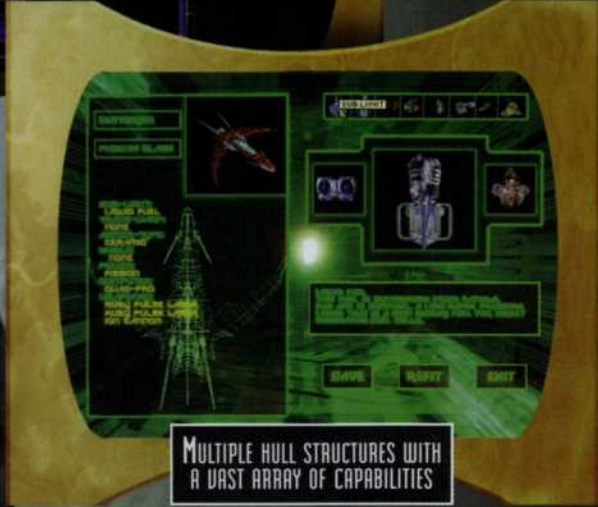


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FOR SOME

ALL?



"Hi, I'm Gary Whitta."

"And I'm William 'Snowball' Harms welcoming you to this special presentation of the PC Gamer Sports Network. As the 1998 NFL season gets underway, we're here in the studio and on location around the country to bring YOU the definitive round-up of this year's batch of PC football games. And it promises to be a breakthrough season!"

"It certainly does, Bill. You know, it's always puzzled me that our great nation's most popular sport has also been the most poorly represented on PC over the years. While the console systems have long enjoyed some excellent gridiron games, the PC has been left behind with weak graphics, shallow tactical gameplay, and many other glaring gameplay problems.

"But this year, all that's about to change. This is the first PC football season in which 3D acceleration has been widely available, and as you'll see later in our on-location reports, that new technology has resulted in some gridiron graphics the like of which you have NEVER seen before."

"That's right, Gary. But this season's offerings are promising more than just pretty graphics. The designers have gone back to the blackboards to totally rework their game engines and playbooks, and the result could be the first real season where PC football games do justice to our nation's number one sport."

"So, without further ado, let's head out to the golden state, where PCGSN's Quintin Doroquez reports live from the EA Sports compound in San Mateo. Quintin?"



EA SPORTS

MADDEN

****PCGSN LIVE REPORT****
QUINTIN DOROQUEZ
 SAN MATEO, CA

"Thank you, Gary. I'm here outside EA Sports' top-secret development camp for an inside look at the much-awaited *Madden NFL 99*.

"Last year's *Madden* was something of a disappointment for EA Sports' most high-profile and long-running franchise. The fast and fun gameplay that the series is known for was intact, but when compared to the rest of the company's stable of thoroughbreds, the technology and overall presentation was woefully behind the times.

"But from my early look at *Madden NFL 99*, all that is about to change in a big way — this game not only promises to look incredible, but all of the managerial and coaching features that gamers have been crying out will finally be implemented in full force.

"It's hard to talk about *Madden NFL 99* without first taking a moment to get foamy around the mouth while looking at the breathtaking graphics. Gone is last year's horrid V-Poly technology, to be replaced by true 3D-polygonal players, boasting up to 1,200 polygons per model. The game will ship with support built in for AGP, Voodoo, and Voodoo2 graphic accelerators, so moving these intricately-modeled players

around in high-resolution will be a breeze if you have the right hardware. Of course, things will be scaled back if your machine isn't up to snuff, but even at lower resolutions, the game looks fabulous.

"Of course, all of the polygons in the world don't mean a thing if the players look ridiculous once they hit the field with stilted and robotic movements. So tons of new animations are being added to give this

NFL 99

game the most realistic look and feel of any football game ever created. Having seen the game in action, I'm convinced that the developers are on the right track. Jukes, pump fakes, and touchdown celebrations all look incredible with smooth, flowing movements. Even better, though, is the many different types of tackles that have been added to the mix. Multiple wrap tackles, shoulder drags, and hits that make you go 'oooph!' look spectacular and are enhanced

by realistic sounds supplied by the NFL. If nothing else, *Madden NFL 99* is sure to be the most attractive game in the history of the series and is the early season favorite to win the graphics war among this year's contenders.

"The artificial intelligence (AI) is also getting attention. Last year's game featured something called Liquid AI, meaning the players reacted to the ball and the game situation, rather than having a pre-programmed script. It was an improvement over what had come in the past, but still had some problems against a skilled human player. Building upon this foundation is a new addition called Smart D, where the computer-controlled team will learn the player's tendencies and adapt its strategy accordingly. The running game is also being overhauled. This is one of the toughest things to get right, and as seasoned PC players all know, a football game game sucks hard if the running is poor. To address this, EA Sports has cooked up some advanced run-blocking code to ensure that this part of the game is much more



The field could get a little slippery in these conditions.

evenly balanced this time around.

"*Madden NFL 99* is bursting at the seams with new additions that could make it the choice for fans of all types. If you're new to football or PC games in general, the new One-Button mode may be of interest. Depending on the situation and timing, a single button press will perform any number of actions, from handing to a running back, hitting the open receiver, or throwing a stiff-arm to ward off a defender as you barrel down the field. For veterans, the familiar controls will be available, letting you to choose your receiver (with enhanced touch passing, allowing for bullet passes or lobs), and spin and juke your way in for a touchdown.

"When it comes to coaching strategies and features, the *Madden* series has never been the best choice. But that looks set to change this year as a full plate of options is in store for all of you virtual Vince Lombardis out there. The Franchise mode will let you take control of a team and try your hand at building a dynasty for the ages. Player ratings





Ouch! That's gotta hurt! Big hits create big plays. The football is up for grabs after this collision.

will improve or decline based on their age, and you'll have to contend with things like salary caps, re-negotiating contracts, and restocking your team with young talent in the draft. Your drafting position will be based on your record from the previous season, and if you don't live up to expectations, you may find yourself out of a job. There will also be a Fantasy draft feature, letting as many as eight participants pool the NFL players and draft up teams. Unfortunately, this is a stand-alone feature that can't be used in conjunction with the Franchise mode, and is only playable on the same machine with no available network or modem options.

"There will be plenty of help available to you as you try and take your team to the Super Bowl. Each team will have its own specific playbook, but you can create your own custom version complete with gameplans. There will be a play creator so you can design that quadruple reverse you've always dreamed about, and a practice mode will help you perfect it.

"If all you want out of a football game is to get out on the field and lay a hurting on your opponent, *Madden NFL 99* will deliver here as well. The Arcade mode is a new addition that will feature few rules and more devastating hits.



All of the player models are finely detailed, right down to the wrinkles in the players' jerseys.

"Rounding out the feature list are a player creator and more than 120 great NFL teams from the past, while Pat Summerall will return as the play-by-play man (hopefully with a bit more enthusiasm than last year), and Coach Madden will bring his inimitable style to the color commentary.

This year, in addition to the usual assortment of 'Madden-isms', there will be detailed analysis focusing on the star players. One final area to discuss is multi-play. As many as four gamers can play on a single computer, but LAN, modem, and, for the first time ever, Internet play will be an option as well. Over a modem or LAN, full action play will be possible, but with TCP/IP connection, players will be limited to a coaching-only mode.

"From everything I've seen so far here at the *Madden NFL 99* camp, this could be the year that this series regains its rightful place at the top of the football mountain. It's beautiful, it plays like a dream, and it's loaded with options that will satisfy the screaming masses, making it my pick this pre-season as the game to beat. We'll find out for sure when the game hits store shelves this fall.

"That's all from me — now it's time to head over to the somewhat colder climes of Bellevue, Washington, where PCGSN's Dan Bennett has been keeping a close eye on the development of Sierra Sports' latest effort. Over to you, Dan."



You'll have several different camera angles to choose from when executing your plays.



Players will react to the ball by turning their heads at just the right moment.



A variety of wrap-tackles and other movements make the action look very true to life.



Your team's passing game will be much less effective when the rain is coming down.

SIERRA SPORTS

FOOTBALL PRO

'99

****PCGSN LIVE REPORT**
DAN BENNETT
BELLEVUE, WA**

"What?"

"I said, over to you, Dan!"

"Oh. Thank you, Quintin. I'm reporting from the frozen tundra outside the Sierra Sports HQ in Bellevue, and though the weather is cold outside, things are heating up inside, where *Football Pro '99* is being prepped for release.

"In 1993, when the first *Front Page Sports Football* game was released, many football fans must have thought they had died and gone to heaven. It featured incredible graphics and the deepest simulation of the game of football (or any other sport for that matter) ever attempted. The public and gaming press couldn't heap enough praise on this breakthrough title. When the follow-up, *FPS: Football Pro*, came along and greatly improved on its predecessor, the gauntlet had been thrown down to any who would enter this market: you had to go through the *Front Page Sports* series if you wanted to make it to the top.

"Maybe it was a case of having too wide a margin of victory or just plain laziness, but something went awry with the *FPS* games that followed. Little was added or changed, save a new numeral at the end of the title to signify another passing year. The graphics, which were once considered state-of-the-art, began



If you want to run the Dolphins in a career league, at the end of each year, you'll have to worry if Dan Marino will hang up his cleats.

to look very dated. The interface and game engine started to accumulate cobwebs as the years passed, and the attempt to move the series to a Windows 95 format wound up doing more harm than good. What this game needed was a complete overhaul. Enter *Football Pro '99* from the newly-revamped Sierra Sports division.

"The new 3D graphics engine will support hardware acceleration through Direct3D, but it won't be a requirement. This alone should help to improve the jittery performance that destroyed the arcade portion of *FB Pro '98*. From what I've seen, the visuals are an improvement, but aren't quite as advanced as some of the other titles the game will be competing against. So long as the movement and animations are smooth, however, the depth of the game should compensate for any deficiencies. As the game goes on, the graphics will reflect the deterioration of the field — the worse the weather, the quicker the field will degenerate into a muddy mess. The size of the crowd will also be graphically depicted, and the team uniforms will be

fully customizable, right down to the logo. Howard David will be back in the broadcast booth; the overall style of the game, with its TV-style camera work and informative displays, should be more appealing and exciting than the dull and dreary presentation of the past.

"The artificial intelligence exhibited by the CPU has always been pretty good in this series and should hold its own once again. Some tweaks have been made to the play-calling code to improve things like clock management, and the players will have their own individual AI to determine their actions as they react to the ball and opposing players.

Even experienced *Football Pro* players should expect a respectable challenge from the computer-controlled opponents.

"Improvements have been made to just about every area of the simulation. The interface has been overhauled, making it

much easier to pick the right play for any situation. If you choose a running play, you then pick which side of the field to attack; for passing plays, you decide the length of the pass. Next, you choose your formation and then you will be given a choice of plays that fit the criteria you've selected. This method should be much more intuitive, especially for those who aren't totally familiar



The game's players should move a lot smoother this year with the help of 3D acceleration.

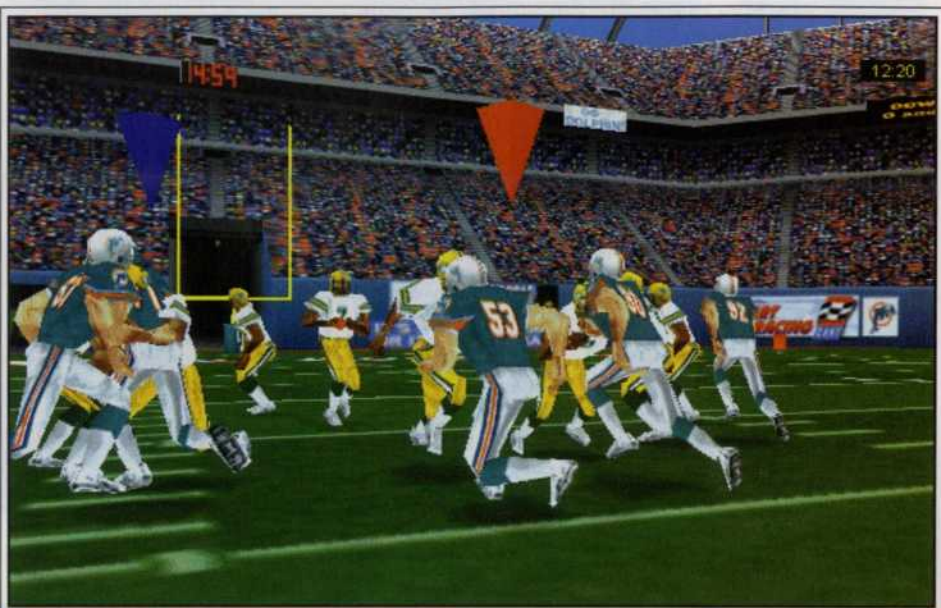


The strength of the Football Pro series has always been its depth as a simulation.

with the series. Creating your own plays should be simpler and quicker as well, with the help of templates. An example of this is the selection of a blocking scheme for your offensive linemen. All the offensive players will be given a blocking assignment that can be adjusted as you see fit, rather than having to individually plot the movement of every player.

"Drafting up a league will easier too. Finally, you'll be able to see your current roster on the same screen as the available players, cutting down on all that annoying clicking back and forth. The computer teams will draft more intelligently, evaluating the entire draft pool and picking a player that fits the team's needs, rather than just taking the best player available according to some vague number-crunching scheme. When it's time for the college draft, there will be a new method incorporated in generating these players. Their height and weight will determine their physical attributes, and their skills will be affected by how old they are (with older players being somewhat more skilled). Every player will have the potential to play a number of positions, and will lose or improve on this potential depending on how he is used.

"To help you make decisions, each game played will generate a scouting report showing details on the offensive and defensive outcomes. For example, the offensive report will tell you how many plays of a specific type were called and what the result was of these plays. It will also show things like the game situations (second down and long, third down



Not only have the graphics in the game been improved, but work is being done to make the artificial intelligence of both the players and computer coaches even better than previous games in the series.

and short, etc.) that were in effect when the play was called.

"The Remote League Management features will be improved to make running an Internet league less of a chore. It will allow the draft to be run online, and owners will be able to send a small file with roster changes, rather than the entire league file, to the commissioner for updating the files. Once all teams have sent in their changes file, all the commissioner needs to do is compile them, and the game will create a new league file.

"Career leagues will now have a full pre-season (with expanded rosters) and will be completely fleshed out thanks to the addition of an all-encompassing financial model. With every option in effect, you'll have to contend with salary caps, free agent signings and contracts, ticket prices, television revenues, and concession prices. Before each year's amateur draft, there will be a free agent signing period, and you'll be able to make trades with other teams in an effort to build the best team possible while still

staying under the cap. Other improvements to the career mode include more awards given out at the end of the season with records being kept throughout the league's history, and the previous year's statistics will be saved on a year-by-year basis, rather than just a lump career sum.

"Other games are starting to incorporate many of the features we've come to take for granted from the Football Pro series, but until they prove themselves out on the field, I still have to tip this title as the most complete simulation around. If the improvements that are promised are pulled off effectively, those who want total control of everything from the general manager's seat to the chin strap of the third-string quarterback should be quite pleased by what *Football Pro '99* has in store for them this October.

"I'm heading inside now for a hot cup of cocoa, so I'll hand off to Jay Vidhecharoen, who was lucky enough to be sent to the considerably warmer city of San Diego for his report. Jay?"



Manage your team salary wisely or you'll find yourself over the cap and scraping the bottom of the talent barrel to fill your team's holes.



A full crowd means more revenue. The new financial model in the game will allow you to set everything from ticket prices to the cost of a beer.



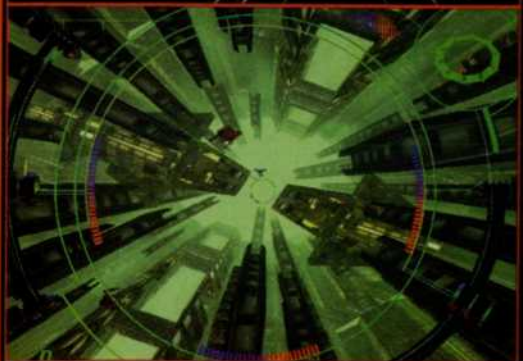
The new play-calling interface should be a big improvement over past years. Of course, you'll still be able to create your own plays and playbooks.

You know the feeling. It sets in around the 5th or 6th pot. It's a bit beyond the traditional adrenaline rush. Well, that's what it feels like when you get to the 5th and 6th cylinders in Dead Reckoning. And with 9 more cylinders left to conquer, each featuring a more challenging alien opponent than the last, you'll be wired for days.

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DIRTY RECKONING™



the coffee?

Warning: This game is served scorching **HOT.**



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SONY INTERACTIVE NFL GAMEDAY '99

****PCGSN LIVE REPORT****
JAY VIDHECHAROEN
 SAN DIEGO, CA

"Thanks, Dan — you might want to take a warmer coat next time.

"Now, when media giant Sony entered the console market with the PlayStation, many folks, supposedly in the know, didn't give the company much of a chance of succeeding. They said that all the money in the world wouldn't make up for Sony's lack of knowledge of the market. Thirty million PlayStations sold later, nobody is questioning the company's console savvy any longer, but when Sony then started an internal development house to make sports games for its new console, the response was still negative. But again, the company has slapped its detractors upside the head with a long list of titles that have been commercial as well as critical successes. Now, the inevitable move into sports gaming has yielded perhaps the most eagerly awaited football game of the season — *NFL Gameday '99*.

"*NFL Gameday* was the first football game to use polygonal players on the PlayStation. While it won't have that advantage on the PC, the graphics are still among the best you'll find, and they should stand up very well against the competition. All of the latest 3D accelerators will be supported, using both Direct3D and Glide for cards using the Voodoo Graphics chipset. Each player model will be scaled to the actual height and weight of their real-world counterpart, and the motion capture information was acquired using

real NFL players including quarterback Ryan Leaf, linebacker Hardy Nickerson, and running back Jerome Bettis. Among the many animations included will be tight-ropeing the sidelines, swim moves by linemen, diving and one-handed catches, and various types of tackles, giving the game a very realistic look and feel. The stadiums look incredible too, with the actual buildings' blueprints being used to ensure authenticity. The game shouldn't suffer in the audio department either, with Dick Enberg and Phil Simms providing the play-by-play and color commentary, respectively.

"The gameplay of *NFL Gameday '99* is already something of a proven commodity thanks to the scorching PlayStation version. Essentially, the game is a straight port of that version. So, as in the original, the artificial intelligence was designed with the help of NFL players, and is programmed to learn from the player's tendencies. If you like to air it out with long bombs, the defense will adjust its own game to better defend against you. If you're the 'three yards and a cloud of dust' type player, expect the computer-coach to load up the box and try to stuff the run. By reading and reacting to your game, the AI does a good job of preventing

you from finding and exploiting 'money plays' (guaranteed plays that net you a huge chunk of yardage whenever used), which is a problem many football games have had in the past.

"Each player will be rated in twelve different skills (speed, hands, arm strength, tackling, aggressiveness, etc.). And while you won't be able to edit an existing player's ratings, you will be able to create free agents. When building a free agent, you will have a fixed amount of points to distribute amongst the skills. These players can be drafted and traded just like any other member of your roster.

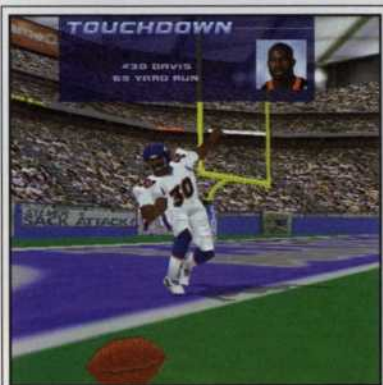
"*NFL Gameday '99* will allow you to be in total control of a team you build from scratch. There will be a full drafting



The infinite number of playing perspectives lets you get down in the trenches where the big boys play.



Every player model in the game will be scaled to his correct height and weight.



You would be happy, too, if you had just scampered for a 69-yard touchdown! Celebrate!

feature, letting you pool the players and draft up new teams (custom-created players can be included as well). You'll have more than 500 plays at your disposal, covering all the latest trends and formations found in the NFL. Stat-fiends will be happy to know that the game keeps track of the numbers for both individuals and teams throughout the season.

"There will be a few ways to play out your season or game, depending on how much realism and control you want. The Simulation mode will be the choice for serious-minded coaches. The game will move at a realistic pace, and the abilities of your players will play a big factor in the outcome. In Arcade mode, the game will speed up considerably, and there will be exaggerated animations such as when a player is high-stepping or taunting the opponent. There will be no penalties called in this mode either. Another way to play is using the Total Control Passing method. With this in effect, the passing game becomes much more of a test of skill, as you need to read the defense properly before making the throw. If the defense is playing in a zone, you may want to overthrow the

ball and have your receiver come back to make the catch. Against a man-to-man defense, you would rather lead your receiver so he has to run to the ball and outdistance the defender. This way of controlling the passes adds a new level of depth to the game.

"The biggest news from 989 Studios (the new name of the group that was formerly Sony's internal development group) is that it has conquered the issue of online action play over the Internet. Using a lowly 28.8 Kbps modem (although a 33.6 is recommended), you will be able to log on and play a real, honest-to-goodness, game of arcade-style football against another human being. There will be a match-making service run by Sony and 989 Studios known as SISA.NET that will make it even easier for you to find fellow gamers to compete against. I haven't had the opportunity to play with this yet, but I'm assured that it's currently working well and will be even better by the time the game is released. This feature alone could make *NFL Gameday '99* the fan favorite, even though it's missing some of the deeper options that its competitors are boasting, such as career play.

"The really exciting news is that this is just the first step for Sony in the PC sports games market. Its plans for next year are much more ambitious, with many other titles on the way, and hopefully, a follow-up football game adding in all the features that will be missing from this year's inaugural model. In any case, *NFL Gameday '99* should fare very well, with its proven gameplay, high-quality graphics, and online action — something that no other title can offer this year.

"This is Jay Vidhecharoen for PCGSN signing off from San Diego and handing you back to the EA Sports compound in San Mateo, where Dean Renninger has the low-down on this year's big college contender."



Make a catch near the sidelines, and you may find yourself having to walk the tightrope.



It's pretty easy to be a good quarterback when you have pass protection like this!



Make a big hit and knock the ball loose. Several different varieties of tackles should keep things interesting.



Catch it in stride and sprint for the end zone. Diving and one-handed catches will be possible when the ball isn't thrown as perfectly as this one.

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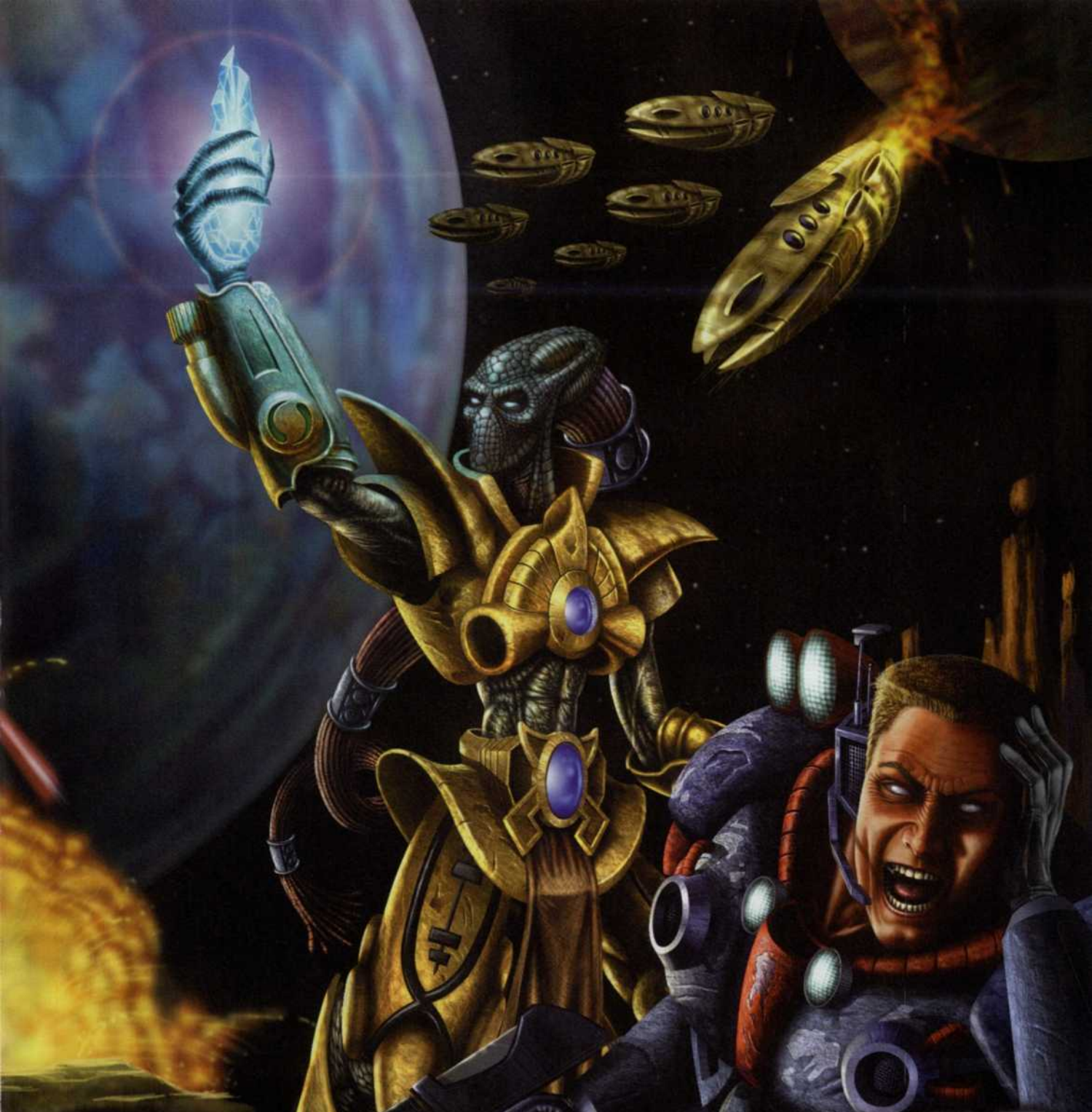
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NCAA FOOTBALL 99



The football was hand-drawn into every frame to make it look as realistic as possible.

****PCGSN LIVE REPORT****
DEAN RENNINGER
SAN MATEO, CA

"Coming off an impressive rookie season, the expectations are sky-high for *NCAA Football 99*. Judging by what I've seen so far, these expectations will be met — and exceeded — when the sophomore version of this college football title is completed.

"One of the biggest gripes that most people had with last year's game was the use of sprites instead of polygons for the players. While the sprites were drawn and animated quite well, they made the game feel as if it was a bit behind the technology curve. But after seeing the full 3D-polygon engine that will be the heart and soul of *NCAA Football 99* in action, I can assure you that the designers have caught up with the times. The graphics are excellent, and the new animations such as pump fakes, juke moves, and wrap tackles show off the power of the engine brilliantly. The artists even took the time to hand-animate the football into every frame so that it looks perfect in the players' hands. This beauty comes at a price; a hardware accelerator is almost a requirement to run the game in 3D. This doesn't mean that techno-peasants will be left out in the cold however; there will also be a sprite engine for

those whose systems can't cope. It may not look as nifty, but the same gameplay features will be available.

"The gameplay was what made *NCAA Football 98* stand out from the crowd last year, and things should be no different this time around. In fact, anyone who played the previous version will have no trouble picking up a joystick and getting knee-deep in the action. The same outstanding running-game model is still in place, and most of the niggling problems from the previous version have been addressed and remedied. The run-it-up scoring should be tamed down thanks to a reworking of the artificial intelligence of the safeties, and the quarterback that had to stop to throw a pass now can throw on the move. You can



now save a game in progress so that you won't have to forfeit if your computer crashes or your dog mistakes your power-strip for his chew toy. Some other touches have been added to enhance the gameplay, such as swim moves for the linemen, a lateral shuffle

move, the ability to reverse the direction of the play calls, and a new trajectory kicking method, allowing you to adjust the height of the kick when trying to make long field goals. All in all, the game plays a lot like last year — which is a very good thing indeed.

"Atmosphere was another area that the 98 edition excelled at. The authentic look of the stadiums and the inclusion of individual team fight songs did a great job of putting you into the college mood. All of this and more will be back for another go-round, with 112 Division 1-A teams, 122 stadiums that look better than ever, more than 60 team fight songs and chants, and the return of Chuck White to do the PA chores. Since this is a



The college atmosphere will be in full force, with chants, fight songs, and a dynamic crowd that reacts intelligently to the action on the field.



This Tennessee player is so excited by the fact that he's about to score a touchdown that he just couldn't resist showing off.



The intelligence of the secondary has been improved this year, so you won't see as many free trips into the end zone.

college game, the goal will be to end up in a bowl game at the end of the year. EA Sports has secured the exclusive rights to some of the top bowl games, including the Orange, Sugar, and Fiesta, the last of which has been deemed the game that will be played for the national championship. There will also be seven other "no name" bowl games included, representing the real life match-ups. The system for determining the rankings has been changed, and should be much more accurate than last year's model. There will also be individual player awards handed out at the end of the season, such as the coveted Heisman Trophy, as well as recognition for the best quarterback, running back, etc. Back again this year are the historical match-ups of classic games from the past. The number available has been doubled, with 20 new games offering 40 more teams added to those from the previous version. In short, everything you need to get your pompoms in a tizzy will be here, giving *NCAA Football 99* a feel very much different from the NFL games on the market this season.

"A glaring omission in *NCAA Football 98* was the Dynasty mode, especially when you consider that it was included in the PlayStation version. *NCAA 99* intends to make up for that mistake this year, so now, once your season is over, you have to make decisions on how to go about recruiting future blue-chip players and furthering the glory of your program. Depending on how well you did, you will be given a number of 'prestige points' to use in your recruiting efforts. You need to allocate a percentage of those points to whatever positions you need (or want) to fill or improve. The computer will make suggestions for you based on what it feels is the best player available, but you will have the final decision on whether or not to recruit the recommended player or go in another direction. Don't have too many losing seasons though, or you may get the axe, and have to start shopping your resume



You don't want to let that lame defender tackle you from the ground — you can use the hurdle move to avoid his nasty clutches.



Beautiful weather effects and awesome 3D graphics make *NCAA Football 99* an early contender for the Heisman of football games. A hardware accelerator is almost a requirement to run this game at its full potential.

around to lower profile schools to try and regain your reputation.

"Other features include a coaching mode where you call the plays and make the substitutions while the computer runs them for you. Authentic playbooks designed with the help of Terry Donahue, the former head coach at UCLA, will be available, and if you want to customize your own, you can with the 'user profile' feature (although no actual play editor will be included). There will be many different camera angles to play from, and a free-roaming replay camera that will be as powerful as last year's version, but more intuitive to use.

Remote play via LAN and modem, as well as serial cable and as many as five players at the same computer will be part of the package. The game will also come with approximately 700 common surnames that have been recorded by Chuck White, and using the player editor, you'll be able to edit the names, as well as the stats, so that you'll hear them being announced on the field, rather than just the players' number.

"College fans should be more than delighted with *NCAA Football 99*. If all goes according to plan, the game should be on the shelves shortly after this issue hits the news



Look at this silly little Cornhusker...you just can't contend with a Wolverine stiff-arm!



stands. I reserve the right to make a final judgement until I get the completed code in hand, but even the early alpha version I played has made me confident that this will be a worthy successor to what turned out to be the best football title available on the PC last season.

"Now it's time for us to head over to New York, where PCGSN's Greg 'Fancy Man' Vederman has some news concerning Acclaim's belated entry into this year's pro season. Greg?"

I HAVE AN ENORMOUS TANK BATTALION.

I HAVE AN ARSENAL OF WEAPONS AT MY FINGERTIPS.

I'VE DESTROYED BUILDINGS IN MY WAY.

S O W H Y

I AM ONE WITH THE CROSSHAIRS.

I AM A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH.

DMB  100
RLD  58%

EGY  11
AMP  50%

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I KNOW HOW TO DEFEND MY HOST STATION.

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ACCLAIM

NFL QUARTERBACK CLUB 99



The kicking game has always been a strong point of the Quarterback Club series.

****PCGSN LIVE REPORT****
GREG "FANCY MAN" VEDERMAN
 NEW YORK, NY

"That's right, Dean — after taking a year off from the PC football market, Acclaim is back to do battle with *NFL Quarterback Club 99*. The previous two PC releases were well accepted by the action crowd, with their smooth play and sharp graphics, and this latest version is looking better than ever, with the help of 3D acceleration. Plenty of other features have been added and improved upon as well, so even simulation fans may want to give this one a second look.

"Not surprisingly, *QB Club* will go with a 3D-polygon engine and support for hardware accelerators will be included using Direct3D. The stadiums are looking good and the smooth-skin textures being used on the player models should make them very fluid when in action. There will be 250 new animations added, including endzone celebrations by specific players, such as Merton Hanks' chicken dance and Terrell Davis' salute.

"The new stuff goes well beyond the eye-candy, though. The artificial intelligence and the game strategy of the computer coaches have been totally revamped, using the knowledge and expertise of New York Jets Offensive Coordinator Charlie Weis. The proper percentage of runs and passes will be executed as per the real life numbers, and adjustments will be made depending on play-calling tendencies during the game. Similar to the Madden series' Liquid AI, each player is an independent thinker, not restricted by a pre-determined script and able to choose the best, most intelligent course of action when involved in a play. Each team will have its own playbook that will reflect its style out on the field, or you can create your own from the large selection of plays available. You'll be able to draft up your own teams and contend with player contracts and the dreaded salary cap, while wheeling and dealing with the other teams to improve your lot. During the season, players' attributes will

change in accordance with their performance, and injuries and penalties will play their part in driving you to an early head of gray hair.

"As for the presentation, Mike Patrick of ESPN fame will perform the play-by-play duties, while the color commentary comes from CBS' Randy Cross. The referee won't be some nameless schmoe either; Jerry Markbreit, the NFL's Head of Officials, will be providing his services. As many as six people will be able to play in a game on the same computer, using a combination of gamepads, keyboard, and mouse. You'll be able to create custom teams (with your own choice of uniform colors), players, and coaching profiles, and the game will award game, week, and season awards such as Player of the Game and an overall league MVP at the end of the season. And a feature made famous by the *QB Club* series will return again this year — the Historical



Simulation mode will let you replay key moments from all 32 previous Super Bowls, and will even allow you to create your own nail-biting situations.

"There's going to be some heavy competition out there for *NFL Quarterback Club 99* to go up against when it's released this September.

The lack of a career mode and online play could hurt the game's chances,

but if the graphics and gameplay meet the standards we've come to expect from this series, it should be able to hold its own, especially with the established fan base that has been waiting two years for an update.

"That's all from me in New York City — for our final report, we go over to Michael Wolf, who joins us live from the windy city. Take it away, Mike."



Cheese-head Brett Favre of the Green Bay Packers will be back to endorse the game for another year.

Map

? X

I DEPLOYED MY GUYS USING THE TRANSPARENT MAP.

I TOLD MY GUYS TO ATTACK FROM BOTH FLANKS.

I KNOW WHERE THE TECH UPGRADE SECTOR IS.

I KNOW WHERE TO PLACE MY HOST STATION.

I KNOW WHERE THE POWER STATIONS ARE.

SO WHY AM I STILL DEAD?

I SAW A MYKONIAN CUBOID FORMATION.

I'M BEING SMART ABOUT MY MOVES.

I KNOW WHICH SECTORS ARE SECURE.



Use your map to deploy your troops and jump into any of 15 different types of vehicles.



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MIDWAY

NFL BLITZ



The touchdowns in *NFL Blitz* come at a fast and furious pace, and even the lowliest quarterbacks seem to have a gun for an arm.



This game is no place for the weak. Every hit will have you grimacing in pain and checking the field for some loose teeth.



Number 8 may have gotten enough yardage for the first down, but I'm sure he regrets every inch of it, thanks to Number 37.

****PCGSN LIVE REPORT****
MICHAEL WOLF
 CHICAGO, IL

"I'm here in Chicago where Midway, the creator of those coin-op classics that have gobbled up so many of your quarters over the years, is looking to make its first big splash into the world of PC football.

"If your prime interest in a football game is how much pain you can inflict on your opponent, Midway's *NFL Blitz* is definitely the one for you. This adaptation of the hit arcade game will deliver more brutal hits and sadistic pleasure than you can shake a quarterback's spine at. Yes, the idea is still to outscore your opponent and win the championship, but realism takes a major back seat to the outrageous arcade action.

Every NFL team is represented, but you'll be limited to the seven toughest offensive and defensive players on the roster. The simple controls are conducive to the fast, intense gameplay that scoffs at refs, penalties, time outs, and injuries. The simple rule here is: if it slows down the game, you won't find it in



NFL Blitz. Ten yards to make a first down is all fine and good for those other games, but here you'll have to go thirty yards to hang on to the pigskin for another four downs. Hurdles, stiff-arms, spin moves, diving catches, and sheer brute force are the tools you'll use to make your way downfield. Twelve different tackle animations will show in exquisite detail every bone-breaking moment.

Don't think that the play is over just because the ball carrier was tackled either; there will be plenty of extra-curricular activity to enjoy as you plant your foe's head into the turf just to show you care.

"Trash-talking is also a big part of *NFL Blitz*'s charm. Players will taunt one another mercilessly, doing their level best to embarrass their opponents and make them

run crying back home to mommy. The only thing worse than the players' behavior though, is the announcer's. This guy is off the wall and foul-mouthed! He's definitely not afraid to speak his mind about the action on the field in his own 'colorful' style.

"There's a real game hidden behind all of the lunacy, and it's a lot of fun. *NFL*

Blitz may not have the depth of the simulation titles, but when you've had a bad day at the office, I can't think of a better way to get rid of that pent-up aggression. And speaking of pent-up aggression, it's just about time to head back to Gary and Snowball in the PCGSN studio."



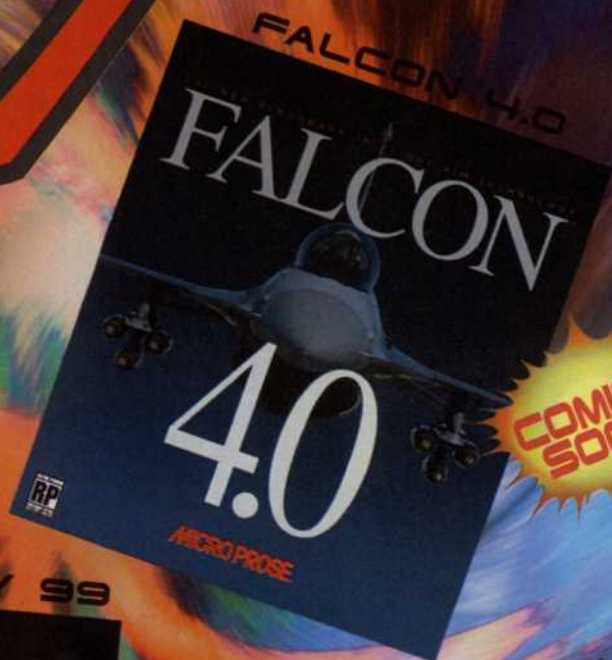
"Thanks Mike — our thanks too to Dan, Greg 'Fancy Man' Vederman, Jay, Quintin, and Dean for their reports. We've just got time to make a quick mention of one last entry into this year's season — as we all know, Interplay is continuing to increase its sporting presence with the VR Sports brand, and the latest addition to that line will be none other than *VR Football 99*. Little is known about the game, other than it's due to ship in November — a little late for many enthusiasts — and, interestingly, it will be using Shiny Entertainment's *Messiah* engine for its 3D graphics. That's it from me — anything you'd like to add, Snowball?"

"Er... not really."
 "Well, then it's goodbye from me, Gary Whitta, and him, Billy 'Snowball' Harms as another special presentation of PCGSN draws to a close. See you all next time, and remember — it's only a game. Good night."

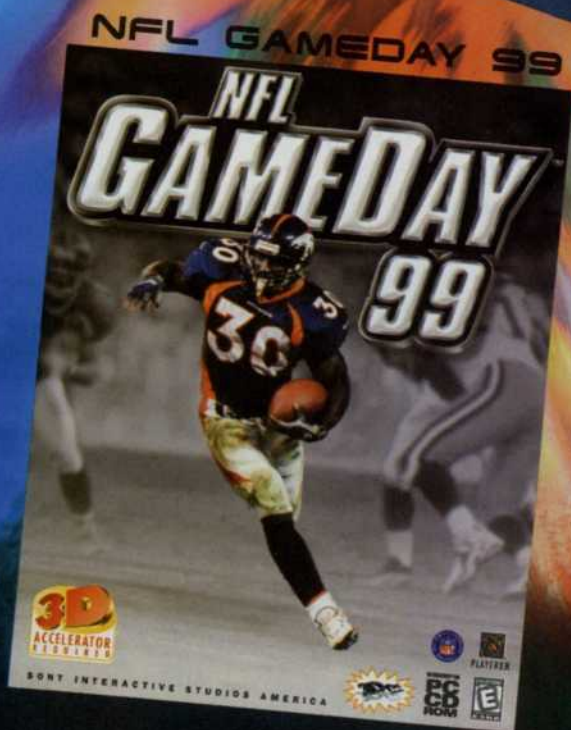
ELECTRONICS BOUTIQUE

SEPTEMBER 1998

ONE
STOP
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YOUR
CYBER
NEEDS



COMING SOON!



1*800*800*5166

WWW.EBWORLD.COM



CD ROM ENTERTAINMENT

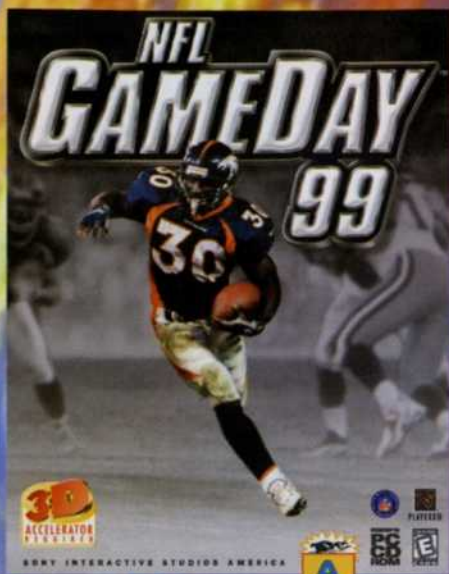
NFL GAMEDAY '99

A. The best selling game on any console comes to the PC this August. Over 500 plays designed by All-Pro players.

WINDOWS CD ROM

Sony Interactive

\$49.99



EVERQUEST

B. Prepare to enter an entire world with its own diverse species, economic systems, alliances and politics.

WINDOWS CD ROM

Sony Interactive

\$49.99



SPACE BUNNIES MUST DIE

C. Groove! Ride! and Blast! evil alien rabbits with the sassy Allison! This is the ultimate bad hare day!

WINDOWS CD ROM

Panasonic

\$49.99



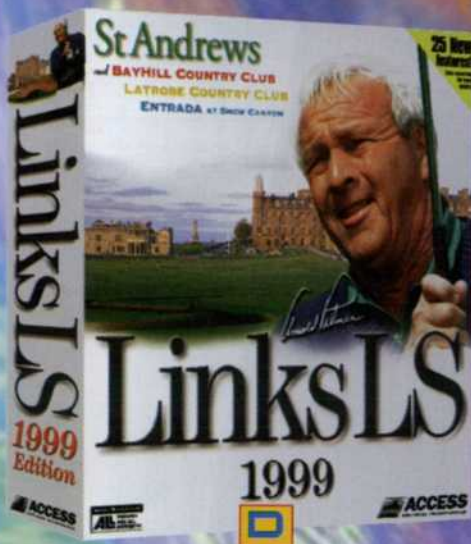
LINKS LS 1999

D. 1999 edition of the world's most award-winning golf simulation features historic St. Andrews and 25 new features.

WINDOWS CD ROM

Access Software

\$49.99



WAR GAMES

E. The WOPR is now threatening life. And they found a way to end war. Exterminate humanity.

WINDOWS CD ROM

MGM

\$44.99

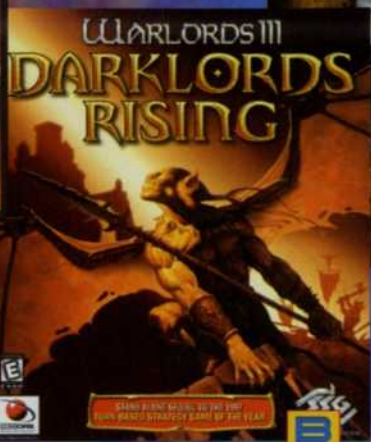




A



C



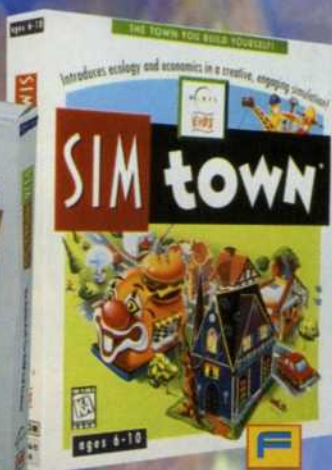
E



D



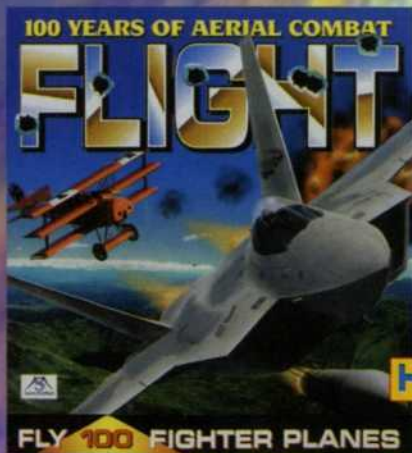
E



F



G



H

EXTREME WARFARE

A. Commando-style missions, get ready for combat without limits.
WINDOWS CD ROM
Broderbund
\$44.99

WARLORDS III: DARKLORDS RISING
B. Stand-alone sequel to 1997's Strategy Game of the year.
WINDOWS CD ROM
Broderbund
\$44.99

RIVEN
C. The Sequel to Myst, winner of two prestigious Codie awards and the best-selling game of 1997. Now on DVD.
Broderbund
\$59.99

SIM TUNES
D. Kids can make their own "musical pictures". Just select and draw from the color palette.
WINDOWS CD ROM
Electronic Arts
\$14.99

SIM PARK
E. Kids become rangers, creating their own flowering, buzzing, chirping, roaring park.
WINDOWS CD ROM
Electronic Arts
\$14.99

SIM TOWN
F. The first game that lets kids build their own dream town and build key learning skills in the process.
WINDOWS CD ROM
Electronic Arts
\$14.99

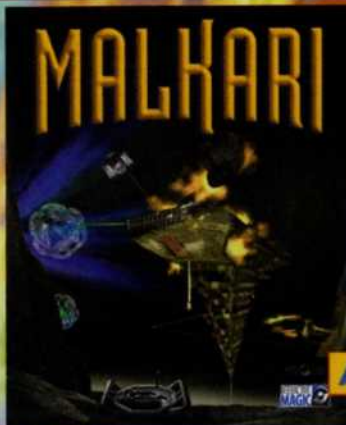
SIN
G. You've made a religion out of crime now you're going to make Elexis pay for her sins.
WINDOWS CD ROM
Activision
\$49.99

FLIGHT: 100 YEARS OF AERIAL COMBAT
H. Get ready for intense and authentic flight collections spanning a century of aerial combat.
WINDOWS CD ROM
Softkat
\$29.99

**MALKARI**

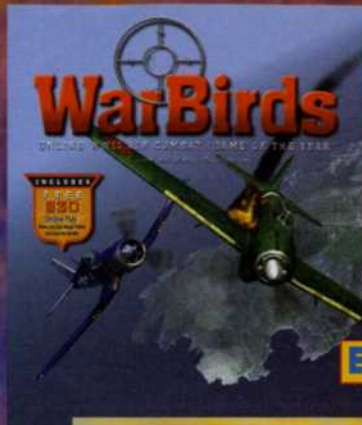
A. Attempt to lead their brethren to ultimate glory by exploring and conquering the entire star system.

WINDOWS CD ROM
Interactive Magic
\$49.99

**A****WAR BIRDS**

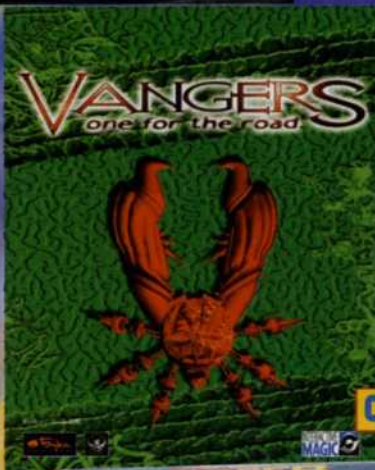
B. Train in any one of 5 off-line games, and hone your skills by practicing, bombing, strafing and dog fighting.

WINDOWS CD ROM
Interactive Magic
\$49.99

**B****VANGERS**

C. Armored racing, trading, and combat in a twisted world like nothing you've ever seen.

WINDOWS CD ROM
Interactive Magic
\$39.99

**C****IF/A-18 E**

D. The US Navy's newest weapon...now in action.

WINDOWS CD ROM
Interactive Magic
\$39.99

**D****RC RACER**

E. Blaze over extreme tracks in this pulse pounding racer.

WINDOWS CD ROM
Fox Interactive
\$44.99

**E****X FILES THE GAME**

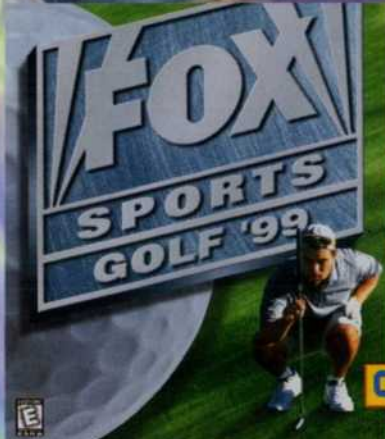
F. Access highly confidential case files and evidence in the secret government website.

WINDOWS CD ROM
Fox Interactive
\$49.99

**F****FOX SPORTS GOLF '99**

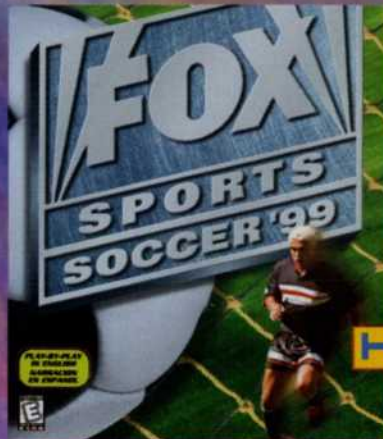
G. Great gameplay, and easy-to-use interface, stunning graphics, a true 3D environment, and more courses.

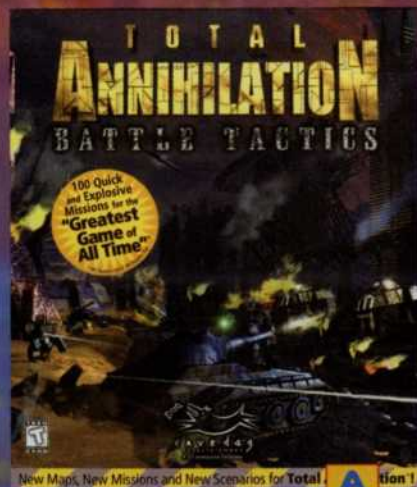
WINDOWS CD ROM
Fox Interactive
\$39.99

**G****FOX SPORTS SOCCER '99**

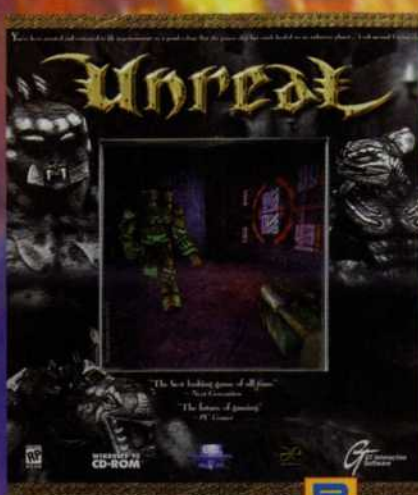
H. Amazingly smooth player animations, 128 teams, with play-to-play announcers in English and Spanish.

WINDOWS CD ROM
Fox Interactive
\$39.99

**H**



New Maps, New Missions and New Scenarios for Total **A**ction 1

**B**

TOTAL ANNIHILATION: BATTLE TACTICS

A. Continue the war as the conflict over the transfer from flesh to machines escalates.
WINDOWS CD ROM
GT Interactive
\$19.99

UNREAL

B. You are an uninvited guest in the fastest, sleekest, most dangerous 3D world ever created.
WINDOWS CD ROM
GT Interactive
\$44.99

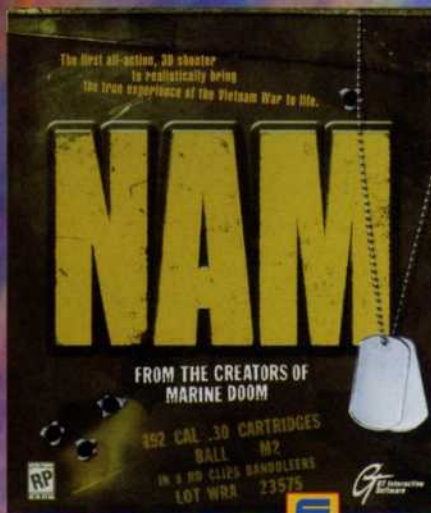
**C****D**

LODE RUNNER 2

C. The state of the art sequel to the arcade classic delivers a mindbending puzzle world of 3-Dementia.
WINDOWS CD ROM
GT Interactive
\$47.99

QUAKE

D. The bloodiest and most terrifying interactive game of all time.
WINDOWS CD ROM
GT Interactive
\$19.99

**E****F**

INCOMING

E. Aliens attack the international moon base in 2008. Every breath you take could be your last!
WINDOWS CD ROM
GT Interactive
\$44.99

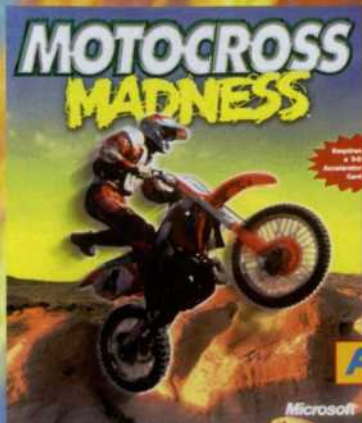
NAM

F. Captures all the intensity and paranoia of jungle warfare. Your mission is to survive.
WINDOWS CD ROM
GT Interactive
\$24.99



MOTOCROSS MADNESS

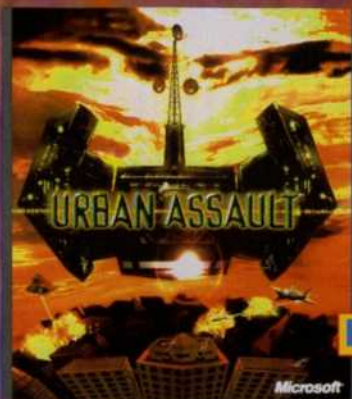
A. Stunts and racing on two supercharged, dirt-diggin' wheels!
WINDOWS 95/98
CD ROM
Microsoft
\$49.99



A

URBAN ASSAULT

B. From a first-person cockpit perspective you control 15 types of combat vehicles.
WINDOWS 95 CD ROM
Microsoft
\$49.99



B

KLINGON HONOR

C. Enter the brutal realm of the Klingon Empire and prepare yourself for bloody battle.
WINDOWS 95 CD ROM
MicroProse
\$49.99



KLINGON HONOR

C

EUROPEAN AIR WARRIOR

D. Take to the skies over Europe during World War II piloting 20 authentic fighter aircraft.
WINDOWS 95 CD ROM
MicroProse
\$49.99



EUROPEAN AIR WARRIOR

D

MONSTER TRUCK MADNESS 2

E. The sequel to the original Monster Truck Madness, one of the three best selling auto racing simulation games during the last year.
WINDOWS 95 CD ROM
Microsoft
\$49.99



E

FLIGHT SIM 98

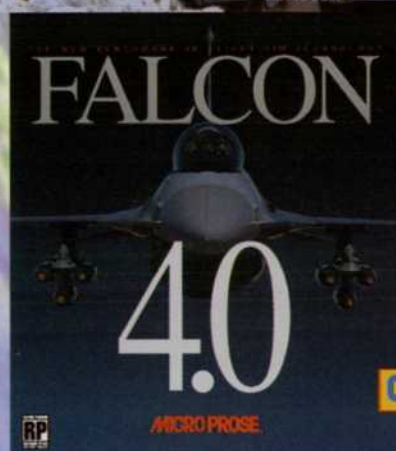
F. The world leader in flight simulation takes you to new levels.
WINDOWS 95 CD ROM
Microsoft
\$54.99



F

FALCON 4.0

G. The new bench mark in flight sim technology.
WINDOWS 95 CD ROM
Micropose
\$49.99



G

MECH COMMANDER

H. For the Mechwarrior, war is life and death is the only true peace.
WINDOWS 95 CD ROM
Mlicropose
\$49.99



H



GRAND PRIX LEGENDS

A



B

GRAND PRIX LEGENDS

A. It's 1967 and you are in the cockpit of an open racer during racings most dangreous era.

PC

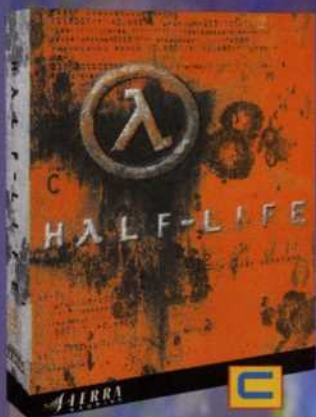
Sierra

\$24.99

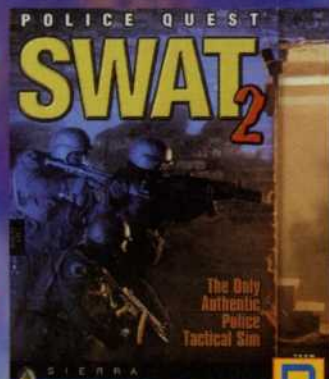
STAR SIEGE

B. One of the most action packed thrillers for your PC. WINDOWS CD ROM Cendant

\$44.99



C



D



E

HALF-LIFE

C. They're not just chasing you. They're hunting you.

WINDOWS CD ROM

Sierra

\$49.99

POLICE QUEST SWAT 2

D. Keep the peace or inflict pain and havoc on the streets of LA. Build the ultimate SWAT team--or the deadliest band of terrorists.

WINDOWS CD ROM

Sierra

\$49.99

STARCRRAFT

E. Powerful forces clash for galactic domination. WINDOWS CD ROM Blizzard

\$44.99



F



G

MORTAL KOMBAT 4

F. Enter the sinister 3D realm! Shinnok is ready...are you?

PC

Midway

\$39.99

ULTIMATE CIVIL WAR COLLECTION

G. Five of the best selling software programs ever produced on the subject of the Civil War packaged together.

WINDOWS CD ROM

Sierra

\$39.99

RAMPAGE

H. The mad man and his bio corp. Scum-Labs have altered your DNA make-up turning you into a building smashing reptile.

PC

Midway

\$29.99



H



J

RAINBOW SIX

J. It's using a trigger. It's using your mind. If you make a mistake, you're gone -- and the world too.

WINDOWS CD ROM

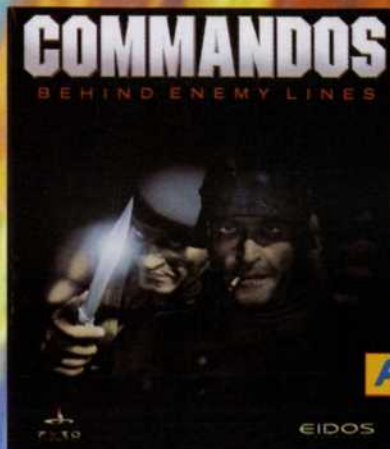
Red Storm Entertainment

\$49.99



**COMMANDOS**

A. The fastest and most furious fighting game ever.
WINDOWS CD ROM
Eidos Interactive
\$49.99



A

DEATHTRAP DUNGEON

B. Sixteen levels of fast and furious combat.
WINDOWS 95 CD ROM
Eidos Interactive
\$49.99



B

FINAL FANTASY VII

C. What begins as a rebellion against an evil corporation becomes much more. And what erupts goes beyond imagination.
WINDOWS CD ROM
Eidos Interactive
\$49.99



C

LONGBOW ANTHOLOGY

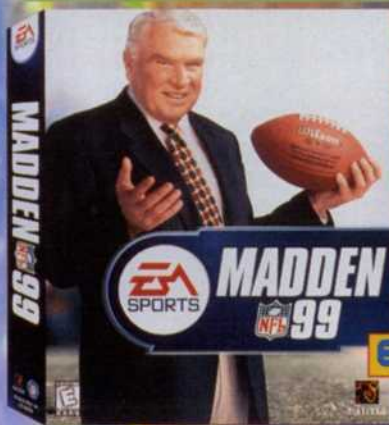
D. Get enhanced versions of both Longbow Gold and Longbow 2 in one action-packed box.
WINDOWS CD ROM
Jane's
\$39.99



D

MADDEN 99

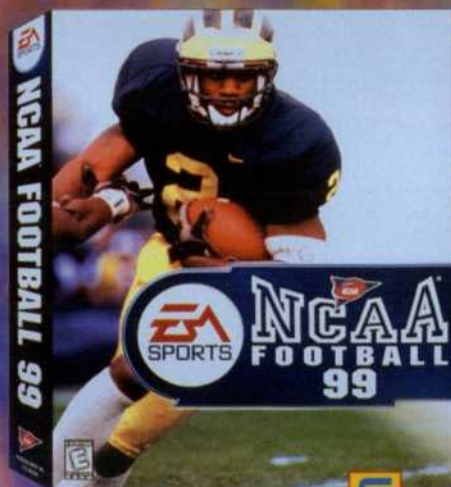
E. Madden-style is the best looking, best playing sports game ever created with new motion animations for authentic NFL moves.
WINDOWS CD ROM
Electronic Arts
\$44.99



E

NCAA FOOTBALL 99

F. The ultimate college atmosphere with all 112 teams and stadium, authentic fight songs and chants, and all the major conferences and championship games.
WINDOWS CD ROM
Electronic Arts
\$44.99



F

WORLD OF COMBAT 2000

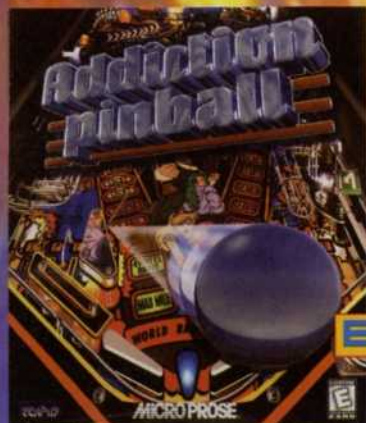
G. Three of Novalogic's best selling simulations available in one complete combat collection.
WINDOWS CD ROM
Novalogic
\$44.99



G



A



B

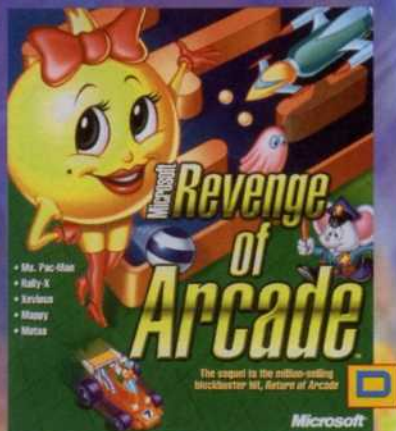
SHANGHAI DYNASTY

A. Challenge your mind with these games.
WINDOWS 95 CD ROM
Activision
\$44.99

ADDICTION PINBALL
B. Go full tilt with addiction pinball.
WINDOWS 95 CD ROM
MicroProse
\$29.99



C



D

YOU DON'T KNOW JACK PACK

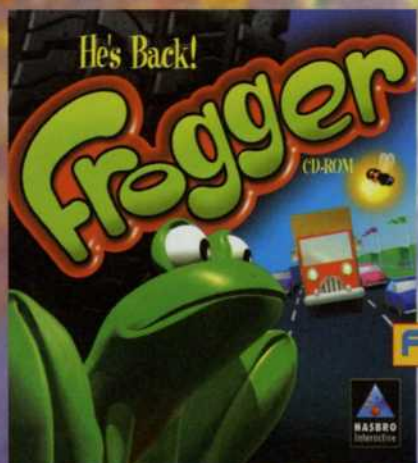
C. Includes your favorite You Don't Know titles, TV, movies and sports.
WINDOWS/MAC CD ROM
Sierra
\$39.99

REVENGE OF ARCADE

D. Collection of five classic arcade games from the early 80's. Featuring the one and only Ms. Pac-Man.
WINDOWS 95 CD ROM
Microsoft
\$29.99



E



F

CD LABEL MAKER KIT

E. Its the easiest and most accurate way to create, print and apply professional quality labels.
2 Free CDR disks included.
PC
Memorex
\$29.99

FROGGER

F. Frogger, he's the coolest amphibian in town.
WINDOWS 95 CD ROM
Hasbro Interactive
\$39.99



G



H

PANTHER XL

G. John Romero, co-creator of Quake and Doom says, "Buy it!"
PC
MAD CATZ
\$59.99

VIVICAM 3000

H. 1000x800 pixels, advanced color performance, automatic electronic flash, internal memory up to 20 images.
PC
Vivitar
\$189.99

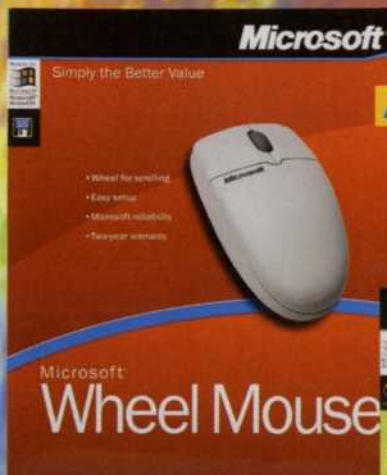
LIFESTYLE



MICROSOFT WHEEL MOUSE

A. Now its fast and easy! Roll the wheel forward or backward instead of clicking.

PC
Microsoft
\$29.99



ACTIMATES ARTHUR

B. Engage your child in hours of fun and interactive learning.

PC
Microsoft
\$99.99



SIDEWINDER PRECISION PRO

C. This joystick is the successor to the Sidewinder 3D pro with improved ergonomics and digital optical technology.

PC
Microsoft
\$69.99



YODA MOUSEMAT

D. This special die cut Yoda mouse mat will remind you to "Trust the Force".

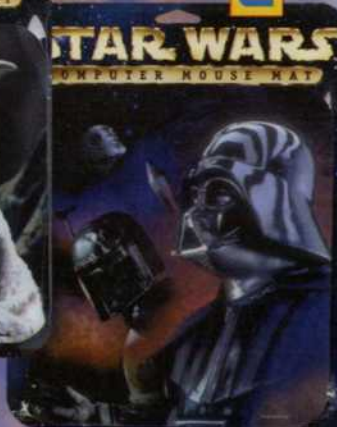
American Covers, Inc.
Accessories
\$7.99



DARTH VADER MOUSEMAT

E. This durable polyester fabric surface and comfortable non-skid rubber back make mouse tracking trouble-free.

American Covers, Inc.
Accessories
\$7.99



R2-D2 & C-3PO MOUSEMAT

F. Cool collectible mouse mats featuring the greatest trilogy of our time... Star Wars.

American Covers, Inc.
Accessories
\$7.99



DEATH STAR MOUSEMAT

G. TIE Fighters and X-Wing Fighters battle it out on the durable fabric surface!

American Covers, Inc.
Accessories
\$7.99



JUMP TO LIGHTSPEED 3D MOUSEMAT

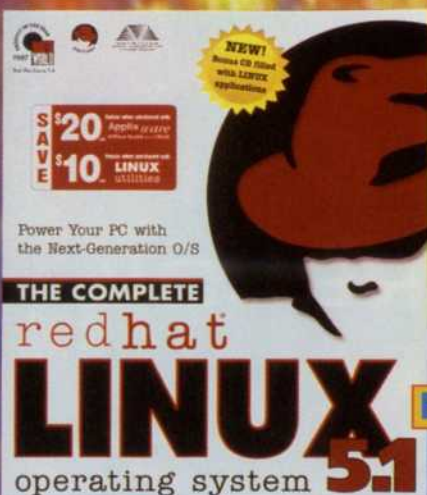
H. Star Wars 3D Lenticular Mouse Mat that brings one of the film's favorite scenes to your desk top.

American Covers, Inc.
Accessories
\$9.99

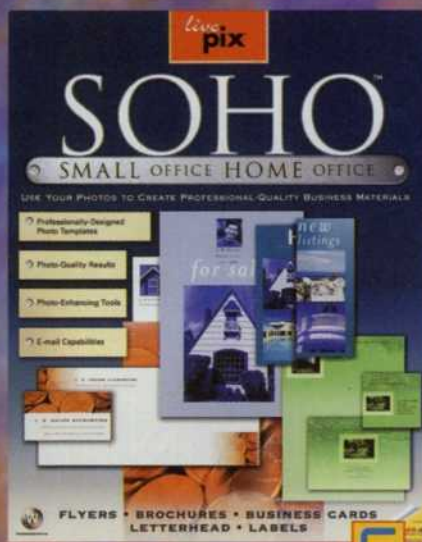




A



B



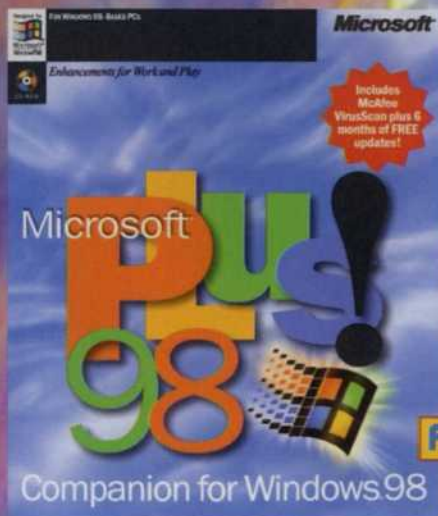
C



D



E



F

CINEMAIL

A. Reach your clients anywhere in the world! Record and send video e-mail.
WINDOWS 95 CD ROM Baraka
\$39.99

RED HAT LINUX 5.1
B. Power your PC with the next generation complete Red Hat 5.1 operating system.
WINDOWS CD ROM Simon & Schuster
\$49.99

LIVE PIX SOHO
C. Small businesses can now create professional-quality materials incorporating their own photos.
WINDOWS 95 CD ROM Live Pix
\$49.99

COLOR ZIP DISK 5 PACK
D. Offers 100 MB capacity, high reliability and infinite storage capability. The colors make organization easy.
PC Fuji
\$69.99

WINDOWS 98 UPGRADE
E. The exciting new successor to Windows 95 that works better and plays better.
Full version available \$189.99.
WINDOWS 95 CD ROM Microsoft
\$89.99

PLUS 98
F. The ideal companion for Windows 98, with enhancements for work and play, including new themes and cool games.
WINDOWS 98 CD ROM Microsoft
\$39.99



CD ROM ENTERTAINMENT

RECOIL

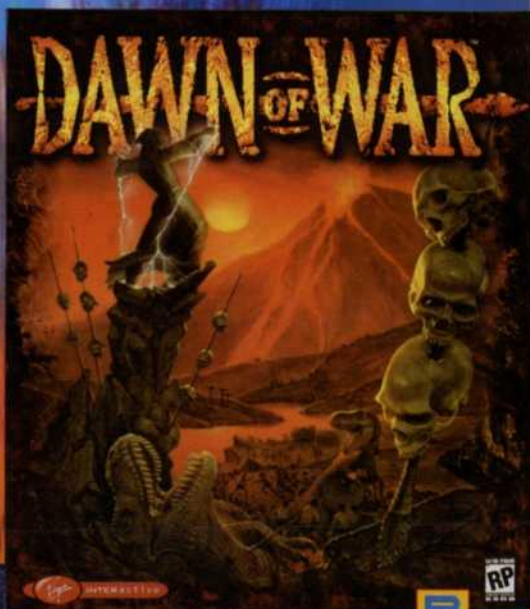
A. Command a rapid-fire battle force tank in 6 explosive worlds armed with 18 mass destructive weapon.
WINDOWS CD ROM
Virgin Interactive
\$49.99



A

DAWN OF WAR

B. Enter a real-time world where you lead one of three species in a prehistoric fight for survival.
WINDOWS 95 CD ROM
Virgin Interactive
\$44.99



B

COMMAND & CONQUER TIBERIAN SUN

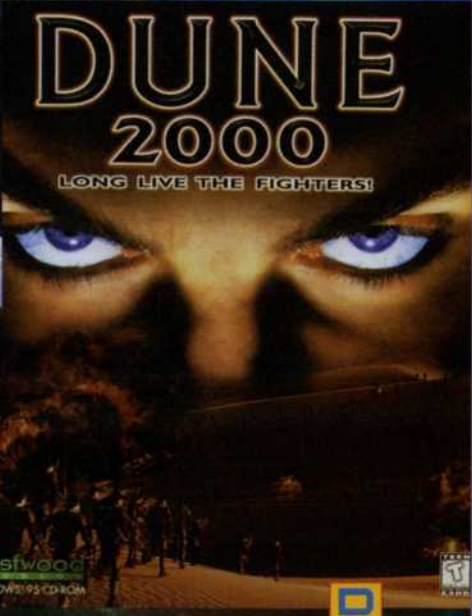
C. High-tech advanced weaponry, 3D dynamic terrain, immersive graphics and highly addictive gameplay in solo and multi-play modes.
WINDOWS CD ROM
Westwood Studios
\$49.99



C

DUNE 2000

D. Remastered for the new millennium—the classic Dune II returns. Your challenge is to seize control of the dune.
WINDOWS CD ROM
Westwood Studios
\$44.99



D

LANDS OF LORE III

E. As Copper LeGré, you must overcome many dangerous obstacles to prove yourself worthy of the crown.
WINDOWS 95 CD ROM
Westwood Studios
\$49.99



E

Bow Down Before the One You Serve!

Polar bears. Everyone thinks of them as some snuggly, beloved beast, slow of wit and even slower to action. But a special *PC Gamer* undercover investigation has learned it is all a ruse, a shadow play, a cover designed to conceal their true intentions and their ultimate goal:

The domination of the world.

Their plan is so perfect that only the most deviant of minds could have formulated it. Through a series of propaganda-laced *Discovery Channel* specials, they have slowly gained a favorable public opinion — after all, who can't relate to the eternal struggle of a mother and baby cub fighting the odds to survive in a harsh world?

Don't believe the lies!

The attack is coming, people. The first to fall will be the old people who take cruises up to Alaska. The captains of those ships are slowly being replaced by disguised polar bears, who will steer the vessels a bit too far north, into the dark abyss of the Arctic. There their brethren lie in wait, slowly circling in the water, their black hearts hungry for the taste of old tanga flesh.

Once the cruise ships fall, it's only a matter of time before the rest of humanity is crushed under the heel of



the polar bear empire. But most alarming of all is what will happen to PC games, that bastion of humanity and beacon signal of all that is good with the world.

All games will be transformed, altered to match the polar bear mentality. Gone are the days of *Deer Hunter*. Now all gamers will be forced to play *Seal Hunter*, where they scan the ice floes for air holes — and there they sit, waiting for a little head to appear, which is quickly ripped off.

Quake will be replaced by *Trash Migration*, where gamers play as a bear wandering around some Canadian town, eating trash and scaring the locals. Ah, the horror, the horror...

Hardware Requirements

With each *PC Gamer* review, you'll find two very important pieces of information: the game's minimum hardware requirements and the hardware configurations we recommend as the least you'll need to really enjoy the game. While a game will run on the minimum system the manufacturer specifies, it might not run all that well. Because of this, we test each game on several systems so we can bring you a more realistic assessment of what you'll really need.

THE PC GAMER RATINGS SYSTEM

100%-90% CLASSIC

Not many games can earn a rating over 90%, and even fewer can approach the magic 100. Anything that we rate over 90% is an instant classic — a game that's truly significant in both content and design, and one that we'd recommend without reservation to anyone interested in PC gaming.

89%-80% EXCELLENT

These are excellent games. Anything that scores in this range is well worth your attention, though it may not make any significant advances over its rivals. Also, some genuine benchmark games of decidedly specialist taste will fall into this area — it may be the best 7th Cavalry simulation on the market, but not all of us want to relive Little Bighorn.

79%-70% VERY GOOD

These are pretty good games, which we would recommend to fans of the particular genre —

although it's a safe bet that there are probably better games out there.

69%-60% GOOD

A reasonable, above-average game. It may be worth buying, but probably has a few significant flaws that keep it from earning a higher rating.

59%-50% FAIR

Very ordinary games. Not completely worthless, but not a very good way to spend your gaming dollar, either.

49%-40% BELOW AVERAGE

Poor quality. Only a few, slightly redeeming features keep them from falling into the abyss of the next category...

39%-0% DON'T BOTHER

Just terrible games — and the lower you go, the worse they get. Avoid these titles like the Plague — and don't say we didn't warn you!

PC Gamer Editors' Choice Awards



Every month, we honor the best games we see — those earning 88% or above — with our Editors' Choice award. It's not easy to earn, and there are a lot of excellent games that fall just short of the honor. So when you see the *PCG* Editors' Choice logo on a game at a local software shop, you can bet it's among the best.

DESCENT: FREESPACE



p.152

FINAL FANTASY VII



p.136

MEDIEVAL



p.163

THE OPERATIONAL ART OF WAR



p.126

The Operational Art of War,

Category: Wargame

Developer: Norm Koger

Publisher: TalonSoft, (410) 933-9191
www.talonsoft.com

Required

Windows 95; Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 90; 16MB RAM; 20MB hard-drive space; Windows-compatible sound card

We Recommend

Pentium 133; 32MB RAM

Multi-player: Hot-seat only

Elegance is not a word commonly used to describe a wargame, but in this case it fits. Norm Koger — veteran designer of such classics as *Red Lightning* and *Age of Rifles* — has poured a lifetime of experience and passion into *The Operational Art of War*, and the result is an exceptional product.

Gamers who share his passion — whether they're crusty old grogs or newcomers to the genre who're ready to move beyond *Panzer General* or *Steel Panthers* — will find *TOAW* a game

With his first game for TalonSoft, Norm Koger has produced a masterpiece: This is a deep, rich, exquisitely detailed wargame.



The 3D "toy soldier" mode is tons of fun to watch during the action, but it's easier to plan your battles from the 2D view.

filled with possibilities and a ton of fun.

TOAW comes with a generous list of pre-packaged scenarios — several of them hefty enough to be sold as stand-alone games — but the heart and soul of

deployed in combat from 1939 to the end of the Korean War (even those of Belgium, Hungary, Finland, and Romania). Available ground units even include partisans, motorcycle troops, bridging/ferry specialists, and railroad repair engineers.

To create a scenario, you first design a map (based on a historical operation or your own imagination), using fairly standard graphics tools. Maps can range from 20x20 hexes (for quick, tactical battles) to 100x100 hexes for mammoth campaigns. Hexes are scalable from 2.5 km to 50 km. In the larger scenarios, you can also set "climate zones," including weather fronts and extreme temperature fluctuations.

Once your map is complete, you design the opposing Orders of Battle using a Force Editor of incomparable power and detail. You can create armies as large as 100 formations controlling 500 units! You can tweak their equipment and replacement stats as much as you like, or simply cut-and-paste the historical default values. The level of detail here will give old-time wargamers hot flashes.

There's more! Koger has designed a very advanced "Event Trigger" sub-program that allows you to set up possible political and strategic events which, when and if they occur, will have a ripple effect on the battlefield itself. Such events may be triggered by the capture of a vital objective, or when the unseen but God-like High Command decides to change policy.

Some events have relatively subtle



This is the initial onslaught in Korea, as depicted in the traditional top-down view.

Vol. I [1939-1955]

PC GAMER
EDITORS'
CHOICE



The "Plan an attack" display is both innovative and very useful.

effects (increased supply, a sudden influx of replacements, or the appearance of guerrilla bands behind the front lines). Others are more devastating, such as the sudden use of gas or chemical weapons by one side, or permission to "go nuclear" (in Korea, for instance, when the Chinese start flooding across the Yalu).

WHAT HAPPENED TO MY PLANES?

I was playing turn 10 of the Korean scenario, desperately defending the Pusan perimeter against the hordes of the North Korean People's Army, and wondering why my interdiction efforts were only taking out 3 percent of the NKPA's supplies. Time for a maximum effort, so I set all my air units on "interdict" and hoped for the best.

When my turn ended, to my astonishment, I read that 193 friendly planes had been destroyed, with not so much as a single Yak to show for it. How could this happen? I called Norm Koger, who was as surprised as I was. After I e-mailed him the saved game file, he spotted, to his chagrin, a bug. If at least one of your air units is not assigned to "air superiority," the program interprets this as an invitation to an all-out aerial assault against absolutely no resistance. Hence the massacre.

Norm immediately put up a patch, but until you get around to downloading the fix from www.talonssoft.com, all you have to do is make sure at least one of your air units is assigned to an air superiority role during each turn, and you should have no problem.

To my knowledge, no other wargame has ever gone this deep. Elements that are usually abstracted and beyond the scenario-creator's grasp are made concrete and specific within the editor. In his extremely well written notes in the manual, Koger warns designers not to "go crazy" with the event editor, since too many bolts-from-the-blue can skew an otherwise solidly designed scenario.

If all this sounds complex, well, it is.

Even the most experienced grognard will have to invest many patient hours learning how to wield all the design tools Koger has made available. Stick with it, though, and eventually you'll be rewarded with the power to create scenarios of incredible depth and texture.

Fortunately, gamers who are not (yet) confident enough to tackle the Scenario Editor will enjoy the benefits from TOAW through its ready-made scenarios. The basic mechanics of play are not intimidating, the tutorial is good, and the pre-packaged scenarios are action-packed.

Koger uses conventional elements (attack/defense ratings, movement points, etc.), but in a very sophisticated manner. Say you want to attack a hex full of enemy units. Highlight any stack of units you want to commit to this attack, then right-click to bring up an attack-posture menu.

Click on "Plan an attack" and you'll see a marvelously useful display showing, in the center, the enemy force. Available friendly units are displayed in six surrounding panels, along with available artillery, air, and naval support. Click on the units you wish to commit. Bronze-colored flags appear beside units that are in the same formation and can fully participate; silver flagged units can participate, but will suffer a subsequent penalty in movement points, making them unavailable to exploit any breakthrough that might result. Combat occurs in phases, until all movement points are used up or you decide to call a halt.

There are two modes for viewing the action: traditional, top-down, with standard NATO symbology, or an animated 3D "war movie" view (a nod to the *Panzer General* crowd). While it's often fun to watch the animations, planning is best performed in the 2D mode.

Air assets can be set on "interdiction," "air superiority," or "direct support." But it is important to note that the



The Force Editor gives unprecedented power and finesse to create new scenarios.

interdiction and air superiority modes are abstracted, global routines. Your squadrons go up, do the best they can, and report later on losses and percentage of interdiction. "Direct support" is sometimes necessary, but if the enemy has lots of AA guns and help from his own air force, expect some heavy losses. When the program judges an air unit to have reached 50% efficiency, it automatically places that unit in a rest/reorganization mode. You can override this in an emergency, but you'll burn out your pilots quickly if you do.

Some of the scenarios are very unusual (the Israeli War of Independence and the Bataan campaign, for instance). But they're all exciting, nail-biting, games, and the artificial intelligence is murderously aggressive.

Is TOAW "perfect"? Not quite. The AI sometimes resists to the last man long after you're ready for the battle to end. The naval modeling is very weak (Koger's working on that). And there really should be hot-key controls for such things as entrenchment — as it is, you have to cycle through every unit in a stack and give it a separate "dig in" order, which gets tedious very quickly. By the time this review sees print, it's likely that patches will be up for all these things.

Despite a few stumbles, the skill and effort that has gone into TOAW makes it one of the most mesmerizing and appealing wargames ever to hit the PC.

—William R. Trotter

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: The battles are exciting and often unique; the scenario editor is a thing of beauty and wonder.

95%

LOWS: The naval model is weak; watch out for that air-forces bug!

BOTTOM LINE: TOAW is a great wargame!

Jazz Jackrabbit 2

Category: Arcade

Developer: Epic MegaGames/Orange Games

Publisher: Gathering of Developers, (301) 983-9771
www.godgames.com

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 90; 16MB RAM	Pentium 166; 32MB RAM; Gamepad

Multi-player: 4-player split screen; Modem: 28.8; IPX; TCP/IP; Maximum Players: 32 (on eight computers)

After a four-year absence from computer screens, Epic's side-scrolling superstar Jazz Jackrabbit has finally made his return to the PC, battling the evil turtle mastermind Devan Shell and his deadly minions through level after level of jumping'n'shooting fun. And even though most side-scrolling heroes are reborn in lackluster 3D action games these days, *Jazz 2* sticks unashamedly to its 2D roots, with terrific results.

From the first level to the final end-level boss, *Jazz 2* is a slick, creative, and addictive romp that's obviously been a labor of love. Though it may not have the same of jaw-dropping technology found in Epic's *Unreal*, *Jazz Jackrabbit 2*



Whether blasting through medieval castles or swinging through tropical jungles, one thing is certain: The multi-layered backdrops and incredible animations make *Jazz 2* one of the best looking side-scrollers around.

Epic MegaGames' gun-toting bunny is back for more side-scrolling fun in this stylish and addictive sequel.



As he tracks down arch-nemesis Devan Shell, Jazz will have to negotiate all sorts of hazards and baddies. Check out the claws on crab-boy!

is loaded to the brim with excellent animation, art, and sound effects. It also includes a robust selection of multi-player options with split-screen, modem, LAN, and TCP/IP Internet play. On top of all that, there's even a built-in editor that allows players to create and modify their own *Jazz 2* levels.

Though there is a lot going on, *Jazz 2* doesn't need much more than the minimum system to enjoy it at its fullest. On a Pentium 90, the graphics may strain a bit at 640x480 at 16-bit color, but if you've got a little more RAM and a slightly better processor you've got everything you need.

On the gameplay front, *Jazz Jackrabbit 2* has its bases covered. Players have the option of playing as Jazz or as his brother Spaz (a wild-eyed ball of energy with a wicked karate chop) through the game's dozens of mini-episodes. Each mini-episode features levels based on a unique theme (medieval, woodlands, beach) brought to life with cheerful graphics and cute characters as Jazz (or Spaz) blasts his way through wave after wave of Devan's baddies. Regardless of which character you choose, control is excellent, with

quick response and tight control. Though the action follows the side-scrolling doctrine chapter and verse (jump, run, jump, and collect treasure), skillful level design keeps the game lively and fun. Fans who find side-scrollers tedious and frustrating will be surprised that *Jazz 2* doesn't rely on heavy-handed try-it-a-million-times challenges or unbeatable bosses — most levels can be completed with minimum fuss.

The reason for the no-fuss gameplay comes from a careful balance between the adventurous gameplay style of classic Mario games and the speed-freak action of *Sonic The Hedgehog*. If you prefer to blast your way straight to the end, you'll only pass up on some treasure and extra exploration, but if you want to pick your way through every nook and cranny, you'll be rewarded with extra loot and a few extra power-ups.

Once you tire of the single player game, the multi-player options and level editor add lots of replay value. Multi-player action is divided into several types of games (treasure hunt, capture the flag, battle mode, race) and locating and connecting to an Internet game is extremely easy since *Jazz 2* includes an automatic server lookup to find active games. When you're ready to start an Internet game, *Jazz Jackrabbit 2* displays the game type and ping time of all active games. These multi-player games are surprisingly stable and playable over the Internet, and the gameplay is as frantic and intense as any first-person game.

Overall, *Jazz 2* is an amazing value that you can pick up and play for a few minutes at a time or for hours on end; with its multi-player options, level editor, and cartoonish charm there's enough variety and replay value to keep you going for sometime to come.

—Todd Vaughn

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Nice animations; good control; even-handed difficulty; the level editor and multi-player adds oodles of replay value.

84%

LOWS: Side-scrolling formula means repetitive play.

BOTTOM LINE: *Jazz Jackrabbit 2* proves that side-scrolling can still be fun when it's done right.

THINGS TO DO TODAY

- I. ROUND UP PRISONERS FOR THE LION PITS.
- II. VISIT FORUM TO ASSESS CITY'S FINANCES.
- III. PRACTICE WAVING TO THE PEOPLE (IN ADORING FASHION).
- IV. HIRE VOICE COACH TO HELP PRACTICE EVIL LAUGHTER.
- V. MEET WITH CHIEF ARCHITECT/ARTISANS TO DISCUSS NEW COLOSSEUM.
- VI. SEND RIVAL A BASKET OF POISONED FRUIT.
- VII. INSPECT GLADIATORS FOR THIS THURSDAY'S BLOODFEST AT THE COLOSSEUM.
- VIII. RAISE TAXES TO FUND MORE TAX COLLECTORS.
- IX. LECTURE PUBLIC ON BENEFITS OF PROCREATING.
- X. HIRE MORE VIGILS TO PATROL THE SLUMS.
- XI. MEET CLEOPATRA FOR DINNER (THIS MIGHT BE THE NIGHT!)
- XII. STAGE A FUNNY THING TO HAPPEN ON THE WAY TO THE FORUM.
- XIII. ABSOLUTELY DON'T FORGET TO...

...LISTEN TO YOUR PEOPLE!

CENTURION

This fruit basket looks absolutely delicious! It's awfully nice of you to have me deliver it to your arch rival. I thought you hated each other?
I wonder if anyone would notice an apple missing...?

LION TAMER

Tipping the vigil off to arrest plebs for loitering was ingenious! It's much cheaper to feed my lions prisoners than the meat from that farmer. We'll see how long those gladiators last against my boys now!

PIG FARMER

Gotta wash the stench of horse manure out of my clothes in time for church! There will be a lot of single ladies at Venus' temple tonight. Rumor has it the priest is going to denounce birth control!

VIGIL

I'm being transferred back to the slums for riot control - the Lion Tamer tipped me a gold piece to round up some fresh meat for his pets.

PRIEST

Dedicating the temple to Venus was a smart move. Church attendance hasn't been this high in years! Then again, neither has the city's population.

TAX COLLECTOR

If you are planning to build a new Colosseum as I suspect, you'll need a lot more money, and a lot more guys like me to gather it. People who think taking candy from a baby is wrong just haven't bothered to try it.

- Build, rule and battle on one screen—no more switching between city, province and battle screens!

- Visual feedback: The real-time effects of the player's actions are immediately visible on screen.

- Various terrain sets include deserts, forests, mountains and multiple elevations.

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The X-Files

Category: Adventure

Developer: Hyperbole Studios

Publisher: Fox Interactive, (888) 369-0031
www.foxinteractive.com

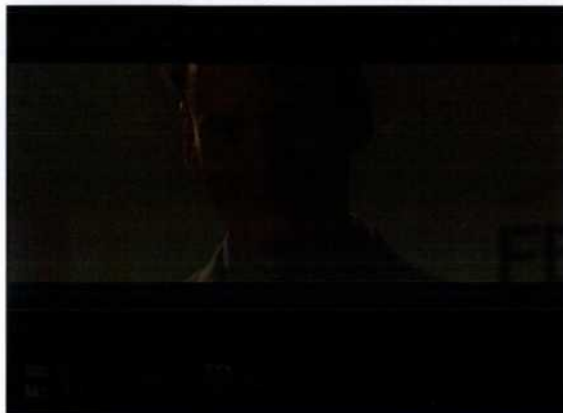
Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 120; 16MB RAM; 250MB free hard-drive space; DirectX compatible sound card and graphics card	Eight-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 200; 32MB RAM

Multi-player: None

By now, you've seen the *X-Files* movie and decided whether or not Chris Carter, Gillian Anderson, and David Duchovny have a future in feature films. My vote is a definite yes: It was entertaining, and die-hard fans of the TV show like me loved getting an "X-Files" fix during re-run season.

It's with this in mind, I'm sure, that Fox released *The X-Files* game around the same time that the movie premiered. Certainly it's been hyped almost as much, with the ads promising big things: Duchovny and Anderson are prominently featured, and the tag line reads: "Assist Agents Fox Mulder and Dana Scully in their latest investigation into paranormal activity." What truth-seeking fan could resist?

Now, before we go any further, let me state that I am a true X-phile: I've watched the show since the first episode; I'm a veteran of "X-Files" conventions; I own a lot of "X-Files" paraphernalia; and I suffer through drab episodes of



This is your partner, Mark Cook. All you have to do is look at this guy to know that he's bad news. Don't trust him.

X-philes yearning to "interact" with their two favorite FBI agents are going to be disappointed by this FMV adventure flop.



AD Skinner will help with the investigation until he's conveniently called back to Washington early in the game. Playing as Agent Willmore (that's you on the left), you'll spend most of your time with characters that have nothing to do with the TV show.

"Millennium" just because it was created by Carter. But, more importantly, I'm a gamer, so I'm going to give it to you straight: *The X-Files* game sucks. Hard.

Yes, you do get to interact with Mulder and Scully — but only for a few scenes toward the end of the game. In a convenient plot device, the dynamic duo have gone missing somewhere near Seattle; you play Agent Craig Willmore, assigned to find them. Assistant Director Skinner makes a brief appearance at the beginning of the game to start you on your investigation, but then he's quickly called back to Washington on "important government business." Cancer Man and the Lone Gunmen also have cameo spots, as does X (yeah, I know he's dead; more on that in a minute) — but it's hardly enough to satisfy die-hard fans. Instead of interacting with your favorite "X-Files" characters, you're given a smarmy partner who is obviously a bad guy, a smart-ass Seattle police detective, and a boss who offers little assistance.

From here on in, *The X-Files* game reveals itself to be little more than your typical piece-of-crap point-and-click FMV adventure. Click on your desk and see video of Agent Willmore opening the drawer; click on the door and watch video of Agent Willmore walking through it; click on a person and wait for a long video sequence to load; click on every possi-

ble pixel on the screen, so you don't miss a clue; ask the questions in any order and get the same result. Hell, even when you try to kiss the cute police detective, she doesn't have much of a reaction, and it sure doesn't affect the outcome of the game. The story line is completely linear, so replay value is nil. There aren't even any puzzles to speak of — it's just point, click, point, click, point, click....

While traditional adventuring is regrettably absent, most fans would readily suffer through it if

the plot shed light on the show's on-going conspiracies. But here again, the game fails to deliver. The game takes place in 1996 — X is alive, and Mulder and Scully are still trying to figure out the mystery of the black oil. This will be frustrating to X-philes who have seen the movie and already know the answers to the questions posed here; any investigation of it now seems hollow. It would have been better if the game followed the plot of one of those non-linear episodes about werewolves or Bigfoot or killer dolls. Instead, it rehashes stuff that started happening on the show three years ago!

The fact is, there really isn't an audience for this game. Die-hard X-philes won't like it because Mulder and Scully play only a small part in the action, and any revelations made by the plot are irrelevant to the current state of the story. Die-hard adventure gamers won't like it because it's just another pointless pixel-hunt dressed up in pretty packaging. Where does that leave *The X-Files* game? Well, the seven CDs make for a nice matching coasterset.

— Lisa H. Renninger

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Good acting; beautiful packaging and interface; original (but dated) story line.

35%

LOWS: Non-challenging gameplay; lots of pointless pixel hunting; not enough Scully or Mulder.

BOTTOM LINE: Less unpleasant than having an alien probe stuck up your butt — but not by much.

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A TODD PORTER GAME

Pro Bass Fishing

Category: Simulation

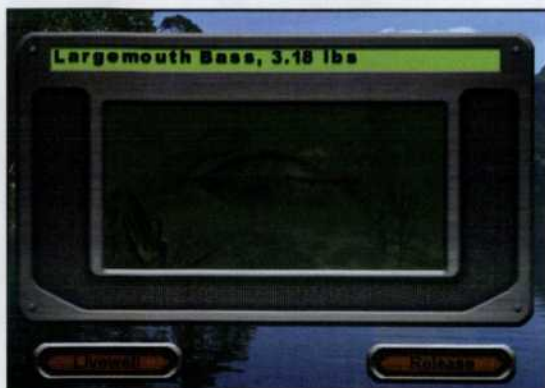
Developer: Sunstorm Interactive

Publisher: WizardWorks/GT Int., (800) 305-3390
www.gtinteractive.com

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 120; 16MB RAM; 60MB hard-drive space; DirectX-compatible video card; DirectX-compatible sound card	32MB RAM
Multi-player: None	

After *Deer Hunter* came out of nowhere and sold about a kajillion copies, it seemed WizardWorks had found its niche by simulating sports that all the big-name software publishers had overlooked. After all, let's be real about this: *Deer Hunter's* success was due a lot more to the fact that it was the only deer-hunting simulation on the market (and its twenty dollar price tag) rather than how good it was.

So wouldn't it have made sense for WizardWorks's latest release to go where no publisher has gone before? Instead, WizardWorks has set its sights on bass fishing, which immediately puts it up against Sierra's excellent *Front Page Sports: Trophy Bass* games, and when compared to Sierra's well-established competition, *Pro Bass Fishing* is in way over its head. Naturally, WizardWorks will hurriedly point out that this is a budget product, but even that argument won't hold water — Sierra's *Front Page Sports: Trophy Bass* can be had for



You: "That's a nice-looking bass."
Bass: "He caught me without even using that fancy Banjo Minnow all my friends have fallen for!"

WizardWorks tries to build on the *Deer Hunter* phenomenon, but this simulation falls short in almost every category.

a mere \$14.95 direct from Sierra. And *FPS: Trophy Bass 2* is just \$29.95 — only a measly ten bucks more than the stupefyingly lame *Pro Bass Fishing*.

Pro Bass Fishing features six lakes stocked with eight types of fish ranging from various varieties of bass to crappies, blue gills, walleyes, and perch. After picking a lake, you steer your boat to a likely hot spot and check the fish locator to see what's lurking below. After that, it's simply a matter of choosing the right lure for the water and weather conditions and then start casting. With any luck, you'll be reeling in something in relatively short order.

However, when you make that first cast you'll spot one of the game's weirdest design choices: your boat is always visible no matter how far you cast. Imagine your boat being dragged to a spot about five feet from where your cast landed and then remaining that same distance from the lure as you retrieve it, and you've got a good idea of *Pro Bass Fishing's* visual presentation. Pretty weird for a game that's being touted as the "most realistic fishing experience a gamer can get," wouldn't you say?

Even if you can overlook this strange sight, though, you'll quickly uncover *Pro Bass Fishing's* other shortcomings. The "customizable weather" mentioned on the box means you choose whether it's sunny, rainy, or cloudy — apparently temperature, time of day, and wind direction don't factor into the "pro bass fishing" experience. Speaking of "pro," tournaments are nowhere to be found, nor is there any way to compete in a multi-player game — both of which are available in the *Trophy Bass* games.

The touted "personalized rod, reel, and line configurations" are deceptive as well. It basically means there are three unchangeable rod-and-reel combos — there's no option to alter line weight, line type, or hooks (all found in *Trophy Bass*). Itching to try your hand on the lakes where real-life pros fish for big bucks? Sorry — six fictional lakes are all you get. And if you're looking for hints and tips on how to catch the really big ones, you're out of luck — you won't find anything in *Pro Bass Fishing* to match the extensive



The only information you get on your surroundings is from the Sunfish 2000 Fish Locator: Apparently, things such as temperature, wind, and time of day are of no importance when trying to land "ol' bucket mouth."



Provided you can set your hook quickly, you'll reel in the big ones almost every time while playing *Pro Bass Fishing*.

tutorials in the *Trophy Bass* series.

There'll probably be people who pick up *Pro Bass Fishing* because they're not aware there's something much better available for about the same price — but the fact that you're reading this magazine, at least, means you're no longer one of them. Fishermen, you have been warned.

—Stephen Poole

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: You'll be fishing in five minutes or less.

LOWS: Totally bereft of options for stuff like hooks, line, temperature, and other variables; fictional lakes; bizarre casting animation.

BOTTOM LINE: This one belongs at the bottom of a deep lake.

35%

Icarus: Sanctuary of the Gods

Category: Roleplaying

Developer: KRGsoft

Publisher: JC Research Inc., (408) 977-0250

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 75; 16MB RAM; 130MB hard-drive space; Windows 95-compatible sound card	Eight-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 133

Multi-player: None

Retro is in. Everywhere you look — fashion, music, and commercials — you'll find a blast from the past. And PC games are no exception: a big part of *Interstate '76*'s appeal was its muscle cars and funk-o-rama soundtrack.

For a real dose of retro gaming, though, you should check out *Icarus: Sanctuary of the Gods*. This is a dyed-in-the-wool, old-school fantasy RPG — and despite its sundry shortcomings, it proves that sometimes the old ways are still the best.

There's a drawn-out back story that sets up the action in *Icarus*, but the upshot is that an evil deity named Ercanet is extremely ticked off that the humans on the world where he resides have picked a fellow god-type named Tetheus as the ultimate ruler instead of



It's a good thing Helena joined Dreus on his quest — her Fire Wall spell can take out several of goblins at once.

If *Final Fantasy VII* is your cup of tea, *Icarus* may also hold some appeal — if you can put up with its foibles.

him. Like all wicked gods, he's out for a little revenge — and he's unleashed all manner of beasts, monsters, and baddies to carry out the job. The point man for his retribution is Colias, the "Wizard of Blood" — and he gets off to a ripping start by wiping out the village of Coshark.

As the game opens, you control two characters — a knight named Dreus and a mage named Helena — both of whom happen to be Droiyan, humans endowed with special powers by Tetheus. They set out not only to rebuild Coshark from the ashes, but also to exact revenge on Colias — but before you can say "hit points," they're immediately set upon by a gang of goblins. Once they're defeated, the game follows into a sequence of interaction with NPCs in villages, visits to various shops for weapons and other items, mission assignments from key characters, and more battles.

At first glance, *Icarus* looks a lot like *Diablo* thanks to the oblique viewing perspective and the highly detailed character graphics. But combat here is turn-based: First you decide where you'll move (and you can only move once, regardless of whether you moved the maximum distance you could travel), then unleash an attack if you desire. If you don't attack, you gain hit and magic points; if you do, you spend them — and since any remaining hit points are allocated for defense, you can't afford to attack every time an opportunity is presented.

Being compared to *Diablo* is a high honor, but in at least one regard it's a detriment: gamers expecting the rapid slashing and hacking of that game might get bored to tears with the sluggish pace of this turn-based system. I know I was at first — but then I began to appreciate the chance to carefully formulate various tactics and plans. Yes, battles can take an excruciatingly long time to complete, but it does give you a chance to maximize your characters' powers (you eventually have five members in your questing party).

Icarus is admittedly a budget title (\$29.95): Turn off the wretched Journey-



You'll find bad translation gaffes like "Be increased MA to 20 and MD to 30" throughout the game, but they rarely detract from the gameplay.

meets-Boston soundtrack, for instance, and all you've got are some tepid sound effects to spice up combat and NPC-interaction scenes. Poor translation of the game's text results in annoying grammar and syntax errors, but once you've warmed to the idiosyncrasies of the dialogue, it's actually good for a few laughs later in the game. And while the story is decidedly on the hokey side, you'll actually start to care about what's going on as you get deeper into the game.

It's unlikely that *Icarus* will set the gaming world alight — but considering how barren the roleplaying landscape has been lately, some fans may feel that any port in a storm is better than none. Fortunately, *Icarus* is a charmer.

—Stephen Poole

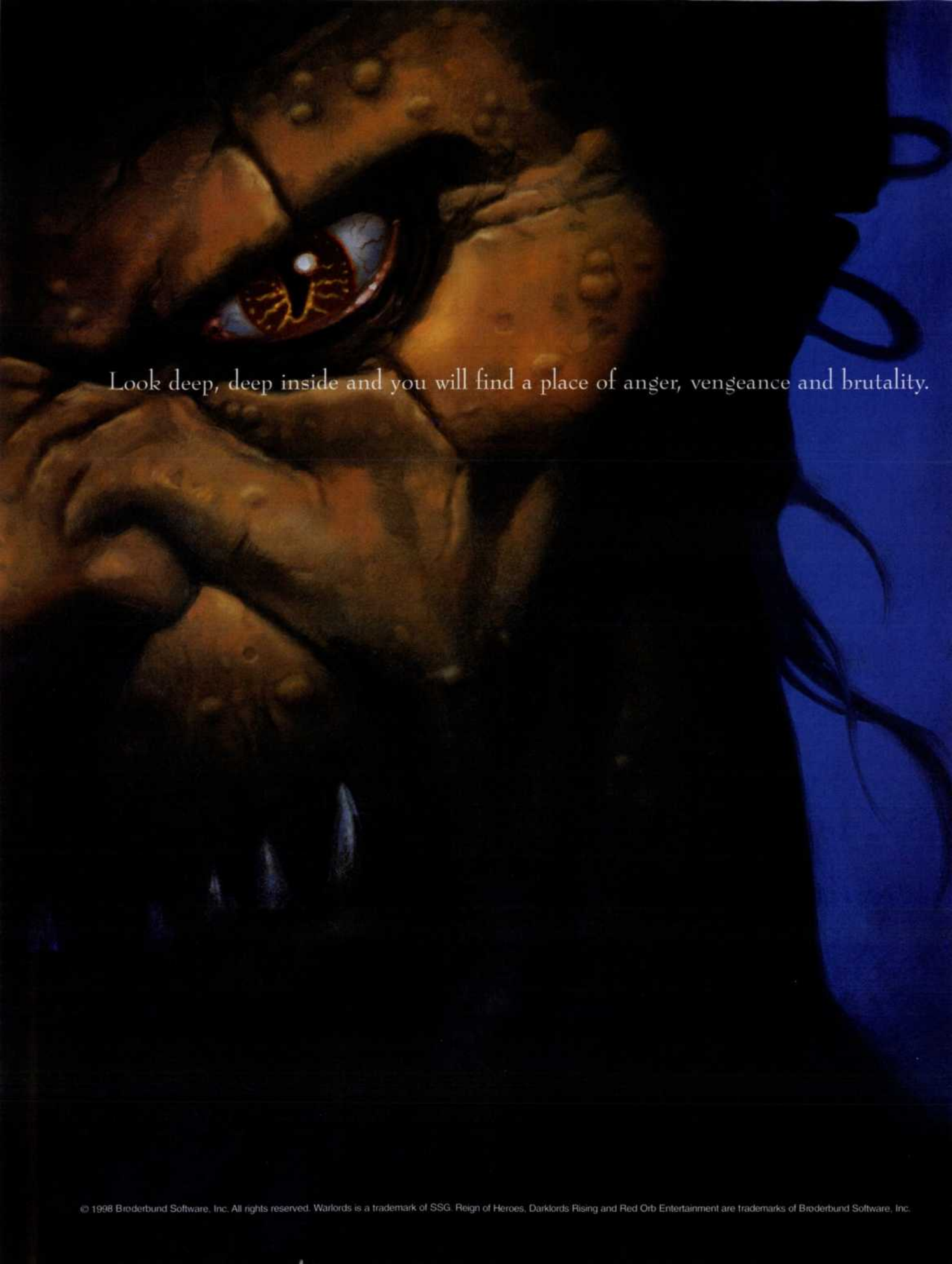
PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Turn-based combat is a breath of fresh air; characters look nice; easy interface.

79%

LOWS: Some combat encounters are too long; no spoken dialog; minimal sound effects; bad soundtrack.

BOTTOM LINE: It won't win awards for originality, but it's fun if you're into turn-based gaming.



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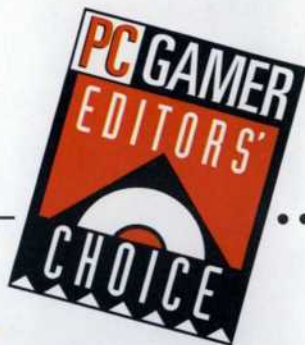
In short, more adventure, deeper gameplay and fewer chances for survival.



WARLORDS III
**DARKLORDS
RISING**



Final Fantasy VII



Category: Roleplaying

Developer: Square

Publisher: Eidos Interactive, (800) 617-8737
www.eidosinteractive.com

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; 4x CD-ROM drive; Pentium 133 (with 3D card, 166 without); 32MB RAM; 260MB hard-drive space; DirectX-compatible sound card	Pentium 200; 3Dfx-based 3D accelerator; 460MB hard-drive space; Gamepad

Multi-player: None

It was a monster hit on the PlayStation, but does it shine as brightly on the PC?

Roleplaying games made for videogame consoles are worlds apart from those designed for the PC, so maybe it's better not to compare the PC adaptation of *Final Fantasy VII* to the PlayStation original. Maybe it isn't fair to complain about how the PlayStation, which has a 33Mhz processor, 2MB of RAM, and a double-speed CD-ROM drive, plays the game faster and with more responsive control than a Pentium 200 with 64MB of RAM and a 12-speed CD-ROM drive.

On the other hand, readers who fell in love with *Final Fantasy VII* after seeing it on a friend's PlayStation — and then inundated us with E-mails asking when and if the game would be available on PC — deserve to know how well the game survives the translation to their machines. The answer: pretty well, but perhaps not as well as you might expect.

For gamers who aren't familiar with *Final Fantasy VII*, but who've found themselves wondering what all the fuss is about, the question is simpler: is this videogame-style RPG as good as those we're accustomed to playing on the PC? The answers: Yes — and no.

The seventh in a series that has become hugely popular in Japan (the

scramble for the latest release reportedly inspires some gamers there to violence), *Final Fantasy VII* tells the story of Cloud Strife, a young warrior who's become disillusioned with military life and turned mercenary. As the game opens, he's been hired to help a rebel group called Avalanche destroy a Mako reactor, a huge machine that sucks the life out of his home planet to create huge profits for an evil mega-corporation known as Shinra. Cloud doesn't give a damn about the planet; he's just in it for the money. Naturally, he develops a heart as the story unfolds, and he ends up taking charge of Avalanche and setting off on a long, perilous quest to locate a legendary place called the Promised Land and stop a notorious baddie named Sephiroth from getting there first.

Gameplay has the distinct flavor of a videogame-style RPG, which may be unfamiliar to many PC gamers' palates. Most of the visuals are heavily influenced by Japanese animation; the music is generally cheesy and repetitious; a single character represents the whole adventuring party as they travel across the map; monsters don't appear until the party is suddenly thrust into combat; and the interface is very simple (in

Cloud	EXP: 32836 p	Status
LV 24	HP 930 / 930	next level: 2923 p
MP 205 / 205	Limit level: 1	
Strength 49		
Dexterity 25		
Vitality 43		
Magic 53		
Spirit 42		
Luck 24		
Attack 85		
Attack% 100		
Defense 61		
Defense% 9		
Magicatk 53		
Magic def 42		
Magic def% 0		
Wpn: Force Stealer		
Arm: Mythril Armlet		
Acc: Power Wrist		

As with any good roleplaying game, your characters' abilities are affected by several ratings. You can control their values by equipping the right magic items.

fact, the game is best played with a gamepad). If you've played and enjoyed other videogame console RPGs, you'll be in friendly territory; if not, *FF7* may take some getting used to.

The game's simplicity isn't necessarily a bad thing. Most tasks, from combat to spell casting to inventory management, are conducted with the same few buttons or keys, so the interface soon becomes second nature. And the magic and combat systems aren't just simple, they're elegant.



The dialogue may not be the best, but it usually gets the point across.



With their dramatic graphics and animation, combat spells are the game's most visually pleasing aspect — especially when they're powerful summon spells.

Magic in *FF7* revolves around special orbs called materia, which impart spell-casting powers to their owners: Lightning materia lets you hit the enemy with bolts from the blue; Ice materia yields cold-related spells; etc. Each weapon or piece of armor has a number of slots that can hold materia—the more advanced the weapon, the more slots it generally has. And some slots are linked, so that one orb of materia can be paired with another orb that modifies its power; for example, Restore materia placed in a slot linked with All materia lets you cast a healing spell on all the members of your party at once. Finally, Materia grows in power with each use, giving characters access to new, more powerful spells.

Combat strikes a unique balance between real-time and turn-based action. You give orders to each of your characters in turn—but even as you're telling one hero to cast a spell or attack a nearby foe, your enemies are taking their turns and your other team members are carrying out their last orders and waiting for more. As a result, battles have a real sense of urgency without becoming arcade-style twitch-fests. The one aspect of *FF7* that isn't at all simple is its story. Some PC roleplayers will no doubt find the game too linear; it doesn't let your characters wander the land at random with nearly as much freedom as traditional RPGs do. But *FF7*'s linear nature allows it to tell a complete, coherent story that's genuinely epic and involving.

Dialogue is another story, unfortunately; on the whole it's pretty bad. But that's probably a result of the original Japanese dialogue being merely mediocre—as it is in most computer games—and then being poorly translated into English, so it's understandable.

The game has a few other flaws,

Materia 101

Final Fantasy VII's unique magic system revolves around orbs of materia that can alter character attributes and let them cast spells or summon powerful creatures. Properly managing the materia you find is a key to success.

• Independent (Purple)

Purple materia helps the character who carries it, either by boosting certain attributes or increasing hit points and magic points. Use these to compensate for certain characters' weaknesses.

• Support (Blue)

Blue enhances the effects of other materia. The All support materia is handy, since it lets the spell it's linked to affect all of your enemies or allies at once.



Finding a way through this door is one of the many non-combat puzzles in the game.

some of them arising from a failure to take advantage of the full capabilities of the PC. Like so many other games translated to the PC from a videogame console with no capacity to store large files, *FF7* doesn't let you save the game wherever you like; you can only record your progress when you reach specific save points (or when you're traveling on the World Map, which you won't reach until you're eight hours or more into the game). Movement with the cursor keys or gamepad is occasionally awkward—a problem that could've been easily solved with support for the PC's mouse. And conversations in the game take place as text on the screen rather than as recorded speech (although, since the



Some of the magic spells are amusing as well as impressive to watch.

voice-acting in most PC games is atrocious, this is no huge loss).

Instead of optimizing the game for the PC platform, Square apparently did only what was required to get its PlayStation game running under Windows. That's a little disappointing, but *FF7* started out as a very good game, and it's still a winner on the PC.

—Michael Wolf

• Command (Yellow)

Yellow materia lets you perform a variety of actions during combat; Sense lets you see how badly an enemy is hurt; Steal lets you nab items from baddies; Enemy Skill lets you use attacks that have been used against you in the past; etc.

• Magic (Green)

Green materia is the most common. It includes offensive spells like Fire and healing spells like Restore. Link green materia to blue support materia to change its effect.

• Summon (Red)

By far the most powerful materia, Summon materia lets you call on some big-time monsters to fight on your side—which could include a demon from hell or a dragon from the skies.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Beautiful graphics; huge, compelling story; unique gameplay.

LOWS: Large hard-drive requirements; console save locations.

BOTTOM LINE: This giant PlayStation hit isn't destined to change the face of PC roleplaying, but it's still a blast.

90%

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Liberation Day

Category: Strategy

Developer: Micomeq

Publisher: Interactive Magic, (919) 461-0722
www.imagicgames.com

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 133; 16MB RAM; 120MB hard-drive space; Windows-compatible sound card	Pentium 300; 32MB RAM

Multi-player: Serial/Null Modem; Modem (28.8); IPX; TCP/IP; Maximum Players: 4; Free Internet Service; www.imagicgames.com

Joining *Hardbodies III*, *Return to Salem's Lot* and *Porky's II* in the ranks of sequels nobody asked for is *Liberation Day*, a follow-up to Interactive Magic's *Fallen Haven*. A fair turn-based strategy game from last year, *Fallen Haven* was promising but flawed. Units were easily destroyed and too few, missions had a puzzle-like feel, and multi-player support was conspicuously absent. Though the game was decent and these were only minor problems, it was a non-starter among most gamers, who stayed away in droves.

Now Interactive Magic and developer Micomeq are taking another trip to the well with a "refined" version of the same game featuring new battles and

This leisurely turn-based sequel to *Fallen Haven* turns out to be a fair prescription for the summer doldrums.

units, new multi-player features, and new bugs. Surprisingly, it's a success overall. Most of the problems of the original have been fixed, though some of the more interesting elements have been eliminated along the way. The result is a game that is a bit dated and clumsy at times, but provides an effective alternative to the current glut of real-time games.

Liberation Day begins with the assumption that the humans lost Nu Haven at the end of the previous game and now the aliens are using it as a forward base. The campaign pits you against three races: the thick Shubblar, the clever Shadamar, and your old foes, the Taurans. By recapturing islands on the planet, you gain new technology and units to use in your quest to drive off the Taurans. There are about 40 missions that can be played sequentially in campaign form, or individually in "skirmish" mode. There is no random map or mission generator and no editor, so once you've finished the 40-odd maps, you've finished the game.

As in *Fallen Haven*, *Liberation Day* is played in phases that involve building structures that give bonuses and allow construction of new units, upgrading units with research points, invading provinces, and moving on. The overarching strategic element of *Fallen Haven* has been simplified so that sectors no longer have significant research and production values. You don't deploy units via drop ship into adjoining territories, as you did in the original. Instead, structures located at your base generate deployment points that you spend to buy and deploy an army in a target sector. Similarly, research has been simplified. Instead of allocating research points via slider bars, you pick up technological enhancements by seizing certain structures in alien territory. Once a new technology is gained this way, units may be upgraded to improve their speed, range, and firepower.

Graphically, *Liberation Day* is no great shakes. A new 1024x768 resolution



Humans take a pounding from alien aircraft in the frozen wastes of Nu Haven.

mode shows more of the map at greater detail, but the units themselves are still a little fuzzy. Terrain tiles look okay, but not quite up to the current standard. The weird, blotchy explosions of the original are still annoying. On the plus side, the interface is decent, and the addition of a mini-map makes moving around quickly much easier.

There are now more than three times as many units in *Liberation Day* than there was in *Fallen Haven*. It used to be pathetically easy to wipe out units because there was no reaction fire, so the addition of preemptive fire in *Liberation Day* drastically improves play balance — you can't move in and wipe out everyone before they can react. Multi-player support (co-op and death-match) is welcome, and the several dozen game maps and connection methods make it quite effective. On the downside, there is some anomalous unit artificial intelligence behavior (i.e., a unit not moving and thinking it has), and one of the most horrendous, protracted, buggy, and immense save game features on the market. In the end, *Liberation Day* is a decent, effective turn based strategy game that's hard to get passionate about, but easy to enjoy.

—T. Liam McDonald



Terrain tiles are far more diverse than in its predecessor *Fallen Haven*, but the graphics still have a jarring, cartoonish feel.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Good turn-based gaming that blends combat, city building, and unit improvements.

70%

LOWS: Missions feel puzzle-like; adequate graphics; screwy save game feature; no alien campaign.

BOTTOM LINE: It's not the sharpest turn-based wargame, but it's decent enough if the price is right.

WHAT IF

THE FATE OF AN
ENTIRE RACE RESTED
IN YOUR HANDS?



Beast Wars: Transformers

Category: Action

Developer: Sony Computer Entertainment Europe

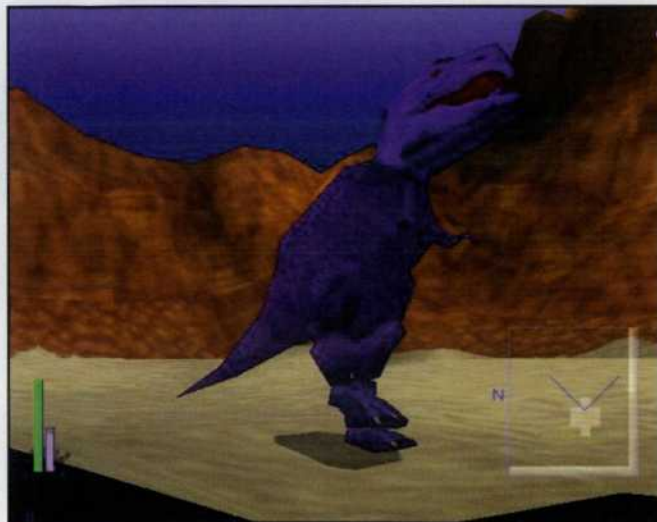
Publisher: Hasbro Interactive, (617) 746-2903
www.hasbro.com

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 100; 16MB RAM	Pentium 166; Direct3D card; Supported sound card

Multi-player: Modem: 28.8, IPX: 4, TCP/IP: 4, Maximum players: 4
Free Internet service: www.zone.com

While I preferred the complex sociopolitical views of *G.I. Joe* over the comparatively blasé mayhem of *The Transformers*, I've always had a soft spot for those wise-cracking, morphing robots. I wasn't sure what to expect from a game based on *Beast Wars* (the computer-animated version of the *Transformers* saga), but I assumed you couldn't go wrong with the classic transforming mechs. Unfortunately, *Beast Wars* is, (sigh!), just another sterile PlayStation port with a tacked-on license.

Sticking to the Saturday morning cartoon's "plot," *Beast Wars* follows the new battles of the Maximals and



Though Megatron's beast form is supposed to look menacing, all I see is a big, huggable, purple dinosaur. Come on then, let's sing a song about fire safety!

Those famous "robots in disguise" hit the PC with guns blazing — but they're badly in need of a tune-up.

Predacons, who have crash-landed on an alien planet rich in a mineral named Energon. Energon is powerful stuff, and overexposure results in mechanical failure — thus, requiring the ability to transform into biological organisms to avoid damage. It goes without saying that in spite of their new surroundings, the Maximals and Predacons continue to engage in their petty and ineffectual battles.

Beast Wars is a standard over-the-shoulder actioner similar to the *Tomb Raider* games, but with more emphasis on raw blasting than puzzles. After selecting your favorite Transformer, you'll tromp through urban and volcanic landscapes, while waves of evil robots attack you. The targeting is automatic as in *Tomb Raider*, but is easily confused — when taking on more than one enemy, the camera starts shifting like crazy, trying to keep all the baddies in view. Strafing is difficult, and anyone expecting these mechs to pull off nimble leaps will be disappointed.

Naturally, *Beast Wars* gives you the ability to transform. While the robot mode is laden with firepower, playing in 'Beast Mode' is like being a crippled rabbit in a Marty Stauffer video. The only advantage to beast mode is the added speed, which can assist you in the one-misstep-and-you-die jumping sequences. And before you start thinking that you'll just play all of the game as a mech, be forewarned that the excessive Energon drain means you're very limited in the time spent shooting. Once your Energon drops to zero, you'll be forced to transform. You'll probably spend more time running around like a idiot, dodging laser fire and waiting for your Energon to restore, than actually killing your foes. And don't forget that transforming back and forth takes time, making you



Here's Optimus Primal, the hero of the Maximals. Even though he got killed by Orson Welles in the *Transformers* movie, he's back for more in this game.

very vulnerable to enemy attacks.

But the biggest drag is that *Beast Wars* looks *nothing* like the TV show, which made a name for itself by pumping the kiddies full of CGI-rendered eye-candy until they were ready to toss their Froot Loops. While the geometric dome explosions and shockwaves look great, the rest of *Beast Wars*' graphics are sub-par — the terrain looks very odd when viewed from a distance, and the polygons distort, even on a Voodoo2. More noticeably, the *Transformers*' beast forms aren't as menacing as they should be — Optimus Primal looks like one of the monkeys from *Tomb Raider*, and Megatron's uncanny resemblance to Barney the Dinosaur should elicit a few giggles.

All in all, *Beast Wars* combines mediocre graphics and control with ridiculous 'Energon' resource management to no enjoyable effect. Don't be fooled, *Transformers* fans — you'd be better off buying fifty bucks' worth of toys than wasting your money on this lame cash-in.

—Colin Williamson

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: You can play as your favorite *Transformers*. The explosions are neat.

28%

LOWS: Pointless gameplay; annoying and unnecessary resource management.

BOTTOM LINE: Action fans will find it all a bore; *Transformers* fans will be outraged.



WHAT IF

YOUR INHERITANCE
CONTAINED A DEADLY
ALIEN SECRET?

Redjack: Revenge of the Brethren

Category: Adventure

Developer: Cyberflix

Publisher: THQ Inc., (818) 225-5167
www.thq.com

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 100; 16MB RAM; DirectX-compatible sound and video cards; Mouse	Eight-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 200; 32MB RAM

Multi-player: None

When I began playing *Redjack*, my expectations weren't sky-high. After all, it was developed by the company responsible for the awful *Dust: A Tale of the Wired West* and *Titanic* (which, despite a recent sales boost generated by the unrelated monster-hit movie of the same name, is an average adventure at best). Still, I'd seen early versions of *Redjack*, and it looked like it could be quite good.

So I wanted to like this game. I honestly did. And as *Redjack*'s pirate-vengeance story began to unfold and I solved the first few puzzles, I really started to warm to it. Then I ran into the first of a whole slew of major stumbling-blocks.

Redjack isn't completely without



The real-time sword fights can be fun, but the game's other action sequences are a pain in the back cheeks.

Cyberflix comes closer than ever to making a good adventure game — but scuttles it with loads of mouse-twitching nonsense.



Young Nick Dove is confronted by a vision of Redjack, the pirate whose death he must avenge. The characters in the game look good.

appeal. It's certainly not another soulless *Myst* clone; you're not exploring a sterile, deserted landscape and occasionally running across completely self-contained, abstract, tile-sliding puzzles. You actually meet people and talk to them; and you pick up strange items and figure out how to use them in puzzles that generally make sense in the context of the game's setting and story line. In those respects, it's one of those rare commodities in today's PC gaming market: a real, old-fashioned adventure game.

Technologically, it's not stunning, but it's a major improvement over *Dust* and *Titanic*. The DreamForge engine used to create those two has been updated to version 5.0, and the result is a game that looks nothing like its predecessors. The characters you speak to no longer look or move like motorized mannequins, and panning panoramic views like those in *Zork: Nemesis* and *Of Light and Darkness* let you look up and down or turn to face any portion of each 360-degree scene. Some of the locations are very nicely done; they aren't exactly realistic, but they have their own depth and life. It's a little like being allowed to wander around freely behind the scenes at an amusement park attraction like Disney's "Pirates of the Caribbean;" it's a cartoon of real life, but it's a fun place to visit.

The problems begin when you run into the first of *Redjack*'s mini-games, little arcade-style challenges that pop up

from time to time, perhaps in an attempt to make the game more appealing to action-hungry players. The real-time sword fights are fun, and if your striking and parrying skills aren't up to snuff you'll often find some useful aids in your surroundings (heavy things to pull down on the enemy, objects to use as shields, etc.). Unfortunately, most of the other twitch games are far, far too hard. A musket-battle against corrupt guards is an exercise in frustration: even on your fifth or sixth try, when you know when and where the guards will pop up, you've still got to contend with the mouse-driven movement interface, which either pans the view too fast for precise aiming or too slowly to let you draw a bead on a bad guy before he drops you. By the time you make it past this portion of the game (and there's no way around it), you'll be reaching for the Rogaine. Then there's the lava-jumping sequence, which is even more vexing. And those two are only the beginning.

It's possible the action bits were only made so difficult to compensate for another of the game's shortcomings. Most of *Redjack*'s puzzles are so simple that the game would be disappointingly short if the traditional adventure-game portions weren't broken up by arcade sequences that the average gamer will have to play over and over again. But with all of this die-and-die-again mouse twitching, *Redjack* is worse than disappointing — it's just plain aggravating. Whose idea of fun is this?

— Dan Bennett

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Real adventure-game elements; well-realized locations; nice graphics.

LOWS: Puzzles are too easy; action sequences are far too hard.

BOTTOM LINE: Without the poorly designed arcade bits shoehorned in, *Redjack* could've been a decent adventure.

58%

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X-COM Interceptor

Category: Action

Developer: MicroProse

Publisher: MicroProse, (510) 864-4550
www.microprose.com

Required

Windows 95; Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 133; 16MB RAM; 85MB hard-drive space; Windows-compatible sound card; Mouse

We Recommend

Eight-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 200; 32MB RAM; Direct3D-compatible accelerator card; 270MB hard-drive space; Joystick; Throttle; Rudders

Multi-player: Serial/Null Modem; Modem: 28.8; IPX: 2-8 players; TCP/IP; Max Players: 8
Free Internet Service: www.zone.com

Ever since it first crept up on gamers and whacked them upside the head with its engaging gameplay, MicroProse's excellent strategy game *X-COM: UFO Defense* has screamed to be a franchise. MicroProse has been smart enough to recognize this and already obliged with one adequate sequel (*Terror from the Deep*) and one very good one (*Apocalypse*).

Moving the franchise into 3D action territory was a logical next step, and on this front, MicroProse is taking a two-pronged approach. The first title out of the chute is *Interceptor* (space combat) and the next in line is *Alliance* (ground combat). On playing the first of the two, all I can say is... let's hope they fare better on the ground than they do in space.

It's not that *Interceptor* is a bad game. Many of its elements are strong in isolation, but when taken together over hours or days of continuous play, they become numbing. It's a reverse gestalt:



If you don't respond quickly to those alien sightings, you will quickly find yourself defending a base such as this one.

MicroProse's classic series heads into deep space as a 3D combat sim and becomes something it never was before: boring.

The sum is less than the parts. Many of the classic *X-COM* elements (tactical combat, research, and manufacturing) are either missing or pared down and impotent. In place of turn-based tactical combat against alien foes, the focus has shifted to fast-paced space combat punctuated by long stretches of galactic management. (Or, taken from the other direction, it's a strategy game punctuated by bursts of action.) The idea is rock solid on the surface: You manage the strategic element, and then hop in the cockpit to fight the battles, creating and participating in a dynamic campaign. In practice, however, the idea doesn't hold together.

The problems with *Interceptor* aren't obvious at the outset, but they become painfully clear over time. When you start up a new campaign game, you are plopped in the middle of a galaxy being infiltrated by UFOs. Various corporations are in control of planets in this galaxy, and these corporations provide your operating budget in exchange for protection from alien incursion. Fail to protect a company and they don't pay, leaving you without the ability to get new supplies.

X-COM operations are run from orbiting bases spread throughout a star map, and here we have the first of several problems. There is an eight base limit, and bases must be placed a certain distance from each other. This means you can't cover the whole galaxy. These limitations are here to prevent the player from overwhelming the aliens with wide base coverage and bringing on the endgame too soon. This is an artificial solution to a problem that could have



UFOs of the various races are all represented in *Interceptor*, and most have a stylish look and sharp modeling.



You don't "research" new gear for your vehicles *per se*, but download it from earth, bypassing the need for those geeky scientists.

been handled with different techniques of money management or a more aggressive enemy artificial intelligence (i.e., build too many bases and trigger a full scale alien assault).

Base management is the core of the strategic game. You can add new modules for training, housing, and defense; manage supplies, crews, and weapon loadouts; and handle research. All of this is greatly simplified from other *X-COM* games, and logically so, since the focus is on the action. You only hire pilots, not technicians or scientists. You don't build supplies, you order them. You don't conduct research, you download it from Earth. Scavenged supplies are immediately sent to Earth (how is not explained), and you get the research back from

them by downloading it through a special communication array. This is a rather dry approach to gaining new equipment and technology, but it suffices as a game-play element, and it works well within the fiction of the game. The problem, however, is that the research "tree" is paced wrong, giving you many of the prime weapons in the first quarter of the game and leaving only a few choice items for later. This has an unbalancing effect that directly impacts the core of the game: the action sequences.

You respond to alien incursions by sending out ships. When these ships are ready to engage the enemy, you must hop in the cockpit and start firing. As a pure 3D action shooter, *Interceptor* has its high and low points. The weird retro look of the ships and the clever and detailed modeling of the UFOs are both strong elements, but overall, the graphics are weak and repetitive. There are a few space stations and a few different UFOs, but the cut scenes and deep-space emptiness leave the game with a bland, uninteresting feel. The optional 3D acceleration smoothes out the graphics and adds some effective shading and lighting, but it's a far cry from *Wing Commander: Prophecy* or *Descent: Freespace*.

In terms of original gameplay in the cockpit — there's none. Controls are the familiar stock we've seen in any other space shooter: weapon cycling, energy and shield settings, afterburners, taunts, and targeting options. The cockpit art is too large and not all that interesting, even though it's spiced up with humorous touches like alien head kill-boards and "I Brake For Sectoids" stickers.

You can send some rudimentary orders to wingmen, but the smart ones pretty much do the job on their own. A good crew can clean out a few UFOs in a



There are various difficulty levels that alter the effectiveness of the aliens, but once you get a good crew of pilots, you can make quick work of the bigger ones.



Each one of your bases has some empty "bays" for various expansion elements such as turrets and research modules.

minute or two, leaving you with little to do but pull your joystick.

However, the main problem isn't with the action engine itself, it's with the narrow mission parameters that quickly become repetitive and boring. When a blip shows up on your main strategic map, you send out a wing of ships to investigate. If they encounter the enemy, you drop into a dogfight with three or more UFOs. These dogfights are all exactly the same, and they come every day or two, meaning you fight dozens of tiny, small scale incursions. *Interceptor* cries out for an option to skip these battles, but you cannot: you must fight every last one.

When you get more powerful weapons, these little dogfights become like swatting skeeters — it often takes longer to load the mission that it does to fight. This is

partly a fault of the compressed research tree and partly because there is no option to automate the outcome of an encounter. But the entire structure of the campaign game is also a large share of the problem. Even with a strong offensive strategy, there will only ever be a few types of action encounters: interception, base defense, and base attack. Period. That's it. You can patrol zones to keep an eye out for convoys and UFOs, and probe for enemy bases, but almost every combat sequence is identical, varied only by the types of ships encountered. Sometimes there are more or better ships, or maybe something large that needs to either be attacked or protected, but none of this dispels the essential sameness of the encounters.

This is a game stuck in a loop. Its own innovative strategic campaign element is the undoing of its action element, and vice versa. One element of *Interceptor* negates the other. As a strategy game, the other X-COMs are deeper and more satisfying. As a 3D space combat game, it is easily eclipsed by the re-released Star Wars space combat games or *Wing Commander: Prophecy* and *Descent: Freespace*. *Interceptor* wants to be too many things at once, and only succeeds for a short time at being any of them before the monotony sets in.

—T. Liam McDonald



The main map can be zoomed and scrolled, and provides an overview of the "frontier" and current alien spottings.

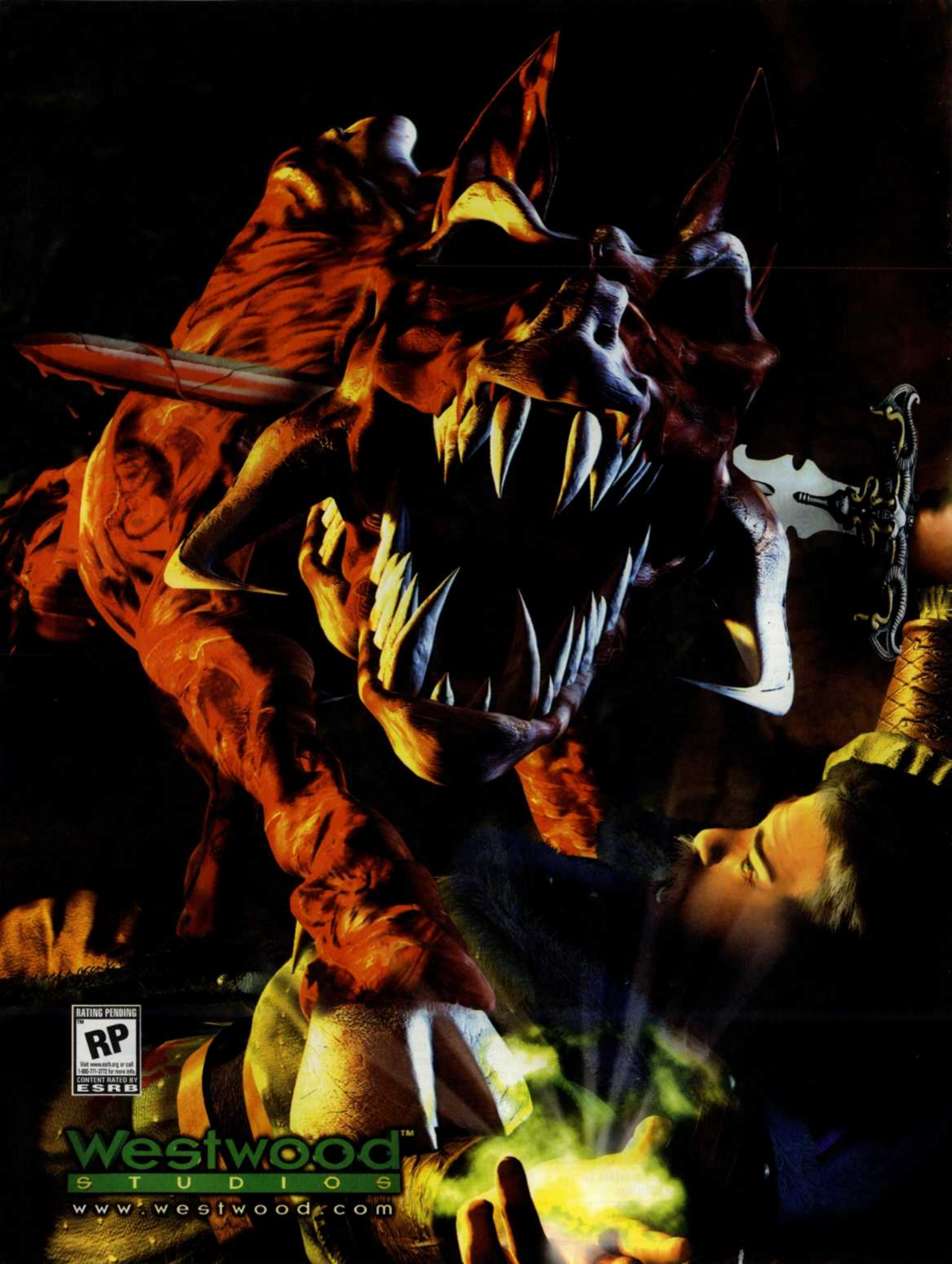
PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Strong strategic element; decent space combat; nice alien ship models.

60%

LOWS: Not enough mission variety. No way to skip dogfights.

BOTTOM LINE: Not as engrossing strategically as the other X-COM games and not as cutting edge as the current crop of space shooters.



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Descent: Freespace — The

Category: Action

Developer: Volition

Publisher: Interplay, (800) 969-4263
www.interplay.com

Required	We Recommend
Win95; 8x CD drive; P133 w/Direct3D-compatible hardware accelerator; Pentium 166 (software only); 32MB RAM; 210MB HD space; Windows-compatible sound card	P200; 64MB RAM; 3Dfx Voodoo- or Voodoo 2-based graphics accelerator; 28.8 Modem; Joystick
Multi-player: LAN (Via TCP/IP protocol); TCP/IP; Maximum Players: 12	



With the notable exception of the Wing Commander series and the Star Wars titles, space combat games have been in short supply in recent years, with few developers venturing into the dark reaches of space. Now, it seems all that is beginning to change. *Descent: Freespace* is a big sprawling space epic that delivers all of the dogfighting and sci-fi thrills of the established masters with impressive technology and loads of options. With any luck, it'll be the first of many envelope-pushing space blasters.

Volition's first effort gives the established space shooters a lot to worry about with stunning graphics and loads of features.

Designed by Volition — an offshoot of *Descent* creators Parallax — *Freespace* builds upon the cinematic style of *Wing Commander* and the World War Two dogfighting style of *X-Wing* to produce something seductively familiar and surprisingly new. The storyline and execution aren't entirely original, but it still sets a new high-water mark for alien-blasting fun.

Though the name is borrowed from *Descent*, *Freespace* has nothing in common with the tunnels and deadly mining robots found in previous *Descent* titles. Instead, the game heads into new uncharted territory, putting the player in the flight suit of a rookie Terran pilot who will, surprise surprise, ultimately have to save the day.

As the game begins, the Terrans are locked in a pitched battle for control of the galaxy's subspace nodes (portals that allow ships to move faster than light to different areas of the galaxy) with a race known as the Shivans. In the midst of the conflict, a mysterious and deadly race known as the Vasudans appears through one of the subspace nodes and begins a relentless march



With impressive artificial intelligence for the enemy pilots, you'll have to hone your dogfighting skills before you can dish out the pain.

through the galaxy, leaving death and destruction in its wake. Eventually, the Terrans and Shivans set aside their differences, uniting to combat this new threat, yet even with their combined forces, the Vasudans seem poised to get the better of them.

The sole single-player campaign unfolds through a selection of strike, defense, reconnaissance, and scramble missions against the Shivans and Vasudans, but the designers deserve a pat on the back for making each mission exciting and memorable. Some of the missions are so dramatic that you'll want to play them over again. In one early mission, you're required to nursemaid a damaged cruiser to a jump-point located in a cluster of orbiting asteroids — but there aren't just a few paltry boulders, there are dozens (if not hundreds) of whirling dirtballs that threaten to crush the ship — and you — in the process. During a later mission, you'll fly above the superstructure of the Vasudan behemoth *Lucifer* dogfighting bombers and fighters while avoiding laser fire from the ship's defensive turrets. While the mission difficulty is a bit uneven — some are terribly easy while others need to be played *ad nauseam* to complete — the ingenuity of the mission designs makes the campaign worth replaying a couple of times through.

But the bread and butter of *Freespace* has to be the graphics, with big, expensive-looking explosions and giant capital ships that fill the screen with incredible detail. In either the software or hardware mode, *Freespace* delivers spectacular visuals with colorful nebulae and planets rushing by in the distance, incredible starfield effects, and



In this jaw-dropping mission, you'll need to clear a path for this crippled cruiser before those asteroids pound it into dust. Many of the single-player missions are exciting and memorable.

Great War

massive ships. Though the game supports the latest 3D hardware through Direct3D, the software rendering mode is surprisingly robust, delivering most of the sexy effects without an accelerator — you'll need a slightly better machine to run in software, but with a 233 or higher, it's very playable and smooth.

Some effects serve to accentuate the sensation of speed (firing the afterburners results in a sharp jerking motion that blurs the starfield) while others serve to pound home the hazards of space combat — as large ships or asteroids are destroyed, they break apart into smaller sections, often exploding into still smaller sections. While the dogfighting style and simple physics modeling of *Freespace* is still a long way from Newtonian physics, there are a few tricks that make the experience just a bit more convincing. For example, if you get too close to a ship as it's destroyed, the concussion shock wave will knock you around, and if you get too close, you may end up with damaged systems.

As you progress through the campaign, management of resources and ships plays a part in your success. Before heading out on certain missions, you can determine which type of craft you want to fly and which weapons to use. You can also change the settings for the ships in the accompanying wings. As new ships, technologies, and weapons become available, you'll have make do with a limited supply, which adds to your command burden — do you use them right away, or do you keep them in reserve for when you're really in a bind?

No matter which weapons you choose or which fighters you select, you'll still be out-gunned and outnumbered by the Vasudans, and you'll need more than keen dogfighting skills to survive. To counter the odds, *Freespace* puts you in a leadership role for every mission. Wingman control extends beyond the guy on your right, putting you in control of every friendly fighter in the battle. Using a slick communication



Freespace's cinematics like this opening scene are well done and fun to watch, but don't really add to the story as much as they could have done.

PC GAMER
EDITORS'
CHOICE



During key missions, you'll witness the devastating firepower of the enemy wreak havoc on friendly units. The massive Vasudan ship *Lucifer* delivers a pounding to this Terran space station.

interface, you can issue commands to all fighters in the area, or specify individual wings or specific ships to perform a broad selection of commands such as attack, defend, retreat, rearm, etc. In some missions, you can even call in reinforcements when the going gets tough.

While some games tend to dumb down wingman controls, the ability to command and control entire wings isn't a throwaway design element in *Freespace* — successfully directing the AI ships is often an essential element in a mission's success. During certain missions, you'll need to defend fleeing capital ships at all costs, using every fighter at your disposal to fend off the attack. Luckily, the artificial intelligence of your comrades is relentless and ruthless, even if they're not terribly bright. Computer-controlled ships will attack the largest and most heavily defended capital ships or installations mercilessly, rearm when their weapons stores are empty and return to the fight without complaint. At times, though, the effectiveness of the computer pilots can rob the player of that do-it-yourself satisfaction — during the game's final mission, I actually completed the objectives without firing a shot.

Once the single player game is over, *Freespace* has a double-threat of options to keep you gaming for months to come. Multi-play allows you to play missions from the single-player campaign cooperatively or competitively with players online or over a LAN. Capture-the-flag missions and team play are also available, but one option that's miss-

ing is a pure dogfight mode. At the time of this writing, LAN play (through TCP/IP) was acceptable, but Internet play was a bit fussy, with poor latency handling and a few annoying bugs. Volition has released several updates to address the problems, but admits there may still be more to come before the problems are cleared up properly.

In addition to the multi-player options, *Freespace* includes a robust mission editor that allows players to create their own missions or campaigns for use in single or multi-player games. Unlike a lot of bundled editors, the *Freespace* editor is surprisingly easy to use, yet powerful enough to create just about any scenario you could wish for.

Even if you're not interested in the extras, the incredible mix of high-tech glitz and dead-on space combat of *Freespace's* single-player campaign is simply too good to pass up, proving the genre has room for more than the established big boys. With any luck, we'll have add-on discs and sequels to look forward to in the months to come.

—Todd Vaughn

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Great graphics and smooth control. Robust mission editor and multi-player options.

LOWS: Short single-player campaign; thin story line. Some fussy Internet play.

BOTTOM LINE: *Freespace* sets a new standard for sci-fi shoot 'em ups with its first-rate production.

91%

Upon further reflection,



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MechCommander

Category: Strategy

Developer: FASA Interactive

Publisher: MicroProse, (510) 864-4550
www.microprose.com

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 133; 16MB RAM; 150MB hard-drive space; DirectX 5.0-compatible sound card; Mouse	Pentium 233; 64MB RAM; 550MB hard-drive space

Multi-player: Serial/null modem: Modem: 28.8; IPX: 2-6 players; TCP/IP: Yes (requires Mplayer or Internet Gaming Zone); Maximum players: 6; Free Internet service: Mplayer, Internet Gaming Zone

Ever since FASA Interactive published the first BattleTech board game back in 1984, legions of devoted fans have elevated it from a roleplaying war game to a major industry. Fans can read BattleTech novels, join a BattleTech MUD, MUSH, MUSE, or other online environment, visit BattleTech VR Centers (or at least could, many are now closed), enjoy a BattleTech card game (by

Magic: The Gathering creators Wizards of the Coast), and even purchase BattleTech figurines. And of course, there's the computer games from Activision — *BattleTech: The Crescent Hawks' Inception*, *BattleTech: The Crescent Hawks' Revenge*, *MechWarrior* and the *MechWarrior 2* series.

Now, the BattleTech universe has taken yet another turn, as FASA and MicroProse have teamed up to create *MechCommander* — a tactical/strategic game that borrows heavily from the board game. But in this case, the intense devotion of BattleTech fans proves to be something of a double-edged sword — hardcore fans of the board game and other BattleTech titles are howling in anger over the game's design, while gamers not as familiar with the BattleTech universe are wondering what all the fuss is about. But while it's true that *MechCommander* has some flaws, it's nowhere close to the disaster some are making it out to be. And if you stick with it long enough, you'll find that it actually succeeds in spite of itself.

The action in *MechCommander* revolves around a decision by the Great Houses of the Inner Sphere to

The BattleTech universe comes to the PC with a few fumbles, but if you can look past its problems, it's a Mechload of fun.

put aside the differences that have kept them divided for hundreds of years and form the Star League Defense Force. The Star League's first order of business: the liberation of planets occupied by the Smoke Jaguar Clan.

As a MechCommander in the First Davion Guards, you've been assigned the task of reclaiming the planet of Port Author — it's a role that gives you complete and total control over your Mechs. It's up to you to purchase Mechs, pilots, weapons, and other components from Battalion Command; once you've outfitted your Mechs, you issue commands for movement and attack from an overhead perspective.

At first, I was a little overwhelmed at all the options open to me: Just decid-

ing on which Mechs to deploy, what weapons to equip them with, and which pilots to use is enough to make a BattleTech newcomer's head start spinning. After you've been through the process a couple of times, though, it



Keeping your Mechs on the move during combat will cut down on the damage they take. You'd think they'd move on their own without your help, but that's often not the case.



Real-time strategy players that are used to destroying every enemy structure they find will need to cool their jets in *MechCommander*: Many buildings should instead be captured for components or occupied in order for you to do repairs on your damaged Mechs.



Here's a puzzler for you: how come FedCom is able to provide you with this fully detailed topographic map *before* a mission, but you don't have access to it after you drop to the planet surface?

really does become second nature. Even so, you can easily spend a good 15 or 20 minutes trying to get the most bang for your buck because the combined weight of your Mechs and ancillary vehicles can't exceed a certain tonnage limit.

It's this component of *MechCommander* that really sucks you into the game. Because pilots improve their skills over time, you've got to make sure you don't let your best ones die needlessly and, consequently, you begin to care for these guys. During combat, you need to capture any available resources and try to disable enemy Mechs rather than destroying them so you can salvage them for parts. The addition of artillery support, sensor probes, and camera drones add even more to the sensation of commanding units from a remote location.

During combat, however, you'll run into various annoyances that detract from the experience. The biggest problem is that it's almost impossible to stay on top of what your pilots are doing: they might be wasting precious missiles on minor targets, standing stock-still in combat when they should be on the move, or utterly annihilating a damaged enemy Mech rather than disabling it in order to salvage parts. Of course, you



Use walls and buildings to minimize the damage your Mechs take from line-of-sight weapons such as lasers and auto-cannons.



The Zoom-In view gives you a chance to relish *MechCommander's* stellar combat graphics and animations, but the limited viewing area makes tactical planning more difficult.

can always step in and take control of them yourself — there are options that allow you to aim at the legs or head of an enemy Mech in order to disable it, and by constantly moving your Mechs you lessen the damage they take — but that's an extremely formidable task, given how fast things are happening and how sprawling some missions can become. The solution, of course, would be a setting to slow things down — a standard feature in nearly every real-time strategy game on the market, but one that's curiously absent here.

Those are the most obvious flaws with combat, but there are others. Units are placed in groups at the start of missions, but you can't reallocate them into new groups once they hit the planet: If I've only got four Mechs, I'd sure like to be able to divide them in two groups for flanking purposes. Here's another puzzler for you: why can you see a map of the entire area before a mission, but not after the battle begins? Thanks to that "fog of war" and the lack of in-game saving, most players will spend the first couple of attempts at a mission simply exploring the lay of the land and location of enemies.

Additionally, the linear campaign makes it all too easy to get stuck on a dif-

ficult mission, leaving you unable to proceed further.

MechCommander features free multi-player action on Mplayer and the Internet Gaming Zone, but there are two big glitches in the multi-player design. The first is that if you screw up picking pilots or Mechs and have to select another, you only get half the Resource Points you paid — most players will just quit rather than continuing with such a handicap. The other is that there's no way to configure Mech groups offline: instead, everyone has to wait as players painstakingly buy and outfit their Mechs.

But in all fairness, I've got to admit that after I hit "the wall" in terms of frustration, I still found myself enjoying *MechCommander* in spite of the myriad problems with combat. As it stands, *MechCommander* can be a very fun game for those with patience; with a few relatively simple revisions, it could become the most authentic BattleTech game available.

—Stephen Poole

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Mech configurations and options immerse you in the BattleTech world; good graphics.

79%

LOWES: Tough battle management; linear campaign; no speed or difficulty settings; no in-game saves.

BOTTOM LINE: It definitely has its flaws, but there's still a lot of fun here.



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ROM**



Fox Sports Golf '99

Category: Sports

Developer: Gremlin Interactive

Publisher: Fox Sports, (970) 522-5369
www.foxsportsgames.com

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Pentium 120; Four-speed CD-ROM drive; 16MB RAM; 87MB hard drive space	Pentium 166; Eight-speed CD-ROM drive; 32MB RAM; 219MB hard drive space; Direct3D accelerator
Multi-player: Serial/Null Modem; Modem; IPX; TCP/IP; Maximum players: 4; Spawnable: Yes	

There's a lot to like in this full-featured golf sim, but some work still needs to be done to make it a real contender.

After making a name for itself in the world of television sports coverage, Fox is now setting its sights on the cut-throat arena of PC sports games. One of the first titles out of the chute is a golf simulation from developer Gremlin Interactive. Released in Europe as *Actua Golf 2*, this game shows a lot of promise, but ultimately falls a bit short when forced to compete with the likes of *Links LS* and *Jack Nicklaus 5*.

Fox Sports Golf '99's most attractive features are the huge number of gameplay and viewing options available. Three different swing methods, eight courses set around the globe, and eight different modes of play provide plenty of variety to keep you busy. The two tournament modes (amateur and pro) are very well done and make you feel like you're actually participating rather than looking at a board full of numbers to best. To progress to the Pro tournament,



Hit the driving range to work out the kinks in your swing. Weather effects, such as high winds and heavy rains, are another option for customizing the game.

you must reduce your handicap to even par in the amateur tour.

Just about everything in the game is customizable. You first create your on-screen persona from a number of different options, such as clothing styles and the clubs you'll carry in your bag. You can decide to have one, both, or no announcers (John Walls and Peter Alliss provide the plucky commentary), and choose from a host of graphics options. On the course, you'll be able to choose from an almost infinite variety of views to play from, and a large number of replay angles to provide a great look at your best shots. Every hole has a fly-by describing its subtleties, and if you want to take a look for yourself, you can even walk the course using your mouse. It's a great feature, and no golf game should be without it.

Sadly though, the gaffes in *Golf '99* come where it hurts the most—in the gameplay. The two and three-click swing meters are poorly calibrated and move much too fast. The real-time mouse swing is the best bet, but it too is rather fussy and will send your ball hooking or slicing at the slightest twitch of your wrist. It also takes some getting used to, because using the suggested lines on the meter for strength of shot are totally misleading. You'll have to get a real feel for it before you start hitting decent shots.

The putting model in the game is just plain wrong. Regardless of the slope of the green, it seems that every putt is just about straight on. Sixty-footers and beyond can be made far too frequently. Also, no matter the length of the putt, the amount of force you need to strike the ball barely changes, giving you no tactile feel when on the green. The look of the putting game is strange as well. The ball rolls much too slowly, making every putt look like it's taking place on a vicious downhill slope on a sun-baked green.

The physics model has some other problems you'll have to deal with. The type of ground (rough, sand, etc.) you're on and the wind will have a direct effect on your shot, but there appears to be no



The walkthrough feature is awesome, letting you view every inch of the terrain to plan out your shots.

adjustments for the angle, making uphill, downhill, and sidehill lies irrelevant. The ball seems to roll realistically for the most part, but not when it enters a bunker. Coming in from any angle, the ball will stop dead in its tracks upon finding the sand.

For those who demand the utmost in realistic physics models from their PC golf, *Fox Sports Golf '99* will be a big disappointment. Normally, I am one of these people, but strangely I found myself enjoying the game despite its problems. The 3D courses look somewhat surreal, with their trees swaying in the wind and highly reflective water, but there's something eerily pretty about them. The tournaments are great fun, with your computer-controlled playing partner showing enough personality to make you feel as if you're out on the course with a fellow player. If the engine can be reworked to provide more realism, and the control methods are tightened up a bit, the next version of this series could make a lot of noise.

—Rob Smolka

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Options galore; tournaments are well done; strangely appealing graphics.

LOWS: Fussy control methods; putting is too easy; some ball physics problems

BOTTOM LINE: A few gameplay adjustments short of being a really good game.

68%

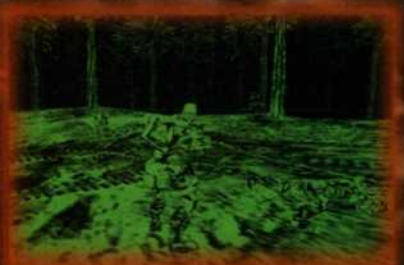
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Medieval

Category: Wargame

Developer: Incredible Simulations

Publisher: Incredible Simulations, (773) 804-7403
www.incrediblesimulations.com

Required	We Recommend
Pentium 133; 16MB RAM; 20MB hard-drive space; Super VGA 16-bit display	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 200; 32MB RAM

Multi-player: Play by E-mail only

You gotta hand it to Incredible Simulations: this stout-hearted little company (essentially Jeff Lapkoff, who does all the code and graphics, and a few play-tester friends) bucks every trend in the industry and still turns a decent profit without the benefit of stockholders, boards of directors, or suits of any kind.

They accomplish this apparent miracle by creating historically accurate and hugely entertaining simulations of dramatic events that (supposedly) don't have any mass-market appeal. The Alamo, Custer's Last Stand, and the Zulu Wars may not be subjects that engage the interest of the multitudes who bought *Panzer General*, but to students of military history, they are fascinating and colorful incidents, and Incredible has always managed to capture the essence of their color and action.

Medieval might turn out to be the "sleeper" hit of the year for a fairly large audience. Anyone who saw *Braveheart*

If you dug the battle scenes in *Braveheart*, you'll love this jewel from Incredible Simulations!

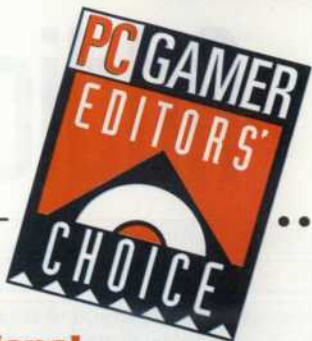
(with its stirring and gruesomely accurate depiction of what pre-gunpowder combat was really like) will have gained an understanding of how large and tactically sophisticated many medieval battles actually were. Edward I fielded

almost 10,000 archers at Falkirk, and that bespeaks a fairly advanced system of organization and supply.

All the classic battles of the period are represented (Hastings, Crecy, Sterling Bridge, Bannockburn, and Vlad the Impaler's last stand against the Turks at Bucharest in 1476, to name a few). Before each battle starts, you issue "general orders" to the whole force (counterattack only when the odds look favorable, etc.). When the action starts, you control everything from missile fire to rally attempts by clicking on a simple, but thorough, array of icons.

Combat lasts until one side's morale falls below 30 percent (you can tell that's coming when you start seeing a lot of guys deserting the ranks before your next turn begins), or until a specified objective is taken. Movement radius is shown by shaded squares, and fatigue is a vital factor (always get the enemy to move uphill, if you can — it doesn't take long for a soldier to get winded when he's wearing 40lbs of armor and toting a halberd!). Leaders are important, too, and units within their radius of influence will attack more bravely, defend more stubbornly, and rally more quickly.

The scenario editor is both powerful and ridiculously easy to use. Want to see if you can change English history by giving Harold 100 more archers at Hastings (God knows, he could have used them)? Try it and see what happens. Or let your imagination run wild and pit hordes of Vikings against Dracula's knights. Included in the roster of deployable units is every type of soldiery used in the period, from peasant levees armed with staffs to fully-plated tournament-grade knights. Incredible has even included units of Amazons, which opens up delicious possibilities for "Xena: Warrior Princess" fans. There's



Can Dracula defend the West against these heathen Turks? Help him out with a few more bowmen, and he probably can.

also a delightful fantasy scenario depicting Robin Hood leading his Saxon guerrillas in a last stand against the Norman oppressors — great fun!

Medieval features the highest production values of any Incredible game so far: marvelous animated soldiers, excellent sound effects, and simple but elegant terrain maps.

Whether you play the historically accurate scenarios, or cook up something outlandish that could never have happened, you'll enjoy this game immensely. It's swift and easy to play, and crammed with all the bone-breaking action you could ask for.

Incredible is, of course, a shoe-string operation, and unless you're in the Alamo gift shop, you're not likely to find its products in retail stores. Just visit its website to place an order, and while you're there, download the free demo battle. If you're even the least bit curious about this neglected era of warfare, chances are you'll be hooked.

—William R. Trotter



You can create Xena-esque Amazon units with the editor. You do *not* want to make sexist remarks around these ladies. They can knock you out pretty quick!

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Solid production values; exciting scenarios; lots of smash-mouth action.

90%

LOWS: The editor sometimes deploys made-up archer units but forgets to give them arrows.

BOTTOM LINE: A colorful simulation of a neglected but fascinating period of history.

Addiction Pinball

Category: Arcade

Developer: Team 17

Publisher: MicroProse, (510) 864 4550
www.microprose.com

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 75; 16MB RAM	Pentium 166; Supported sound card

Multi-player: None

When it comes to silverball action, PC gamers haven't exactly been overburdened with oodles of quality titles. With dreadful drek like *Star Trek Pinball*, hard-core pinball fans were wondering if they'd ever get something as good as Empire's hyper-realistic *Timeshock*. Now MicroProse has entered the fray with *Addiction Pinball*, a title with a solid engine and plenty of promise, but it looks like *Timeshock* is still the king when it comes to pinball on the PC.

Addiction Pinball comes with two tables: *World Rally Fever*, a racing-based table, and *Worms*, based on Team 17's enormously popular action game. Both tables look exceptional, with plenty of animated ramps, traps, and madly flashing lights.

Worms is the more enjoyable of the

This game may be a great-looking package, but pinball fanatics will be left wanting better and more tables.

two, and features all of the cutesy violence and destruction you'd expect. Ten challenges are spread out on the table, such as 'Defuse Dynamite,' where the player must shoot lit skill shots within a certain amount of time, and 'Uzi Spinner,' which gives you points based on the strength and speed of your shot. Despite its many features, *Worms* is made difficult by its overwhelmingly busy layout — it's quite easy to lose your ball's position in the midst of the action.

Rally Fever is a bit easier on the eyes. However, this table is positively overloaded with ramps and ball locks, and almost every shot results in a loop-back ramp. Repeatedly hitting skill shots lets you 'shift gears,' and there are several mini-games such as drag racing and half-pipe.

Even though the ball physics and collision seem to be flawless, neither table moves fast enough. You can adjust the game speed in the options menu, but it's still sluggish on the hardest difficulty setting. While this makes it easier for beginning players, hardcore pinball freaks will be greatly disappointed.

On the plus side, *Addiction Pinball* is packed with more glitz than any other pinball game. Along with those lovely rendered tables, you get an interactive music soundtrack that uses an hour's worth of CD audio (turn down the CD volume before you start playing, though — the music does a good job of drowning out the sound effects). With every skill shot, rendered mini-videos play at the top of the screen in a simulated LED window.

Occasionally, you'll get to play a mini-game with the flipper buttons — *Worms*' "Escape the Yeti" requires you to mash them like there's no tomorrow, and the shop in *Rally Fever* lets you select different bonuses.

You also get loads of viewing options — *Addiction Pinball* offers six perspectives, including a side-ways-view where you have to flip your monitor on its



The "Worms" table is based on Team 17's seminal action game, containing the massive amounts of violence and goofiness you'd expect from the franchise.

side. Unfortunately, there aren't enough actual gameplay options — you're limited to three balls from the get-go, and there's no mode where two players can take turns. The game's manual also mentions a high-score utility that uploads your best scores to a MicroProse server — but it's mysteriously absent from the game (a patch is supposedly forthcoming).

Though *Addiction Pinball* loses much of its spark after a few short play-throughs, the blame really lies within modern pinball. Nowadays, designers are so caught up in the glitz and glimmer of multimedia and crazy robotic tables, that they frequently lose touch with the gameplay — I'd take almost any 1960s table over today's high-powered machines.

Sadly, *Addiction Pinball* concerns itself more with production values and prettiness than the refined gameplay and downright fun of games like *Timeshock*. On the other hand, Team 17 does have an extremely solid pinball engine on its hands, and its future efforts can only improve — especially if it would license some real vintage tables for the sequel. Here's hoping.

—Colin Williamson



"World Rally Fever" features a few interesting targets... and ramps, and ramps, and ramps. There are several mini-games with this table.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Bright 'n sparkly graphics; great ball physics; nice music.

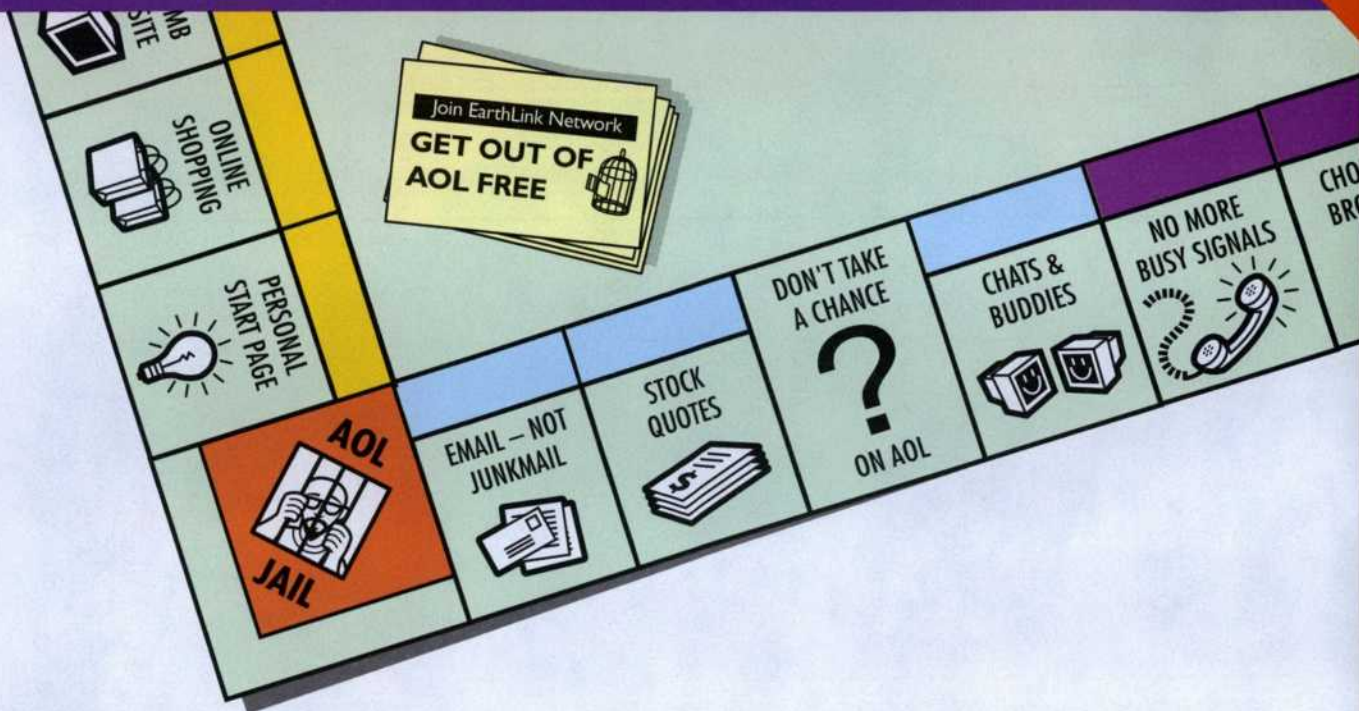
LOWS: The tables are a little slow; lack of gameplay options; only two tables.

BOTTOM LINE: A solid offering, but it won't replace *Timeshock* as the king of pinball games.

65%

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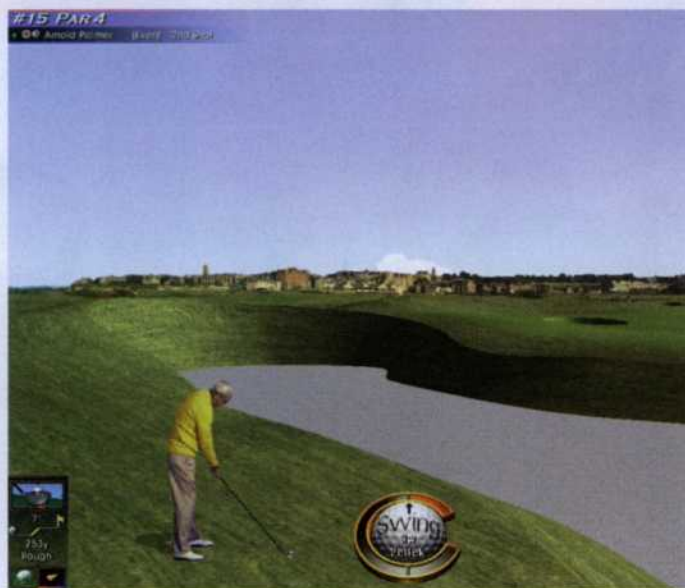
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COMING FALL '98!

Incoming

Category: Action

Developer: Rage Software

Publisher: Rage Software
www.rage.co.uk

Required	We Recommend
Win95; 2x CD drive; P133; 16MB RAM; 44MB hard-drive space; Direct3D compatible 3D accelerator w/4MB memory; Windows com- patible sound card	P200; 32MB RAM; Joystick/gamepad
Multi-player: Serial/null modem: yes; Modem: yes; IPX: 2-8 players; TCP/IP: 2-8 players; Maximum players: 8; 2-player split- screen	

Play enough computer games, and you might come to the conclusion that when the Supreme Being created the cosmos He plopped down a few interstellar billboards reading "planet primed for invasion — take the Sol exit and head right." Yes, the alien invasion back story is getting *extremely* long in the tooth, but then most gamers couldn't care less why they're blasting everything in range as long as the action's fast, furious, and delivers a reasonable level of pyrotechnics.

Case in point: *Incoming*. You couldn't ask for a wearier plot — aliens ravage Earth's forces on the Moon before moseying down to Terra to finish the job — but after about five minutes of playing, you'll have lost that "not another alien invasion!" feeling. Instead, you'll probably be on the telephone calling all your friends to tell them you've found a game so visually stunning that they've got to see it to really believe it.

How good does this game look? I'll put it this way: you know you've got a gem on your hands when have a tough time coming up with words that'll do the graphics justice. The environments, ranging from dusty deserts to the icy Arctic to the lush greenery of Africa, are wonderfully textured and detailed — if someone's done a better job of creating a virtual landscape in a game, I'd sure like to see it. The beautiful visuals don't end with the terrain, either. Every object — enemy aircraft and tanks, anti-aircraft turrets, the vehicles you pilot, even the buildings you must protect in order to repel the invasion — looks as real as anything you'd find in a full-bore simulation.



Manning anti-aircraft guns is just one of the ways you get to waste extraterrestrials in *Incoming*.

Rage Software proves it's on top when it comes to visual effects, but if you're looking for meaty gameplay, you'll be disappointed.

But the true standouts are the visual effects such as light-sourcing, translucent smoke trails, and incredible explosions. Fire your lasers, and the ground lights up with a purplish hue as the beam

zooms toward its target; launch an air-to-air missile, and you're treated to a trailing wisp of smoke and a warm orange glow as it screams in to deliver its payload. When things get hot and heavy as ships crash and burn and weapons fire lights up the sky, the whole affair comes across as... well, downright psychedelic. All this assumes you have a 3D card, of course — non-accelerated PCs need not apply.

Admirably, Rage Software designed *Incoming's* Campaign mode so you'd be faced with distinct tactical challenges by constantly switching the vehicles and weapons you control (you fly a single aircraft in Arcade mode). A typical sequence might go like this: you control an anti-aircraft battery as fighters and bombers approach a base, switch to a helicopter to take out air and ground targets as you retrieve supplies, hop in a



Incoming's graphical superiority shines through even in the top-down strategy game, with light-sourcing from missiles visible even in the zoomed-out mode.

tank and fight off ground-based enemy forces, and finally wind up in a jet escorting a friendly cargo plane. There's even a "Campaign Tactics" mode that plays out like a top-down strategy game, but sluggish control and shallow gameplay (you simply send out units to counter enemy attacks) renders it essentially pointless. Multi-player action is supported via LAN, TCP/IP, modem, and even split-screen, but since no game service has picked up *Incoming*, finding an opponent can be very difficult.

Ultimately, a lot of gamers will tire of the repetitive gameplay sequences: the scenery, enemies, and craft might look different, but the action takes on an extremely samey feel by the time you've slugged it through four or five of the ten levels. But if your tastes lean towards the simplistic, there's plenty here to keep your trigger finger happy.

—Stephen Poole

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: These are some of the best visual effects ever seen in a game.

LOWS: The action gets repetitive fast in spite of the various vehicles; the top-down strategy game is an afterthought.

BOTTOM LINE: It's initially fun, but players looking for more substance will quickly tire of it.

75%

Game, Net & Match

Category: Sports

Developer: MediaGames

Publisher: Blue Byte Software, (847) 995-9981
www.bluebyte.com

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 133; 16MB RAM; 72MB hard-drive space	Eight-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 166; 32MB RAM; 224MB hard-drive space; Direct3D accelerator; Gamepad; Internet or LAN access

Multi-player: IPX; TCP/IP Internet (28.8K+) via Blue Byte's server; Maximum players: 2 via the Internet, 4 on a single computer via daisy-chained gamepads; Spawning: Five online accounts per CD

There's a growing concern among gamers that as multi-player features become more prominent software designers will forget about making sure the solo play is up to snuff. *Game, Net & Match*, the new tennis game from Blue Byte Software, is a strong candidate to be the poster-child for these fears. This is a multi-player game that gives short shrift to single-player concerns; the single-player competition modes are terribly easy due to horrible artificial intelligence which puts up little challenge. It's a shame too, because the single player game had a lot of potential. There are twelve different venues, four different surfaces (clay, carpet, concrete, and grass), lots of different tournaments, and a season mode that lets you create a



Here's a familiar sight. The computer player is powerless to deal with the serve and volley game, taking all the fun out of the single-player experience.

With weak on-court AI and easy gameplay, this is basically an online game with little to no value for the solo gamer.

player and improve your abilities throughout the year. Yet, all of this is rendered useless due to a computer player that has the intelligence of a piece of burnt toast. Halfway through the first set I ever played, I figured out how to thrash my severely brain-dead opponent with ease. This is taking into account that I had the lowest number of skill points possible. As I made my way to the final match-up, I hoped that there would at least be some challenge. Unfortunately, the top player in the tournament fell without winning a game. In fact, I could count on one hand the number of points he managed to win.

The online elements are a different story. Using Blue Byte's server in Germany, you can meet up with other racketeers and attempt to fight your way to the top of the rankings. Obviously, if your opponent is in Europe (the game was released in Germany and the UK weeks before its U.S. launch), lag is going to play a factor in your enjoyment. Balls that appear to have been missed by your opponent will magically come flying back at you, giving you little time to react, and the action will appear to be in slow motion at times. This should cease to be a problem as more people from our shores start to join in on the fun. In our testing, we logged onto the German server and experienced very little lag and smooth play. When similarly skilled opponents (both in ability and point totals)

meet, *Game, Net & Match* is a blast to play. Another nice addition to the online play is that a leaderboard of sorts is being kept by Blue Byte. This way, you can gain bragging rights when you play your way to the top of the list. One of the few complaints with the online play is that you are limited to singles matches only. Multi-play on the same computer is also supported, with as many as four participants able to compete.

As for the aesthetics, it's a mix of



Some courtside objects, like these chairs, are acceptable, but the background sprites are truly laughable and detract from the overall look.

good and bad. The bad consists of terrible background graphics and limited animations. The crowds are the biggest offenders, looking like cardboard cutouts pasted on top of the otherwise decent 3D stadia. When the players walk back to their positions between points, they appear as if they are in the latter stages of rigor mortis, shuffling like zombies across the court. Perhaps they've been bored to death by the announcers' insipid and repetitive comments. On the plus side, the players look good when it counts, moving fluidly during gameplay. The crowd sounds quite realistic, and they respond appropriately to the action on the court.

Under the right circumstances, *Game, Net & Match* is a worthwhile purchase. The controls are easy to master, and if you've got friends to play with and/or online access, you'll enjoy the experience. But with the dearth of tennis games available, Blue Byte missed a golden opportunity to provide a game that would please solo as well as multi-player gamers.

—Rob Smolka

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Excellent online play; good shot control; Blue Byte's leaderboard.

LOWS: No bells or whistles; some ugly graphics; you'll yearn for more intelligent AI.

BOTTOM LINE: There's fun to be had, but only those with multi-player in mind need apply.

65%



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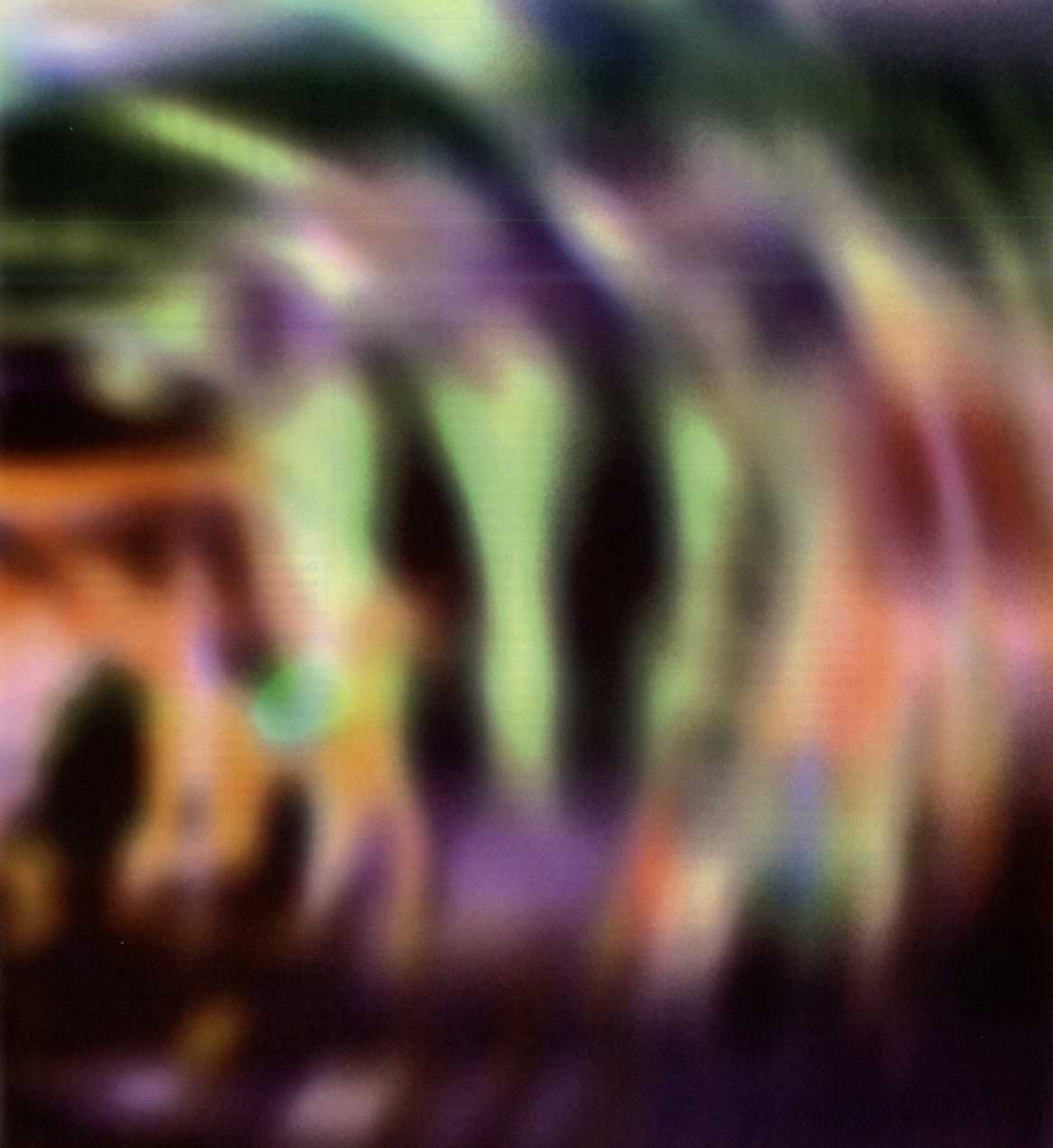
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Dominion: Storm Over GIFT 3

Category: Strategy

Developer: ION Storm

Publisher: Eidos Interactive, (800) 617-8737
www.eidosinteractive.com

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 166; 32MB RAM; 2MB Super VGA video card; DirectX compatible sound card	Windows 95; Pentium 200; 4MB video card

Multi-player: Serial/Null modem; Modem 14.4; IPX (2-8 players); TCP/IP (2-8 players)
Free Internet service:
www.mplayer.com

After being snapped up from the remains of 7th Level's troubled games division by John Romero's ION Storm, *Dominion: Storm over GIFT 3* was pushed into the spotlight as one of the hot up-and-coming real-time strategy games. But the sad truth of the matter is that *Dominion* is just another mediocre entry into this overcrowded genre. It adds some attractive features like waypoints, customizable artificial intelligence, and high-resolution graphics to the mix, yet sticks close to the basics of the genre with lockstep precision: you journey around a map, gather resources, build a base, and wage war. While the game musters a good challenge in both its single-player and multi-player game,



The guard towers and energy walls provide a nice barrier of defense, but are far too difficult to destroy — it takes a sizable force to take out one missile tower.

Despite a good selection of units and challenging gameplay, *Dominion* offers nothing new to this tired and cliché-ridden genre.

there is nothing innovative or fun enough to pry you away from *StarCraft*.

The setup for *Dominion* is ripped straight from a science fiction primer. A deep space probe from Earth encounters a transmission from an orbiting beacon near the third planet of the GIFT system. The message tells of a Messiah, capable of wielding massive amounts of power for those who would control it. Four races, the Humans, the Mercs, the Scorps, and the Darken know of the Messiah's existence, and after negotiations break down, they go to war, each vying for its control.

Unlike the three distinctly different races of *StarCraft*, the four races in *Dominion* are nothing more than slightly altered mirror images of each other. While the graphics are different and very minor variations do exist (the Darken have a slow build time, the Humans have average armor, etc.), the differences are so small it's nearly impossible to tell where they lie. The tactics you use against the Darken are essentially the same as those when fighting the Merc. Part of the fun of playing *StarCraft* is having to alter your strategy based upon which race you're fighting. There is none of that here: simply build loads of tanks to fight against tanks, use infantry to counter infantry — it doesn't get much deeper than that.

The unit animations are fluid, but the environments are bland; it looks too much like Earth, and not like a distant planet. A bit of imagination would have gone a long way in creating a more involved, engaging world. The grassland levels are particularly poor — they could have been taken right from *C&C: Red Alert* and no one would be the wiser. The most interesting of the environments are the lava worlds, which bring rivers and lakes of the hot red stuff into the mix, along with a more interesting landscape — but even though they do look "alien," these levels are



The desert wasteland maps provide a nice backdrop to the war, but don't look very alien. Those look just like the trees in my yard!

graphically challenged.

The AI ranges from surprisingly good to astonishingly bad. At times, the enemy is quite stealthy and cunning. On one occasion, they swooped in for a precision attack, lowered my defenses, and then mopped up. Other times, however, they would destroy the perimeter defenses and then stop, even though my base was theirs for the taking.

The AI for friendly units was shaky as well. Precision attacks are hard to pull off, as units will break away for no reason and go wandering off. At times, they would not fire at an approaching enemy, letting them pass untouched. Yet, at other times, they would battle with killer accuracy. This makes for some frustrating gaming.

That said, my biggest complaint has to be the resource management design — *Dominion* uses one of the most frustrating systems ever seen. Two resources must be collected. The first is a green energy goo that is extracted from Matter Wells. Rather than send out collectors or harvesters, you simply build a refinery on top of the well, and you're done. The second, and more frustrating resource, involves colonists. In order to construct buildings, units, and vehicles, you must construct colonies that house unseen workers — once built, the kind folks inside will work to produce what you've requested. The problem stems from the fact that each item has a cost in terms of both men and energy, and there are rarely enough men to sustain long periods of building.

In most games of this genre, there comes a point during the mission (or multi-player action) where the amount of resources coming in exceeds the amount of resources being spent, creating a nice surplus. Not here. No matter how many

The Boys of *Dominion*

Although the four races of *Dominion* are very similar, a few differences help set them apart. Below are the strengths and weaknesses of each race.

HUMAN



Strengths — Secret weapon, well-balanced offense and defense

Weaknesses — Average armor, average build time

DARKEN



Strengths — Excellent armor, defense

Weaknesses — Slow build time, expensive units

SCORPS



Strengths — Speed and short build time, inexpensive units

Weaknesses — Poor armor, weaker weapons

MERCS



Strengths — Widowmaker vehicle, powerful weapons

Weaknesses — Expensive units, weak armor



More snow! The interface along the bottom is easy to use, separating buildings, men, vehicles, and accessories into their own category.

colonies were built, at no point did I have ever have a surplus of men at my disposal. While resource management is all part of the game, all the fun goes out of the gaming experience if you must struggle to create a handful of units and buildings or bide your time while the workforce is slowly replenished.

On the plus side, *Dominion's* interface is easy to use and features a pretty decent waypoint system, as well as the cool feature of reconnaissance bikes, which go off on their own and explore the map, freeing you up to do other things. Power management in *Dominion* forces you to build within a certain proximity to your power plants (an extremely aggravating system that should be forever banned from RTS games), but small umbilical units help make your base more mobile. They have a nice range and can transfer enough power to run the largest structures.

Another nice feature are the bridges that can be built on certain maps. All such bridges can be destroyed, which is a good strategic move to cut off the enemy's movements. Once your boys are ready, you can place a bridge down and swarm across. This may not seem like that big of a deal, but when worked into the overall strategy, it can really be a big help.

The game's highlight comes in the form of the air units. Although expensive to build, they pack a serious punch and are fast enough to evade enemy fire. They constantly weave around, making themselves that much harder to hit, and will return to base, reload, and go after the target again if it wasn't destroyed the first time around.

At the end of the day, there is nothing here that we haven't seen before. And though *Dominion* does a good job of not insulting the RTS genre, did we really need another science fiction-based real-time strategy game? Just for once I'd like to see an RTS game that didn't start with one of these two phrases: "The year is 2346 and the Earth is a wasteland



A human base sprawls out, and those boys are itching to get it on!

where you must fight for the few remaining resources"; or, "An ancient signal/beacon/whatever draws together several races who must battle it out for The Prize." How about some originality?

Myth showed that an RTS game does not have to be comprised solely of resource gathering and base building — and that is why it won our 1997 award for Best Real-Time Strategy Game. Originality is what the genre needs, and any game developers with an RTS in the works right now would do well to re-examine what they have to see if it really adds something to the party or merely takes up precious space on the store shelf. This genre didn't need *Dominion*, nor does it need any other ho-hum efforts like it. Enough already, people!

—William Harms

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Most units are well designed and look sharp; good waypoint system.

LOWS: Resource management is a pain; environment graphics are sub-par; AI will drive you crazy.

BOTTOM LINE: We've seen this all before, but if you're desperate, *Dominion* delivers on a basic level.

55%



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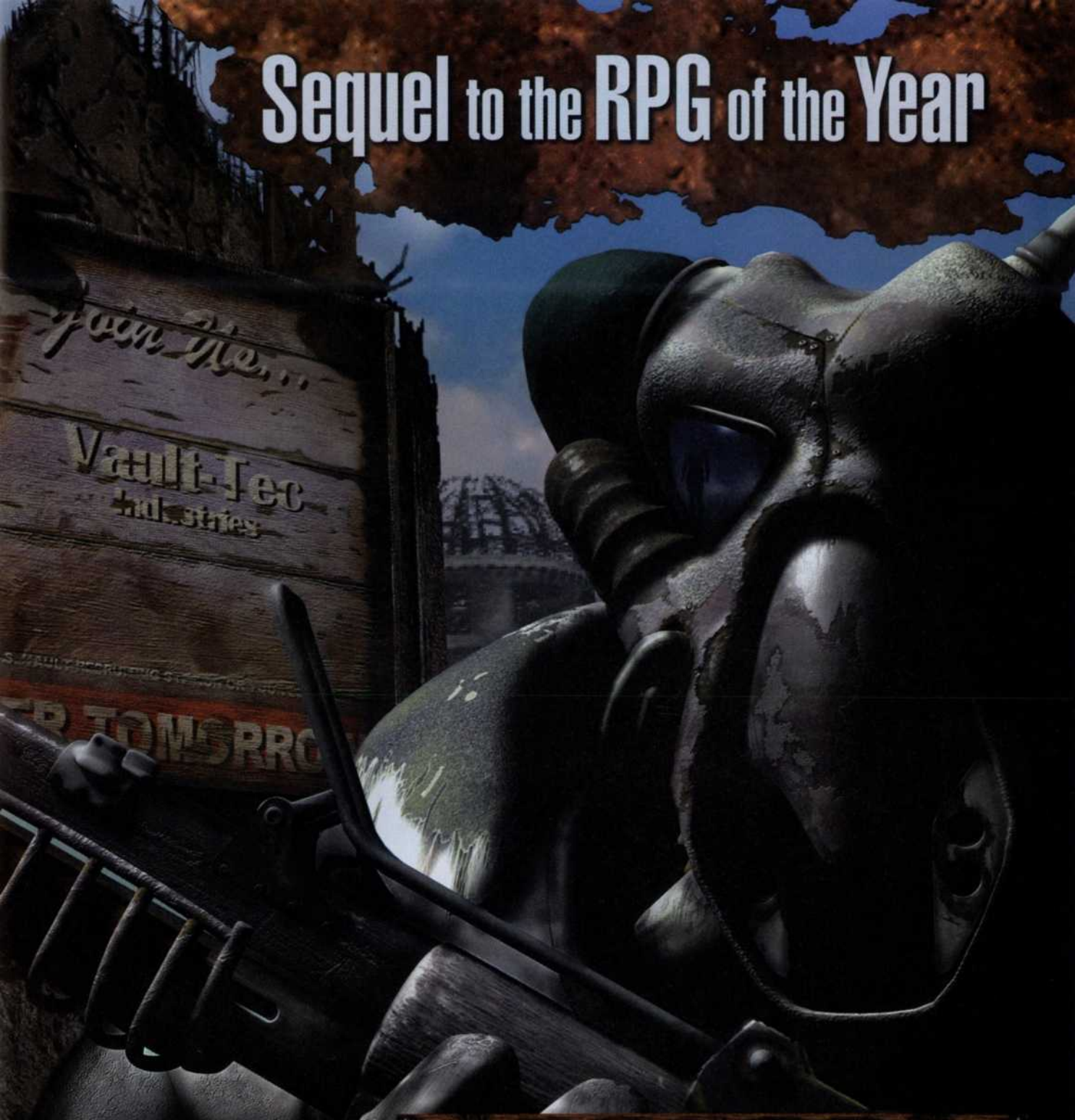


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The Hard Stuff

How should you do that Voodoo2 that you do, too? That's one of the questions we continue answering in this edition of The Hard Stuff. With more and more manufacturers coming to market with 3D accelerators based on 3Dfx's Voodoo2 chipset, both in 8MB and 12MB varieties, the channels are becoming saturated with that old black magic.

This isn't as confusing as it might seem, though. With the notable exception of Canopus' Pure 3D II (reviewed last issue), every Voodoo2 board we've seen so far is virtually a duplicate of 3Dfx's original reference design — in terms of features and performance, there's virtually no difference from one board to the next. In fact, as a result of the similarities, manufacturers may soon find it hard to find an advantage in an increasingly competitive market; this is already evidenced by Diamond's recent actions to cut back on the number of Monster 3D II boards supplied to retail channels. The implications for gamers, on the other hand, are quite peachy: with more and more companies competing with nearly identical products, prices are almost sure to drop.

Lest you think that downward pricing is a phenomenon centered solely around competing Voodoo2 products — prices are only going to continue to drop as other second generation chips begin flooding into the market. And as long as there are board manufacturers around to release new cards every time a hot 3D technology rears its head in defiance of 3Dfx, there is going to be a lot of fierce competition that will drive prices down, not just on Voodoo2, but on all new competing 3D technology.

This month's issue alone has us reviewing three new Voodoo2 cards. Diamond's Monster 3D II has been reviewed before, but only in its initial 8MB configuration. When it comes to making a decision between any of the cards in this current crop, there are only a few reasons to pick one over the other: price, game bundle, and to some degree, recognizable brand name (that last reason is more important than you might think, since many people who purchased original Voodoo Graphics accelerators are much more likely to purchase a Voodoo2 board from that same manufacturer, based on reputation alone).

Keep these things in mind this month and in months to come, as we review even more, even newer, 3D graphics boards.

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How We Rate The Hard Stuff

You've been around long enough to know the greatest technology doesn't mean a thing unless it improves the games you love to play. Our reviews focus on real-world testing, but when a number is in order for comparisons, we use the benchmarking tools developed by our hardware-frenzied sister publication, *boot*. Between our rigorous testing and the thorough bootMarks, we'll give you the lowdown on which devices perform and which ones fizzle.

PC Gamer Editors' Choice Awards



Every month, we honor the best peripherals, utilities, and hardware we test with our Editors' Choice award. So when you see the PCG Editors' Choice logo on hardware at a local computer store, you can be sure it's among the best.

3Dfx Voodoo Banshee

More than the same old Rush

Now it can be told: What many insiders have known for quite some time about 3Dfx's next chipset has finally been officially announced.

The 3Dfx Voodoo Banshee, like the Voodoo Rush before it, will integrate 2D graphics with 3D acceleration, letting gamers put a complete video solution with 3Dfx compatibility into a single slot. This time around, though, it'll use 3D technology from the hot Voodoo2 chipset.

Gamers who follow the 3D acceleration wars will remember that cards based on the Voodoo Rush were plagued by compatibility issues; not all games that worked with the original Voodoo Graphics chipset supported the Rush. According to 3Dfx, this was the result of not developing the entire chipset in-house.

While the 3D engine was basically an internally developed Voodoo Graphics part, the 2D portion of the card was developed under contract with Alliance Semiconductor. When the two technologies were integrated together, the result was an unexpected performance loss and compatibility problems. To this day, getting a Voodoo Rush card to work with a game that uses Glide (3Dfx's proprietary standard) is apparently still tricky, as evidenced by recent games like *Unreal* and *Final Fantasy VII*, which didn't work with Rush-based cards in their initial releases.

3Dfx says it has learned from the Rush, though, and has no intention of repeating old mistakes. The Voodoo Banshee was developed entirely in-house to ensure both compatibility and performance. The 3D portion of the chipset is powered by an almost-standard Voodoo2, although it lacks the Voodoo2's second texture-mapping unit.

3Dfx did increase the Banshee's maximum pixel fill-rate to 100 million pixels per second on the Banshee (up from the

Voodoo2's 90 million). But the loss of the second texture-mapping unit means games like *Quake* and *Quake II*, which support dual-texturing in a single cycle of the chip, will turn out lower frame-rates with Banshee than with Voodoo2. This puts the new chipset at a disadvantage when compared to the Voodoo2, but it should be noted that nearly all second-generation 2D/3D cards will also lack single-pass multi-texturing.

One of the most interesting aspects of Banshee lies not in its 3D rendering capabilities but in its 2D capabilities. 3Dfx says the 2D portion of the chipset is one of the most advanced solutions available to the gaming market. With an aim toward enticing major computer OEMs (original equipment manu-



Don't worry, the chip won't fly off the board leaving a trail of green smoke on the finished product... or so we're told.

facturers like Dell, Compaq, Hewlett Packard, etc.) to use Banshee chipsets in their computer systems, 3Dfx decided to implement nearly every single Windows GDI (graphical driver interface) function in hardware. This is in stark contrast to most other current consumer-level 2D boards, which implement a lot of these functions in software, putting an increased load on the CPU and reducing 2D graphics speed.

Only time will tell how the Banshee performs against other second-generation 2D/3D cards that will see release in coming months. One thing's certain, though — Voodoo Banshee will be the only new 2D/3D board that'll be capable of playing games written exclusively to 3Dfx's Glide standard. And since Glide is better supported by games than any other chipset's native mode, that's nothing to sneeze at.

be viable when it comes to gaming or full-featured DVD movie playback. As it is with any new technology, there will always be growing pains, but as time progresses and more and more people purchase ever newer computers with increasingly powerful processors, these drawbacks will likely fade away. Or, if they don't, digital audio device manufacturers will likely add Dolby Digital and DVD decoding components as they see fit.

So does this all mean that your current sound card is about to become obsolete? Probably not — at least not right away. With all of the new PCI sound cards arriving every day with support for fantastic sound enhancements like Aureal's A3D, we doubt any gamers will be hamstringing themselves by deciding to upgrade to a PCI sound card now while they wait to see who wins the "battle of the sound solutions" that is likely to ensue.



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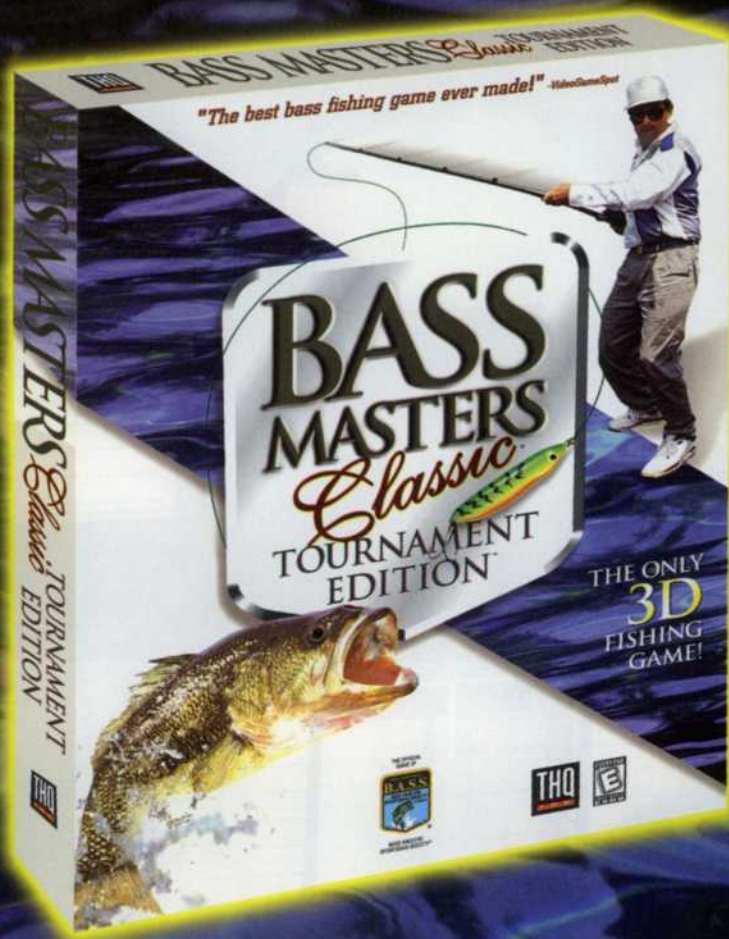
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Diamond Monster 3D II

Company: Diamond Multimedia
www.diamondmm.com

Phone: (800) 468-5846 (TO ORDER)

Prices: \$299 (12MB VERSION REVIEWED)

Back in our June issue, we reviewed the 8MB version of Diamond's Monster 3D II, based on the new 3Dfx Voodoo2 chipset. Since then, Orchid, Canopus, and others have shipped Voodoo2 boards with

12MB of memory. Diamond's initial stance was that it didn't see any need to produce a board with more than 8MB, but in the face of steady griping by the gaming public, Diamond caved in and delivered a 12MB Voodoo2 board.

So now

that we've played with both cards, we can address the obvious question: do you really need the extra memory? The definitive answer is yes and no (you knew that was coming, didn't you?). For the time being, there are no retail versions of any Glide, OpenGL, or D3D games that take advantage of the additional RAM. We say retail, because there is a "highest-quality" patch available on the web that lets you run *Quake II* at a higher-than-standard texture quality, and it's here that the difference becomes apparent.

You probably recall that the first 3Dfx boards — the initial Voodoo Graphics boards — came equipped with only 4MB of RAM, and only two of those were dedicated as texture memory. Until *Quake II* came along, every game ran about the same on these early 3Dfx boards. When it came to *Quake II*, however, people began to notice slight stutters caused by the texture unit being starved for information. Canopus's Pure 3D, a Voodoo Graphics board that raised the stakes by adding an additional 2MB of texture memory, helped to alleviate the problem and got gamers thinking that more memory is a good thing. With the "highest quality" patch in place, this same stuttering is noticeable on 8MB Voodoo2s in



Diamond listened to gamers and released a 12MB board.



Quake II.

And it's just a matter of time before we start seeing this same difference in new games that take advantage of higher-resolution textures.

Like its brother, this new Monster 3D II was easy to install and setup. Benchmark numbers were at or near the top of the Voodoo2 range, nearly identical to the 8MB version (which is to be expected). The only difference between the two Monster II boards, besides the extra RAM, lies in their software bundles. The 12MB card ships with full versions of *Incoming*, *Battle Zone*, and *Monster Truck Madness 2*. Demos include *Andretti Racing*, *Madden NFL*, *Need for Speed II SE*, *Nuclear Strike*, and *Wing Commander Prophecy*.

bootMarks

BOOTMARK	Pentium II 266
X (TESTS DIRECT3D PERFORMANCE)	640x480: 89.44fps 800x600: 80.71fps
Forsaken (TESTS DIRECT3D PERFORMANCE)	640x480: 105.47fps 800x600: 58.15fps
Quake II (TESTS QUAKE II PERFORMANCE)	640x480: 56.4fps 800x600: 44.3fps

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Voodoo2 goodness backed up by the now-nearly-standard 12MB RAM; good game bundle; driver enhancements increase speed slightly over competition.

LOWS: Nothing much new here; requires additional 2D graphics board.

BOTTOM LINE: Diamond has done well by 3Dfx's Voodoo line, and this card is no exception.

Turtle Beach Montego A3DXstream

Company: Turtle Beach
www.tbeach.com

Phone: (800) 233-9377 (TO ORDER)

Prices: \$129.95 (M.S.R.P.)

Well, there's a new hardware accelerator in town, folks, but it's not for 3D graphics. Nope, it's a hardware-accelerated sound card.

For years now, we gamers have had little in the way of choices when it came to sound cards. Most purchases went something like this: "Well, let's see. I need to replace my aging Sound Blaster Pro. Should I get a Sound Blaster 16 or perhaps a Sound Blaster AWE32...? Or, wait, how about a Sound Blaster AWE64?"

Creative Labs has held sway over the audio arena for years — only

with the advent of Windows 95 has the absolute need for a Sound Blaster-compatible card begun to fade. Turtle Beach, having smelled the blood in the water, has recently released one of the best sound solutions we've heard in a long time: the Montego A3DXstream.

Taking advantage of both Microsoft's DirectSound and Aureal's A3D APIs for 3D and positional audio, the Montego functions as more than just a terrific sounding PCI sound card, but also as a PC sound "accelerator."

Through its use of DirectX, the Montego can mix as many as 48 streams of audio on the sound card itself, freeing your computer's CPU for more

daunting tasks like real-time 3D graphics — or anything else it might be running in the background. The days of having to tweak sound settings in an effort to increase a game's performance are nearing an end.

Perhaps the best use of A3D so far has been in GT Interactive's new gem, *Unreal*. As great as this game sounds with the Montego running

through a standard pair of PC speakers, nothing in the world we've heard thus far compares to playing *Unreal* with A3D enabled, listening through a pair of quality headphones.

We ran any number of DOS and Win 95 games in an attempt to find just *one* game that wouldn't function properly. On that score we failed miserably, because the Montego ran everything we threw at it — acting either as a DirectSound accelerator, an A3D device, or as a Sound Blaster emulator.

If you're looking at upgrading your sound card in the near future and you want something that's every bit as reliable as your old Creative Labs Sound Blaster — but sounds infinitely better (with the help of A3D) and puts next to no strain on your CPU — pick up this new card.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: PCI sound card; sounds fantastic; supports DirectSound and A3D; inexpensive; full legacy support for DOS games.

LOWS: It's so much smaller than your old Sound Blaster that you might not know what to do with all the extra space you'll have in your computer case.

BOTTOM LINE: If you are a gamer looking for the next big thing in sound cards, look no further.



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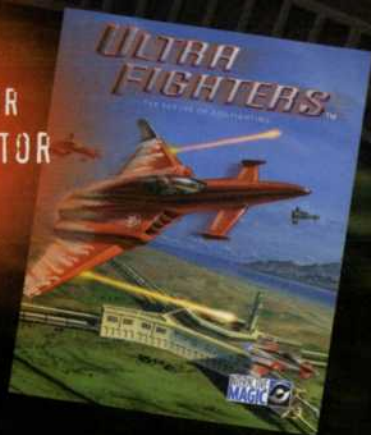


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Panasonic PanaSync E110



Company: Panasonic
www.panasonic.com

Prices: \$1,049 (M.S.R.P.)

We've said it before, and we'll say it again: There's nothing like playing your favorite games on a big-ass monitor.

Prior to this review, every editor in the *PC Gamer* office was vying for the chance to use the 21" (20" viewable size) beast that Panasonic was nice enough to send over. And rightly so; this big guy really delivers the goods.

The monitor Panasonic chose to send was what it deems to be its entry-level 21", PanaSync E110 — but it's hard to find what's entry-level about it. Just about the only difference between the E110 and the rest of its higher-end family is that it doesn't support resolutions higher than 1,600x1,280; a small sacrifice, considering the monitor's low price. And with refresh rates on the E110 reaching

levels as high as a rock-solid 180Hz, we'd be surprised if even professional users scoffed at this one.

Even with its anti-glare screen, the E110 delivers a very bright image. All too often, monitors that would otherwise be vibrant are dulled significantly by thick anti-glare coatings, but the E110's screen strikes a satisfying balance between vibrant colors and resistance to stray reflections that can spoil the image.

In addition to its color quality, we were hard pressed to find any areas of the screen that blurred significantly at any of the E110s supported resolutions. Color convergence, as well, was nearly perfect. The one complaint we had was that there seemed to be a slight loss of brightness as we moved our unforgiving eyes from the center of the screen toward the edges. This degradation is seen on nearly all monitors (sometimes to a larger degree), so this is by no means a hanging offense.

While we all know there's no such thing as an inexpensive 21" monitor, Panasonic has made the E110 a feasible choice for more

Don't let this photo fool you (it's not actual size) — you will need a BIG desk for the E110.

gamers by giving it a suggested retail price of only \$1,049, which should translate to a street price that's considerably lower. If you've been craving a big monitor and you've got the scratch, give it an audition.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Very good quality; good price.

LOWS: \$1,049 is good but it still ain't cheap; a big monitor means a big footprint on your desk, so make sure you have tons of desktop room for this puppy.

BOTTOM LINE: The E110 is a fantastic gaming monitor that should help move 21" displays into the realm of the affordable.

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www.cdrepair.com

Phone: (908) 284-0426 (TO ORDER)

Prices: \$14.99

Like most gamers, we're prone to leaving our CDs lying around outside of their protective jewel cases. Hey, who has time to put a CD back in its proper place when leaving it face-down on a dusty desk is so much easier? Worst thing that can happen is that the CD's delicate surface gets scratched and it suddenly ceases to work. Okay — that's a bad thing, but a new CD repair kit promises to save some of those neglected discs from the graveyard.

Esprit's Wipe Out! lets you remove many of the scratches that would otherwise mean the end of your favorite discs — be they audio CD, CD-ROM, or DVD. It's a common misconception that the information on a CD is etched right into its surface — actually, it's all in the silver platter lurking beneath that plastic cover. When a scratch causes a CD to fail, it's usually

not because the information is damaged; more likely, the CD drive's laser just can't "see" the information through the scratch. Wipe Out! is simply a polishing compound that works by removing the top layers of a given disc, removing some scratches and "erasing" any problem areas.

Of course, some CDs are beyond repair. If your disc has scratches so deep you can see light through 'em, information has indeed been lost, and Wipe Out! won't be able to help. But this sort of deep scratching is difficult to do on purpose, let alone by accident, so most damaged discs should be repairable.

To test this product, we made the rounds of the Imagine Media offices and collected half a dozen damaged discs — some audio discs and some CD-ROMs. Following the instructions, we shook the small container of Wipe Out! for a good 20 seconds, then placed a drop of the solution on the first of our damaged discs. Going to work quickly — it dries fast — we rubbed the CD firmly with a non-abrasive cloth (which is included). In some cases, we had to reapply and start again, but in five out of six attempts, we were able to make our CDs playable. That sixth disc



You see that guy over on the side of the box? You'll wish you were built like him when it comes to rubbing deep scratches out of your CDs.

was marred by a scratch too deep to remove; the instructions say reapplication is often necessary, but after 30 minutes of hard labor, we ran out of steam.

Therein lies the one drawback to this product: It takes a lot of heavy-duty rubbing to repair a disc. We're all he-men around here, have no doubt — but even we had to take a breather in the middle of some disc repairs.

In spite of this one drawback, Wipe Out! proved to be a truly useful tool around the office. Since its arrival and successful tests, people have been coming over to the hardware review section on a daily basis with multiple CDs in hand. Given the large demand, we're thinking we might start charging a fee....

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Does what it's supposed to; if you've got several scratched discs, it's much cheaper than replacing them.

LOWS: Doesn't work on all scratches; sometimes requires a considerable amount of work, even for beely guys like us.

BOTTOM LINE: A good product worth checking into if you've been mistreating your CDs.

Suncom SFX Plus

Company: Suncom
www.suncominc.com

Phone: (847) 229-0002 (TO ORDER)

Prices: \$49.00 (M.S.R.P.)

Several years ago, Suncom Technologies seemed poised to single-handedly redefine the gamepad market with its highly prized SFX. Like most gamepads of its day, the SFX delivered standard four-button support, but the SFX added simple and effective programmable keyboard emulation to its arsenal, allowing players to map keyboard commands to any of the controller's buttons and flippers on the fly. This keyboard emulation proved invaluable for games that had no native controller support — and for customizing controls for demanding games.

Shortly after the SFX was released, though, Suncom's parent company filed for bankruptcy, and the SFX disappeared from the marketplace. Now under the wing of a new parent company, Suncom is back in the controller business with the SFX Plus — a

restyled and retooled version that attempts to pack even more of that gaming goodness into a single controller — but in some ways, it's a step backwards.

In an attempt to give the SFX Plus a modern feel, Suncom passed on the traditional PlayStation-style controller (think Gravis Gamepad Pro) for a Microsoft Sidewinder-esque design. Unfortunately, unlike the Sidewinder's smooth, rounded handles and sleek shape, the SFX's squared-off edges and bulky design make it uncomfortable and unwieldy over long periods of use.

Additionally, the oddly placed buttons can be frustrating for gaming. While the trigger/flipper buttons and directional pad are easy to reach and use, the button layout on the right-hand side of the controller is a mess. Eight closely spaced buttons are clustered within thumb range. In theory, this layout is supposed to replicate the extended number pad, but even with their different shapes, these buttons are so closely packed that it's hard to distinguish one from another.

Like the original SFX, the SFX Plus works as both a standard four-button gamepad and as a keyboard emulator. In emulation mode,



The SFX is back in black as the SFX Plus.

any of the unit's 20 buttons (including two four-way hat switches) can be programmed with as many as five keystrokes each, and four save slots let you save different settings for different games. But despite the robust programming features, poor button placement and uncomfortable feel really drag the SFX Plus down.

With practice, you can avoid misguided button-mashing, but it's an effort that could've been avoided by a more thoughtful design. If you do manage to warm to the button arrangement, the SFX Plus's easy programming makes it worth its weight in gold, but for most gamers, it may be more effort than it is worth.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Easy programmability and setup.

LOWS: The uncomfortable design and awkward button placement are serious drawbacks for regular gaming.

BOTTOM LINE: If keyboard emulation and standard gamepad support are your primary concern, stick to the original SFX — if you can find one, that is.

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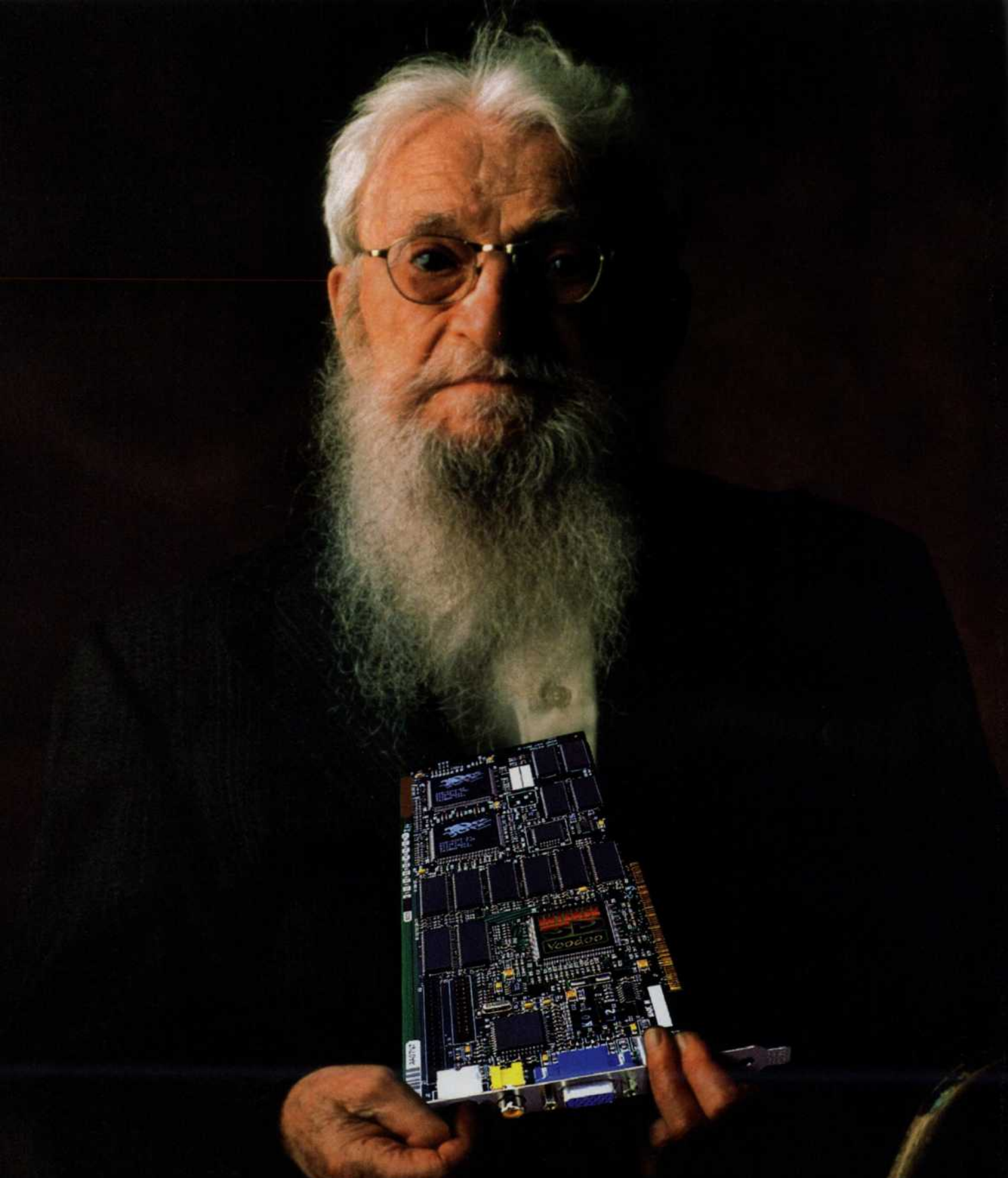


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The Hard Stuff Sideways Page

WE REVIEW SO MUCH HARD STUFF EVERY MONTH, it can be hard to keep track of what's hot and what's not. On this page, we dare to compare hardware we've reviewed. In fact, there's so much data, we had to turn the page sideways to make it all fit! This month: game controllers!

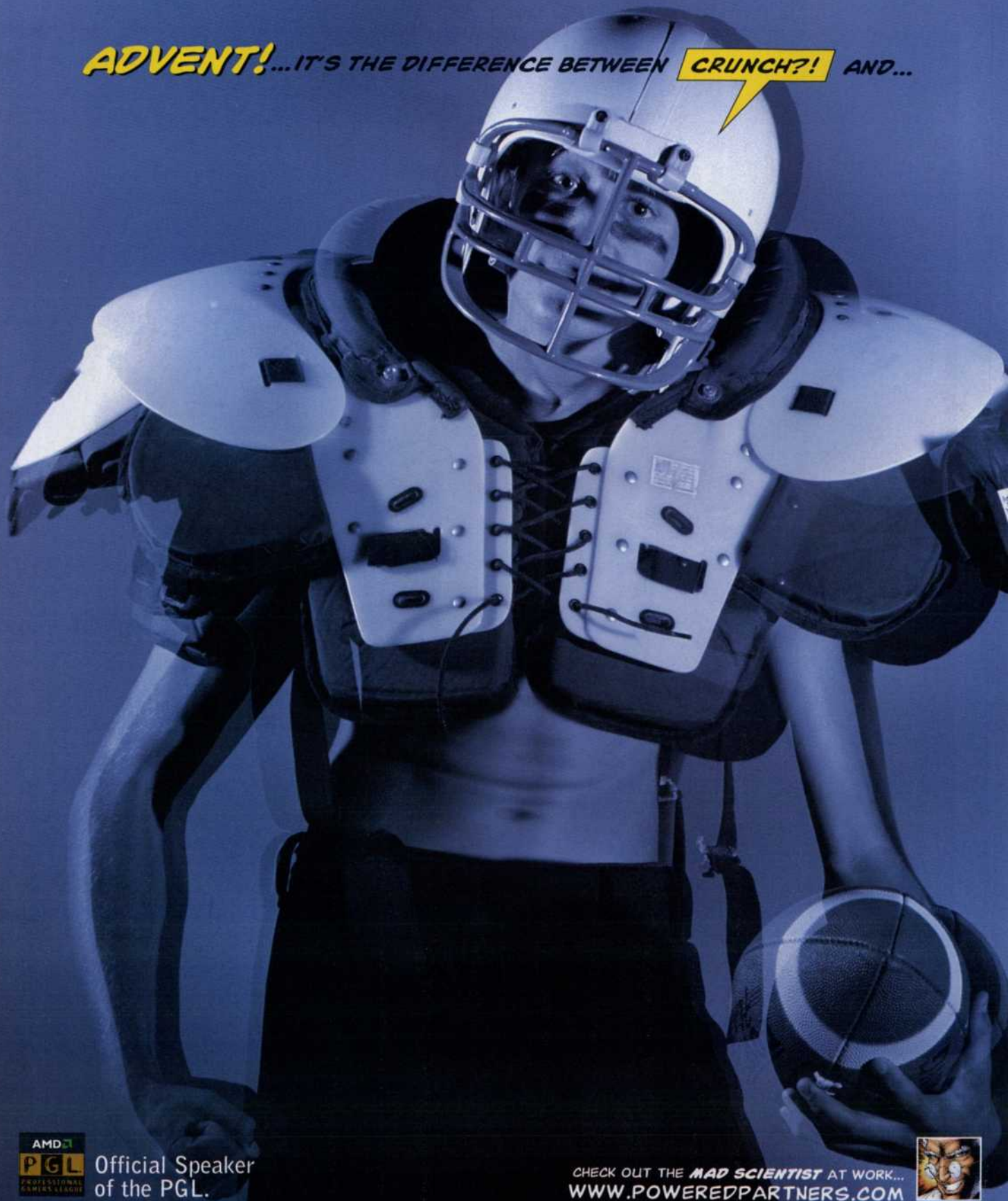
CONTROLLER	ISSUE REVIEWED	PRICE AS REVIEWED	NUMBER OF BUTTONS	PROGRAMMING	AMBIDEXTRIOUS?	WORKS IN DOS MODE?	FUNCTION	COMMON FEATURES	COMMENTS
CH Gamestick	January 98	\$29.95 (est. street)	4	—	Yes	Yes	Action games	HS, TH	Awkward overall; unstable base; poorly placed throttle.
Thrustmaster Millennium Inceptor 3D	January 98	\$89.98	6	Software	No	No	Sims	TH, HS, T	Way too tense; uncomfortable; goofy control.
Quickshot 3D Striker	February 98	\$59.99	Tons	Only through game	No	Yes	Action games	HS	Keyboard emulator. No proportional control. Unforgiving.
Traxxas Free Wheel	March 98	\$79.95	2	—	No	Yes	Racing games	TH	Comfortable, responsive control for arcade racing games; high price.
CH GameStick 14	April 98	\$69.95	5	Software	Yes	No	Action games	HS, TH	Better than CH Gamestick, but there are still better sticks for the price.
CyberStuff CyberStik	April 98	\$89.95	9	Through game	Yes	Yes	Action games	HS, TH	More of a gimmick than a dependable controller.
Techmedia 3DZoneMaster	May 98	\$99	5	Software	Yes	Yes	General purpose	HS	Unique, but not an ideal controller for any game.
Cytech CyberWarrior Digital	May 98	\$49	Many	Software	No	Yes	General purpose	HS, TH	Full-featured; programmable; comfortable; affordable.
Interact Vortex 3D	June 98	\$59.99	Many	Software	No	Yes	General purpose	TH, T	Fun and useful for lots of different kinds of games.
R Gear	June 98	\$99	3	—	Yes	No	Action games	—	Poor audio quality; moving your head like a joystick just isn't natural.
Gravis Xterminator	July 98	\$59.99	10	Software	No	No	General purpose	—	If you're in the market for a great programmable gamepad, look no further.
Ultimate Per4mer Force Feedback	August 98	\$199.99	8	—	Yes	No	Racing	—	Huge dead zone; no test utilities; force feedback effects too strong.
Mad Catz Panther XL	August 98	\$79.95	8	Software	No	No	General purpose	HS, TH	Most useful of the "3D" controllers.
InterAct UltraRacer PC	August 98	\$29.99	4	—	Yes	Yes	Racing	TH	A simple, elegant little racing controller.
InterAct V3 Racing Wheel	August 98	\$59.99	8	Hardware	Yes	Yes	Racing	TH	Works like the inexpensive piece of plastic it is.

GAME CONTROLLER KEY

Programmability indicates how a controller is programmed, through a software interface, a method built into the stick, or both. *Common Features*, which many sticks offer, include force feedback (FF), throttle

(TH), hat switch (HS), and twist axis (T). *Price is MSRP except where noted.

ADVENT!...IT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN **CRUNCH?!** AND...

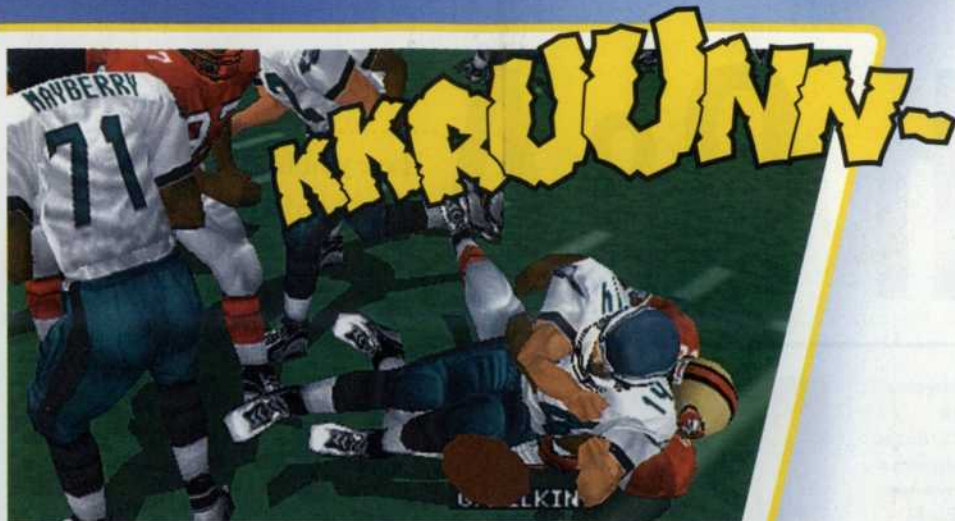


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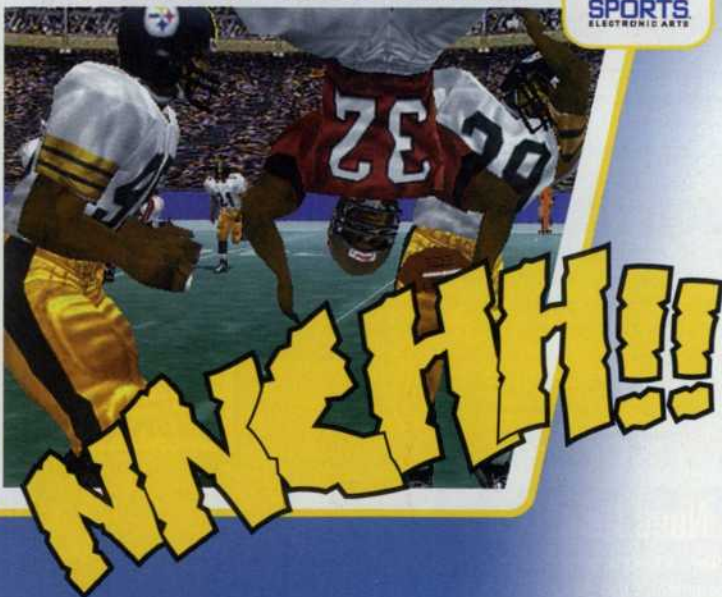
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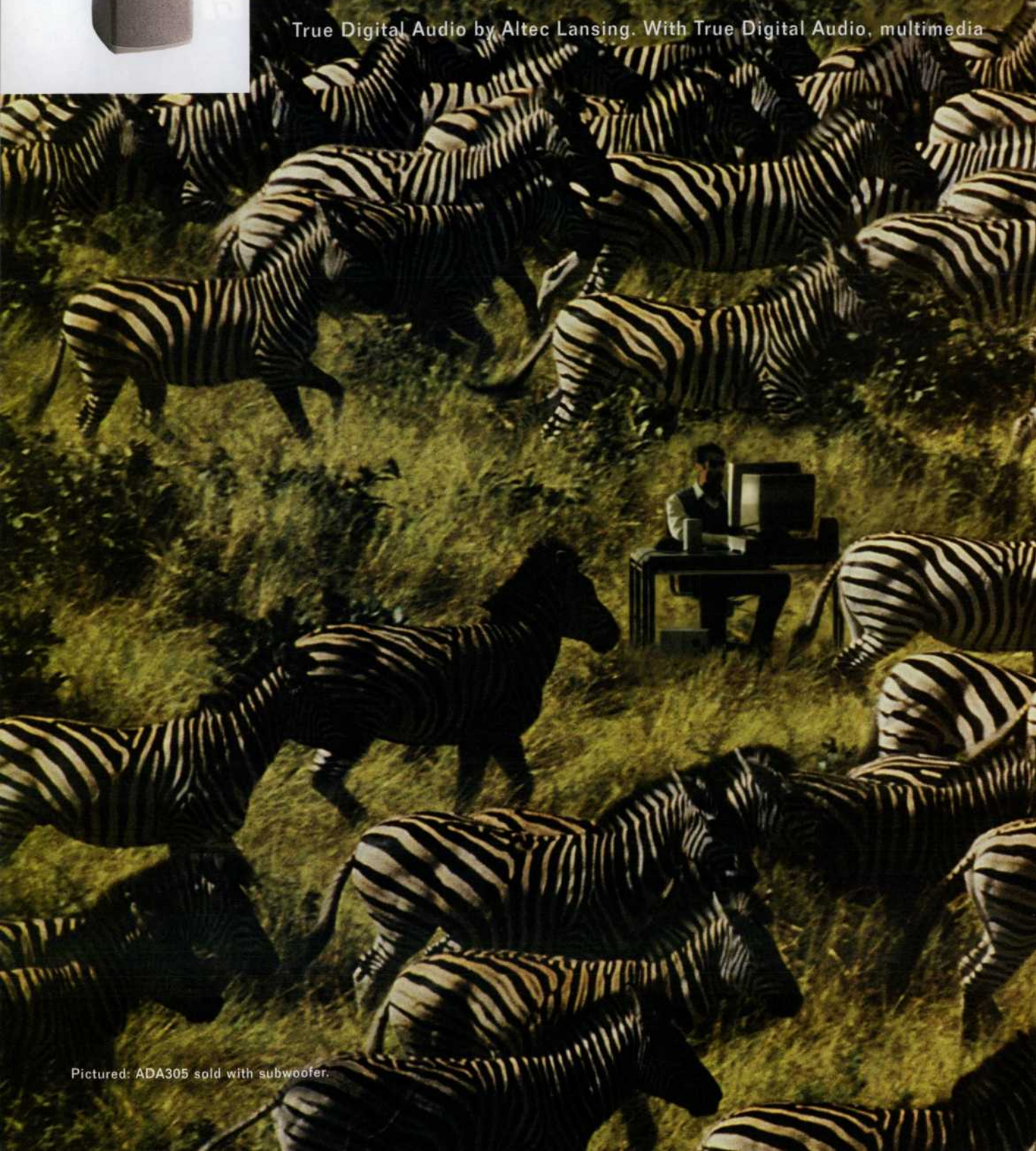


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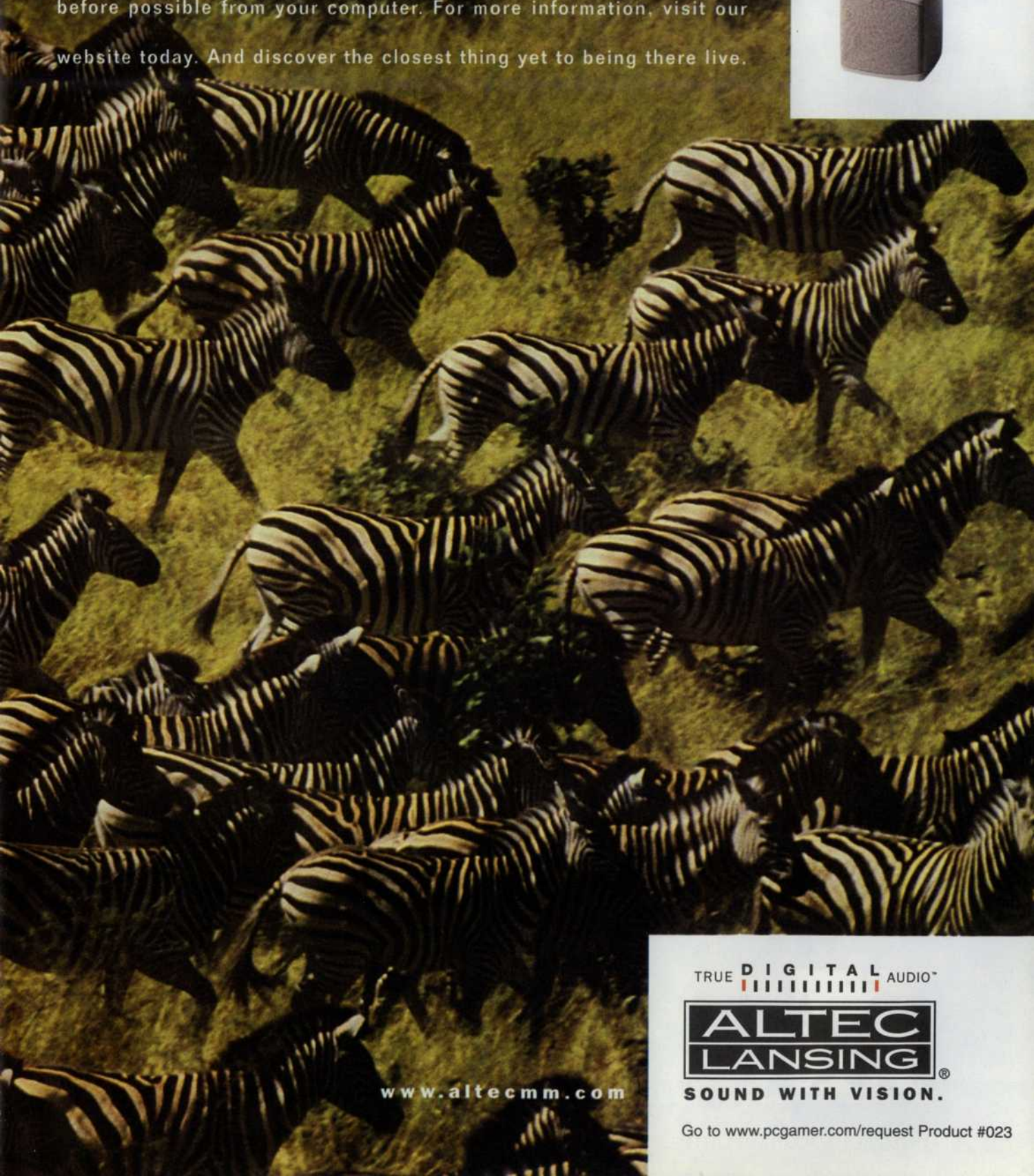
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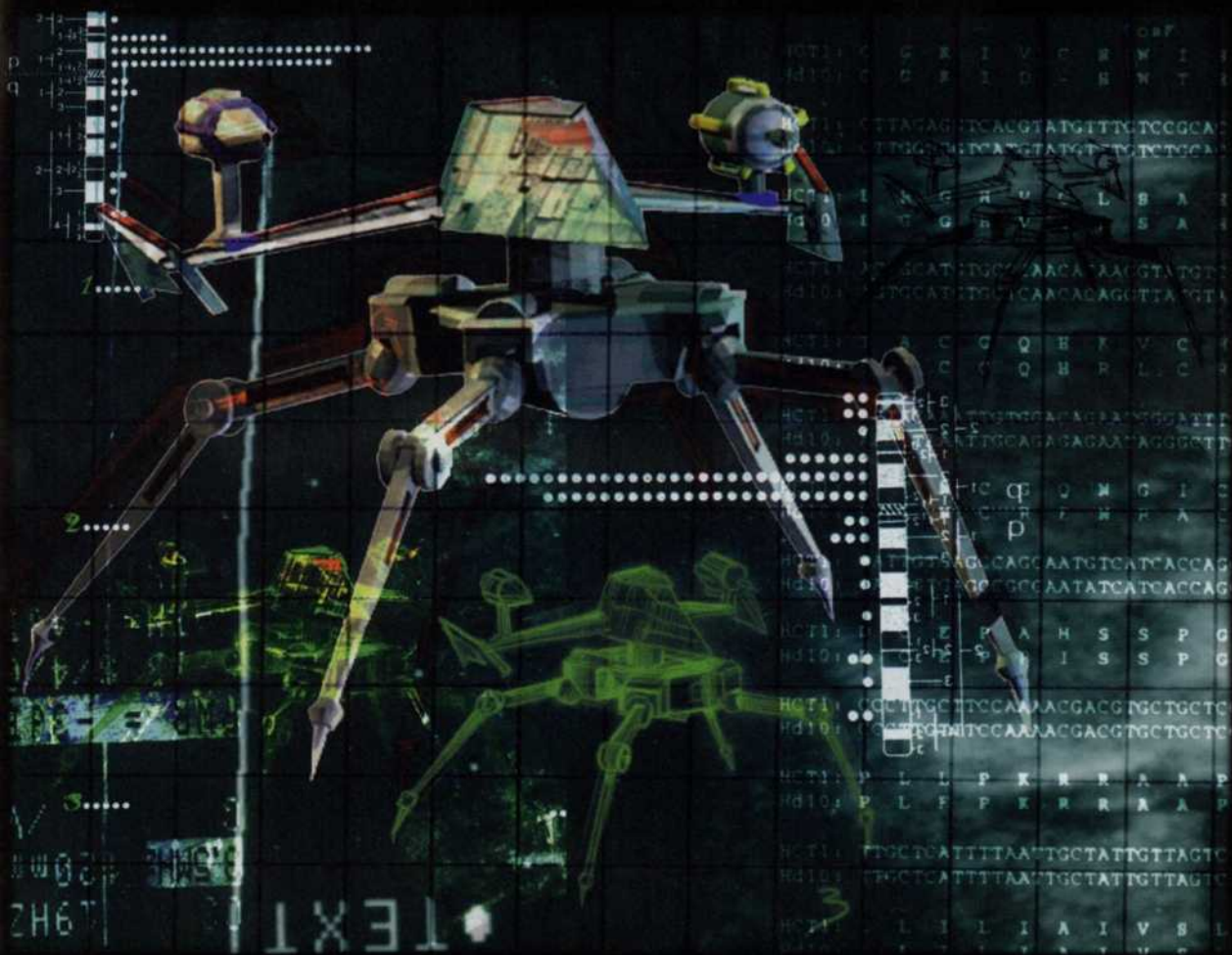
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Rednecks in Quakeland

After playing *Unreal*, *Quake II* seems almost quaint by comparison. Still, id's baby has plenty of kick left, as evidenced by a solid new level set from Activision and Xatrix.

A good *Quake II* level pack like *The Reckoning* points out both the strengths and weaknesses of the *Quake* game engine. The strengths are, of course, evident on the screen: smooth frame rates, detailed figure animation, dynamic lighting, and effective textures. The weaknesses come in the area that has long been a problem for id: single-player gameplay.

Building a believable environment is only half the battle of creating a good action game; level design and pacing are crucial elements that far too many action developers ignore. 3D Realms (*Duke Nukem 3D*), LucasArts (*Jedi Knight*), and Xatrix (*Redneck Rampage*) understand how to create fluid, intriguing gaming environments that capture the gamer and drive him forward with a purpose greater than running through the dungeon and shooting everything that moves. Complex

environments that simply feel real and are interesting to experience aren't easy to create. *Jedi Knight* set new standards, and it's hard to go back to the old *Wolfenstein 3D* dungeon model.

In *The Reckoning*, Xatrix creates a fabulous set of levels and environments, both indoor and out. The problem is the lack of an automap in *Quake II*. Why Carmack and company have eschewed an automap is as puzzling as why gamers have bought the lame excuses (it makes things more challenging, it's too hard to implement, etc.). *The Reckoning* suffers from this lack. The swamp in particular is a realistically developed set

of tiered and submerged caves that quickly becomes a baffling exercise in simply finding the way out. Such jagged, real-world environments, with their dramatic elevation changes, may well make adequate auto-mapping challenging, but it also makes simply getting to the end more of a headache than it should be.

That's too bad, because Xatrix has created an intriguing set of challenges and added a few new twists. The levels begin in a swamp, as you try to get into an alien city, then continue through the ruined city and

valleys. There are four full hubs with multiple levels each. The added weapons are a real treat. The ion ripper's ability to bounce high-energy bolts off of walls especially adds a neat new element. A weird new item enables marines to set a trap that will suck nearby enemies in and spit them out as health power-ups. The phalanx particle cannon is just a big new weapon, but its added power comes in handy late in the game.

The single new monster is interesting, if not com-



The Gekk is the new monster in *Quake II* Mission Pack: *The Reckoning*. Its animations are vivid, but the its look is rather blank.

pletely successful. Called a Gekk, it moves in quick, twitching leaps like a monkey, firing gobs of acidic blood and closing in for hand-to-hand with sharp claws. The animation is outstanding, but the textures are rather flat, leaving the Gekk completely featureless. Modifications to existing enemies simply add new weapons to pump up their power. There are 18 full levels throughout the four hubs, and seven new multi-player-only maps.

Now's Your Chance

If you missed *Seven Kingdoms* last year, you missed the best strategy game in a long time. It's no real surprise that Trevor Chan's little gem went largely unnoticed beyond the confines of the gaming press; Interactive Magic's marketing of its best game yet could be called desultory at best (all they had to do was say, "It's what *Age of Empires* should have been!"). After the rave reviews started pouring in and the 7K cult began to grow, the folks at I-Magic were quick to realize what they had on their hands. The *Seven Kingdoms: Ancient Adversaries* add-on is their way of riding the thunder.

There isn't a lot new in 7KAA, but it does give I-Magic a chance to retool and relaunch the game with better box art (loaded with glowing quotes) and a more vigorous push. 7KAA is, essentially, a stand-alone "gold"-type edition with added features. The odd thing is that most gold edi-

T. Liam McDonald



of tiered and submerged caves that quickly becomes a baffling exercise in simply finding the way out. Such jagged, real-world environments, with their dramatic elevation changes, may well make adequate auto-mapping challenging, but it also makes simply getting to the end more of a headache than it should be.

That's too bad, because Xatrix has created an intriguing set of challenges and added a few new twists. The levels begin in a swamp, as you try to get into an alien city, then continue through the ruined city and

Activision and the creators of *Redneck Rampage* bring us a great new mission pack for *Quake II*, and *Seven Kingdoms* gets a second chance.



Xatrix, the wacky folks behind *Redneck Rampage*, have created a great new level set for *Quake II* (even though it doesn't have any monsters that throw lethal poop).

tions are preceded by an add-on disc, while 7K went straight for the enhanced full edition. In an unusual treat for the loyal fans of the game, the entire enhancement is available free to owners of the original at <http://www.imagicgames.com/7kaa/new/upgrade.html>, which short-circuits any complaints people might have about needing to buy the whole game again just to get the new features. That's a refreshing change of pace from the SOP of "buy the original game, buy the add-on disc, then buy the gold edition to get the full game."

Ancient Adversaries features three new races with their respective Greater beings. The Egyptians fight with a Khopesh that gives them a medium attack, as well as bow and arrow and a "power attack" of Ra Arrows that do heavy damage. Mughuls are armed with scimitars for both regular and powerful berserker attacks. The assegai is the melee weapon of choice for Zulus, whose ranged attacks are done with throwing spear. When not using the spear, the Zulu employs a shield that protect against ranged attacks. As for the new gods, the Egyptian Isis adds five to the population totals for every click, the Mughul Djinni causes fear in villagers resulting in a 20 to 30 point decrease in loyalty, and the Zulu uNkulunkulu adds a 30-point leadership bonus to Zulu generals (but not to generals of any of the other races).

One new siege weapon



It's Mughuls versus Egyptians in the revamped *Seven Kingdoms: Ancient Adversaries*. The gods love gurkhas.

has also been added: After research on porcupines is completed, you are now able to research the "unicorn," a rapid-fire ballista-style weapon with a seven-space range and 60-point damage rating. AA also includes a new winter tile set and 15 new single-player missions. Chan has further tweaked the AI and added the ability to issue orders while the action is paused. A new in-game multi-player matching service has also been included in 7K: AA to facilitate matchmaking. The game wasn't officially

on the market when I tried it out, so no one was online to test Internet play, but everything appears to be in place and functional.

If you didn't buy *Seven Kingdoms* when it first came out, don't make the same mistake

twice. I've played every strategy game for the past ten years, and this is the best thing I've seen since *Civ*. Meanwhile, work on *Seven Kingdoms II* proceeds apace, with greatly enhanced graphics and a more complex role for those annoying Frythians.

PCG



Isis prepares to work her magic on a town in *Seven Kingdoms: Ancient Adversaries*, which means your little peasants will soon be reaching for their Viagra, some vino, and a Sinatra album.

BUG PATCHES*

Descent: FreeSpace v. 1.01 (Interplay): Updates *FreeSpace* to the latest version. *FS100-101U.EXE*

FIFA Road To World Cup 98 Voodoo II Patch (EA Sports): This patch fixes compatibility issues with the Voodoo II chipset. *FIFAV140.ZIP*

Incubation v1.03E (Blue Byte): Lobby technology is now supported (making it Mplayer-ready). Works with PCs that have partitioned hard drives and/or multiple CD-ROM drives. The rate of acquisition of experience points has been adjusted in the difficult mode. Minor problem with the use of stimulants has been fixed. The skill points displayed in the Upgrade Menu for the explosion pack has been corrected. The rest-function problem in connection with Bratt/commander has been eliminated. The ending graphics during the exit sequence has been reworked (3Dfx). The mission briefing for Halls #2 has been edited. The problem with the bayonet has been repaired. A rare bug in the last level has been corrected through the use of an update to the 3D engine. PBM passwords are now encoded (and prior saved games can still be used). The jetpack points cheat in the Upgrade Menu has been eliminated. To use this patch, you must have v. 1.02 installed. (*INC_102E.EXE*, *INC_103E.EXE*)

Pro Pilot v1.2 (Sierra): Adds new aircraft: Cessna 172R. The new C172R replaces the C172 as the default "trainer" plane. Normal glides can now be performed with no increase in airspeed. Excessive climb rates obtainable at high airspeeds have been corrected. Climb performance has been improved. Pitch attitude relationship with flight path has been improved. One-engine out performance for multi-engine aircraft has been improved. Differential power

for multi-engine taxiing has been added. Baron/KingAir engine out yaw is the wrong way. I.e. left engine out gives right yaw! Fixed. Fixed stalls/spins that seem quite unrealistic. Fixed plane friction on the ground. Fixed ground steering. *SPP102.ZIP*

Quake II v3.15 (Activision): This upgrade addresses several features, including security, playability, and enhancements. Also includes a new deathmatch level for one on one play. The 3.15 patch for Capture the Flag is also included. (*Q2CTF315.ZIP*) *Q2V315U.ZIP*

Spec Ops v1.02 (Ripcord Games): Added Voodoo2 SLI mode support, gamepad support, mouse button configuration (3DFX only), joystick support (*very* beta), ability to turn on random enemies (also *very* beta), more configurable keys. Fixed a bug that allowed people to "stick" in sniper mode, software "options" problem cause by v1.1 patch. *PATCH2.EXE*



Unreal Beta Voodoo Rush Patch

(Epic MegaGames): This beta patch fixes compatibility issues with the Voodoo Rush chipset. Since the patch is an early version, its effectiveness cannot be guaranteed. *RUSHB203.ZIP*

UnrealSpace Orb Patch (Spacetec): This patches the SpaceOrb software to support *Unreal*. *UN_SPO11.ZIP*

Unreal Cyrix Beta Patch #2 (Epic): This beta patch will fix compatibility problems with the Cyrix processor. Since the patch is beta, performance is not guaranteed. *UNCYR202.ZIP*

Unreal v1.01 (Epic MegaGames): Updates *Unreal* to the latest version. *UNREALPATCH101.EXE*

*YOU'LL FIND ALL OF THESE PATCHES ON THE CD!

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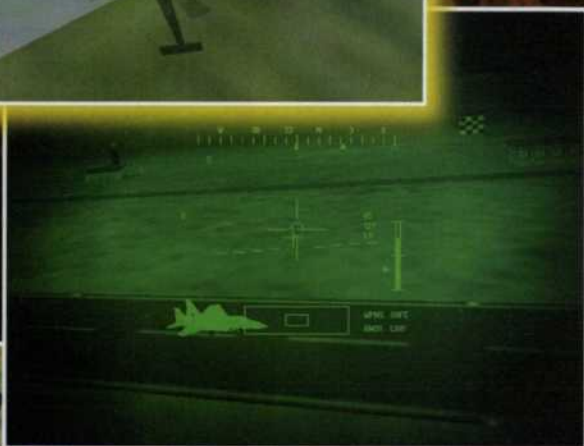
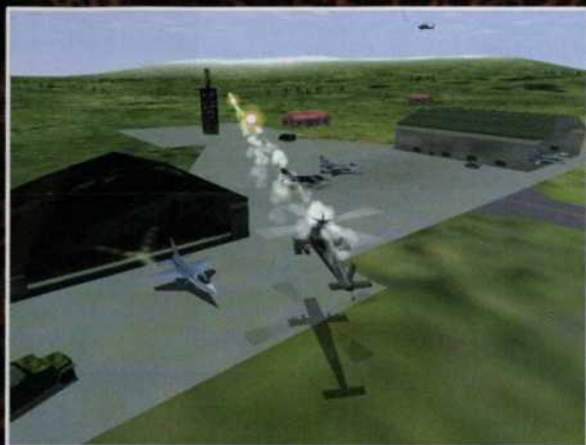
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id Could Change Everything — Again

The concept for id's next, and most eagerly-awaited, project has gone through many public permutations, but I'm hoping they're serious now, because *Quake Arena* is the right idea at the right time, and if executed properly, it may be the last multi-player shooter game anyone needs.

We're told *Quake Arena* will be mainly a multi-player game, with engine and graphics built for 'net play. Solo play is described as a ladder match against deathmatch bots that become more difficult. But the main thing will be the Internet deathmatch.

That makes sense. Like John Carmack said when announcing the new game, making first-person shooters today is almost like making two games; you split time on single-player design and deathmatch design. *Quake* was mostly a deathmatch game, and people lambasted its solo mode. In *Quake II*, more time was spent on the single-player action (even cutscenes, an id first), while the multi-player stuff trickled out in the "point release" and other patches until finally it was done.

When I started writing the column this month, I didn't know id's plans, but meant to discuss how every new 3D shooter intended to "fix the problem" of a lackluster single-player game while ignoring multi-player design.

I was going to say, "Who cares about single player in this kind of game?" They're essentially elaborations of *Wolfenstein 3D* — shoot, run, find key, press switch. Yawn. The only interesting things are hybrids like *Anachronox*, *Deus Ex*, *X-COM Alliance*, and the rumored *System Shock II*. But what about deathmatchers? We're left to our own devices. Then id's announcement forced a rather hasty rewrite.

So id takes one small step for itself. Let's just hope it's also one giant leap for 'net-kind. I still play *Quake II* deathmatch almost every day. There are some serious improvements that need to be made if a new iteration of the engine is going out onto the 'net and into the *Quake* community:

• **FINISH THE INTERFACE.** I got sick of id's cryptic command line interfaces back when I was playing *Doom* over a modem (until I found the *Doom1t* utility). *Quake II* is infinitely better, but it still has oddities — for example, skin management is cumbersome. More to the point, I see tons of E-mails from gamers who simply can't figure out how to play the

don't have to run some *battle.net*-type service, it alleviates latency — in short, it should be built into the game from the ground up.

• **IMPROVE THE EXPERIENCE.** Little things like getting nailed off a respawn pad have to be fixed. Campers are one thing; cheap bastards who squat near a respawn point with a railgun are another. The Lithium mod already fixed this — temporary invulnerability for respawned players. There are still model problems with minimum heights and CTF color schemes.

But the biggest opportunity *Quake Arena* offers is a chance to innovate in the

multi-player mode. Let's face it, deathmatches can get old, and virtually every single variant since *Doom* was released — clans, skins, capture the flag — has come from the user community, not the so-called game designers. The problem with user-community variants is that they aren't often distributed widely enough to become truly popular alternatives to the ho-hum fragfest.

If id is serious about getting back to its roots, it should dive straight back into its single greatest strength — enabling user modification. Make *Quake Arena* a multi-player action game system, what someone at Raven called a "Quake operating system." Do this, and all else will follow.

Have variable weapon sets — *Doom* weapons, real-world weapons, *Hexen* weapons, whatever. Let the host or the level designer select which weapons are available. Download the variant automatically to users who don't yet have it.

How about level packs with variable themed environments? *Doom* space bases, *Quake* dungeons, war-torn cities. Five or six levels sharing a theme, textures, palette, different weapon choices, and different rule sets can practically be a new game.

Allow the host to vary game mechanics. Variable hit points, different speeds for different models. For example, have realistic team games with *no respawning* in a present-day "level pack" and you have an instant online infantry game. Bye bye, *Rainbow Six*.

Follow this line of thinking to the obvious conclusion, and suddenly the whole idea of what an Internet game is becomes something different. A game on a CD is just code to get people together, a key to a community. Give the design to people, let them make games.

id sparked the 1990s renaissance of multi-player games with *Doom*, refined it with *Quake*; now they have a chance to again revolutionize games and put more big companies out of business. And if id doesn't, somebody else will. You can't turn off the Internet.

PCG

Jason Bates



thing online. I never hear that about Blizzard's games.

• **REWARD THE USER COMMUNITY.** id's greatest strength is its dedicated fan base; they do an incredible amount of free work to keep the game varied and interesting. Why is that work wasted? After *Quake* came out, there was a ton of excitement: hundreds of mods, skin shops, brilliant levels, a sense that people could endlessly modify and play this game for years. Then *Quake II* came out, that effort was tossed away, and far fewer new projects began. Why should users work so hard to make some cool mod that won't be done when *Quake III* hits? It has to be easy for existing user mods to be converted to the new engine, especially the models, skins, and levels.

Speaking of users, include the Gamespy utility. The thing is obviously great; it saves id a bundle since they

It looks like *Quake Arena* — otherwise known as *Quake III* — is going to be firmly rooted in territory id Software staked out for itself years ago: the Internet.

One is the Loneliest Number

The very first column I did for *PC Gamer* was on the subject of single-player 3D gaming, and how a trend seemed to be emerging among developers to focus their energies on this previously

neglected element of the genre. And, as I predicted, ION Storm, Epic, Ritual, Valve, 3D Realms, and others are indeed taking that route with their next-generation action titles. But id Software, the genre's creator and its most prestigious member, has never been one to run with the pack. In an astonishing move, John Carmack recently announced that his next iteration of *Quake* would minimize the single-player game and focus almost entirely on the multi-player experience.

What are we to make of it all? Is this latest development a gesture of defiance from id, a signal that it will continue to go its own way, regardless of industry trends? Or is this new direction simply what id thinks is best for the future of the genre? Carmack's own comments on his decision provide some insight. "In the past, we have always been designing two games at once, the single-player game and the multi-player game, and they often had conflicting goals," he says. "The largest conflict was just raw development time. Time spent on monsters is time not spent on player movement. Time spent on unit goals is time not spent on game rules. There are many wonderful gaming experiences in single player FPS (first-person shooters), but we are choosing to leave them behind to give us a purity of focus that will let us make significant advances in the multi-player experience."

Carmack's over-riding

intention, then — to plough his creativity and efforts into the mode via which *Quake* is most popularly enjoyed — is admirable, even visionary. And the pluses are obvious — better-designed DeathMatch levels, less lag (providing the extra work yields better results), a new BotMatch-style feature for one-player practice games, and the eye-candy resources channelled into the environments rather than the single-player monsters.

But while this all sounds promising, I already have a few concerns about what we might end up with. First and foremost, I'm not sure how well the new single player concept will be accepted by gamers. Most of the people

ized and admitted that the 10hz sampling rate was an incredibly bad idea for multi-player. The lack of control precision in *Quake II* is a direct result of the 10hz interpolation, which pretty drastically lags the response time and control, and remains one of the reasons why many hard-core *Quake* players have chosen not to graduate to *Quake II*. Let's hope that this concern is properly addressed.

Another big concern of mine is that the game will have to undergo much longer and more thorough testing than id is perhaps used to. Although id does a lot of in-house testing, I believe the only way to make sure that the game is properly balanced and fair is if

hundreds of people test it. When only a handful of people are testing the game over and over, they see the game grow, but lose the freshness of experiencing it for the first time. By bringing in new testers as the design develops, id would be able to use their first impressions to ensure that the game doesn't alienate newcomers.

As a hard-core 3D gamer, I can't imagine any news more exciting than Carmack's announcement — the idea of a company focusing its efforts almost entirely on creating an awesome multi-player FPS game has been a long time coming. "It is definitely a gamble," admitted Carmack when he laid out his plans, and he's right. So the question arises — why take the risk? The majority of the casual gamers out there are generally only interested in the single-player experience, so I find it difficult to believe that id chose this path in pursuit of the Almighty Dollar, although the recent explosion of professional gaming leagues could have been a factor. id could possibly be designing a game aimed toward the professional gaming market, making it so unparalleled in multi-player technology and gameplay that it will emerge as the game to play in those tournaments for years to come. (One suggestion: if they are setting this project up with those leagues in consideration, a welcome addition would be observer modes and remote cameras, making it easy and fun for spectators to, well, spectate.) Or, the answer could be quite simple — id doesn't want its flagship franchise to be drowned by the imminent tidal wave of *Quake* clones, and this is its effort to do something totally innovative and different to set itself apart from the pack — and if Carmack does everything he says he's going to do, that may well be exactly what will happen. Will id make history once again? We'll have the answer early next year.

PCGG

Dennis Fong, a.k.a. "Thresh"



who play single-player *Quake II*, for example, bought the game because they want to be immersed in its world, away from "real life." So what happens to those gamers when their unfolding story-based experience becomes a succession of shootouts against progressively tougher Bots? They will, I suspect, not take kindly to the new, atmosphere-lite experience.

While on the topic of Bots, I also wonder if anyone at id is capable of writing an AI opponent that's challenging and life-like enough to satisfy every level of gamer. Will they hire someone who has already been tested, as Epic smartly did with the creator of the Reaper Bot?

And what of the 10hz interpolation sampling rate? Well, we can all thank our lucky stars that Carmack real-

id's next generation of *Quake* will be DeathMatch only — so what does that mean for fans of the single-player game? Dennis ponders the ramifications.

You can read more from Dennis at his regularly updated web site, located at www.gamers.com.

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RPGs of the Future

Have you ever been in a situation where you had a job to do, and no matter how fast you ran, how quickly you looked, or how hard you tried, you just didn't get it done? That's exactly how I felt after this year's Electronics Entertainment Expo, otherwise known as E3. With such a proliferation of products, it was well-nigh impossible for me to run around and see everything I wanted to see. I saw a lot of neat stuff; I saw a lot of new stuff; and I saw a lot of boring stuff — but I didn't see everything. Here's a quick look at some of the most promising titles I saw at the show:

Swords and Sorcery

In this new roleplaying game from Virgin Interactive, you take control of a party of adventurers, but you see the world through the eyes of whatever character you have control of. While you control one character, the others react according to their own artificial intelligence. You can stop time and fight enemies in turn-based mode, or you can keep everything in real-time (a choice many RPGs are offering today). This is an RPG that really puts you in the characters' shoes — your viewing perspective even shifts when you move from a tall character to a shorter one. You'll have to split up your party to solve some puzzles, which should make for some good brain-teasers. From what I saw of the game, it has great potential. The interface needs to be cleaned up a bit, though — if it remains as cluttered as it is, it could be a serious downfall. However, with smooth play control, this one has a lot of promise. I don't know

why more people aren't talking about it, but we'll see how well it does when it comes out. Too many potentially great games have been ruined by lack of fine tuning.

Gabriel Knight: Blood of the Sacred, Blood of the Damned

The Gabriel Knight games have always been some of my favorite adventures. As far as I'm concerned, Jane Jensen is the best adventure storyteller in the business, and she's put in extensive research to get this new story just right. The game's engine is quite differ-

— you walk to a stairway and you suddenly appear in the next area. The new character classes are a blast to play. The environments are spookier than ever. Outdoor combat looked awesome. You can even run quickly, to avoid the drudgery of walking through cleaned-out halls. The dreamt-of multi-player aspects over *battle.net* sound thrilling, to say the least. Basically, this game is going to kick some serious ass.

Baldur's Gate

What more can I say about this game? Beautiful graphics, huge story, large game world, multi-player capabilities.... The BioWare team is still working

on scripting the story line into the game, but most of the environments have been completed. Work on the game's multi-player aspects has also just begun in earnest. It shouldn't be too much longer before we all get our hands on the most anticipated RPG of 1998, but any wait is too long as far as I'm concerned.

Fallout 2

Another game everyone's buzzing about is the sequel to one of the best RPGs of last year. *Fallout 2* contains a lot of improvements made from the original *Fallout*, but the same game engine powers the story line. There are new items, new skills, and new environments. Also, the quests are no longer timed, so you have leisure to explore the world at will. This is another game I'm itching to get my hands on.

Ultima: Ascension

I'm not going to say too much about this one right now. I have to mention it because, well, it's an Ultima game. Unfortunately, I didn't get to spend a whole lot of time with the game, and I didn't get a tour of its features. One thing is for certain, however: it is *not* the ninth Ultima. The third-person perspective and the action sequences looked more like something that should be in a game from Eidos than Richard Garriott's latest offering. I look forward to taking a closer look at this game, but until then, I'm withholding my opinion.

Wrap Up

Unfortunately, what happened with *Ultima: Ascension* happened all too often at E3. I only got a few minutes with some products — just long enough to take a quick look at what they had to offer before moving on to get a glimpse of something else. Overall, however, the show indelibly etched one very important fact into my mind: roleplaying games are back in a big way. What a great time to be a gamer!

PCG

Michael Wolf



ent from any other adventure game I've seen. The 3D environment is viewed from a detached camera the player can manipulate to examine everything in the immediate area. Players even see Gabriel from a third-person perspective. If it's successful and easy to use, this could be the revolutionary graphic adventure that will breathe new life into the genre.

Diablo II

As I wandered over to the Sierra booth to check out their new offerings, my jaw hit the ground when I saw Blizzard's *Diablo II*. The crowd surrounding the game was thick — I had to hack and slash my way through to get close enough for a good look. At first glance, I thought it was simply more *Diablo*, but it's so much more. There are no wait times between levels

It's time to take a step back and examine what the future has to offer roleplaying and adventure gamers. Wolf tells us that the future looks bright.

A Site for All Seasons

Okay, maybe it wouldn't happen very often, but suppose somebody makes you a bet about the armament of the Japanese Shimushu class destroyer-escorts. Was the main battery made up of five-inch guns or something smaller? You could order a naval book through a specialty house or the inter-library loan system and wait weeks for an answer.

Or you could spend five minutes on the web: access www.wargamer.com, scan the remarkable list of links displayed there, click on www.skypoint.com/members/jbp/kai-gun.htm, and find the vital statistics for every ship in the Imperial Japanese Navy, along with thumbnail illustrations or drawings. And if your friend bet on five-inch guns and you bet on something smaller, you win (those Shimushu-class escorts mounted 4.7-inchers)!

Most visitors to Mario Kroll's wargamer.com site will have something more serious in mind, of course; but simply browsing has its deep rewards. It's easily one of the most attractive and comprehensive wargamer-oriented sites I have yet discovered. Mario says it started out modestly and just grew:

"I confess: I'm not a traditional wargamer," he says. "I started out playing roleplaying and board games and became quite addicted to *Axis and Allies*. I've always hoped someone would port this game to the PC, and now that someone's actually doing it, I have mixed feelings. If they actually do it right, I'll be ecstatic; unfortunately, PC ports from other formats don't have a great track record, so I'm reining in my enthusiasm and hoping to be pleasantly surprised."

Like so many other board gamers in the early 1980s, Mario was often compelled to

play *Solitaire*; "Better than nothing, of course, but the AI was always too predictable!" He therefore created a modified BBS program for the Commodore 64, where board gamers and RPG fans could swap information and hatch strategies. "It sounds quite primitive today," Mario says, "but at the time, no one else was doing anything quite like it, and it proved very popular."

Kroll "got religion" for PC wargames just after his exposure to *Panzer General* while he was serving with the Army's JAG Corps. "It was easy to get lost in that game and to develop a real emotional attachment for your core units," he says. "It was realistic

me to see the glass as half-full even when I've wanted to pitch in the towel many times over the past three years."

All of wargamer.com's services are free, and Mario's goal is to provide at least 1,000 custom scenarios posted by fans of all the SSI games, all the Talonsoft games, the HPS games — you name it; whatever your favorite kind of wargame, you'll find new and exciting scenarios listed in the site's ever-growing archives.

Kroll's ambitions don't stop there, either. "This summer, we'll also re-launch our award-winning PBEM Opponents Registry," he says, "which averaged about 1,000 active participants during our

first web presence in 1996 and early 1997."

Even though Mario's site is still under construction, I can testify that it's a mouth-watering feast of add-ons, FAQs, utilities, forums, and beautiful links displayed in the Movement to Contact section.

Once you're sucked into this area of the site, you're lost — for hours. If you're a tank buff, check out the AFV News (All Things Armored, with a great discussion board); Russian Front aficionado? Dive into the Battle of Kursk site. Engaged in serious research? The resources of the Center for Military History are a mouse-click away. If submarines are your thing, there's a very handsome site entitled The U-boat Web, which gives you the stats, combat records, and ultimate fates of every German sub; it also has a terrific art gallery and interviews with U-boat veterans.

That's just a brief list to whet your appetites. The links are so many, so varied, that they deserve a future column to themselves. "Credit for the links should go to Paul Calvi, who used to run the well-known Tanker's Homepage," Kroll says. "Paul does a great job managing the links and designing the layout there."

The links alone make it worthwhile to visit www.wargamer.com. But it's also a first rate source for profiles of both PC and board game companies, along with previews and comment on new and forthcoming releases (ditto for miniatures, if that's also a format that interests you).

For many visitors to Mario's web site, the segment of choice will be the scenario designers' forum, where veterans and novices alike give you tons of tips on how to research and implement the games of your dreams.

In sum, www.wargamer.com is an ambitious, attractive, and enormously valuable resource for wargamers of every persuasion. Visit it just once, and you'll be hooked. It is now one of my favorites (just about on par with the pornographic Star Trek site), and it will probably become one of yours as well.

PCG

William R. Trotter



enough, under the simplicity of the surface, and it was incredibly playable."

Mario's addiction to PBEM games led him to teach himself some HTML and open a PBEM opponent registry using a German Internet service. "I searched and searched," he says, "and it quickly became apparent that there was no single resource on the Internet for locating PBEM opponents for PC-based war and strategy games. I was in the midst of getting a computer science degree and I figured, 'How hard can it be?'"

Kroll has long ago abandoned such naivete. Moving the site from Germany to the states has not been easy; financial problems had to be overcome, and wargamer.com was periodically off-line during its period of growing pains. Mario credits fellow enthusiast and business partner Tim Maushardt for "encouraging

Bill discovers an online cornucopia about wargames, scenario design, the Panzer Lehr Division, and the Imperial Japanese Navy!

Strategic Simulations

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Strategic Simulations' Simulation Strategy

Veteran gamers know that SSI's name stands for Strategic Simulations Inc., so it can be truly said that "simulations" is the company's middle name. And SSI has done very well for itself with games like those in the *Panzer General* and *Steel Panthers* series — those are, after all, simulations of historical battles, right? But what about our kinds of simulations? Where are the sims that put you in the cockpit (or driver's seat) of some legendary piece of military hardware? SSI has had just a couple of successes in this area in recent years, but it looks like we can expect even more.

SSI's *Silent Hunter*, released back in 1996, is still easily the best World War Two sub sim going. The same year brought us *Su-27 Flanker*, which remains a big hit with hard-core air combat aficionados. Since then, there's been...well, nothing. But a slew of new games in development suggests SSI is serious about becoming a major player in the sim market. I recently got a chance to speak with Executive Producer Carl Norman about his ambitious plans for the company's new Digital Combat Series.

DB: This series marks SSI's first attempt to create a branded line of simulations. Where does this new dedication to sims come from?

CN: We've really only scratched the surface with a few one-off products, but both the products we've done in the last few years — *Silent Hunter* and *Flanker* — have been very popular and very well received by the community. We want to be competitive; we don't want to be looked at as producing one-off simulations.

DB: The Digital Combat Series has a lot of bases covered, with WWII sims like

Panzer Commander and the upcoming *Luftwaffe Commander* and *Silent Hunter II*, and modern sims like *Flanker 2.0*. But since the series also includes the highly anticipated *Harpoon 4*, can we assume it won't be limited to first-person sims?

CN: Yes. We believe simulations come in a lot of different flavors. For instance, the *Harpoon* series, which I've worked on — a lot of people think it's a wargame, a lot of people think it's a strategy game, and others think it's a simulation. I happen to believe it's a hybrid of all of these. My personal feeling is that a simulation is something that has actual algorithms that simulate systems or subsystems. So a

two developers that I've got to get to work together. And while they're both great groups, they're worried about getting their products out — and I'm telling them they've got to worry about each other's product. Never a dull moment in the software development business!

I would love to link *Luftwaffe Commander* with *Panzer Commander*, but those products were well into development when we first got into this. Maybe we'll do some kind of sequels that will link together.

DB: So you'll start by pitting simulated U-boats against simulated destroyers via network or the Internet. Sounds like a step toward the "elec-

tronic battlefield" sim companies have promised for years.

CN: Years ago, the government did this thing called Simnet, based in Fort Knox. They took distributed simulations and put them together so you had, like, Bradley and Cobra and Apache simulators linked to M1 tank sims. The only problem was, it was location-based. Now it's getting to the point that we can link this stuff together on the 'net.

I imagine you're going to see everybody trying to do this — and you know what? I think the market is big enough for all of us. There are technologies available both commercially and within the military that provide the ability to link dissimilar simulations together with a common base. We're pursuing that, and I'm sure our competition is. Who knows — the next phase could be we link one of our sims with, say, one of Jane's Combat Simulations' sims. We don't have any formal agreement with these guys to do that, but wouldn't that be cool?

DB: Okay, that covers the first two parts of the plan....

CN: The third phase of the series would be getting it so that you could actually take some of these first-person perspective simulators and tie them into a third-person environment — like, say, *Harpoon 4*, or a WWII variant of it. It's something we're working towards.

DB: Sounds good. How soon do you think we'll see these things become reality?

CN: It's not going to happen overnight; there are still a lot of issues from a technical as well as a marketing perspective. We have a five-year plan for all of these simulations; they're not all approved and funded — my boss always tells me I'm asking for more candy than I can eat. But I learned a long time ago that if you want mortars on the objective, request tactical nuclear weapons. You ask for tactical nukes, you'll probably end up with 60mm mortars anyway. I think it's going to be exciting not only when we get there, but I think the journey's going to be fun.

Dan Bennett



game like *Harpoon 4* is still a simulation because you're simulating sensors, weapons systems, etc.

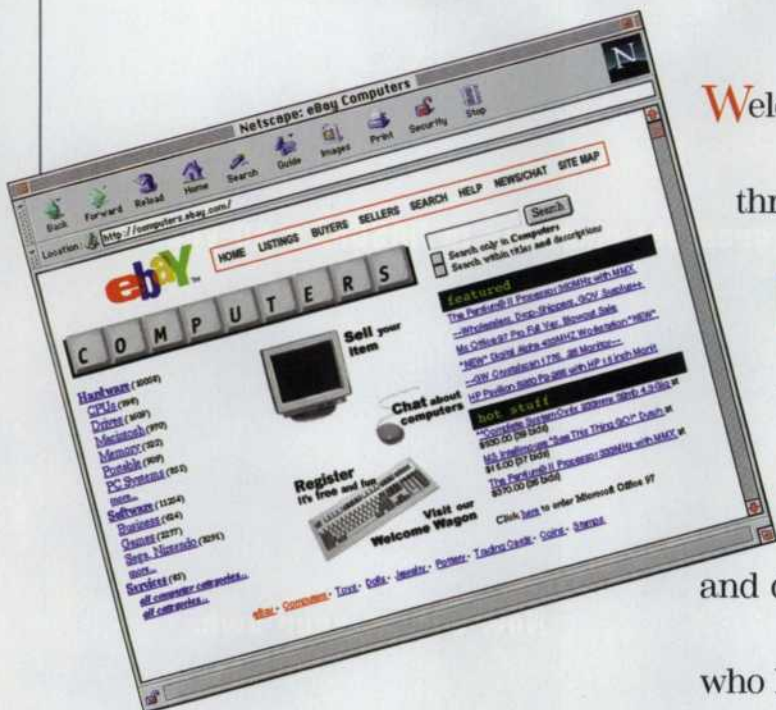
DB: I understand the third-person concept plays an important role in a plan you have to eventually link products in the series for multi-player. How will that work?

CN: We want to start off with several phases, the first phase being just establishing that we have a series of products. We did that with our first release, *Panzer Commander*. The second phase is to get some of our first-person-perspective simulators working together. We're currently working with a developer right now on a proof-of-concept to do a destroyer game that will link with *Silent Hunter II*. There are going to be a lot of headaches doing that; I've got

SSI has a new line of good-looking sims in the works — and some tantalizing plans for the future.

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Unreal, Part 1

Stop staring at the pretty pictures and get gaming!

Is Epic MegaGames' three-dimensional triumph giving you grief? Fear not — we're here to help with this handy walkthrough for the game's first eight levels. Look for the conclusion to the game in next month's issue.

The Vortex Rikers

LEVEL 1

As *Unreal* begins, you find yourself alone on a prison ship full of slaughtered comrades. Your health is at a dangerous 12 percent, so it might be a good idea to use the bandages in the adjoining cells to boost your stamina. On the lower cell block, there's a dark hallway — just walk inside, and you'll hit a darkened switch. Check out the in-progress execution if you do so desire.

Head up the elevator and grab the translator. Enter the air duct and work your way to the bridge. Give the captain your best

regards, then head into the armory. You can get the kevlar suit by standing underneath the button on the ceiling and jumping. Head back to where you came, then proceed through the medlab until you hit a closed door. Wait for your buddies to be slaughtered, then enter and pick up the Dispersion Pistol.

Make a stop at the first aid station for a health pack, then walk through the broken fan. Hit the lever, then take a ride on the lift to the emergency exit. Break the glass and jump into the hatch.



Well, I guess Steve won't be pestering me about that fifty bucks I owe him anymore. Grab the pistol and get out of there, or you could be the next one slaughtered.

Luleve's Falls

LEVEL 2



Ahh, there you are! Bonuses galore await you in this secret cave.

Head out of the ship into the clearing. Keep going forward into the village, where you can find an AutoMag, some flares, and some health inside the buildings. Grab some ammo at the bottom of the nearby pond and at the bow of the ship. Walk through the crater at the stern of the ship, then walk up the wooden planks. Hang a left and head into the mine complex.

Proceed slowly until the first Brute comes out, then back out to the clearing to get some maneuvering room (and to avoid the second Brute, who's going to pop out of a wooden door). Kill them both, then head back inside the mine. Go through the wooden door to the right, and use the elevator. One hallway leads to an outside area with Nali Healing fruit (and a Brute — be careful), while the other leads to a small house across from the waterfall. Raid the house for supplies (grab the flashlight!), then go behind the house into the dark mine, killing the ceiling-mounted spike creature. Make your way through the mine complex, killing any other critters that get in your way. Once you get outside, hop down to the platform to take another AutoMag, then head all the way back to where you first met the Brutes. There's another elevator going up at the end of the hallway — take it, then ride the second elevator. Kill the Brute at the end of the hallway. If you want an assault vest, push the wooden crate back to the edge of the walkway, then use it as a stepping stool to the railing — now simply drop down on top of the vest. Head outside, then go through the red doorways to proceed.

Rrajigar Mine

LEVEL 3

Once you get to the red clearing, kill the Brute who's tromping around through the doorway to the left. Head up to the red-lit area on the right-hand side of the room, and turn on your flashlight — there's a small cave that holds some useful armor. Walk under the sign that reads "Force Field Control Unit" and use the elevator.

Peek out from behind the rock formation and blast the spike creature. Head down the dimly lit hallway (paying no attention to those dead bodies on the floor) until you get to the force field room. Hit both buttons.

Go back the way you came. Uh-oh, there go the lights! Make short work of the Skaarj Warrior, then go back to the elevator, killing anything that comes your way. Go through the other opening into the caves, then enter the orange hallway. Wait for the earthquakes to die down before proceeding into the caves. Kill the Skaarj to the right, then follow the Nali to a secret area where you can acquire a Stinger. Keep going until you find a lava pit with a makeshift bridge — hop down, then shoot the red button to raise the bridge.

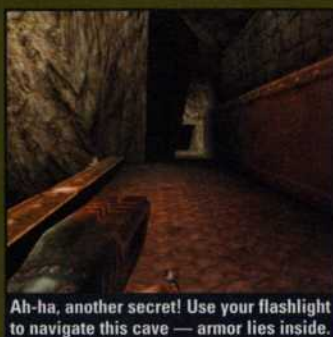
Keep walking through the mine until you find another Skaarj, then blow up the Tarydium canisters to enter a control room. Clear out the bad guys, then flip the switch in front of the panels. Hit all four arrows on the center column, then blast the Skaarj that drop in. Both doors lead to an elevator — take it up. Keep to the right, kill the Skaarj, and keep walking and shooting until you get to a red handle. Turn it, then ride the lift up. Take the wooden bridge. When you get to the storage bins, kill the Skaarj, and follow the Nali until you reach a bridge that goes over a river of lava. If you try to cross it in the center, it will break, so simply walk up the side. If you're feeling nimble, you can jump across to get the shield belt.

Walk across the other bridge in the same fashion, and go through into the boiler room, killing the Skaarj. Keep progressing until you get to a bridge with two bright red lights overhead. Go to the right and trigger the elevator, but be ready for the Brute who's riding it. Head up.

This is a good place to save your game. Stick to the left, and keep strafing left as you run down the catwalk so you don't get sucked into the fan. Break the glass, then press the three yellow buttons. Go back the way you came, and the door under the red lights should now be open.



Shoot the red button with your AutoMag, and the bridge will raise.



Ah-ha, another secret! Use your flashlight to navigate this cave — armor lies inside.



Hit all four buttons on the sides of the column, then get ready to dish out the hurt to the Skaarj Warriors who come in.

Depths of Rrajigar

LEVEL 4

Destroy the Brute, then take the elevator up to the mining cart. Hit the button, then hop into the cart. Kill the Brute that's enjoying taking potshots at you, then proceed to the next cart. Go across the lava bridge and keep going until you reach a misty area. Be careful — there's a Skaarj waiting for you. Hang a right, and take the elevator. Walk to the end of the room full of pillars, then go up the ramp to the right. Walk into the hallway with the barrels, then head down into the boiler room and throw both switches. Go back up, hang a right, and keep walking until you find a Skaarj and a green switch. Flip it, then head through the door to your lower right. Simple!



You need to deactivate both of these boilers to escape this level. Now head back up the walkway.

Sacred Passage

LEVEL 5

Looks like we're outside again! The front-door method won't work here, though — you'll have to be sneaky to get into the temple. Head toward the back of the temple and hop into the water. You'll see a small tunnel — go inside, and after a short swim, you'll emerge inside. Find the black door with a small square underneath, then step on it. Walk through, and blast the Brutes. Hit the lever at the back of the fountain to get the water running, then go through the newly opened door.



See this hole? It's your ticket inside the Nali temple. Mind the piranha, though....



As soon as you get the water running, you can enter the temple.

Chizra-Nali Water God

LEVEL 6

From outside the pool, blast the four chains holding the wooden raft. Get on to the raft and jump, triggering a door to open. Walk forward and drop down into the ruins. The pool in front of you contains several Tarydium shards, plus a small passage that leads to a cave. Walk up the plank and follow the Nali to a secret area with flares and more shards. To the right of the secret area is a block that's out of place — push it, and an elevator will lower. Get on it, and you'll be transported to a room that contains the ASMD. To the left is a small doorway — push the block, and the floor will drop out from under you. Eat the healing fruit, then punch the slab directly to your right. The large door will open. Nuke the Skaarj inside with your new ASMD. Enter the hallway to your right and hop over the bricks. Keep going until you encounter a Nali chieftain. Ignore him, and blast the serpent that's waiting for you on the bridge. Walk forward until you get a message on your translator; seems you'll need to get the "Stick of 6 Fires" before you can proceed. Walk onto the bridge, and drop down into the pool below. Kill the

serpent, and walk to the idol in the center of the pool. A door opens. Enter, but watch out for the arrows that will be fired at you.

Go up the elevator and make short work of the giant mosquitoes that fly at you. Walk into the square room, and press the displaced stone to your left. A pillar will drop — stand on it, and you'll be lifted back to the area where you first found the ASMD. Go to the doorway and drop the floor out again — but this time, the stairs will lead to an open door. Jump over the opening in the floor. Go either left or right, and use the displaced bricks as stepping stones. Kill all the 'skeeters, then head through the opening door and kill the serpent.

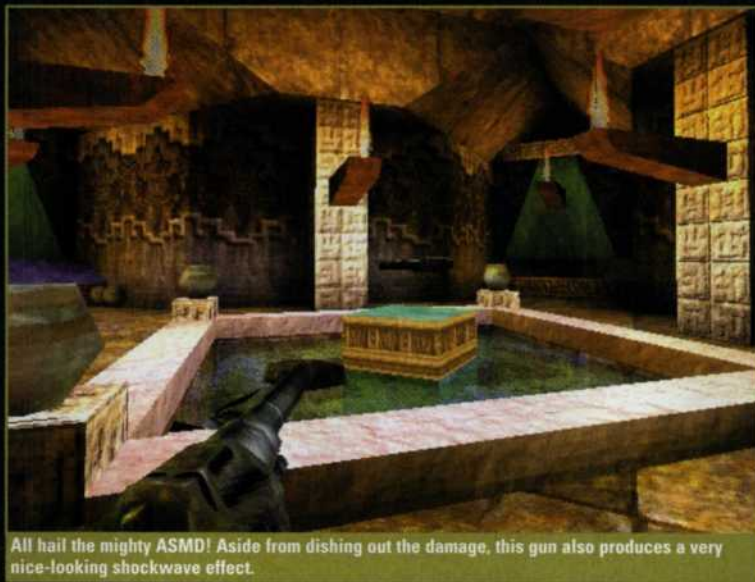
Go to the right, drop into the water-filled room, and climb up the rocks. You'll find yourself in a large room filled with wooden bridges. There's a large golden door at the end of the room, but you can't get in just yet — you need to press the stones below both blue torches. Head back to the golden door and hit the button behind the ASMD cores. The door opens. Head through, then enter the golden door to the right. Kill both serpents. Head into



You can make your way up this wooden plank, but taking a dip in the pool will get you some extra Tarydium shards.

the water. To the left and right, you'll see a hallway with green lighting. Enter, and climb up the rocks at the center of the passage.

You've arrived at the Pool of Thunder. Take a quick dip inside (and grab the super health pack behind the waterfall), then head back to the room with the Eightball gun. Go to the opposite side of the room, through the second gold door. Go and stand on the altar to set off the lightning. Head out and take a right through yet another gold door. Kill the beastie, then hit the switch. Hop on to the wooden platform. Go through the doorway to the right, follow the ramps downstairs for a room full of goodies, then hit the switch. Head back the way you came. Back at the room with the Eightball gun, you'll see a new opening with a lever and some green hieroglyphics. Throw that lever, and you'll finally be able to get that pesky Eightball gun. The bars over the door will raise, and you can run through. Follow the passage until you get to a teleporter, then hop right in. Kill the Skaarj who's waiting for you, then walk through the passage into the Nali Ceremonial Pools.



All hail the mighty ASMD! Aside from dishing out the damage, this gun also produces a very nice-looking shockwave effect.



Walk inside this teleporter, and you'll be transported to the end of the level. Watch out for the Skaarj waiting for you, though....

Ceremonial Chambers

LEVEL 7



Hop on to this makeshift raft and you'll receive a quick ride through this underground river that leads to the next level.

One of your little Nali buddies will be leading you as soon as you enter the level, so follow him through the first door. Hang a left, go down the ramp into the water, and throw the switch. Blue bars will open on the other side of the underground chamber, so swim for it. Why, it's another switch to throw! Hit it, then head back to the ramp room. With the large gold door facing *away* from you, take the doorway to the left. When you get to the T-intersection, hang a right. Ignore the pool and keep walking forward.

Once you reach the room with the palm trees, kill the Skaarj and go through the gold door. Check out some crucified Nalis in the room to the left, while keeping an eye out for any Skaarj that might drop from the ceiling. Climb the wooden plank. Follow the twisty passage, then throw the switch. Get on the wooden platform. When it reaches its destination, follow the wooden bridges until you can go no further, then go for a swim until you reach a dock with an odd-looking gun. Push the switch next to it, then "climb" the rope. Do your best Lara Croft impression as you use the wooden planks to reach the summit. Follow the hallway until you reach a dock, then ride the makeshift boat to the end of the underground river. Press the button and go through the door.



Going up! Fire the grappling hook with the switch to the right, then walk right up. It's not as hard as it looks — just align your crosshair with the center of the "rope," and you'll be up without a hitch.

Dark Arena

LEVEL 8



Inside this coliseum, you'll find a Titan that will give you the fight of your life. That's why they call it "Bloodsport"!

This map starts off in an underground grotto. Work your way through the level until you find a large pair of doors. Push one of the stone faces, and it will open. Head down until you come upon a clearing. There's not too much inside the coliseum if you're going for the front-door approach — instead, loop around until you see the Skaarj and the crucified Nali. In the shadows, behind a copse of palm trees, is a flashlight — and a secret way in.

Once you get into the jail, hang a left. Follow the passageway until you get to a corner, then take the first door to your left. Walk up the stairs and hit the switch to lower the elevator. Get inside, and you'll soon find yourself in the hub of the coliseum. Go up the stairs into the arena, and be sure to grab the Eightball gun.

It's go-time, baby! Hit the boss with everything you've got, remembering to strafe like a madman and keeping a good twenty feet between you. Once you take him out, exit through a hole that's been blasted through one of the four doorways. Walk into the brick room, hit the lever on the wall, and go through the doors.



"What have they got in there? King Kong?" One of the stone heads in the previous room will open this huge door.



See that copse of palm trees in the distance? That's your way in. Have mercy on the crucified Nali, however, and put 'em out of their misery...



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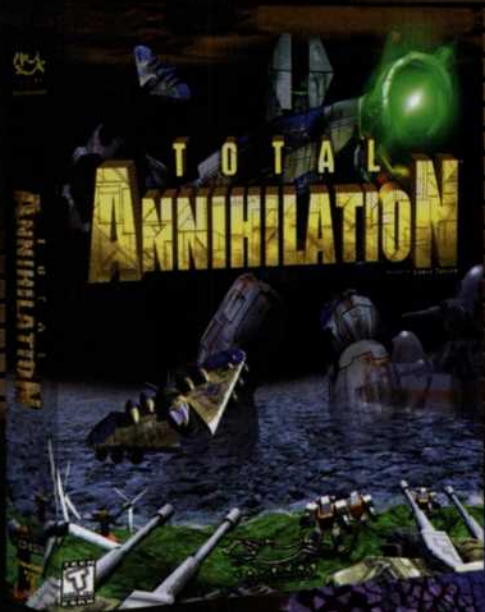


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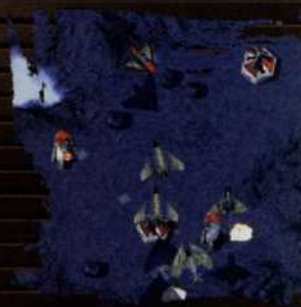
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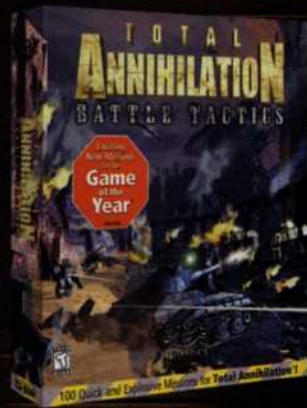
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Might and Magic VI

Kick some RPG ass with our comprehensive guide!

Might and Magic VI has singlehandedly given roleplaying gamers hope for the future. That wide-open range-where-thou-will design can, however, leave many scratching their heads about where to go next and how to best handle various situations. *PC Gamer's* Tom McDonald has spent more than one hundred hours ranging around the darker corners of Enroth with his level 70+ party, and he recently returned, blood-drenched and sweating, to tell us a tale of derring-dos and don'ts.

THE BALANCED PARTY

A Touch of Class

Short and sweet: Knight, Archer, Cleric, Sorcerer. Do it or die.

Okay, so some savvy gamers will disagree and preach the virtues of multi-class characters like the Paladin and Druid. There are certainly times when you want every free hand to have a spell book for those monsters immune to conventional attacks, such as the Diamond Gargoyle. This is the best argument for using a Paladin rather than a Knight, but the fact is your Paladin will never grow to be the powerhouse sword-user that your knight can. There are many, many moments late in the game when a melee attacker with two swords who can hit for 70+ points on each attack will be the man who saves the day. With an Archer, Cleric, and Sorcerer to handle the magic, it makes sense to have one dedicated fighter.

Archers are the best choice for a hybrid because they are able to use elemental magic, whereas Paladins cannot. The Archer may not use shield or plate armor, which is a problem, but they make up for it by being able to wield a variety of weapons. Druids are a combination of a Cleric and Sorcerer, without the ability to learn Light and Dark magic, making them rather useless. Therefore, a Cleric and Sorcerer round out a good party by being able to handle a wide array of skills. One of the best uses of magic is to make your Archer your Air and Water

wielder (for your transportation spells), Assign Body, Mind, and Spirit magic to the Cleric (for healing and bonuses), and make your Sorcerer the bad-ass with a bag full of Incinerate and Dragon Breath spells. You can later dole out the balance of magic skills as you go. It

always helps to have two Fire Magic wielders, so maybe give this and/or Earth to your Archer.

The choice comes down to play style. The phased-versus-real-time combat argument is a dead end: both are necessary depending on the situation. Magic-users, however, function much better in a phased environment where you can prepare spells and tend to magic points.

Skills

There are good skills and pointless skills. There's little use for Diplomacy, Body Building has a modest effect on attack strength, and Perception can be learned later in the game (a Perception level of 8+ will be needed to open the warded doors in the Supreme Temple of Baa). The rest of the skills are needed, but not by everyone. It's also helpful to assign complimentary skills to the same character.

To begin with, everyone should work toward mastery in learning. This will rocket you through experience points and into the higher levels. One person with a higher luck rating should get the Disarm Trap and Identify Skill, which enables them to open chests and



Let your merchant buy all spells, then transfer them over to the proper spell user. They can be more than 50 percent cheaper this way.

identify the items inside. Another person (preferably a Knight, since he'll have extra skill points to spend without a magic requirement) should take Merchant and Repair, so they can fix and sell items. A high merchant skill will enable you to sell the items you find at much, much higher profits, and buy things at very high discounts. It's an essential way to stretch your gold.

It's not a bad idea to make one of these two characters (the disarm/ID user and the fix/sell user) your Water Magic wielder. When you get the Enchant Item skill, you can then enchant any worthy items and sell them for much more money. A good trick with a skilled merchant is to buy items (at a discount), enchant them to increase their value, and sell them back to the merchants at the higher price. When you have 300,000 gold in the bank, you'll see the wisdom of this.

As you go along you can pick up Meditation (which increases spell points) and Perception, but wait until your party is in the double-digit levels.

Don't try to jump to Master of each skill right away, except for perhaps Water Magic. Instead, move each skill up incrementally and become Expert first, and then Master.

Miscellaneous Tips

- Water Magic may seem like a ninny skill, but you will prize and cherish it for two reasons: Town Portal and Lloyd's Beacon. These spells enable you to pop all over the map without resorting to lengthy travel. They also enable you to pop out of a sticky situation, heal, and jump right back in.
- Heroism is an oft-neglected spell. Melee combat is much more effective when a



Food trees are a good source for free supplies. Like everything else in Enroth, they are seasonal and regenerate.

strong Heroism spell is running, since hits are strong and more likely to connect.

- An Air Master can cast a Wizard Eye that reveals all the items on the map, even in places you can't see. This saves time in avoiding a room full of monsters when there is nothing to gain.
- Cure spells for insanity, disease, weakness, fear, and poison are *essential*. Get them right away.
- In Ironfist, get all your characters the Bow skill from Berserker's Fury. A row of four archers is crucial.



There are fifteen obelisks scattered throughout the land, some in pretty tough neighborhoods. Read them by clicking on the plaque and try to decipher the riddle.

- If you have a long hallway or open space, do the "retreating hail of arrows" maneuver. By holding down the "A" key and back arrow at the same time, you spray the area with arrows while staying out of danger.
- Rings and pendants are a fundamental source of protection and power. The best ones regenerate hit and spell points at a faster rate. They will also be your prime protection against elemental magic if you opt not to chase shrines all over the map.

Barrel Liquids

While questing, you'll come across various barrels. If you run your mouse over them, the message bar will say, for example, "This barrel contains a white liquid." Each has a meaning. Almost all give a +1 to whomever clicks on them, so if you know what liquid boosts which stat, you can better choose who drinks it.

- WHITE:** Luck
BLACK: Poison
RED: Might
BLUE: Personality
YELLOW: Accuracy
GREEN: Endurance
ORANGE: Intelligence
PURPLE: Speed
STEAMING: Fire Resistance
"MAGICAL": Magic Resistance

Trainers

	EXPERT	MASTER	
MAGIC	Air	New Sorpigal Free Haven	Mist (must be Arch Mage)
	Body	New Sorpigal Free Haven	Silver Cove
	Earth	New Sorpigal	Silver Cove
	Fire	New Sorpigal Free Haven	Mist
	Mind	New Sorpigal Free Haven	Silver Cove
	Spirit	New Sorpigal Free Haven	Ironfist
	Water	New Sorpigal (Eastern Island) Free Haven	Mist
	Light	Kriegspire Silver Cove	Southern Island (must be "Saintly")
	Dark Magic	Blackshire White Cap	Paradise Valley
	WEAPONS	Axe	Ironfist Darkmoor
Bow		Ironfist Castle Stromgard	Castle Kriegspire
Dagger		Ironfist Free Haven	Castle Stone
Mace		Darkmoor Castle Stromgard	Blackshire
Staff		New Sorpigal Mist	Silver Cove (Northern Island)
Sword		Ironfist Free Haven	Blackshire
ARMOR	Chain	Ironfist Bootleg Bay	Darkmoor
	Leather	Ironfist Mist	Castle Stone
	Plate	Ironfist Free Haven	Free Haven (Castle Temper)
SKILLS	Ancient Weapons	New Sorpigal	Paradise Valley
	Body Building	New Sorpigal Ironfist	Free Haven Silver Cove
	Diplomacy	Ironfist Free Haven	Castle Stromgard
	Disarm	Ironfist Free Haven	Castle Stone
	Identify	New Sorpigal Ironfist	Free Haven
	Learning	New Sorpigal Ironfist	Silver Cove
	Meditation	New Sorpigal Silver Cove	Mist
	Merchant	Free Haven Darkmoor	Silver Cove (personality 30)
	Perception	New Sorpigal Bootleg Bay	Darkmoor
	Repair	Silver Cove Mist	Castle Stone
	Shield	Ironfist Free Haven	Blackshire

*If you complete the quest for the Dwarf King, who can be found in *Mire of the Damned*, he will also give you master axe training.



Next to most stables are paddocks. Each has two horseshoes on the floor. Pick them up and click them on your character to earn +2 spells points. They regenerate every year.

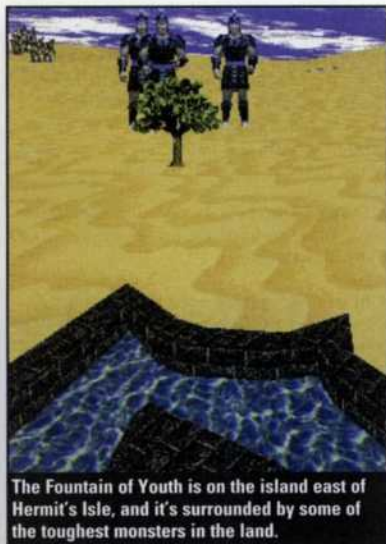
- Pick up horseshoes. They add two skill points when you click them on a character.
- Reputation has two purposes. It encourages a wider array of NPCs to join your party, but this is negligible, since most useful NPCs will join anyway. The only real reason to quest for reputation is if you're going for Light Magic Master. This requires a "saintly" reputation. Donating at Temples and most quests will raise reputation levels. Some quests, NPCs, and items will lower it. If, for instance, you sell human bones or hire on a "duper" to get better prices, your rep will go down.

- Don't screw around with magic wielders like monks or wizards. Get in close and slash. They are lethal at a distance but not so tough when you get in their faces. In a room full of magic users, go for the wizards first, or you will be casting Cure Insanity and Cure Weakness spells for the entire battle.
- Enchant items to make them worth more for resale or to give them magical properties. Items must be valuable to enchant, or they will break. This means weapons need to be worth more than 250 gold and regular items need to be worth more than 450.
- Items do not need to be identified to be used or sold, and there is no penalty when selling unidentified items.

- When engaged in hard fighting, keep one or two characters with enough skills to train to the next level. This is because training functions as a full heal and restoration of spell points, and can be used as a "free" healing instead of going to temples. This does not cure conditions (except for weakness) and



A healthy assortment of potions may mean the difference between life and death. Early in the game, buy every empty potion bottle you find.



The Fountain of Youth is on the island east of Hermit's Isle, and it's surrounded by some of the toughest monsters in the land.

unconscious characters obviously may not train.

- Click on torches and bas-reliefs. They often reveal treasure or bonuses.
- A fly scroll can be found by clicking on the side of the bank in New Sorpigal.
- Enroth regenerates monsters and treasures one year after they are killed and claimed. Go back to an easy dungeon and wipe the monsters out in a few minutes if you need a quick pay-off.
- Magical aging effects can be eliminated by drinking from the fountain of youth found on Hermit's Isle. This does not affect permanent aging.
- The cheapest healing is found at the temples of Baa (2-10 gold).

Who Buys What

- LOADSTONES (5): David Carp, Free Haven
- HAPPY FEATHERS (10): Bonnie Rotterdam, Free Haven
- 4-LEAF CLOVERS (25): Geoff Southy, Free Haven
- COBRA EGGS (300): Hejaz Mawil, New Sorpigal
- KEGS OF WINE (300): Nick Fenster, Free Haven*
- AMBER (500): Dillan Robinson, Free Haven**
- TEETH (500): Sy Roth, Free Haven
- BONES (1000): Ion Miller, Free Haven***
- GOLDEN PYRAMIDS (1000): Renee Blackburn, Free Haven*
- GONGS (2000): Lawrence Aleman, Free Haven

*Kegs of wine and Golden Pyramids are worth far more than this at Abdul's Resort in Dragonsands, since they are the only currency accepted here. This is where the best weapons in the land are found, so you should keep pyramids and kegs for trade here. Even if you don't want the weapons, their resale value is high.

**Don't unload your Amber until you have finished the Firelord's quest in Bootleg Bay.

***Selling bones lowers your rep a full level.



The two most useful spells in the game: Town Portal and Lloyd's Beacon. Get them right away and do away with almost all lengthy travel. They also enable you to pop back and forth from questing to healing.



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QUESTBUSTERS

There are far too many quests and sub-quests to detail here. Many are optional, but some are required for the narrative to advance. Others are useful to gain valuable experience and promotions that enhance your party. Generally, you begin with easy quests, then take on a mixture of pure (i.e. monetary) retrieval quests mixed with the council quests. As you earn money and finish council quests, you will have the skills, cash, and items needed to move forward in the story, and with the end in site will probably concentrate on story quests to the exclusion of others. Get the quest before you perform it!

SECTION I: BEGINNING

As the game begins, you need to bring the letter to Potbello, who can be found at the New Sorpignal Inn. From there, you are asked to bring it to Humphry at Castle Ironfist, but there's no need to rush off chasing quests just yet. Linger around New Sorpignal, pick up quests, and clean out the entire island. By the time you leave for the journey to Ironfist, you should be pumped and rich enough to bump up those skill levels and spell books. Since one dungeon has four associated quests, this is a good place to linger.

Goblin Watch (New Sorpignal)

QUEST: Get Goblinwatch code

RECEIVED FROM: Janice, New Sorpignal Town Hall

MONSTERS: Rats, Suckers, and Goblins

NOTES: The parchment with the code on it is in the first section of the dungeon (to the right), and you can get it pretty fast. You don't need to clean out the entire Goblin Watch, but you should to help build skills. By the time you're done, you'll be much stronger.



The beginning: Your first move in New Sorpignal is to visit Andover Potbello in the Inn. He will also give you a quest.

SPOILER: The solution to the Goblin Watch is NILBOG (goblin backward).

Abandoned Temple of Baa (New Sorpignal)

QUESTS: Find the Candelabra, Kill the Spider Queen and bring back her heart, Get Cobra Eggs, Rescue Angela

RECEIVED FROM (IN ORDER): Andover Potbello, Buford Allman, Hejaz Mawil, Violet Dawson, and New Sorpignal

MONSTERS: Cobras, Spiders, and Bats

NOTES: This will be a frustrating exercise, since your party is weak and will need to constantly backtrack to be healed. Since the Temple is huge (one of the largest sites in the game, and full of low-power monsters), it can be very time consuming. This is why you need to work toward Town Portal and Lloyd's Beacon spells ASAP. In the end, it is worthwhile to clean out the whole blasted thing and complete all four quests, since the money and experience are good. Use your Poison Protection spell if you have it. If you bring the candelabra



Hydras aren't so tough once you have their number. Almost everywhere you encounter them you can hide in a doorway and rain meteor and starburst spells on them.

Locations of the Shrines

The Seer (On the Mountain in Northeastern Ironfist) can tell you which shrine to pray at during which month. You need to get the "quest" from him for it to get the following bonuses.

JANUARY: Might, Bootleg Bay (north-west corner)

FEBRUARY: Intellect, Mist

MARCH: Personality, Silver Cove (north-west island)

APRIL: Endurance, White Cap (near castle)

MAY: Accuracy, Free Haven (west of town)

JUNE: Speed, Mire of the Damned (east of town)

JULY: Luck, New Sorpignal (eastern island)

AUGUST: Fire, Kriegspire (near Castle Kriegspire)

SEPTEMBER: Electricity, Castle Ironfist (west)

OCTOBER: Cold, Kriegspire (along northern mountain range, in the center)

NOVEMBER: Poison, Eel Infested Waters (south of Castle Alamos)

DECEMBER: Magic, Blackshire (north-east of town)

back to Potbello, you will lose reputation points, which can be restored by donating to the temple.

Circus

QUEST: Find Nicolai

LOCATION: Bootleg Bay (December), Mire of the Damned (August), Blackshire (April)

RECEIVED FROM: Humphry, Castle Ironfist

MONSTERS: Various

NOTES: This is pretty easy, since Nicolai is just in the main tent of the traveling circus. The trick is hitting the right circus at the right time, since it moves around. Some are in pretty tough neighborhoods. Bootleg Bay is the closest and easiest for early in the game, since the cannibals, head-hunters, and lizards aren't too bad. Don't bother with the circus games right now unless you have a skill (might, intellect, accuracy, luck) rated at more than 80. If you do have high ratings, you will want to play these games of skill to earn pyramids for trade at Abdul's Resort.

Shadow Guild (West of Castle Ironfist)

QUEST: Save Sharryl

RECEIVED FROM: Fairchild, New Sorpignal Townhall

MONSTERS: Thieves, Thugs

NOTE: This is a small dungeon, so take it early in the game for experience.

Temple of Baa (Southwestern Ironfist)

QUEST: Chimes of Harmony

RECEIVED FROM: Janice, New Sorpigel Townhall

MONSTERS: Skeletons, Spiders, and Clerics

NOTES: This is a good place to spend some time, since there are plenty of easy-to-medium creatures to boost experience. Go in here with a high learning skill, clean it out, and come out 5-10 levels higher. Do not touch (or go near) the gong in the large temple room: it releases a couple hundred skeletons and doesn't help. The door you need is behind this altar, so slide along the wall to find it. The chimes and gold are located in secret rooms at both ends of the long corridors.



If you have trouble with the Followers of Baa, maybe you should be playing Lemmings.

Temple of Tsantas (Northern Island, Bootleg Bay)

QUEST: Rescue Sherell

RECEIVED FROM: Tormini, Free Haven

MONSTERS: Cobras, Headhunters, and Cannibals

Temple of the Fist (Bootleg Bay)

QUEST: Destroy the Crystal

RECEIVED FROM: Winston Schezar

MONSTERS: Monks

NOTES: Touching the crystal destroys it.

SECTION II: PROMOTIONAL QUESTS

After whetting your swords with starting quests, it's a good idea to go right into the six Council quests and the various Promotional quests. The Promotional quests not only earn core experience and treasure, but also powerful character promotions that add points and respectability. Even if you are not of the same class as the promotional quest, you gain "honorary" status and all the benefits.

Sorcerer to Wizard (Bootleg Bay)

RECEIVED FROM: Newton in Mist

MONSTERS: Lizards, Cannibals, and Headhunters

NOTES: Everyone should drink from the fountain, which can be found on an island northeast of Bootleg Bay. Return to Newton to get the promotion and the next quest.



Ain't they cute when they get pissed off? Kill one peasant, and most of the town will turn on you.

Knight to Cavalier (Rockham, Free Haven)

QUEST: Visit Blackpoole

RECEIVED FROM: Lord Temper, Castle Temper, Free Haven

MONSTERS: The area is crawling with Archers and Clerics.

NOTES: Visit Temper, then go get the nomination from Chadwick Blackpoole in the village west of Free Haven, then return to Temper. It will be slow-going without Meteor Shower or Starburst.

Cavalier to Champion (Warlord's Castle, Northwestern Silver Cove)

QUEST: Prove the Warlord is defeated.

RECEIVED FROM: Lord Temper, Castle Temper, Free Haven

MONSTERS: Soldiers, Knights, and Cuisinart

NOTES: Death Knights, Doom Knights, Veterans, and the Cuisinart are all tough customers. This castle is full of booty, but once you grab the message scroll, you might just want to portal out rather than chink away at Cuisinarts for hours on end. The Warlord doesn't need to be defeated; all you need is the message scroll to complete the quest.

Paladin to Crusader (Silver Helm Outpost, Mist)

QUESTS: Rescue a damsel in distress (Melody Silver), retrieve Gharik's Forge key, and clean out Outpost

RECEIVED FROM: Humphry, Castle Ironfist and Scrivener, Mist Townhall

MONSTERS: Monks, Guards

NOTES: Melody is in a secret room behind the mural. Don't leave this dungeon until you find the Gharik's Forge key, which you'll need for a council quest.

Crusader to Hero (Dragon's Lair, Mired of the Damned)

QUEST: Slay the Dragon

RECEIVED FROM: Humphry, Castle Ironfist

MONSTERS: Dragon

NOTES: It's one big dragon. Kill him and bring his claw back to Humphrey.

Cleric to Priest (Free Haven)

QUEST: Rebuild Free Haven Temple

RECEIVED FROM: Stone, Southeastern White Cap

MONSTERS: Harpies and Fire Archers are located along the way.

NOTES: Bring a stonemason and carpenter to the ruined Free Haven temple. All three can be found in the northwestern corner of Free Haven. You'll need to dismiss any NPCs you picked up to hire the stonemason and carpenter.

High Priest (Temple of the Sun, Island North of Bootleg Bay)

QUEST: Retrieve Sacred Chalice and place it in the Free Haven Temple.

RECEIVED FROM: Stone, Southeastern White Cap

MONSTERS: Monks, Minotaurs

NOTES: There is no need to really bother with the Minotaur King if you don't have a medium strength (level 20) or higher party, since he guards nothing important.

Archer to Battle-Mage (Icewind Keep, White Cap)

QUEST: Retrieve Dragon Keys

RECEIVED FROM: Stromgard, East of White Cap

MONSTERS: Magyars, Harpies, and Archers in the surrounding country; Guards and Ogres in the Keep

NOTES: You need to find the Dragon-tower keys located in the keep. The keep is easy, by the area around the keep is tough.



Ogres seem pretty formidable when you first encounter them, but they will be one of the lesser monsters as you get deeper in the game. Engage them from a distance when possible.



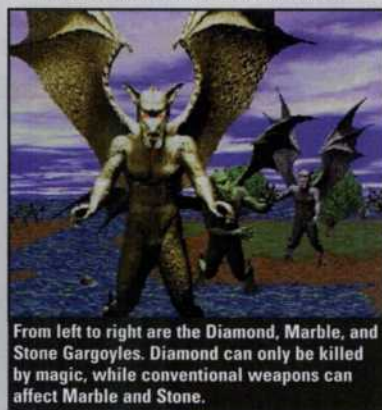
The dragon towers found throughout the land will seem mysterious at first. When you find the Dragon Tower keys and get the quest, you'll understand their purpose better.

Battle-Mage to Warrior-Mage (The Dragon Towers)

QUEST: Turn off the Dragon Towers
RECEIVED FROM: Stromgard, East of White Cap

MONSTERS: None, really

NOTES: If you have Town Portal, this is easy. Just go to each town and push the red buttons on the dragon towers to activate them, then return to Stromgard. There are five dragon towers altogether. You must still have the keys from Icewind Keep.



From left to right are the Diamond, Marble, and Stone Gargoyles. Diamond can only be killed by magic, while conventional weapons can affect Marble and Stone.

Warrior-Mage to Arch-Mage (Corlagon's Estate, Southwestern Ironfist)

QUEST: Retrieve the Crystal of Terrax to Newton

RECEIVED FROM: Newton, Mist

MONSTERS: Ghosts, Skeletons

NOTES: A lower level party won't have too much trouble here, since the long hallways enable the "Hail of Arrows" maneuver. The problem is the length of halls, which lead to much to-ing and fro-ing. Don't try it without Lloyd's Beacon.

Druid to Great Druid (Island North of Silver Cove)

QUEST: Pray in stone circle

RECEIVED FROM: Fleise, Silver Cove

MONSTERS: Gargoyles

NOTES: You need to pray in the circle of stone (touch the altar) on March 20, June 21, September 23, or December 21.

Potions

The three plants found throughout the land yield yellow (endurance), red (health), and blue (magic) potions. Anyone familiar with the primary colors can mix these three to come up with even more basic potions. Basically, there are three core potions and three more that can be made by combining them. Through further combinations, you get more powerful white and black potions that are very potent, but also extract a cost from your character stats. The trick is mixing the advanced potions without blowing yourself up. Here's how:

CORE POTIONS

BLUE (RHINA ROOT): 10 spell points

RED (WIDOWEEP BERRIES): 10 hit points

YELLOW (POPPYSNAPS BOTTLE): 10 to all primary statistics temporarily

CORE MIXES

GREEN (RESISTANCE): Yellow + Blue, 10 to resistance temporarily

ORANGE (PROTECTION): Yellow + Red, 10 to armor class temporarily

PURPLE (CURE POISON): Blue + Red, cure poison

WHITE POTIONS

BLESS: Purple + Blue, bless for 6 hours

EXTREME ENERGY: Orange + Yellow, adds 20 to primary statistics temporarily

HASTE: Green + Yellow, haste for 6 hours

HEROISM: Orange + Red, heroism for 6 hours

RESTORATION: Purple + Green, cure all conditions except dead and stoned

STONE SKIN: Orange + Blue, stone skin for 6 hours

SUPER RESISTANCE: Green + Blue, 20 to resistance temporarily

SUPREME PROTECTION: Orange + Green, 20 to armor class temporarily

BLACK POTIONS

DIVINE CURE: Restoration + Orange, 100 hit points temporarily and 1 year to age

DIVINE MAGIC: Super Resistance + Green, 100 spell points temporarily and 1 year to age

DIVINE POWER: Extreme Energy + Purple, 20 levels temporarily and 1 year to age

ESSENCE OF ACCURACY: Bless + Yellow, adds 15 to accuracy and subtracts 5 from luck permanently

ESSENCE OF ENDURANCE: Supreme Protection + Yellow, adds 15 to endurance and subtracts 1 from other statistics permanently

ESSENCE OF INTELLECT: Stone Skin + Blue, adds 15 to intellect and subtracts 5 from might permanently

ESSENCE OF LUCK: Super Resistance + Purple, adds 15 to luck and subtracts 5 from accuracy

ESSENCE OF MIGHT: Heroism + Red, adds 15 to might and subtracts 5 from intellect permanently

ESSENCE OF PERSONALITY: Restoration + Blue, adds 15 to personality and subtracts 5 from speed permanently

ESSENCE OF SPEED: Haste + Red, adds 15 to speed and subtracts 5 from personality permanently

REJUVENATE: Extreme Energy + Green, removes all magical aging affects and subtracts 1 from primary statistics permanently



The sewers are loaded with caches of yellow, blue, and red potions.

Great Druid to Arch Druid (Temple of the Moon, Northwestern Free Haven)

QUEST: Pray at Altar of the Moon at the full moon

RECEIVED FROM: Fleise, Silver Cove

MONSTERS: Gorgons, Cobras

NOTES: Protection from poison, cure poison, and Stone to Flesh are the keys to this dungeon. The monsters aren't hard to take out, but they can cripple a party. Visit altars in order:

Life, Accuracy, Might, Endurance, Speed, then Luck. Wait until midnight to pray.

SECTION III: COUNCIL QUESTS Wilbur Humphrey (Castle Ironfist)

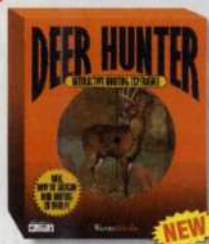
QUEST: Find Shield

LOCATION OF ITEM: Blackshire countryside.

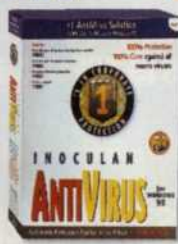
MONSTERS: Werewolves

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NOTES: Humphrey's shield is in a chest surrounded by werewolves, south of Blackshire. Werewolves, particularly Greater Werewolf, are very tough and will disease you constantly. The chest also requires a 7+ disarm skill.

Anthony Stone (White Cap)

QUEST: Capture the Prince of Thieves

LOCATION: Free Haven Sewers

MONSTERS: Rats, Clerics, and Thieves

NOTES: You'll find the Prince in the Free Haven sewers, so get the quest *before* you go down there.

Temper (Free Haven)

QUEST: Get the demon plans

LOCATION OF ITEM: Devil's Outpost, Western end of mountains above Kriegspire.

MONSTERS: Demons

NOTES: Just a one-room brawl, and you don't even need to enter the room. Drop a beacon, though, because the demons are nasty, resilient to many fire attacks, and drain spell points. This will take a few full heals to finish, but is not much of a puzzler: a demon drops the plans at your feet. Not much will be gained by cleaning the whole outpost once you have the plans.

Loretta Fleise (Silver Cove)

QUEST: Fix prices of stables

LOCATION: The stables in New Sorpigal, Ironfist, Free Haven (two stables), Mire of the Damned, Bootleg Bay, Silver Cove, Blackshire, White Cap, Kriegspire, Darkmoor.

MONSTERS: Various, depending upon the town

NOTES: Portal from town to town and discuss the price fixing with each stable. Pretty easy, except it does lower your rep one level.

Stromgard (Frozen Highlands)

QUEST: Stop the eternal winter

LOCATION: Kriegspire Mountains, Hermit Hut.

MONSTERS: Drakes, unless you can avoid them

NOTES: The Hermit's Hut is located right in the middle of the mountain range. Fly to it (using Wizard Eye to avoid the drakes unless you are very high level), talk to the hermit, and return to Stromgard — simple.

Newton (Mist)

QUEST: Retrieve the Hourglass of Time

LOCATION: Gharik's Forge, Island Northeast of New Sorpigal

MONSTERS: Magicians, Fire Elementals

NOTES: This is a tough, complex dungeon. Wizards cast insanity with alarming frequency. You will be portal-ing a lot for this one, but don't try to be a hero. Load up on protection amulets, rings, and spells, and get in close to fight with weapons. You must have the forge key from the Silver Helm Outpost.



Success! The Council approves of your quest, and the door to the Oracle is open.



After you gain the approval of the Council, you can go right into the four crystal quests.

Humphrey/Silvertongue Traitor Quest (Ironfist)

QUEST: Expose Silver Silvertongue as a traitor.

LOCATION: Superior Temple of Baa, Kriegspire

MONSTERS: Magicians, Druids, and Clerics

DESCRIPTION: There are several important things to remember. You need to have 8+ in Perception to open doors. Just give it to one member of the party and have them open all doors. Humphrey will give you the Baa cloak that enables you to enter the temple, but you don't need to wear it. In the room with the four bas-relief faces of Baa arranged around the walls of the altar room, touch each face in order (they tell you their numbers). Each character can earn 50,000 points by touching the large face of Baa in the main arena but this lowers your rep one level for each click. The letter is in a chest that is opened by two keys you collect when you kill the High Priest and High Magician.

SECTION IV: MEMORY CRYSTAL QUESTS

Once you gain the council approval and expose Silvertongue, you are allowed into the Oracle. He will tell you that you need to return the four Memory Crystals to their places in the Oracle. The

Crystals are scattered, and require some serious questing.

Alpha Crystal

LOCATION: Supreme Temple of Baa, Hermit's Isle

MONSTERS: Clerics, Fire Spirits, and Demons

NOTES: To get to the Island, you first need to visit Humphrey and ask about the Queen Catherine (the royal yacht). The Yacht is docked at Ironfist. The island has Titans and Sea Monsters, but ignore them and just run for Temple, which is a pretty easy thing to do. The temple isn't too bad, just convoluted.

Epsilon Crystal

LOCATION: Castle Kriegspire

SIDE QUEST: Retrieve the jeweled egg for Emile Lime, of Kriegspire

MONSTERS: Minotaurs

NOTES: Minotaur Mages and Kings are tough customers, but the castle is pretty easy and the crystal is located in plain sight. The large cavern filled with drakes holds many valuable items. The torches to the far right and left also hide 15,000 gold each.

Beta Crystal

LOCATION: Castle Alamos Northern Island, Eel Infested Waters

MONSTERS: Air Elementals, Magyars, and Magicians

NOTES: This is a long dungeon that is easy to get lost in. To find the clues that will unlock the gate you need to click on all the trees and read the cryptic message, then try to decipher them...or you can just cheat.

SPOILER: The answer to the riddle is JBARD.

Delta Crystal

LOCATION: Darkmoor Castle

SIDE QUEST: You must destroy the Book of the Liches.

MONSTERS: Liches, Floating Eyes, and Ogres
NOTES: This is one of the toughest quests in the entire game, and unlike Alamos, there is no way around it except to slog through and drop beacons. Magical protections don't work. Wizard Eye is disabled. The place is full of traps that can't be avoided even with high perception. Power liches and eyeballs are very tough customers. Your best bet is to run like hell, drop beacons, heal, and pop back in.

**SECTION V:
 ENDGAME QUESTS**

While the other quests can be taken in a willy-nilly, come-as-you-care order, once you have all the memory crystal the plot and missions become more linear, leading up to the finale.

Tomb of Varn (Dragonsands)

QUEST: Find the Cube
MONSTERS: Genies, Varn Guardians, and Patrol Robots
NOTES: This is large and complex, with plenty of monsters throwing status spells. Get the Crystal Skull for extra protection. Genies will cause more pure headaches than anything else in the game, since they regularly put you to sleep, cause fear, and are immune to many spells. Guardians of Varn are immune to all but one or



Supreme Titan (left) and Noble Titan. The Supreme Titan is one of the toughest customers in the game, since he has high armor class and an attack that can kill with a single hit.

two spells (i.e. implosion, shrap-metal). When you enter the pools in the bathhouse, they will ask you questions based on six code scrolls found throughout the pyramid. You must answer them quickly since you're taking damage, then drop through the Well of Varn trapdoor. The chest with the Cube is in the Pyramid area to the northwest.

SPOILERS: The codes are the names of the crew of the *Enterprise* backwards: First Mate: KCOPS, Navigator: ULUS, Communication Officer: ARUHU, Engineer: YTTOCS, Doctor: YOCCM, Captain: KRIK.

Oracle Control Center

QUEST: Get blasters.
LOCATION: The Oracle
MONSTERS: Robots

NOTES: This is an optional quest, but the blasters you earn make it worthwhile. The Terminators damage items each time they hit, so you might want to hire an NPC to repair items unless each member of your party has a repair skill. Terminators also may eradicate your guys, so have someone with the Resurrect spell on hand.

Castle Ironfist

QUEST: Free Archibald
RECEIVED FROM: The Oracle
MONSTERS: None

NOTES: Go to the castle and talk to Nicolai. The third eye is located in the well Northwest of the castle. Go back and get the bell from Nicolai. Go to the second level of the castle and free Archibald from the library. Take the scroll.

The Hive (Sweetwater)

QUEST: Kill the Hive Queen
MONSTERS: Demons, Hive Queen
NOTES: The grand showdown isn't as bad as some of the other quests, but the Hive does disable Town Portal and Lloyd's Beacon, which is frustrating. Despite the Oracle's warning, the Demons are not immune to magic. The final encounter (the Hive Queen) isn't too tough, but she is surrounded by minions. Concentrate on her.



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A blue and black gaming chair is shown from a front-three-quarter view. The chair has a high backrest and a seat, both upholstered in blue fabric. The frame is black plastic. In the center of the backrest, there is a black rectangular box containing the text "IT'S READY. ARE YOU?" in orange, bold, sans-serif font. The chair is set against a light beige background.

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THE INTENSOR™ SURVIVAL GUIDE

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Fig. 1. A breakdown of what you're up against.

#	ITEM
1	Left 2" Mid-range Directional
2	Right 2" Mid-range Directional
3	5.25" Center Mid-range
4	5.25" Low Frequency Tactile Driver
5	High-range Tweeter
6	Sound Volume
7	Tactile Intensity
8	Electronics Unit
9	Heavy Duty Single Cord Connector
10	Optional Office Chair Base
11	Optional Subwoofer
12	Headphone Jack

PART TWO

Remember, in this chair no one can hear you scream.

Not everyone will have what it takes to handle Intensor's patented audio system. After all, we're talking 5 high-performance built-in speakers with 108dB output. Technically speaking, that means it's really

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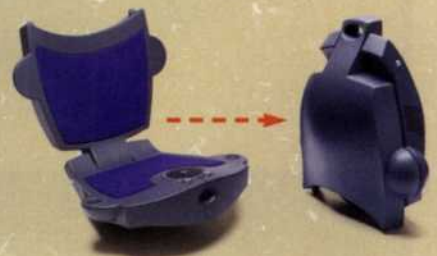


Fig. 2. At 19 pounds, Intensor is designed for quick evacuation in the event things get ugly. (Shaky hands will appreciate the built-in molded carrying handle.)

PART THREE

Ducking, dodging, whimpering and other useful gaming skills you might want to perfect.

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DEFENSIVE PROCEDURES



Fig. 3a.
The Dodge

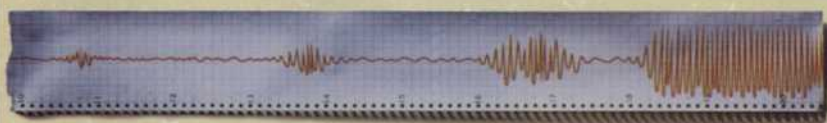


Fig. 3b.
The Weave



Fig. 3c.
The Duck

TACTILE SENSATION GRAPH



Kidney Punch

Crushed By Falling Piano

Torn Apart By Wild Dogs

Intensor



Fig. 4. Artist's conception of Sensory Gaming's effect on the human heart. Those with heart conditions should proceed at their own risk.



Fig. 5. Note: Players attempting to negotiate Intensor on anything less than a good, stiff spine may be reduced to a vegetative state.

PART FOUR

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Fig. 6. Intensor has been known to induce shock. In such cases, place victim flat on back, elevate legs 8 to 12 inches and call for help. (If victim begins vomiting, place him or her on one side to allow fluid drainage.)



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THE EXPERT'S GUIDE TO UNITS



SCVS

The dutiful SCV should be more than just a workforce for you. They can safely eliminate spider mines and are valuable scouts. Sending the occasional SCV up to an enemy base early in the game will allow you to predict what form of attack your opponent will use. For example, sending one of your SCVs about three minutes into the game into a Protoss camp will allow you to see if he is moving to harvest gas (probably not rushing) or is building a second gateway. About four or five minutes later, sending a second SCV, you'll be able to see if he's created a Cybernetics Core before going for more Gateways. If so, he's likely to be moving toward a Robotics Factory, Dragoons, and Reavers. It's this early insight that allows you to counter his potential attacks.

The other key to SCVs is their ability to repair mechanical units. At least one SCV should accompany every attack

force that has Wraiths, Siege Tanks, or Goliaths. Repairing units in the middle of battle can often be the key to victory. Experienced opponents will take out the SCV as quickly as possible, but short-sighted opponents will often overlook it in favor of more formidable targets.



MARINES

While much of the time, they're fodder, Marines are invaluable given that they're so cheap and so versatile. In large numbers (say a couple complete groups assigned group bindings) marines can be a devastating offensive force to aerial or ground units. In bunkers, they should always be one of the cornerstones of your base defenses. Marines are especially useful against expensive units with generally slow firing rates such as Mutalisks, Scouts, Dragoons, and even Siege Tanks (provided they're not in Siege Mode).

Somewhere along the way, always



Always be pumping out Marines because they are some of the cheapest, fastest, and most versatile units to build.

be sure to upgrade Marine firepower and range, and if you have the resources, eventually armor. The StimPack (which provides faster firing and movement for a short period of time) is amazing but only on attack forces that are particularly "expendable" (e.g. you have a target that needs to be destroyed regardless of your losses). Never use StimPacks on defensive forces or you could wind up a little short on units in the end.

Always try to keep Marines spread apart when walking in formation or when simply standing around. This will make them less susceptible to area-of-effect attacks and blasts such as those from Siege Tanks, Reavers, and Psionic Storms. It should go without saying that for purposes of defense, your base should be surrounded by bunkers loaded with marines. Inside bunkers, they are protected from Irradiate, Psionic Storm, and Broodling attacks while still doing full damage to enemies like Mutalisks (that typically only take half damage from many other forms of defense). They will form a suitable defense against aerial or ground forces.

One final tip: take one or two Marines and simply have them patrol around the perimeter of your base. If they run into an enemy, the firing should provide you with a good alarm, allowing you to defuse the situation before things get too close to home.



FIREBATS

Much like the Marine, the Firebat is a low cost unit that is of particular use in close-quarter situations. Given its shorter range but more damaging attacks, the Firebat is especially useful against units that fight hand-to-hand. If you have a



Always keep an SCV or two with an attack force for on the spot repairs.

Protoss opponent, you should have plenty of Firebats on hand to combat the considerably stronger Zealots. Likewise, Zerglings will fall easily under the stream of flames issuing from these units. In each bunker of your base, it is usually prudent to have at least one of the four positions occupied by a Firebat. In doing so, units directly attacking the bunker can be quickly dispatched.



GHOSTS

Relatively weak attacks make the Ghost a poor offensive unit, but this weakness is offset by some very special powers that, when properly used, make all the difference on the field of battle. While each of these powers needs to be researched and are quite costly, the savings over the long haul are worth it.

Cloaking is the first power that should be researched. While cloaked, the Ghost is an invaluable source of intelligence. Positioning cloaked Ghosts along known enemy trails will give you a heads-up on the attacking force, allowing you advanced intelligence on how to counter it. Additionally, being able to sneak a Ghost into an enemy base will provide intelligence on what units are being built and where weakly-defended points of entry may be. Of course, keep Ghosts well away from any detectors, especially Zerg Overlords.

Lockdown is a particularly useful defensive measure, and as a part of a base assault. When on defense, it's often good to keep a couple of Ghosts scattered about your base — keep them near buildings or in shadows where they might be overlooked by an enemy. At the first sign of a major attack, use Lockdown to remove a few key units from the battle. Pay particular attention to artillery units like Siege Tanks. When on offense, cloaking to get near an enemy base and then locking down any defensive Siege Tanks, Cruisers, Scouts, and Wraiths can allow your forces to march right in.

Nuclear weapons are the great equalizer for the Terrans. While they are incredibly adaptable in their strategies, the sheer power of the nuke evens the odds. The Ghost in charge of painting the target should always be cloaked. You may want to have more than one Ghost handy when lasing a target, just in case an observer happens by (Terran Science Vessel, Zerg Overlord, or Protoss Observer). Where possible, a series of nukes can be prepared (see below) and you can decimate all outer base defenses, allowing you to get to the chewy center with conventional ground forces.



VULTURES

While its speed is great, the Vulture is by and large useless for anything other than scouting missions. The grenade launcher is functional against Zerglings and

marines, but against anything more heavily armored, the Vulture is fodder. One of the few decent uses for the Vulture is against workers early in the game as a rush tactic. The unit's impressive speed can often allow it to get past stationary base defenses.

One would think that spider mines are a useful upgrade, but again, they're really only useful for providing intelligence and the time required to set them up generally isn't worth the effort. By and large, your time and resources are better spent on other units than the Vulture.



SIEGE TANKS

Along side marines, Siege Tanks should be the second major portion of your forces. An effort to research Siege Mode (via the machine shop add-on to the factory) should be one of your highest priorities in any game, regardless of your tactics. While not in Siege Mode, the tanks are



Nukes are the great equalizer. Proper use of your ghost units will ensure victory.

effective against other large ground units such as Dragoons, Archons, Ultralisks, Hydralisks, etc. They need to be kept well away from large numbers of Zerglings or even Marines given their relatively slow firing rate. In light of their inability to attack aerial units, they should always travel with a compliment of Marines or even a few Wraiths. When in Siege mode, the tanks are particularly vulnerable to Zealots and Zerglings as they won't be able to hit the hand-to-hand attacking foes. To help alleviate this situation, always travel in groups of at least three (ideally more) where they are positioned some distance away from one another, but still in firing range. In this way, if an enemy should close ground with one of the tanks, one of the others will be able to remove the threat.

For defense, Siege Tanks in Siege Mode should be positioned around your base. It's often good to set them near missile towers or bunkers with Marines



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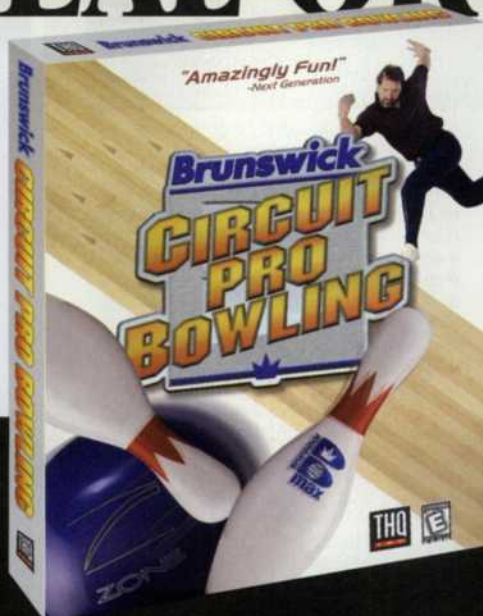
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As soon as possible, supplement your bunker defenses with Siege Tanks that are in Siege Mode.

as they have no aerial defenses of their own. Because they are so slow to build and they are fairly expensive, Siege Tanks need to have SCVs with them for repairs at all times.

On offense, Siege Tanks should be well supported with Marines, Wraiths, and even a few Goliaths (again, anti-air capability needs to be handled by other units). Spreading three or four Siege Tanks along a front with the other forces just behind them makes for a formidable attack force. As you pummel the outer defenses of a base, inevitably, forces will come pouring out. With the enemies forces lured away from the base defenses, decimate them with your waiting forces. Then resume shelling the base with Siege Tanks.



GOLIATHS

Fairly robust and relatively quick, Goliaths are something of a strange unit.

Their ground attacks aren't very strong (only slightly stronger than an upgraded Marine) but their powerful ground-to-air capability makes them a key asset in either an attack party or for base defense. Goliaths will shred Mutalisks and Scouts in short order, and against Battle Cruisers and Guardian Aspects (which have slow firing rates) they will also do well. They are also relatively cheap and fast to build. Goliaths are particularly susceptible to attack from Siege Tanks, large numbers of Zerglings, Reavers and Ultralisks.

Goliaths should be used to accompany Siege Tanks (or any attack force) to protect them from Guardian Aspects, Mutalisks, and other aerial enemies.

Naturally, being mechanical, Goliaths can be (and should be) repaired by SCVs at every opportunity.



DROPSHIPS

The Terran Dropships aren't as useful or necessary as other races' transport ships given that most major Terran Buildings

can pick up and relocate themselves. If you're seeking a secondary base, then Dropships are useful for dropping an SCV on an island or other isolated resource area. At the same time they are useful for dropping a few Marines or Firebats behind enemy lines to take out an enemy's work force.



Wraiths are key for air-to-air superiority. Always be sure to research cloaking.



WRAITHS

Extremely expensive but potentially extremely effective, Wraiths should be used

only on maps where there are tons of resources. The Wraith's primary strength is its air-to-air attack capabilities and its stealth through cloaking.

Wraiths themselves are not particularly robust and can easily be destroyed by Protoss Scouts, Goliaths, Hydralisks, Marines, Scourges and, of course, Missile Towers, Photon Cannons, and Spore Colonies. On the flip side, they are good at removing Guardian Aspects, Mutalisks, Battle Cruisers, Overlords, and Carriers.

While their ground attacks are quite weak, the ability to cloak makes them great for hit-and-run attacks and scouting missions. If you have a large force of Wraiths, it's good to split them into at least two groups of six or more. As one group is off attacking in cloaked form, the other should be in the base recharging their cloaking units and being repaired. As the cloaks wear off on the

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attacking group, send them back to base and deploy the second group. Naturally, vary where you are attacking to keep your enemy on their toes.



BATTLECRUISERS

If Wraiths are expensive, then Battlecruisers are positively exorbitant. You need to have massive resource reserves before you can even consider deploying these monsters. Their slow rate of fire makes them particularly susceptible to Scourges (five of them will easily take a Battlecruiser down). Likewise you want to keep Battlecruisers away from Scouts, Wraiths, large numbers of Mutalisks, Hydralisks, or even Marines.

Battlecruisers should never be in the field by themselves and should always have a compliment of Wraiths and Goliaths to keep away would-be attackers. As always, an SCV should accompany a Battlecruiser for purposes of repair. They're too expensive to simply throw away, and they're too slow to continuously send back to base.

If you are going to make the investment into Battlecruisers, you should definitely research the Yamato Cannon. This long-range weapon is useful for taking out Missile Towers, Photon Cannons, and Colonies at long range.



SCIENCE VESSELS

As a detector and unit with several key special abilities, the Science Vessel should be high on any advanced player's list of necessary units. The Defensive Matrix adds a 250-point shield to any unit. As such, it's particularly useful on Ghosts making a Nuke run, Battlecruisers making an attack on a tower, or even to protect Wraiths from Scourges. The second two major abilities must be researched, but in certain situations, they are absolutely key defensive points.

The Irradiate power is particularly useful against Zerg enemies given that it does considerable damage in a short period of time against living enemies (thus it is fairly useless against most Terran units). It's particularly great against slow-moving Guardian Aspects and Ultralisks.

On the other side, the EMP Shockwave removes enemy shields and strips enemies of their energy for special powers. As such, Protoss units should fear the appearance of a Science Vessel given that they would be reduced to their base armor for the damage required to destroy them. Additionally, the power is useful against units preparing to use special powers such as Battlecruisers with their Yamato Cannon.

Because they are so slow, Science Vessels are quite vulnerable to Scourges, Mutalisks, Goliaths, Hydralisks, and Wraiths. More often than not, you'll want to keep them in your base until they are needed. When outside the base, they should always have at least a few Wraiths as an escort.



Use the Science Vessel's Irradiate on a line of workers to seriously hinder production. It's also great against Guardian Aspects.



Battlecruisers should always be supported by groups of Wraiths and Marines.



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OPENING GAMBIT: "THE RUSH"

How to pull off — and defend against — *StarCraft*'s least popular tactic!

As with any real-time strategy game, "the rush" is a potentially powerful strategy that can end a game before it has even really started. As covered in previous installments of *PC Gamer's StarCraft* strategy guides, there are times to rush and there are times not to. Either way, offensively speaking, it's generally foolish to pin all of your hopes on winning with the rush. Defensively speaking, you should be able to stop the rush provided you take some simple steps. When playing as the Terrans, there are several elements to consider before attempting to use or defend against the Rush.

One of the most important criteria is your knowledge of the map. If you are familiar with the map's layout, start positions and resource areas, then you may want to consider a rush. The reasons for this are that you should have knowledge of where the other player could be (cutting down on necessary scouting time), and how to enter a base through a predictably unguarded route. Another factor is the size of the map. Smaller maps mean less travel time and fewer resources; two criteria that would point to a high rush potential (both for yourself and your opponent). Assuming you can be more efficient than your opponent on these smaller maps, it pays to rush, as the start positions are generally known. If you are playing on a map you don't know, it's probably wise not to rush, but you want to start scouting early in the game (with an SCV or Marine). In this way you should be able to ascertain how you are connected to your enemy, where there are opportunities for expansion, and likely areas of entry to your base (so you can properly set up your defenses).

Another key consideration for rushing is the race of your opponent. In general, the Protoss are well-suited to fighting off a Terran rush if they have even a slight foothold (two or three Zealots will march through double that number of Marines). If you're still intent on rushing, you should be prepared for Zealot defenses and, at the most, one Photon Cannon. To combat these, you might want to have one Vulture (which are faster than the Zealots) do a hit-and-run attack on the Zealots in an attempt and lure them away from the base. While doing so, have as many Marines as you can enter the base from another direction to decimate the Protoss Probes in an attempt to slow, if not destroy, your enemy's supply chain. Naturally, avoid any Photon Cannons as much as possible by skirting along the edge of a base, just out of their range.

When defending against a Protoss rush, again, you'll primarily be up against



Never let a Zerg player have free run of the board with his Overlords. Take them out on sight.

Zealots. Properly placed bunkers with Marines and, as soon as possible, Firebats, will form the primary defense. Given that Zealots attack hand-to-hand, go for Firebats as they will rip through a Zealot rush with little difficulty. When the rush finally comes, be sure to have at least one or two SCVs repairing bunkers as they are being attacked. It should buy you the necessary seconds needed to fend them off.

The Zerg hordes are far more susceptible to a Terran rush than the Protoss are. At an early stage in the game, the best defenses they should have will be Hydralisks flanked by very few Mutalisks (if any). More likely than not, they'll have some Zerglings and a couple of Hydralisks with a Sunken Colony. The Zerg units will fall quickly under the assault rifles of the Marines (especially Zerglings), but be prepared for continued fighting as new units are hatched in the middle of battle. If possible, lure Zerglings and Hydralisks off of the creep so as not to be damaged by any Sunken Colonies that your opponent may have placed. If need be, try to get Firebats up to the battle as quickly as possible to aid in the removal of Sunken Colonies. If you should start to be repelled, make a last-ditch effort to take out as many Drones as possible.

The Zerg rush will come at you in one of two forms. First is the initial Zergling rush. The key here will be the attempt at overwhelming you with numbers. If you have only one or two bunkers filled with Marines, you're going to be in trouble. One easy way to augment your chances of survival is to build some extra bunkers as decoys (with the intent to fill them later, if possible) while still having some Marines and Firebats loose in your base for support of the decoy bunkers. Your opponent will attack the Bunkers first, thinking them to be the major threat. In the meantime you should have SCVs repairing the bunkers (which probably won't buy you more than a few seconds, but that should be all you need to fend off the attack) while your Marines and Firebats toast the pre-occupied Zerglings. You might want to put a Marine or two in each bunker just



The Battlecruiser's Yamato Cannon is useful for taking out defensive emplacements at a distance.

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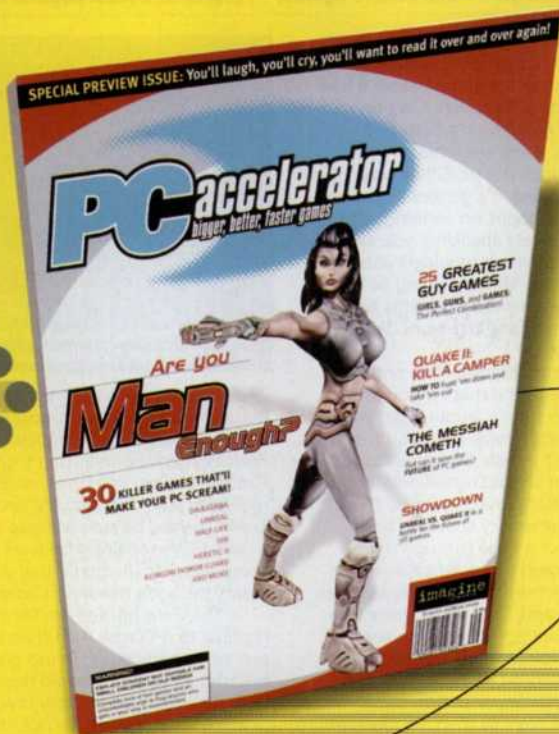
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to make it look as if it is truly firing. If there are Hydralisks involved in the fray, try to have Firebats close ground and take them out as quickly as possible.

The other Zerg rush you may see is the Mutalisk rush (which a smart Zerg player usually wouldn't try against a savvy Terran player). Here, your opponent will try to capitalize on the early air power of the Zergs in an effort to take out your SCVs and then your base. When scouting early, look and see if your opponent has made a move for gas and a Spire. If so, you can bet you're going to be seeing some winged shadows overhead soon. Luckily, Marines make for a formidable anti-air threat and bunkered/loose Marines should be able to stave off any threat. You may want to have a single Marine patrolling your supply line (or its outskirts) as an alarm system for any would-be attacks.

Ironically enough, probably the biggest threat to Terrans are other Terrans. Just as your rush will primarily consist of Marines and Firebats, so should any offensive threat from an enemy Terran. There are two potential keys here. First is being extremely efficient in your build order so that you have more troops than your opponent does. Second, avoid defensive emplacements as much as possible in an effort to get to the SCV supply line.

There are some general defensive strategies that should always be employed



Use your Supply Depots as walls to keep enemies at bay while your forces hit them from safely on the other side.

regardless of the race you're playing against. The first and most important is to create walls and choke-points wherever possible. Use supply depots as your primary building block. As you build each supply depot, it should form a part of a wall that surrounds your base. Make it so that any ground units that want to threaten the main base have to go through them (all the while getting pummeled by Siege Tanks and Marines) or around them into even better prepared defenses. Second, you should always have at least one SCV running around and repairing all defensive vehicles, Bunkers, Missile Towers, and Supply Depots. Finally, if you can, secure the high ground and let the Siege Tanks hammer anything that comes within the resulting increased range.

BUILD ORDERS FOR RUSHING

First, set your first four SCVs to collecting crystals. Continue to build SCVs until you hit seven. With your eighth SCV, build a Supply Depot. Once that's built, start building a Barracks while continuing to build SCVs (until you have at least ten). When the Barracks comes online, begin pumping out Marines (regardless of whether you've decided to rush or not).

By this time, you should have already scouted your enemy with one of your SCVs to see what they're building. Make your determination of whether or not you

are going to rush. If so, build two more Supply Depots (in positions that would make a good wall if the rush should fail) and then a second Barracks. Once you have at least five Marines, begin marching them toward the enemy base. All the while, continue queuing up Marines for production while also moving towards Firebat production.

Try to have one Marine go to a far side of the enemy base to act as a decoy. With the remainder, try to attack the weak side and wipe out as many defensive emplacements as possible. The key

is to not have the full brunt of the defenses firing upon you at any one time. If you are successful, you'll have free reign to take out the remainder of the enemy units and, of course, workers. Try not to let any of the Drones/Probes/SCVs escape as it can lead to a protracted and otherwise boring remainder of the game. Naturally, as the battle progresses, send reinforcements as they are constructed to the frontlines.

If you decide not to rush (or even if you do, should you fail), you should begin placing bunkers in key choke points and move toward a factory and Siege Tanks as quickly as possible.



Once you have at least five Marines, begin assaulting the enemy base. Try not to let any of the enemy Drones/Probes/SCVs escape.



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INTELLIGENCE AND COUNTER-INTELLIGENCE

Knowing what your opponent is up to is key to devising a proper strategy for attack as well as providing knowledge of what you'll have to defend against. If you know every move your opponent is going to make, you'll have little difficulty winning the game. Likewise, you need to deny your opponent the same advantage. Luckily, Terrans have a number of options for securing that kind of crucial intel.

Early in the game is where intelligence gathering should begin. At about your eighth or ninth SCV, send one out to find the enemy's base. Once you find it, see what he is building. If he's working on a second Barracks or Gateway before harvesting gas or building more advanced units, you should brace for a rush of low-level units. If he has moved to building more advanced buildings, then you may want to consider initiating a rush of your own.



Bunkers are your primary defenses given their ground-to-ground and ground-to-air attack ability.

Following this preliminary probe of your opponent, intelligence should come from two new places. First is the ComStat Scanner add-on for your Command Center. At a cost of just 75 energy, you can have a free look at your enemy's base. You should do this at every opportunity to see what he's up to. Between these short glimpses, you should use cloaked Ghosts and Wraiths to probe at the sides of the enemy bases and, if possible, even slip inside for a closer look. As always, stay away from detectors like Overlords, Spore Colonies, and Photon Cannons.

One of the few good uses for Vultures is as a disposable scout. Simply send it in the base and see how far it gets in the defenses. The other decent use is for laying spider mines that also act like stationary cameras for you. Scattering the spider mines at various points along known enemy paths will provide you with an early warning system for attack.

On the counter-intelligence side, the Terrans are at something of a disadvantage when compared to the Zergs or Protoss. Unfortunately, Terrans only have one mobile detector unit, the Science Vessel, and it's quite expensive, so you probably won't have many of them. At least one should be placed on full-time patrol duty around the perimeter of your base. In doing so, any cloaked enemy unit



Use your Science Vessel to place defensive matrix on key units. This adds a 250-point shield to any unit.

will show up on your radar and any of your Siege Tanks should take it out on sight. This is particularly useful for finding any Observers or Ghosts that may have been undetected by your missile towers.

The other key has to do with base design and positioning a web of Missile Towers around the perimeter of the base. A single hole in the web can spell disaster against a Terran enemy with a Ghost and a Nuke. When playing against a Zerg player, constantly check your workers and other units in the base for presence of a Parasite. If you find one, either destroy it immediately, or better yet, send it on a suicide mission into the enemy's base so you can have a look at his defenses again.

BASE SIEGE TIPS

The secret to properly cracking an enemy's base revolves around the proper use of Nukes in conjunction with well-supported Siege Tanks. That's not to say it couldn't be done just with Siege Tanks, but taking out some enemy units and basic defensive structures with a Nuke or two makes it so much easier.

While this sounds easy, there are a couple of different ways to approach the situation and a few diversionary tactics that can help maximize damage and minimize losses. The first way revolves around having a couple of Nukes prepared. For those who are unaware, there's a nice way to have two Missile Silos able to be powered by a single Command Center (though not at the same time). Assuming you have

already built one Nuclear Missile Silo from single Command Center, simply lift the center off and set it down again some distance away. Then begin building a second silo off of it. While you can't be building Nukes in both Silos at the same time (as each Silo depends upon the center for power), you can have a Nuke ready to be fired in one and then disconnect and reattach to the second Silo where it can then prepare to fire. In this way, you can stockpile Nukes (kind of) without having separate Command Centers for each Silo.

Assuming you have at least two Nukes ready, position Ghosts at opposite ends of an enemy's base. The first Nuke is going to be a diversionary tactic used to draw defenses to the hole it creates (and

away from your primary attack location). The second Nuke is going to create a back door for your awaiting Siege Tanks and back-up (consisting largely of Goliaths and Marines for anti-air support, and a few Ghosts for Lockdowns where needed). Be sure to set at least three or four Siege Tanks in Siege Mode slightly behind what you anticipate will be the front lines just in case you should temporarily have to fall back. Again, every Siege Tank should be within firing range of one of its brethren for protection. Use Ghosts to lock down threatening Ultralisks, Arbiters, Siege Tanks, and Reavers.

Under the cover of at least a dozen Marines and a dozen Goliaths, Siege Tanks should begin gaining ground in a leap-frogging fashion. Just as the last target is destroyed within firing range, the tank furthest away in the group should un-Siege Mode itself and slide forward to provide new targets. While it might be tempting to do so, don't let your support units (the Goliaths and Marines) push forward into the base for further action. Methodical destruction and proper support will ensure complete annihilation. If you let them get ahead, you splinter your force and risk being repelled.

The first targets to destroy should be defensive emplacements such as Sunken Colonies, Spore Colonies, Bunkers, Photon Cannons, and Missile Towers. Following those, structures that produce units directly such as Barracks, Gateways, etc., should be targeted.



Siege tanks backed by support units is the best way to begin a base attack. Once you're inside the base, leapfrog Siege Tanks after one another to make a clean sweep.

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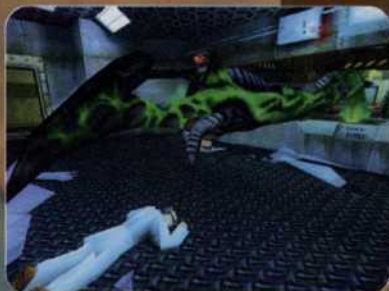


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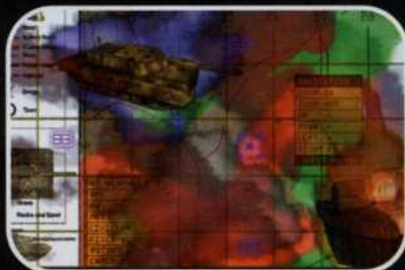
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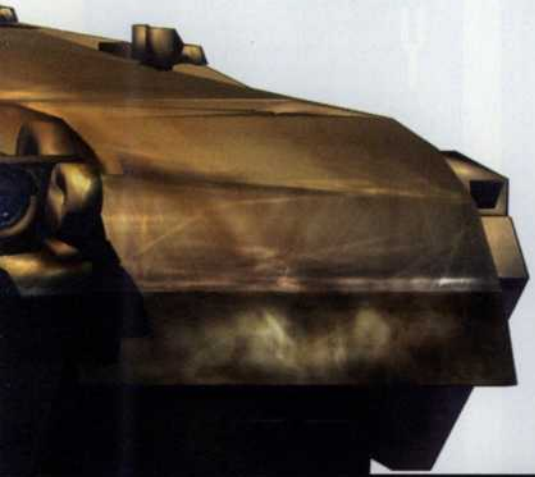
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Total Annihilation: The Core Contingency, Part 2

This time it's the Core's turn to get jiggy with it!

After last month's Arm guide, it's now time for some strategies for getting through the Core missions. You will be in for some tough challenges as you try to fend off the dreaded Arm forces, so don't move another unit until you've had a chance to read through our guide.

Arm Arrives on Hydross

CORE MISSION 1



Build Stinger floating missile towers early and often to deal with the Arm Albatross seaplanes.

The water world of Hydross has no landmasses whatsoever. You will need to build your base using new underwater (and floating) structures. The offensive water-based units require a lot of metal. To be successful, you will need to maximize your metal economy. Send out your mobile units to do some scouting and find the location of the metal deposits.

Have your Commander build the underwater metal extractors while the construction ship builds some floating missile towers. The enemy seaplanes, when they arrive, can be devastating, so make sure to have plenty of firepower in place to knock them down.

Next, have the construction sub build an Advanced Shipyard so that you can build an Advanced Construction Sub and a Hive carrier. The Advanced Construction Sub will allow you to build a Seaplane Platform. Be sure to get some air coverage up ASAP. The Hive will serve as a repair pad for the seaplanes and will generate energy that will help your base economy. The Hive will also help extend your radar coverage so that

you will be less likely to be surprised by enemy attacks.

Have your Commander build an Underwater Metal Storage facility. When your units, or the enemy units, start sinking, they can represent a good source of much needed metal. You will need the extra metal storage capability or you will lose a lot of metal that could otherwise go toward your war effort.

You may need to make some Floating Metal Makers in order to have enough metal. Put them on a squad key so that you can turn them on and off quickly. Don't underestimate the damage that the Serpents can do to your units. They are best taken out using the torpedoes from one of your subs. The Serpents can be reclaimed for an incredible amount of energy. Reclaim them when you need a shot of power to move the economy along.

Keep plenty of construction ships active. There is always another missile tower to build, or another sunken ship to reclaim. When in doubt, put them on repair patrol throughout your base.

Wet Work

CORE MISSION 2



Typhoon seaplanes and Shredders are needed to protect your fleet from the Arm Albatross seaplanes.

You start the mission with a Shredder anti-air defense ship. It has flaklers mounted on it as well as anti-air missiles, which makes it a very handy unit indeed. Keep it above water as long as possible.

Do some scouting to see where the metal deposits are. There are some corpses that can be reclaimed for their metal and some floating Dragon's Teeth that will come in handy for base defense. Take out the pesky Serpents quickly, since you don't want them taking out anything of yours critical early in the mission.

Watch out for enemy ships with long range guns sitting on the other side of the reef. Get a Hive Carrier built as soon as you can to give you extended radar coverage. Also, get a Seaplane Platform made. You need to do this to complete the mission and besides, the Seaplanes can take out even the biggest ships and are adept at moving to a trouble spot very quickly. Once you have your base established, go after the Arm fleet.



It's imperative to build an underwater metal storage facility quickly.

Sitting Ducks

CORE MISSION 3

First, build a Tidal Generator off to the side (away from the Serpents) and then build a Torpedo Launcher. That will take care of the Serpents when they return from their feeding run. Next, build a Shipyard and get on with the mission.

This mission comes down to the basics — build lots of construction ships, which build lots of floating missile towers, and repair and reclaim.



For extended radar coverage and the ability to manufacture seaplanes, make sure you build a Hive Carrier quickly.



When investigating the Arm base to the south, don't skimp on the number of Typhoons you send.

Slugging and Slogging

CORE MISSION 5

Get your base set up with plenty of anti-air defenses and units. There are rivers to the north and to the south. You will need to defend both possible fronts. Keep your construction units busy building, repairing, and reclaiming. There will be

enemy hovercraft raids that may require your Commander to do some serious D-gunning. Be sure that he has all the energy he needs before you march him to the front and be sure that he has a construction unit that he can run to if he needs repairs afterwards.



The advanced radar and the Punisher unit make a good combination for ranged attacks. To avoid shooting the beacon by accident, only shoot moving targets.

Lusch — Welcome to Paradise

CORE MISSION 4

Lusch is a world clogged with rampant jungle growth. You will want to thin out the jungle a bit to allow you room to build your base. Use your construction units on patrol through the jungle to clear out the undergrowth. As long as you have a deficiency of energy, they will reclaim trees and other plant life. An Energy Storage facility will encourage this. By clearing the jungle you will be

opening up a clear field of fire and reducing the chance that your units will suffer damage as a result of forest fires.

Get your defenses up quickly so that you will be good and ready when the enemy hovercraft attack. Heavy Laser Towers are very effective as a defense against hovercraft since their light armor is most easily destroyed by a weapon that can target quickly and hit hard. Use your radar to target the incoming enemy units as soon as they are within range.

Once you have your base defenses established, build a Hovercraft Pad and start producing the various hovercrafts. You need to build a Hovercraft Pad in order to complete the mission anyway, but even if you didn't, hovercrafts are the best way to launch an assault on Lusch. The hovercraft can shoot down the rivers and then up on shore to take out enemy plants.



Dense jungles are no problem for the Pyros!



The advanced radar and the Punisher unit make a good combination for ranged attacks. To avoid shooting the beacon by accident, only shoot moving targets.

Alien Bugs

CORE MISSION 6


A solar plant is essential so that your Commander has enough energy to take out the scorpion. A radar tower will help to give you early warning.

At the very beginning of the mission, your Commander is bugged by a bug — one of the alien life forms known as the Scorpions. Finish the bug off by D-gunning it before it can do too much damage.

There is a Scorpion hive between you and the beacon. Try to take out as many of the Scorpions as you can by using long range weapons. A well-placed Punisher Cannon will handle this task quite well.

Get your defenses up quickly. Build a couple of Hovercraft Pads as well as some Aircraft Plants. Reclaim trees to power metal makers in order to keep the plants producing.

Be careful when you assault the Arm base because you do not want to destroy the beacon. You must capture the beacon in order to complete the mission.

Commanding Confusion

CORE MISSION 8

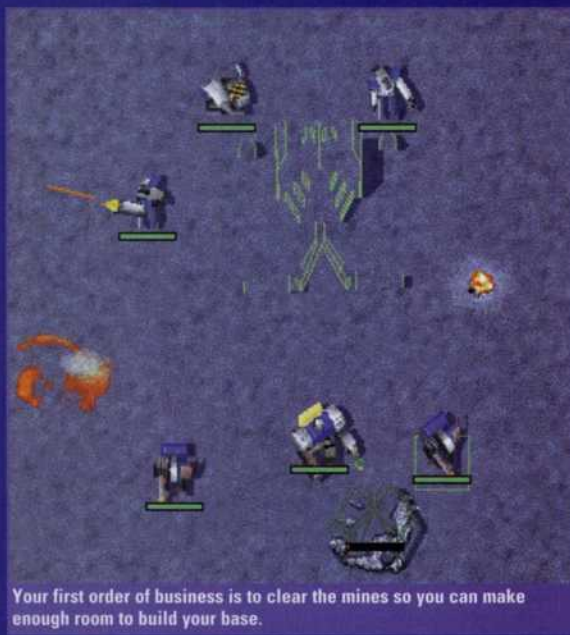
This mission sees the first appearance of the Arm Decoy Commander. There is also an uncomfortable number of Arm Maverick Kbots wandering around (more than one is uncomfortable).

You start out in the middle of a minefield. Have the Freakers destroy the mines in order to clear enough area for a base. Get an Aircraft Plant made and some Construction Aircraft built. You will need them to build extractors on the metal deposits in the fissure to the east (if you use any other construction unit it may build itself into a corner). Get some anti-air weapons made as well.

The enemy will have units hidden behind the rocks and spires. The Decoy Commanders, even without having a D-gun, still pack a nasty heavy laser and do a whole lot of damage when they explode. Try to

keep them out of your base.

Use Cans to destroy the Decoy Commanders and clear out the minefields. Keep a Voyer mobile radar bot behind them to help spot targets. Use the radar screen to target the unseen mines.



Your first order of business is to clear the mines so you can make enough room to build your base.

Shake, Rattle, And Die

CORE MISSION 7

Tremblor is a world of earthquakes and bottomless vapor pits. Though it is metal rich, the metal is often concentrated in nearly inaccessible fissures.

You will need construction units on patrol throughout the base so they can automatically repair any damage caused by earthquakes. You will know that an earthquake has occurred by the shaking screen — and if it happened under any of your units, they will complain and claim that they are under attack.

To get to the metal, build air construction units and have them build metal extractors. The vapor pits will be impassable except by air units. Use the vapor pits as barriers that work for you.

You will find that you can hide key units behind the spires and use the spires to protect them. On the same note, be careful of the rock spires. The enemy can also use them to hide behind, and they can get in the way of your weapons.

The Arm will have salted the map with land mines. Some of the mines will show up on radar, so get radar coverage up quickly. Have your long-range units destroy mines as you find them. Be wary of booby-trapped metal deposits!

When dealing with mine fields, it is best to use ranged weapons. Use a squad of Mortys to do the clean-up work. Watch out for mines that are hard to spot because of radar jamming.



The Freaker unit is useful for scouting out mine fields and taking out the ones that your radar and long-range weapons miss.



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Storming the Cloud Fortress

CORE MISSION 9

The Arm fortress is located to the south. There is no ground access to the fortress, so you will have to destroy it with air units and long range weapons.

Start by getting a radar tower up so that you can see where the land mines are and to see any other hidden units nearby. Beware of Mavericks waiting in ambush!

Grouping four or five Pulverizer missile towers together will eventually knock down the most persistent air

attack. Build several of these groups around your base to protect your most critical structures.

Build an Advanced Radar Tower, and some Vulture Radar Planes to give yourself radar coverage of the entire map. Use an Intimidator, Rapiers, Hurricanes, and Vamps to destroy the Arm fortress.

Build an Air Repair Pad — your air units are going to see a lot of action. Be sure that you have enough energy sources to power it.



Send in plenty of air units to attack the Cloud Fortress. Your ranged weapons will need to use them as spotters, so make sure you keep enough of them alive.

Frigid Devastation

CORE MISSION 11



The versatility of the hovercraft enables them to lead the assault. Snappers will draw the fire of the floating laser towers long enough to take them out with the Nixer's mini-merls.

Arm is aggressively establishing itself on Gelidus, and it will probably start by destroying your Moho Mine and other units to the far west. There is not much that you can do about that. Move the Sumo over to the Moho and hope for the best.

Get some Solar Collectors built quickly. There are a couple of metal deposits and some corpses that can be reclaimed later, but you need energy fast.

To move along the base development, have your Construction Hovercraft start a structure and have your Commander finish it. This allows the Construction Hovercraft to build more of the critical defenses quickly.

You will find the Rapier to be especially useful. Build a squad of them as soon as you can. Use them in conjunction with a hovercraft squad to attack the Arm base on the floe to the west.



Be sure to keep at least one construction unit on repair patrol. If you get caught in a hailstorm, you'll be glad you did.

Cool Down

CORE MISSION 10

Gelidus is a harsh and forbidding frozen world. Metal is scarce, and incredible hailstorms will fall intermittently. Use your metal wisely and have repair patrols throughout your base. If you can time your strike against the Arm emplacements just after a hailstorm has hit them, they will be in a weakened condition.

Have your Commander build some Metal Makers to help with the metal economy. Be sure that you have enough energy to power them before you activate the Metal Makers.

You will find the hovercraft to be especially effective for navigating the ice floes. Make a Hovercraft Pad as soon as you have established your defenses. Also use the Construction Aircraft to build an Advanced Aircraft Plant.

Early in the mission, you may want to use your Commander to destroy any marauding enemy hovercraft. He will not need to use his D-gun because hovercraft are pretty easy to destroy, but be sure to turn off any Metal Makers before your Commander gets into trouble. Watching an energy-lean Commander die unnecessarily is a terrible thing. Also, beware the enemy hovercraft with long-range rockets. They will destroy your Commander before he can get out of range. Keep your Commander moving and he will take fewer hits.

You may want to experiment with the Fortification Wall sections and build yourself a first class fort. Use the Toaster pop-up cannons along with the Walls to really build a comfy base.

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Time to Leave

CORE MISSION 12

Keep the Fusion Plant from being destroyed! You will need its energy to make the repairs to the other units. Move all construction units to the Fusion Plant to repair it. Also, move the Krogoth closer to the Fusion Plant so that

you can repair him and so that his anti-air missiles can help protect the Fusion Plant. As soon as the Fusion Plant is safe, build some missile towers, and repair the Krogoth. Get a plant built so that you will have more construction units and some mobile units to

repel the waves of desperate attackers.

Remember that this is a defensive mission. You just have to survive long enough to keep the Implosion Device/Beacon from being destroyed. Save often and play tough and you will eventually prevail.



Remember that this is a defensive mission. It will be tough to keep this imploder up and running. Be prepared to repair frequently.



Keep the Krogoth alive! These Hawks shouldn't be a problem, but the Commander is standing by just in case.

Krogoth Encounter

BONUS MISSION

This is a historical mission that takes place prior to the many advances in technology seen in *Core Contingency*. You are limited to the units that were available in the original *Total Annihilation*, and you will be taking on the most devastating weapon ever conceived by Core technicians. This is not a mission for the timid.

Advanced players will tend to play this mission as they would a multi-player game — aggressively and offensively. That is until they meet Krogoth, who will quickly change their stance to one of a more defensive nature.

Take the time to build up a strong defense before you go Krogoth hunting. Guardians and Annihilators will be useful. Judicious use of Dragon's Teeth to stall the onslaughts will allow you to think about your strategy, and buy time for your big guns to do their work.

Large groups of expendable units to slow down Krogoth are another good way to approach the scenario. While Krogoth is turning them to rubble, you can be hammering him with your heavy stuff. If you can get a Spider within range, the odds will tilt in your favor.

As soon as you are confident that you can withstand the Krogoth attacks, go hunting for the Gantries. Use air units to take out the Gantries as quickly as possible. That will slow down the flow of Krogoths, unless the enemy makes more Gantries.

Once you have your base secured and have eliminated the Gantries, it's time to get aggressive. Move large groups throughout

the map searching for the last few Krogoths and destroying all construction units and plants. This will be a difficult task, but it's one you must accomplish or you will be faced with even more resistance as the enemy rebuilds.

To win, you just have to kill all of the

Krogoths and their Gantries. Of course to do that, a whole lot of units are going to become statistics (speaking of which, check out your stats after you complete the mission...they should be impressive). A last hint for this mission is to stock up on Power Bars... you're going to need the energy.



It's easy to get your butt kicked if you're not careful in the bonus mission. Good thing we're here to help!

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Readers' Requests

Cheats, cheats, cheats, and — you guessed it — more cheats!

This month, it seems like the only thing on our readers' minds are cheat codes. You dirty little scoundrels! Back in the old days, we used to suffer through every painful minute of every game we could get our greedy little hands on! We played the same scenario over and over again until we were ready to launch our computers out the window and gouge our eyes out with sharp instruments! But did we complain? No sir! We were thankful for what we had! If we *did* stoop so low as to cheat, we used to have to walk six miles in a blizzard....

DIE BY THE SWORD

To use these cheats, press the **F1** key during gameplay and type the following:

- FREEZ** Turns off the artificial intelligence of the enemies on a level. Can also be used in tournament and arena modes.
- AGRAV** Any limbs hacked off will be subjected to anti-gravity and bounce around the level.
- GHOST** Turns off the physics of the enemies while you remain in full control of your character.
- AIAIM** Allows you to see the enemies' targeting information on where they think your character is.
- DEDLY** Multiplies the damage of your sword by 10 each time you type it, but is not usable in net play.
- GOLRG** Increases the size of your character by 110% each time you type it.
- BAMFF** Teleports you to predetermined locations on the level.
- MUKOR** God mode. Hits and lava will not do damage, but crushing will.
- LUNAR** Reduces the gravity each time you type it. It cannot be turned off once activated.
- PEACE** Delivers 50,000 points of damage to any enemies in combat mode.
- BTINY** Shrinks your character to 50% of original size. Type again to return to normal.
- HICUP** Randomly launches characters



To put a quick end to any battle in *Die by the Sword*, use the **PEACE** cheat code to power up your sword and deliver 50,000 points of damage. Ouch!

- around the screen.
- IFALL** Causes your character to trip.
- GOCAM** Enables camera that you can move at will. Use the CTRL + U, I, O, J, K, L to move on axis. CTRL + directional arrows to zoom and rotate. CTRL + mouse rolls camera freely.
- FPERS** Displays frames per second.
- BZONE** Cycles through graphic modes of the polygons: wireframes, flatshaded, off, and normal.

SEVEN KINGDOMS

To enable the cheat mode, type **!!!!@###** and then press the key listed below.

- C** Adds \$1,000 to your bank account.
- V** Adds 1,000 to your food reserves.
- T** Gives you all technological advances and scrolls.
- M** Shows the entire map.
- +** Increases the population in a selected city. The nationality of the additional people will be random.
- =** Use to increase prayer points in the selected Seat of Power.
- B** Immediately completes construction of the selected building.
- Z** Toggles the fast build mode on and off.
- U** Makes the king immortal.

ARMY MEN

To enable these cheat codes, press **Escape** and type the following:

- INVULNERABLE** .. The name says it all. Gives Sarge invulnerability.
- PLETHORA** Gives you unlimited ammunition for your secondary weapon.
- PYROMANCER** ... Unlimited flamethrower use.
- PARALYSIS** Your enemies will be unable to move.
- OCCULTATION** ... No one can see you until you fire your weapon.
- TRIUMPH** Win the scenario automatically.

UNREAL

Press the **-** key to open the console and type in any of the codes below:

- GOD** Gives 999 rounds for all weapons.
- GHOST** Turn on no clipping mode.
- FLY** Turns on Flight mode.
- WALK** Turns off both flight and no clipping modes.
- PLAYERONLY** Stops time from passing. Type again to start up again.
- BEHINDVIEW 1** Gives you a third-person perspective.
- BEHINDVIEW 0** Resets normal first-person perspective.
- OPEN (MAP NAME)** .. Go to any level in the game.



Whether it's invulnerability, the ability to fly, or access to all the levels, our cheat codes for *Unreal* will deliver.

MAP NAMES:

- Bluff • Ceremony • Chizra • Dark • Dasacellers • Dasapass • Dcrater • Dig • DKNightOp • DMARIZA • DMCURSE • DmDeathFan • DmDeck16 • DMEIsinore • DMfith • DmHealPod • DmMorbias • DmRadikus • DmTundra • Dug • Endgame • Entry • ExtremeLab • ExtremeEnd • ExtremeGen • ExtremeBeg • ExtremeCore • ExtremeDark • ExtremeDGen • Gateway • Harobed • IsvDeck1 • IsvKran4 • IsvKran32 • NaliBoat • NaliC • NaliLord • Noork • NyLeve • Passage • QueenEnd • Ruins • SkyBase • SkyCaves • SkyTown • SpireVillage • TerraLift • Terraniux • TheSunspire • Trench • Unreal • VeloraEnd • Vortex2

FORSAKEN

At the start screen, type **bubbles** and then type:

- THEFULLMONTY** ... Access to all of the levels.
- IAMZEUS** God mode.



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- B) TELL HER YOU'D LOVE TO TAKE HER SHOE SHOPPING THIS WEEKEND.
- C) IMMEDIATELY GO ONLINE TO PC GAMER'S REQUEST-O-MATIC SITE TO RECEIVE INFORMATION ON THE FOREMOST JOYSTICK MANUFACTURERS.



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OBVIOUSLY,

YOUR CHOICE IS "C." SO KISS YOUR WIFE FOR BEING SO COOL, AND THEN CHECK OUT REQUEST-O-MATIC.

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The votes are in: Burger King was the fast food chain that had the politically incorrect fish sandwich known as The Whaler. Thanks to all our faithful readers who wrote in — many of you did

extensive research on our behalf, and we are forever grateful. Now on to bigger and better things. You've probably already read our "Top 10 Games of 1999" story, so which game are you most looking forward to? Let us know!

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No Returns

I'd just like to comment on Mr. Bennett's column "We're Mad as Hell" regarding buggy games. Mr. Bennett proposes that one way gamers protect themselves is by not buying games from stores that don't allow returns. As a customer service representative for a large computer company, I'd like to tell you why we don't allow returns on open software. First, as Mr. Bennett points out, there is a large amount of CD "burning" going on where people buy a game, make a copy, and then try to return the game. You cannot possibly imagine how many people have tried to return large amounts of software along with a CD recorder purchased the day before. Second, unless the program is defective, the company that produced the game will simply not pay us for the product. And, I'm sorry to say, but a buggy program isn't defective — it is simply lousy work (at least in the gamer's opinion). Of course, if a game is defective out of the box, we, as most stores, will gladly exchange it for the same title. But, other than that, I would simply do what Mr. Bennett proposes — gamers should wait a month to see what the reviews are on a game they are interested in before buying it.

— Robert Angelo, via the Internet

To a certain extent, I agree with Mr. Bennett's recent column about buggy games, but I do have few comments. I work for a computer store, and I am constantly faced with people wanting to bring back their games. Ninety-five percent of the time these people are not bringing them back because the games are crappy or need patches. Customers bring the games back because they didn't read the requirements and tried to play *Forsaken* on their 386.

The individual stores are the ones who get screwed the most. Game publishers sometimes refuse to take the software back from us, but almost all of them have a Satisfaction Guarantee for individual gamers. All our customers have to do is call the number, send in the game, and get their money back. But most gamers are too lazy to do that —



Sure, a gamer who doesn't read the hardware requirements before he buys a game and ends up finding out he can't run *Forsaken* on his 386 is on his own. But when he buys a game that doesn't live up to its advertising because its publisher kicked it out the door unfinished, he's entitled to a full refund or an exchange. If we can't vote with our dollars, the ship-now-patch-later problem will never go away.

they'd rather return it to the store. Most stores have to take products back, so we end up losing money because someone was too lazy to wait five minutes for a patch or return the game to its publisher. The truth is that returns are the biggest loss a computer store can have because we have to sell them at clearance prices, which is quite often less than what we bought the games for.

Another point: Some stores that take games back will only exchange them for the same games. How does that help the situation if the game sucks?

Look, I don't want you all to think that I like crappy, unfinished games. I just wanted everyone to see the other side of the story.

— Ryan, via the Internet

Thanks, Robert and Ryan, for giving us the game retailer's point of view. But our response to retail-

ers is the same one Dan had for game companies that complain that they have to ship unfinished products because "that's the way the system works": That's your problem, not the gamer's. If software stores are willing to sell defective products, they'd better be willing to accept returns. And as long as there are some stores out there that will make an exchange or a refund on a buggy game, that's where smart gamers will shop. Finally — while we agree that a 386 owner who doesn't bother to read a game's requirements deserves to be stuck with an unplayable game — a buggy game absolutely is a defective product. If it doesn't work as advertised, there's no other word for it. The idea that a program is only defective if the CD-ROM is scratched or broken was created by software retailers because it serves the purposes of software retailers — it drastically reduces the number of returns they have to accept, and it allows them to pretend they're not responsible for selling a product that doesn't do what it's supposed to do.

Federation Fraggged

This is in reply to Jason Bates' recent column titled, "Frag the Sky." Toward the end of it, he mentions America Online's *Federation*. Regrettably, *Federation* was removed from AOL last summer and forced to start out on its own for a hourly fee, displacing many freeloading players (like myself) who relied on AOL's flat rate. *Fed* was truly a great, massively multi-player game, and I was deeply saddened when I heard that AOL had asked IBGames to move it in order to make room for their "Premium Games."

— Jarrod Ozereko, via the Internet

ADSL

Your recent ADSL article surprised me. You say that "not all of these trials are being run in big cities — or even big countries." Hey, what about your neighbor to the north? There are parts of Canada that have been testing this technology for two years. We do have one limitation with ADSL — you have to be within two miles of a telephone routing station. Beyond that, the service will start to slow down, and the company wants as fast a connection as possible, so they have restricted it to this distance. As for costs...when you said it costs \$1,000 for installation, does that include buying the modem or just installation? Here it costs \$100 for installation and \$40 per month, but we only have to rent the modem. Anyway, I thought I would mention what we have going up here in the cold north. Do you know how hard it is to keep the walls of my igloo from melting when I run my computer? Can you do an article on this? So many computer owners are becoming homeless because of this. Thanks.

— Brad McGraw, via the Internet



ADSL: Your gateway to faster death?



Myth II looks like a promising follow-up to a great game — but is this sequel thing getting out of hand?

Funny you should say that, Brad. We recently received a proposal for an article on the perils of running a PC in an igloo — a problem that becomes increasingly relevant as processors become faster and winters colder. Unfortunately, the article was written entirely in French, translated from the original Inuit. We're trying to translate it, but — don't hold your frosty breath.

As for ADSL prices, the ones we quoted were given to us by a representative of Slip.Net, one of the first ISPs to offer ADSL in the San Francisco Bay area. We've gotten several E-mails from folks who've found ADSL much cheaper where they live — interestingly, most of them were, like you, from the Great White North.

I'm one of the people lucky enough to be offered the ADSL you talked about in the July issue. When I got the E-mail from BelSouth (my ISP), it seemed pretty cool, but I still wasn't sure. After all, it'll cost me around 40 bucks a month, plus whatever installation charges there are. But then, that very same day, I picked up your mag and there was a full page story on ADSL. After reading this, there was no doubt in my mind that I need it. No more lag for me, now I can get fragged in *Quake II* without any delay.

I live in north central Florida, in an area that is mostly cows, trees, and cows. The closest software store is a 30-minute drive, and I am surrounded by people who think *Redneck Rampage* is a simulation of real life. Yet I love PC games, and am now actually being rewarded for living here by being offered to try ADSL. There is a God.

Also, I'd like to thank you guys for explaining the way ADSL works, and exactly what speed it connects at. As usual, you answered all my questions.

— Dennis Farrell, via the Internet

Sequelitis: Part II

Frankly, I don't understand why companies keep churning out sequels. I understand that if the first game was very successful then making a part two would be profitable, but damn! Your recent "Hot 100" feature included numerous sequels to previous games — four out of the five games on the front cover were sequels! Don't get me wrong, I'll be waiting for *Fallout 2* and *Myth II*, but there are too many sequels nowadays. Look at *Quake II*. It has only the slightest story line, and yet plans for *Quake III* are already in progress. Sure, it was one of the biggest hits in PC history, but who wants to play the same game again and again? If developers want to make sequels, they ought to make official expansion packs or create sagas. The *Elder Scrolls* titles are a good example. *Arena*, *Daggerfall*, *Battlespire*, and *Redguard* all bind into one saga in the world of Tamriel, yet each has its own distinct engine, graphics, and story line. Everyone has confidence that the *Quake II* designers can make a good game, so why can't they make an original game?

— Allen, Joshua "Reficul,"
via the Internet

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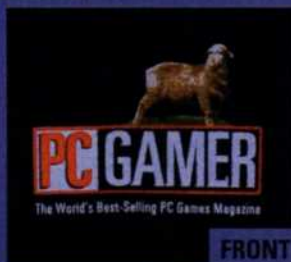
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NEXT TIME...

As the September issue draws to a close, our thoughts inevitably drift toward October, and all the joy it will no doubt bring, along the lines of...

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PC GAMER PRESENTS...

the BEST GAMES of all time

Oh, yes! It's that time once again — time for us to scan the width and breadth of PC gaming history and provide our definitive listing of the 50 greatest games ever made — and it looks set to be very different to our last listing of a year and a half ago. You thought the American Film Institute's Top 100 Films was controversial? Baby, you ain't seen nothin' yet!

PLUS...

Inside Cavedog

Next month, *PC Gamer* goes where no gaming mag has gone before... deep into the bowels of Cavedog Entertainment, creator of *Total Annihilation*. We'll have a first look at the TA prequel *Total Annihilation Kingdoms*, Ron Gilbert's *Good and Evil*, and the mysterious *Amen* and *Elysium*. Don't miss it!



Reviews!

We'll have plenty for you to sink your teeth into, including...

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SEPTEMBER 1998

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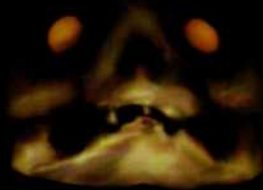
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The door gently creaked open and a man painted to look like a zombie stepped into the house. "Sorry, guys," he said. "It's over."
"What?" John lowered the shotgun and ejected the shells from the chamber. "Why?"
"The numbers just weren't behind us." The zombie-man gently shook his head. "Sorry."
"Those bastards!" Carl pulled the rubber wound from his leg and threw it down. "This is crap! The guild is going to hear about this." He stormed out the door.
John and the zombie-man watched him leave. "What are you going to do now?" John asked.
"Got a gig playing a blue ass monkey. Nothing too great, but it'll pay the bills." The two men walked toward the door. "You?"
"Heard something about a guy fighting killer robots. Gotta read the script, though. Could turn out to be crap."
"It probably is."
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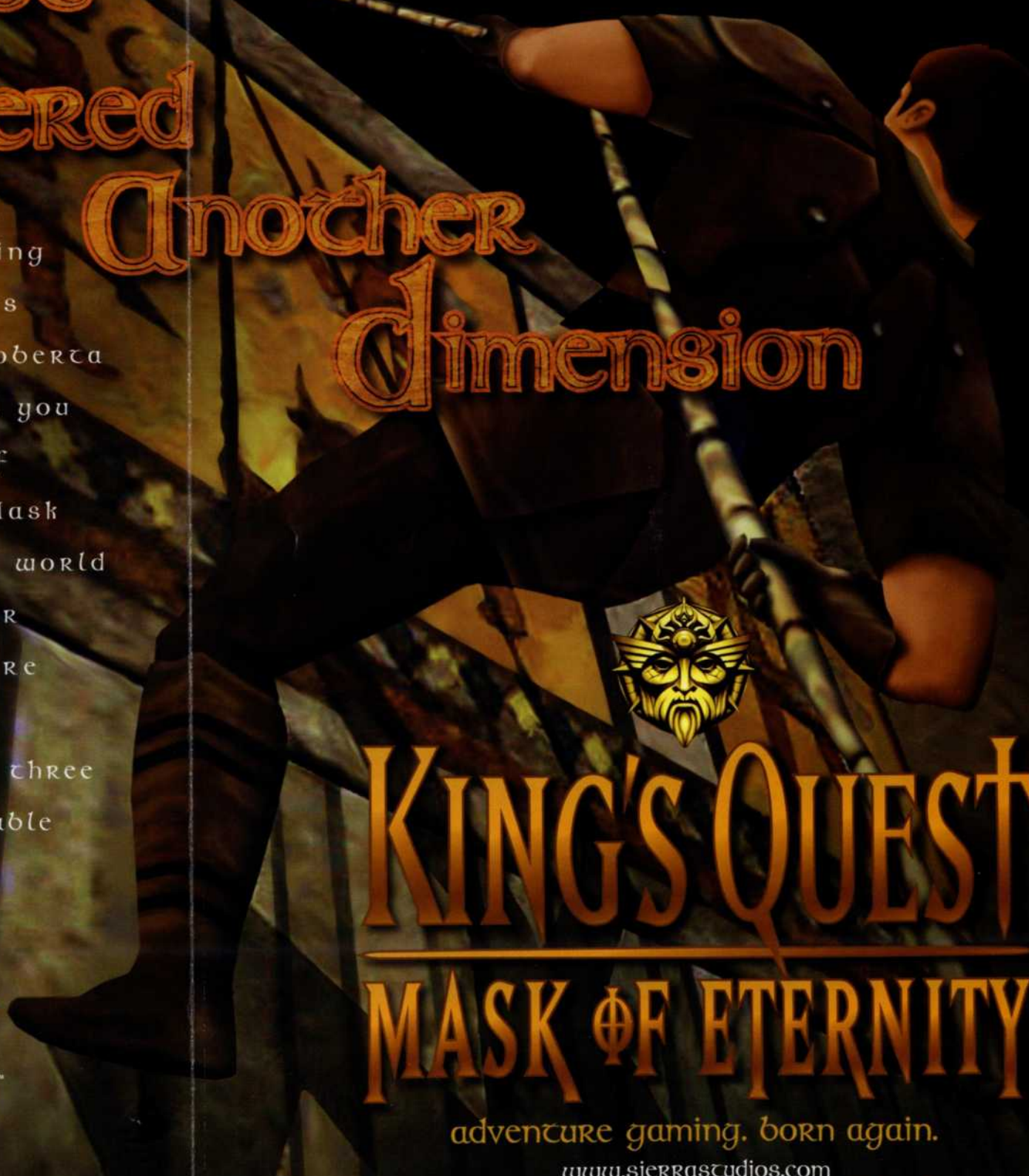
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