26 REVIEWS: Shogo • NHL 99 • Dune 2000 • IAF • Voodoo Banshee

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Vol. 5 No. 12 • DECEMBER 1998

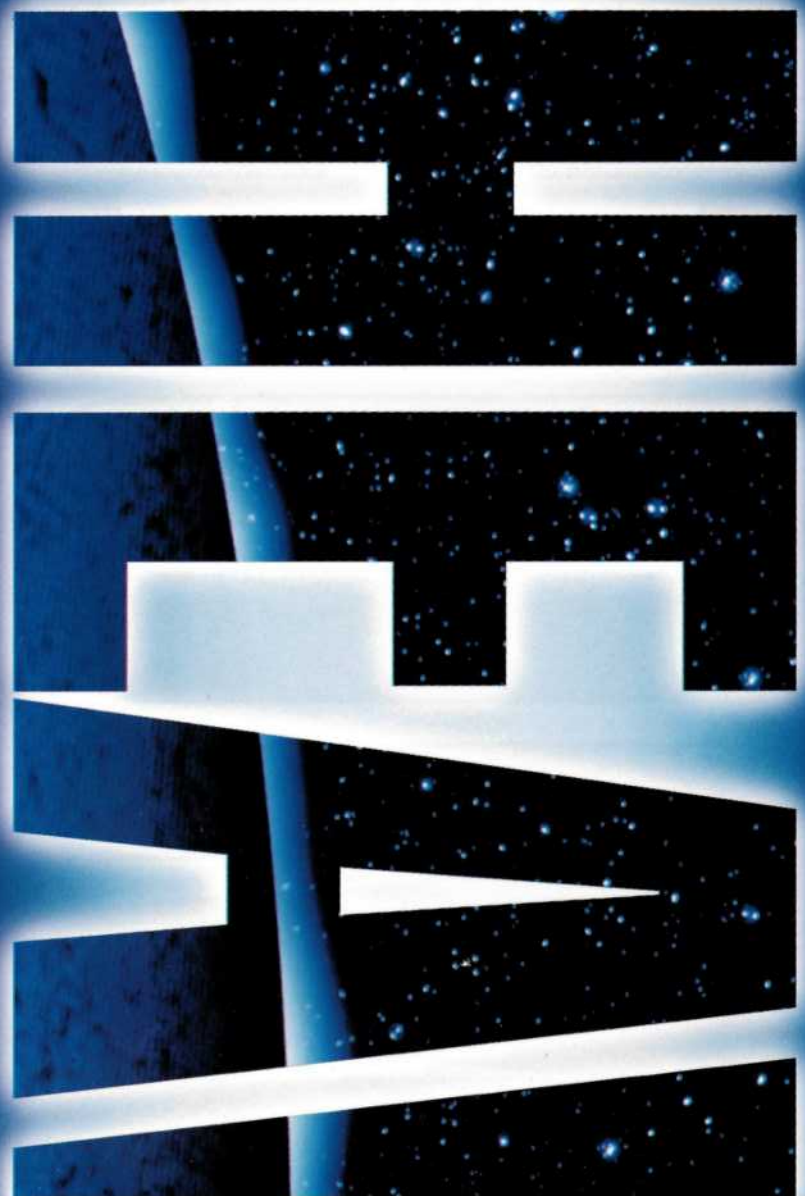
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PC GAMER

VOLUME 5 • NUMBER 12 • DECEMBER 1998

INDIANA JONES and the UNDISCOVERED GENRE



60

It's been a long time since LucasArts last graced us with an Indy game, but now everybody's favorite adventurer is back — and Lara Croft has got a lot to worry about. We've got the first in-depth look at the new action adventure game which looks set to out-raid *Tomb Raider*.

Cover Story

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Big FAT Holiday Special

What games make the best gifts? What will be the hottest titles this Holiday season? What's the best choice of video card, joystick, monitor? What are some of the more original gaming gift ideas? How will you possibly get through another season with your sanity intact? All these and more questions are definitively answered in *PC Gamer*'s Holiday Buyer's Guide!

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Hardware

239 The Hard Stuff

Intel has dominated the PC processor market since the beginning, but recent advances from the competition may change all that. This month we'll tell you why AMD's new chip might just be the David to Intel's Goliath, plus the usual hard-hitting hardware reviews.

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Insert disc, install demos, and play. It's not much more complicated than that, but just in case, here's a handy guide. 8



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The Colonel has found a program that may give old boardgames new life.

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Reasoned writings from our readers.

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Refer to our handy index to find out which products are worthy of your hard-earned dollars and which should be shunned at any price.

416 **Next Issue**
Join us for a trip to South Park as we get the "poop" on the upcoming game based on the immensely popular TV show. We'll also talk with up and coming developer Valve, round-up next year's roleplaying games, and so much more!



So, what's Santa bringing you?

If you haven't already written that Holiday wish-list of yours and stuffed it up the chimney so that it can be spirited away to the North Pole, you'd better get moving. And if you're stuck for ideas, my advice is make a bee-line for this month's Big Fat Holiday Special, which provides a definitive, catch-all guide to the silly season's essential hardware and software.

I already know what I'm going to be dropping hints about. Recent months of attempting to struggle along with my dusty old 166MHz Pentium have finally convinced me that, man, I gotta upgrade! For example, with games like *Half-Life*, *Sin*, *Shogo: Mobile Armor Division*, and *Rainbow Six* tearing up hard drives this Holiday Season and with *Quake III: Arena*, *Max Payne*, *Daikatana*, and *Prey* due in 1999, it's obvious that the first-person action genre has scaled to never-before-imagined heights of excellence. Only problem is, anyone without enough muscle to run these spec-hungry games to their full potential is going to be left out in the cold. So this year I'm treating myself to an upgrade to a ninja-fast Pentium II system and a Voodoo2 card. Oh, I remained loyal to my trusty P166 for a long time, but in the end, resistance is futile.

The Holiday Season is always a watershed period for gaming (more than half of all games sold during the year are sold in the fourth quarter), and when we emerge bleary-eyed from this one and into 1999, we'll be looking at a world in which gamers without fast machines and 3D acceleration are going to have a hard time finding top-name titles that will run acceptably on their systems.

So my advice is this: Take advantage of this season of giving — and get as much cool hardware as you possibly can! Bleed those rich aunts and uncles dry and pump your system to the max. Trust me, you'll need it in the year to come....



Gary Whitta, Editor-in-Chief

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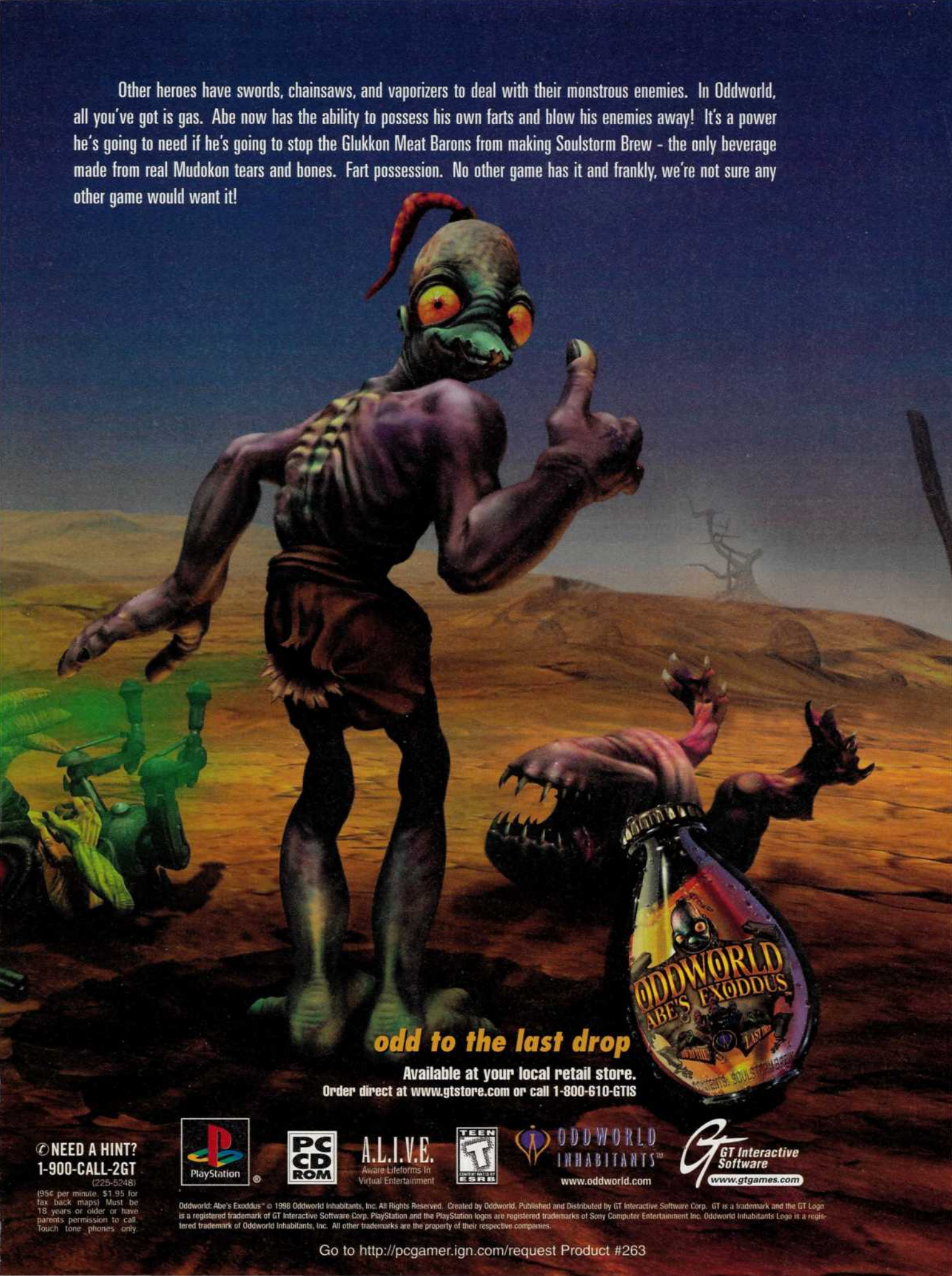


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We never miss a chance to tell people how wrong they are!

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Games



Action, Simulation, RPG, Card games, Board games, blah, blah, blah... Anyways we got a lot of games.

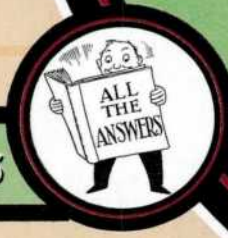
Chat



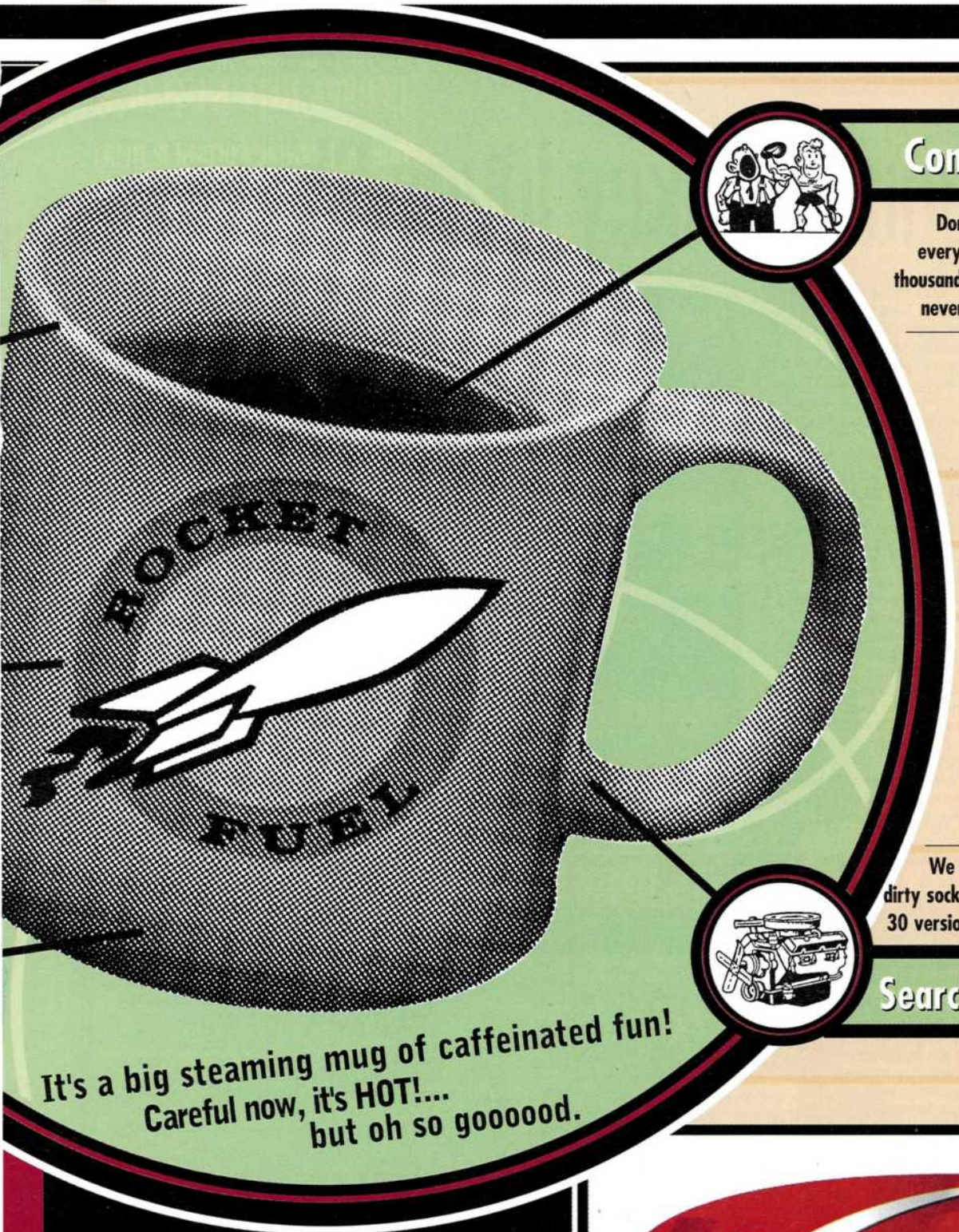
Discuss economic policies in Western Europe (On Thursdays, the topic is Slovania).

We won't call it cheating... but...um...well, it is.

Strategy Guides



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Coconut Monkey loves Shogo

Everyone knows that beloved *PC Gamer* mascot (and all around nice simian-type thing) Coconut Monkey is a monkey of action. He's never content to just sit around, twiddling his — well, since he doesn't have hands, we don't know what he would twiddle, but suffice to say he ain't twiddling anything. Anyway, he loves adventure (as seen by his continuing exploits on *The CD*), and when he found out that *PC Gamer* had the exclusive demo for *Shogo*, he just about flipped. He got out all of his favorite manga books and comics and movies and started skimming through them all in search of a mech design that would put to shame anything seen in *Shogo*. Hours later, exhausted, he realized even a game designer of his expertise could never surpass what he saw in the demo. So he sat down and played through it, and was blown away. So much so, in fact, that he now stomps around the *PCG* offices (well, he bounces), and speaks only in sub-titles. It's all been rather amusing.

You too can join CM is some manga-smashing action with the *PC Gamer* exclusive demo of *Shogo*, so get cracking!

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.EXE* 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 $8.99, 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 the new IGN PC web site at *http://pc.ign.com* on the Internet. The new site contains daily gaming news and a plethora of game news. Our own PC Gamer Online now lives at *http://pcgamer.ign.com*.

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

For the latest information on the *PC Gamer* CD, be sure to check our web site at *pcgamer.ign.com/static/magazine/cdrom.shtml*. As well as new updates, you'll find our Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) at this location.

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 *Shogo* demo type *X:\Shogo\setup.exe* where *X* is the letter of your CD-ROM drive, and press Enter. The setup program for *Shogo* 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.

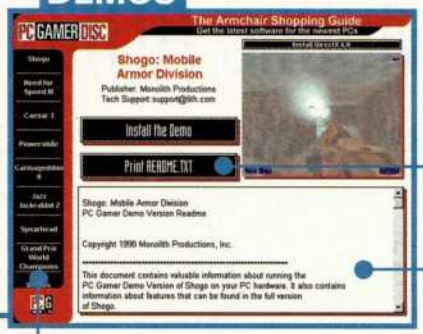
Please remember that if you're using Windows 3.1, you cannot run most Windows 95 demos or our front end.

A lovely * symbol means that that demo requires DirectX in order to run. You can install DirectX by running the DXSETUP.EXE file in the \DIRECTX directory on *The CD*.

Demo	Directory	Install Command	Page	OS
Shogo*	\SHOGO	SETUP.EXE	10	WIN95
NFSIII: Hot Pursuit*	\NFS3DEMO	SETUP.EXE	15	WIN95
Caesar III	\CAESAR3	CAESAR3.EXE	17	WIN95
Carmageddon II*	\CAR2DEMO	SETUP.EXE	18	WIN95
Spearhead*	\SHDEMO	SPHDEMO.EXE	23	WIN95
Recoil*	\RECOIL	RECOIL.EXE	25	WIN95
Carrier Strike Fighter*	\IF18DEMO	IF18DEMO.EXE	27	WIN95
Powerslide*	\PSDEMO	SETUP.EXE	31	WIN95
Grand Prix Champions	\GPWCDEMO	SETUP.EXE	31	WIN95
Swarm*	\SWARM	SETUP.EXE	32	WIN95
Jazz Jackrabbit 2*	\JAZZ2	J2SWC123.EXE	32	WIN95
Speed Busters*	\SBDEMO	SBDEMO.EXE	32	WIN95
EarthLink	\EARTHL	SETUP.EXE	33a	WIN95
MindSpring	\MSPRING	SETUP.EXE	33a	WIN95
Game Add-ons			33a	WIN95
Patches	\PATCHES		352	
Having Problems?			33a	

FINDING YOUR WAY AROUND

DEMOS



The "Install the Demo" does just what you'd expect. Most demos come with README files that further explain gameplay. 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.

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."

ADD-ONS



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

INTERNET

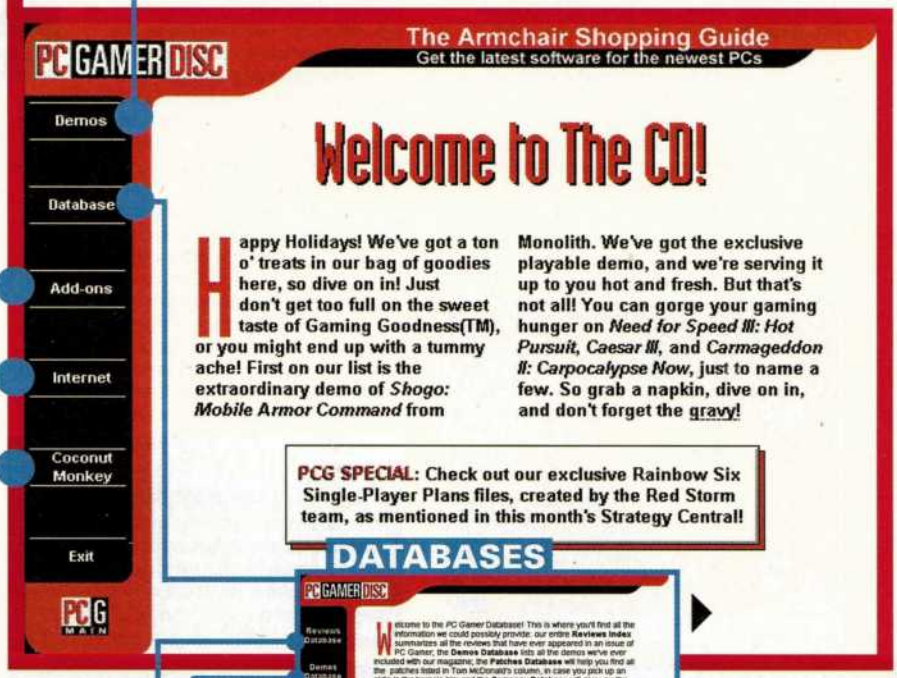


If you want to get online fast, this is the place to go. Get your Internet fix here!

COCONUT MONKEY



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



DATABASES



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.

Shogo: Mobile Armor Division

EXCLUSIVE! PCG 1998

INSTALL \SHOGO\SETUP.EXE
TECH SUPPORT *support@lith.com*
CATEGORY: Action
COMPANY: Monolith Productions
REQUIRED: Windows 95; Pentium 166; 32MB RAM; 50MB hard-drive space; DirectX

It began way back with *Speed Racer*, but for the past several years Japanese manga has swept America like a tidal wave. With the rising popularity of anime, it was only a matter if time before someone took that popular art form and merged it with the popular 3D shooter. Well, the folks at Monolith Productions have done just that with *Shogo: Mobile Armor Division*.

Shogo places you in the role of Sanjuro Makebe, an orphan who ends up in a military academy. (For you *Titanic* fans, there's also a love interest: it seems that Sanjuro has a little thing for a young lass names Kura.) After coming up through the academy, Sanjuro is one serious butt-kicker — and he needs to be, because there's a war raging and he's the only one who can stop it. Hard choices must be made along the way; choices that could affect the lives of millions.



Ka-BOOM! Lighting them evil folks up sure is fun.

The demo for *Shogo* contains one level from the full game, "City of Ghosts." This level will have you commanding a 50-foot mech through city streets, blowing up lots and lots of bad guys in the process. The default controls are listed below, but it's easy enough to change them to a setting more familiar to you — simply enter Options, then Controls and remap the commands. You're also able to change how your graphics are set up, although you do this at the opening menu by clicking Display.

After starting the demo, you'll go through a short cut-scene where you learn your mission objectives — pay attention to what's happening on the screen, because it will give you some clues as to where the baddies will pop up. Once the level starts, it's typical first-person action as you journey through the city blowing the crap out of everything with your big guns. Toggle between the weapons with the number keys; once you get the sniper rifle, you can enter sniper mode by pressing 6 — after you cap that dumb-ass with a headshot, press 6 again to exit sniper mode.

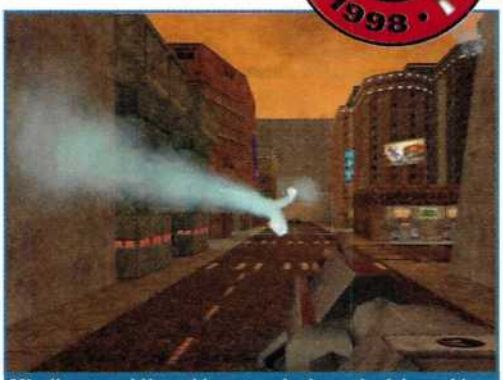
This demo is exclusive to *PC Gamer*

BILLY'S TIP

As the level starts, a bunch of enemies will mass on your right-hand side, around the corner. Step forward to upgrade your weapon, and then fire a shot around the corner. The initial blast will splatter most of them, making it easy for you to go in and mop up.



The opening movie will fill you in on your mission objectives and show you what you look like. Those are some big guns! As the level starts, you can upgrade your weapon right away.



Missiles away! If anything steps in the path of those, it's going to find itself in a world of hurt.

(who loves ya, baby?), and *Shogo* is reviewed in this issue. We don't want to give too much away, but it's a safe bet to say that this game kicks some serious butt. So what are you waiting for? Install the dang thing already and crack some skulls!



Ah, yes, the beloved sniper mode, the new staple of the 3D shooter. Die, sucker, die!

CONTROL KEYS

Mission Log	F1
Forward	↑
Backward	↓
Left	←
Right	→
Duck	C
Jump	Spacebar
Sidestep Left	<
Sidestep Right	>
Fire/Attack	Ctrl
Look Up	page up
Look Down	page down
Toggle Vehicle	V
Chase View	B











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EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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A Classic RPG*

*Minus the faeries, spells, and other crap.

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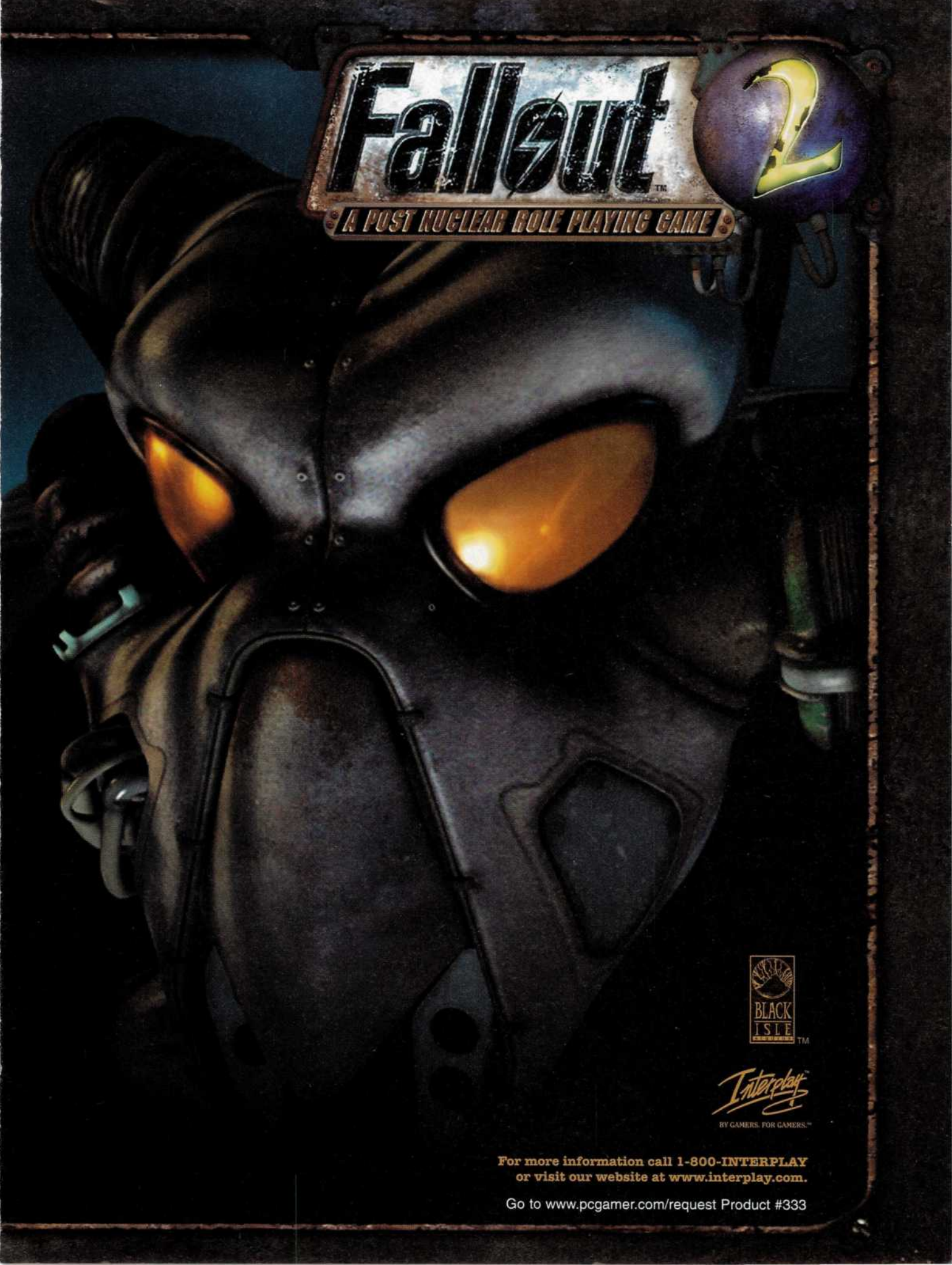


Comprehensive RPG System.

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Need for Speed III: Hot Pursuit

INSTALL \NFS3DEMO\SETUP.EXE
TECH SUPPORT (650) 571-7171

CATEGORY: Racing
COMPANY: Electronic Arts
REQUIRED: Windows 95; Pentium 166; 16MB RAM; 20MB hard-drive space; DirectX

The *Need for Speed* franchise is one of the most popular racing series for the PC. Combine fast cars with fast tracks, and you get — well, fast fun! (Or something like that.) Anyway, Electronic Arts continues its racing series with *Need for Speed III: Hot Pursuit*, and this time you'll be racing against the man himself: Mister Johnny Law.

The demo contains one track from the full game — Rocky Pass — and will randomly select between Single Race and Hot Pursuit modes, weather effects turned off or on, and normal or aggressive AI drivers. Single Race is just your standard race, and Hot Pursuit will pit you against one opponent, with tons of cops breathing down your neck. Not only must you beat the other car to the finish line, but you must avoid being pulled over by the coppers.

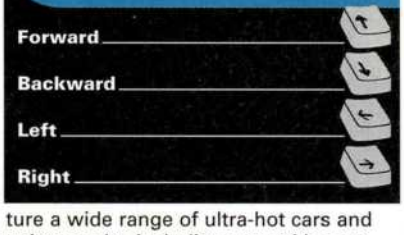
The first time you get pulled over will only result in a warning, but the second time will end with your butt being hauled off to the big house. What does this mean to you? It means that after you get your first ticket, you've got to go all-out to make sure you don't get stopped again. This may result in running the cops down, ramming your opponent into a wall, and/or many other methods of shady driving. But hey, as long as you don't end up in the slammer, who cares?

The demo only lets you drive the Corvette, although the full game will feature a wide range of ultra-hot cars and twisty tracks, including several bonus cars. This issue features a review of the full game, so be sure to check it out for the lowdown on this racing goodness.



That cop wants to pull you over — put the pedal to the metal and leave him in the dust.

CONTROL KEYS





Dang! Busted by Da Man. You're only allowed two tickets, so don't get busted again.



What could be more fun than screaming down the side of a mountain in the pouring rain? Not much...so hang on, because here we go!



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Caesar III

INSTALL \CAESAR3\CAESAR3.EXE
TECH SUPPORT (206) 644-4343
CATEGORY: Strategy
COMPANY: Sierra
REQUIRED: Windows 95; Pentium 90; 16MB RAM; 45MB hard-drive space; 1MB PCI video card

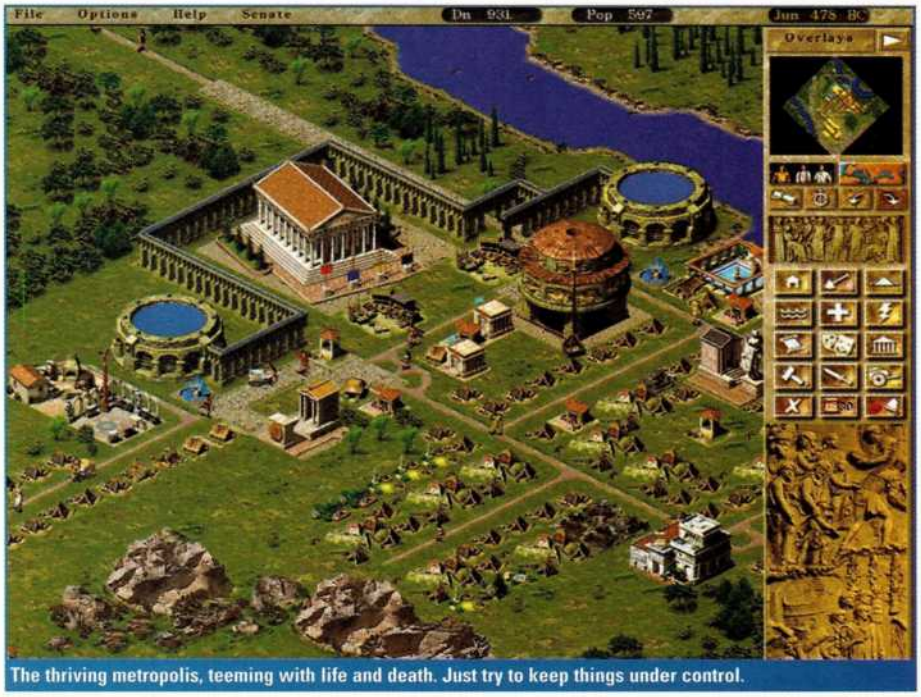
The Roman Empire is new, still growing, and in search of a few good men to govern its various cities. You've been picked to become one of the elite few, and it's up to you to grow your city from a little thing down by some river into a full-blown metropolis that will one day rival Rome itself. It'll take guts, cunning, planning, and a strong stomach for the day-to-day tasks of running the show.

The demo lets you try a couple of levels from the full game, and you'll be challenged to create your city, populate it, grow food, and create the backbone of a (hopefully) strong economy. If you're successful, Rome will promote you to bigger and better things.

To get started, you'll need to build housing to attract folks to your neck of the woods. On the right-hand side of the screen in a menu bar; scroll your mouse over it, and a window will pop up to tell you what each icon does. After you create housing, people will start to show up, and new options will appear as your population grows. Once things are rolling, you must build a Senate, farms, granaries, schools, temples, and other structures. Fires will break out and buildings will collapse, so you'll need to be ready to take care of those problems as they arise.

The second mission of the demo is where you'll have access to a wide range of options. Choose your city center carefully and keep in mind that you can only build the farms on the yellow grass located within the semi-circle of rocks.

Plan well, and your city will thrive — and Rome will take notice, quickly moving you up the ranks. Plan poorly, and your city will collapse or burn up, and everyone will leave. And your Roman bosses will be none too pleased with the likes of you. If that happens, you'd best be working on your lion-fighting techniques....



The thriving metropolis, teeming with life and death. Just try to keep things under control.


To get the settlers to join your new town, you'll need to construct a well and build housing.



The opening screen will fill you in on your mission objectives and other such things.

BILLY'S TIP

After you create your Senate, be sure to scroll your mouse over it from time to time to check the status of your city, including unemployment. Once it gets too high, people will start to leave, so you've got to make sure you have plenty of employment opportunities for your citizens. Once your unemployment is around zero, carefully balance the growth of your city by alternating between building housing and building places of employment.

Carmageddon II: Carpocalypse Now

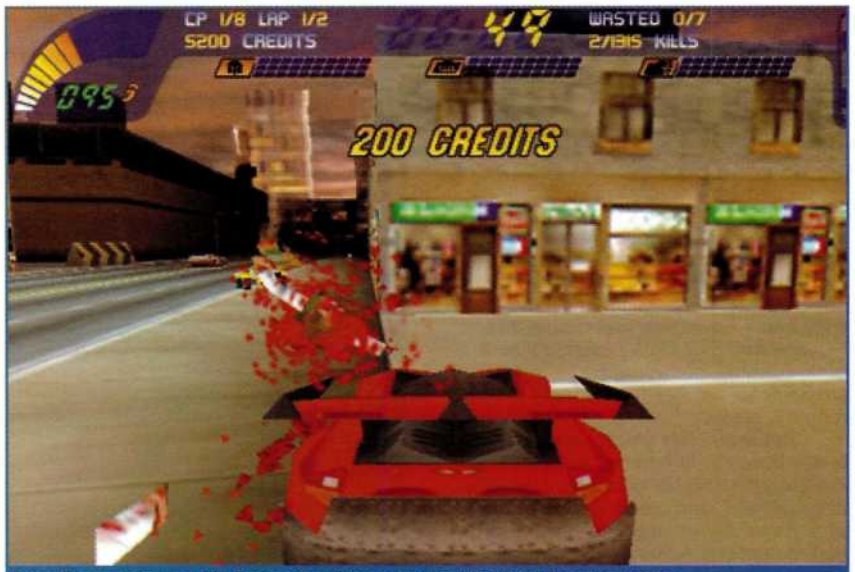
INSTALL \CAR2DEMO\SETUP.EXE
TECH SUPPORT (714) 553-6678

CATEGORY: Action
COMPANY: Interplay Productions
REQUIRED: Windows 95; Pentium 166; 16MB RAM; 40MB hard-drive space; 2MB D3D video card; DirectX

WARNING: *Carmageddon II* is not meant for the weak of heart, the squeamish, or for anyone who thinks that running over innocent people for points is a mean thing to do. In fact, there's a whole lot of running-over and squishing in this demo, so if you're under 18 or object to insane amounts of violence, please do not install this demo. It is for mature (and psychotic) gamers only. Thank you, and we now return you to your normal Disc Pages.

Way back in The Day, there was a sweet little movie called *Death Race 2000*. It was a great film, and in it you could see a certain Sly Stallone run over some guy in a river bed, then peel out on his guts (movies don't get much better than that, folks). The original *Carmageddon* followed that same train of thought, letting players get behind the wheel of a lean machine with spikes and other implements of death. And now those mad geniuses at Interplay are back with *Carmageddon II: Carpocalypse Now*.

Playing this demo is pretty simple. You're given a car and a mission: race around the track, running over folks and dogs and such, all while trying to collect points and prevent the other participants from trashing your car. Most of your vital information appears along the top of the screen, with a small map appearing at the bottom. Use the control keys listed below to control your car and score those all-important points.



Oops. Sorry about that, Mr. Pedestrian. Guess you shouldn't have been in my way.

You'll want to nail as many innocent folks as possible, and one of the best tools at your disposal is your car's horn. See, it scares the crap out of people, and they run around all crazy-like — which is your cue to strike. Line them up and punch the gas, and soon their body parts will be raining down onto the hood of your car.

Again, this is game is *not* for kids or the squeamish, so steer your children and your grandparents clear of it. And please, please don't try any of this in real life. It'll get you in loads of trouble, and we'll smack you one.

SPECIAL NOTE: The demo for *Carmageddon II* requires a Direct3D-compatible video card in order to run. Sorry, non-accelerated folks!

CONTROL KEYS

Accelerate	NUMBERPAD 8
Brake/Reverse	NUMBERPAD 2
Turn Right	NUMBERPAD 6
Turn Left	NUMBERPAD 4
Handbrake	Spacebar
Wheelspin	Z
Repair	Backspace
Recover	Ins
Toggle Map On/Off	Tab
Target Lock	T
Cycle Target	Y
Horn	H



Guess the driver of that truck didn't like you too much. And you with a brand-new paint job, too.



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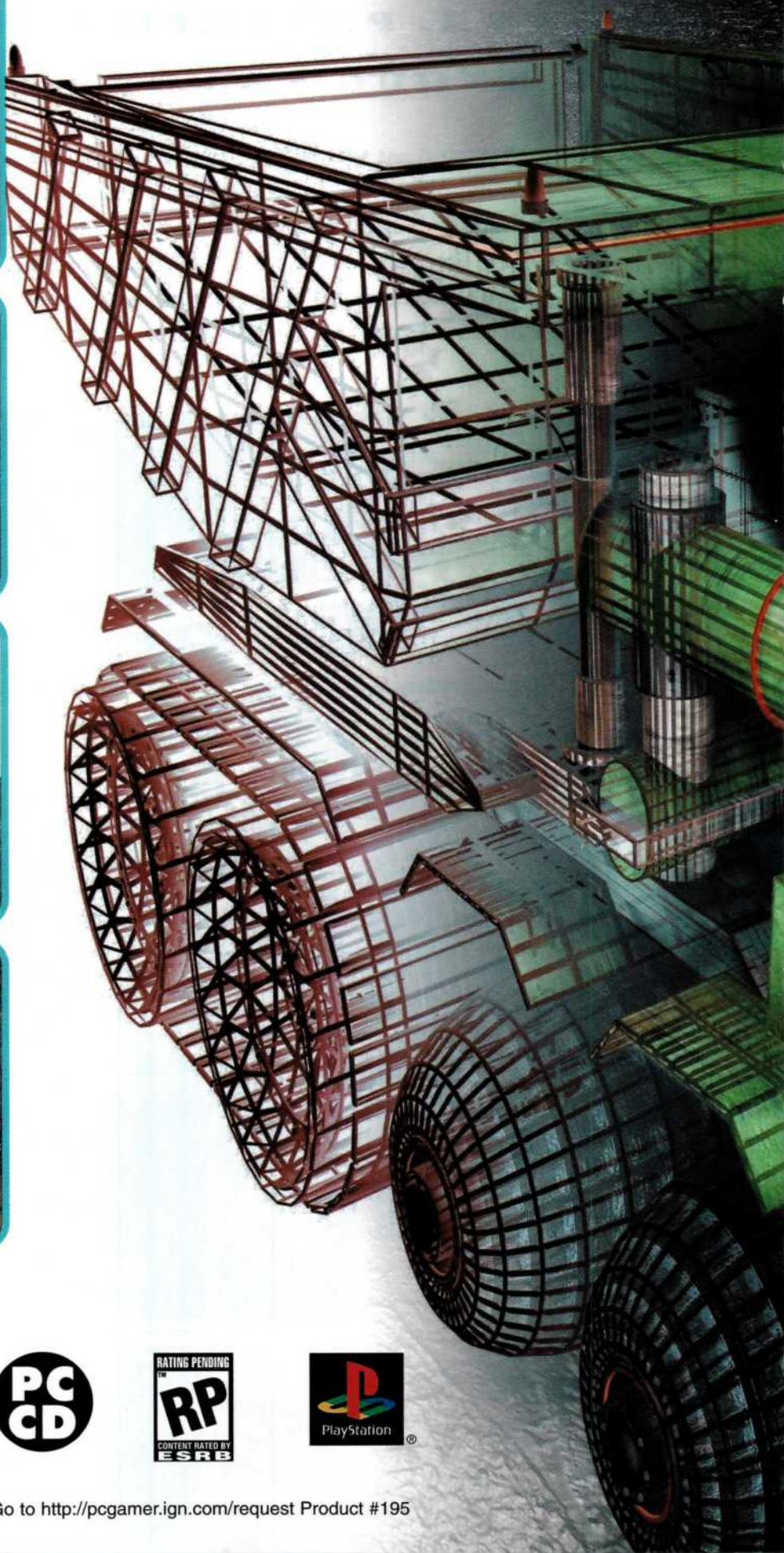
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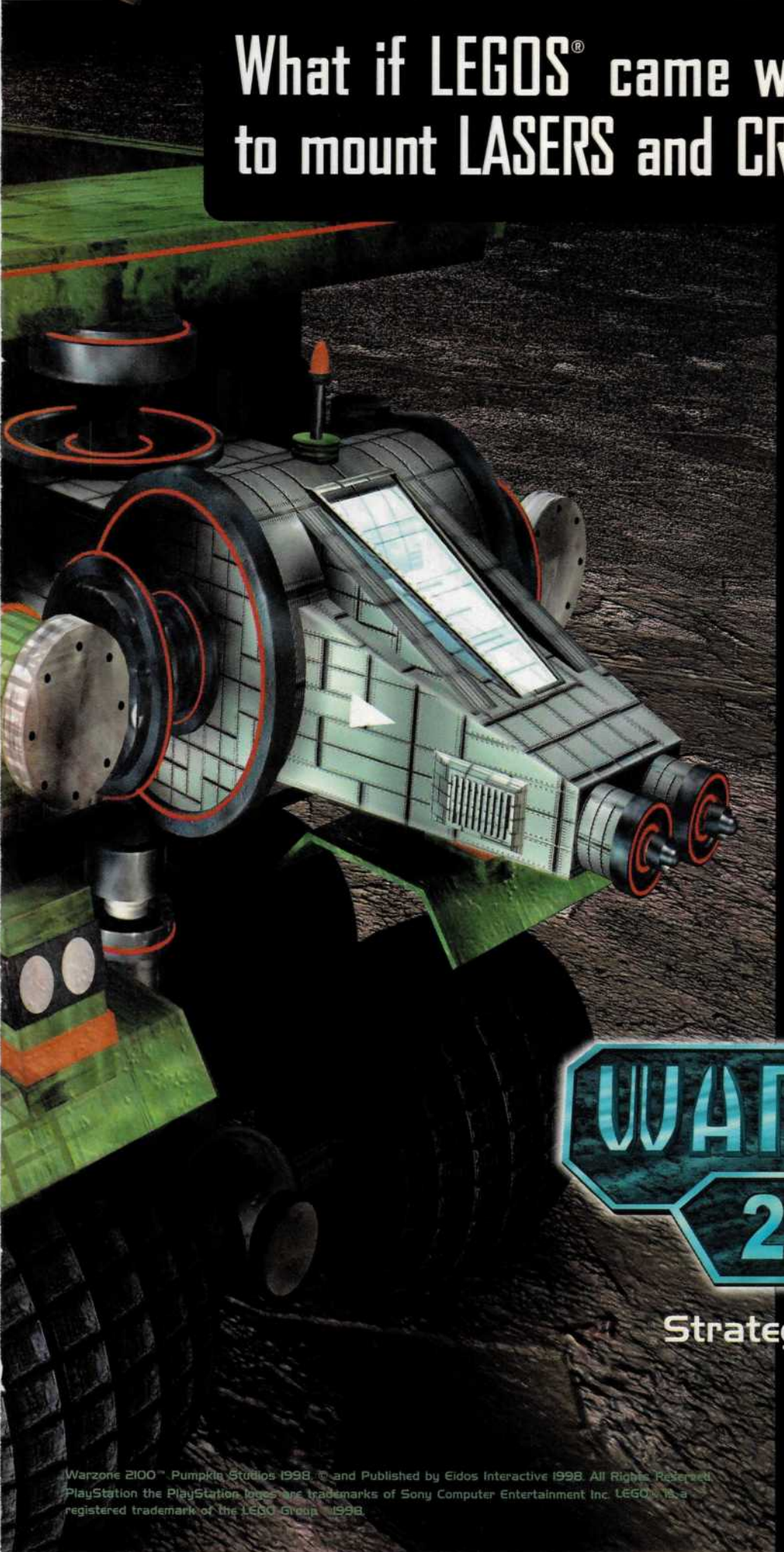
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CATEGORY: Strategy

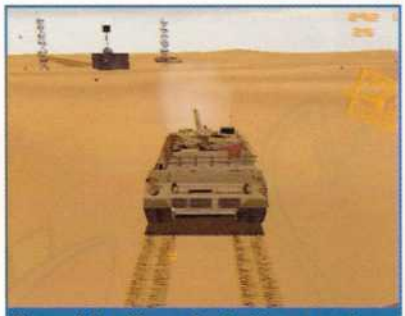
COMPANY: Interactive Magic

REQUIRED: Windows 95; Pentium 133; 16MB RAM; 120MB hard-drive space; DirectX

It seems the Libyans are up to their old tricks again, and they've decided to invade Tunisia. They take over the small country, and lest they continue onward, you will participate in Operation Removal. Your mission? To wipe out the Libyans and drive them out of Tunisia. And you can't afford to fail; if you do, the Libyans will be able to get their mitts on all those oil fields — and we can't have the price of gas going up five cents a gallon.

The demo for *Spearhead* lets you try out two missions from the game as you control an M1A2 Abrams Battle Tank. You'll need to use all your strategy and stealth as you duke it out against the Soviet-equipped Libyans. To start the demo, click the Single-player tab. You will then be presented with two missions to choose from. The first takes place at dawn, and your objective is to protect a radar installation from enemy forces bent on destroying it. The second mission takes place during the day and challenges you to clear a path from your present location to a supply base at Waypoint Alpha. According to intelligence, you will encounter only moderate resistance (but we all know how reliable intelligence can be).

While playing, the main thing to keep in mind is that you control the direction of the tank with one set of controls, and the direction of your aim with another set. It will take you a little while to get used to this, so if you stink up the first couple of missions, don't sweat it. Get the controls down, head back into the demo, and kick some serious booty.



That tank is rolling — let the big gun roar!

CONTROL KEYS

Drive	D
Brake	B
Reverse	R
Acceleration	1 - 0
Forward	NUMBERPAD 8
Reverse	NUMBERPAD 2
Left	NUMBERPAD 4
Right	NUMBERPAD 6
Aim Gun Up	↑
Aim Gun Down	↓
Aim Gun Left	←
Aim Gun Right	→
Fire	Spacebar
Exit Game	Shift + Ctrl - X



Those flames are pretty, we know, but you can't take too many losses like that.

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Recoil

INSTALL \RECOIL\RECOIL.EXE
TECH SUPPORT (714) 833-1999

CATEGORY: Action
COMPANY: Virgin Interactive
REQUIRED: Windows 95; Pentium; 16MB RAM; 40MB hard-drive space; 1MB video card; DirectX; Mouse



Ha-ha, we've got the hang of it now. That poor sucker never saw it coming. Too bad, so sad!

In the future, to say that things have gone horribly awry is an understatement. The Mainframe Network has taken over (how, no one knows — possibly aliens, natural evolution, or perhaps one of those ill-advised government experiments) and most humans are now a collective of computer-mesmerized zombies. A few folks have managed to escape from the clutches of the Network. Unable to defeat the Network themselves, they create a computer program that gives them remote control over an experimental enemy tank. They send this program back through time to you — and now you must pilot their tank and save the world (shades of *The Terminator*, yes — but who doesn't love *The Terminator*?).

The demo for *Recoil* places you in control of that tank. To set up your video configuration, select Options, and you'll be presented with a range of choices. You can change your resolution, type of video card, etc.

To start the demo, click Game, then Start. Select New Game, and you'll be ready to go (for a multi-player game, select Multi-Player and enter your connection info). After a brief introduction, you're thrown right into the action. Listen to the voiceover, as it explains your mission objectives.

The control keys are listed at right; it may take you a little while to get used to them. You control the direction and aim of the gun turrets with the mouse, and the direction of the tank with the arrow keys. After wiping out the first couple of baddies, take a few moments to familiarize yourself with the controls — as anyone who's spent any time on the freeways of L.A. can tell you, it's a real challenge to shoot in one direction while driving in another.

If at any time during the mission you forget what you're supposed to be doing, simply press O, and you'll receive a brief rundown of what's going on. The action is fast and furious, and your aim must be true, brave soldier. Fight hard, and remember: the future is counting on you.



Yes, we're duking it out on the beach. Fun for the whole family!



Bring the battle inside and fire up the cannons, 'cause it's clobbering time!

CONTROL KEYS

Forward	↑
Backward	↓
Left	←
Right	→
Fire Primary	LEFT MOUSE BUTTON
Fire Secondary	RIGHT MOUSE BUTTON
Viewpoint	V
Toggle Weapons	1 - 9
Objectives	O
Select Overhead	G

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iF/A-18E CSF

INSTALL \IF18DEMO\IF18DEMO.EXE
TECH SUPPORT (919) 461-0948
CATEGORY: Flight Sim
COMPANY: Interactive Magic
REQUIRED: Windows 95; Pentium 166; 24MB RAM; 72MB hard-drive space; DirectX; Gamepad



To get to the action, just click on the pretty little statue in the middle of the compound.

The long-standing dispute between Greece and Turkey over the island of Cyprus has intensified, and ground skirmishes have begun to erupt along the Cypriot border. When Turkey then takes it a step too far by directly invading Cyprus and destroying the Greek airfields, it's time for the United Nations and the good old U.S. of A. to join the fray. In *iF/A-18E Carrier Strike Fighter*, your mission is to comply with that request.

Most of the features in the demo are disabled, so while you can click on the ship and some of the buildings, you will not be allowed to do anything. To get to the action, click on the big F/A-18 statue in the middle of the main menu screen, and you'll be taken to the flight deck.

The first thing you need to do is start your engines, left and right, by pressing CTRL+L and CTRL+R. Once this is done, press 0 to bring your engines up to full power and CTRL+C to have the boys on the flight deck launch you into the wild blue yonder. Once in the air, you'll need to arm your weapons (the control keys are listed at right) and find the enemy bogies. You're outnumbered, so you'll need to hit 'em hard and fast to even the odds. You also have a wingman who will help you out.

Now get up there and help defend truth, justice, and every man's, woman's, and child's right to fly a really hot jet fighter and blow stuff up!



These boys are ready to fly. Get up there and kick some butt!

SPECIAL NOTE: *The CD* must be in your CD-ROM drive in order to play *iF/A-18E Carrier Strike Fighter*. Also, you must have a gamepad or joystick to control the demo (the demo won't start unless it detects one).



You need to keep your eyes open; those bogies can come from any direction.

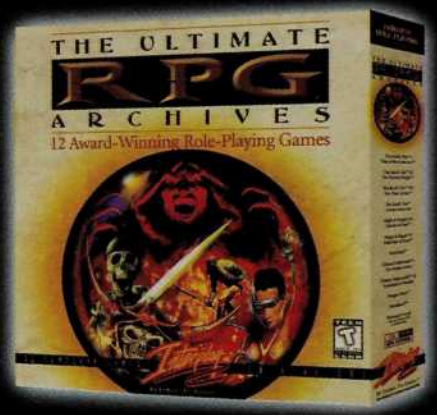
BILLY'S TIP

This may seem obvious, but you'll want to shoot down the enemy before they shoot you down. Complicated, I know, but give it a try.

CONTROL KEYS

Throttle Control	1 – 0
Left Engine On/Off	Ctrl + L
Right Engine On/Off	Ctrl + R
Catapult Launch	Ctrl + C
Landing Gear	G
Rudder Right	X
Rudder Left	Z
Select Next Weapon	Enter
Master Arm	Backspace
Toggle Weapon Mode	I
Pause	P
Exit Mission	Ctrl + Q
Eject	Shift + E

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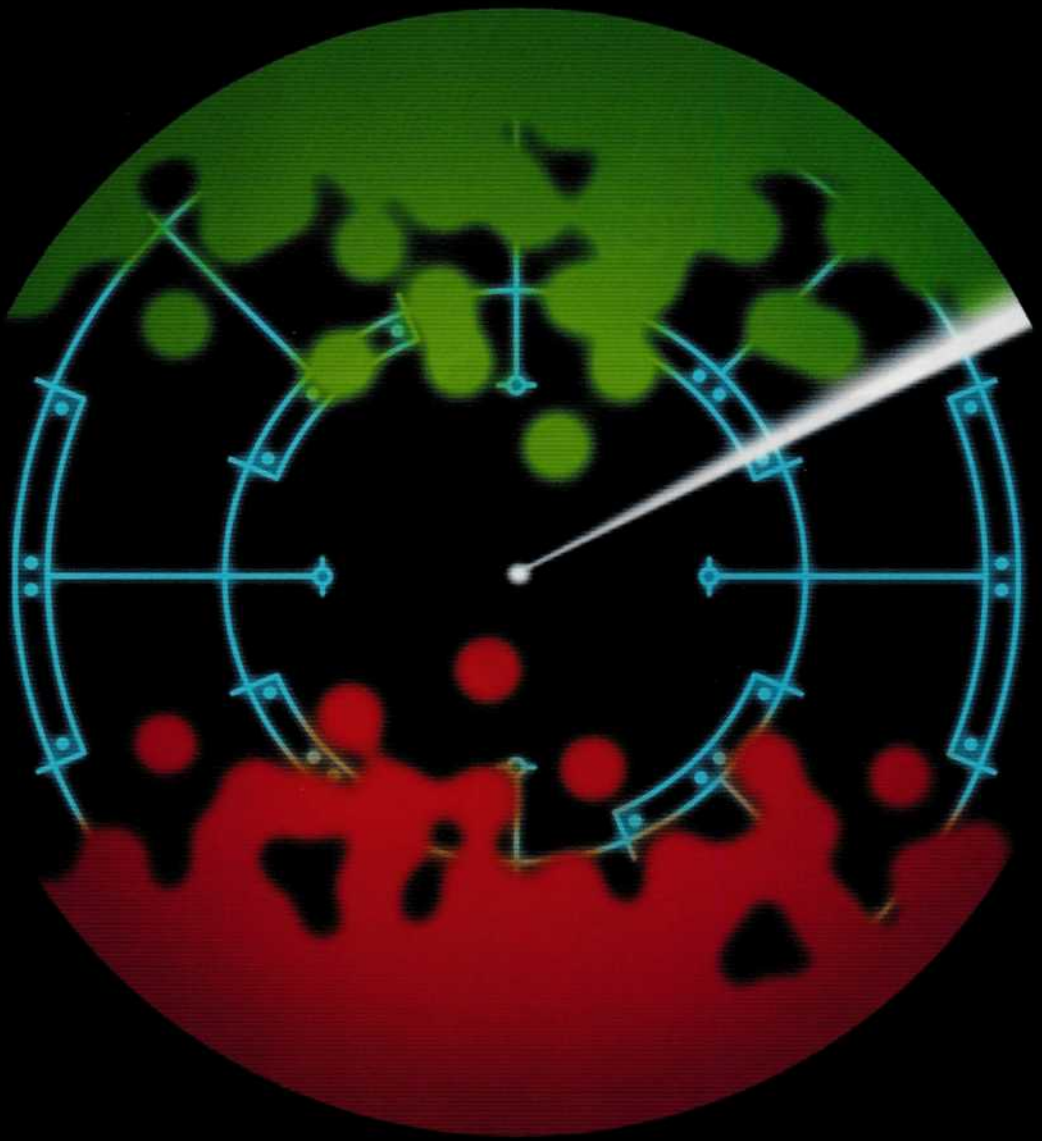


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Grand Prix Champions

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TECH SUPPORT *www.intense-games.com*

CATEGORY: Racing
COMPANY: Intense Games
REQUIRED: Windows 95; Pentium 166; 16MB RAM; 20MB hard-drive space

We've said it once, and we'll say it again — the kids, they love their racing games. Not just any racing games, but games that let gamers race around in Formula One cars (now, that's some serious power!). And if anyone knows Formula One racing, it's Johnny Herbert, who has teamed up with the folks over at Intense Games to create *Johnny Herbert's Grand Prix World Champions*.

The demo lets you spin around the track twice in an intense race that will have you competing with ten other cars. The race starts immediately after the demo starts, and it uses your gamepad or joystick as the default controller. If you do not have a gamepad, you control the action using the keyboard. The demo lets you see the action from the cockpit of your car, and you'll need to pay attention so you don't spin out of control and smash yourself against the wall. This is a racing simulation, so you'll need to take it easy around the corners — there's no forgiveness if you take a corner too fast, so you'll be eating some cement.

Since you start out in tenth place, you'll need to use all your racing skills to overtake the field and grab the checkered flag. Good luck!

BILLY'S TIP

As with all racing games, the object is to finish first. In order to meet that objective, you may want to try a couple of test races to get a grasp on the controls and the layout of the track. After these test runs, start the demo for real and kick some butt.



The field is tough, so you're going to have be in top form to come in first.

CONTROL KEYS

Accelerate	A
Steer Left	<
Steer Right	>
1st Gear/Neutral	P
Reverse/Neutral	L
Toggle Steering Assist	F3
Toggle Braking Assist	F4
Toggle Auto/Manual	F5
Toggle HUD	F8

Powerslide

INSTALL \PSDEMO\SETUP.EXE
TECH SUPPORT (800) 434-2637

CATEGORY: Racing
COMPANY: GT Interactive
REQUIRED: Windows 95; Pentium 166; 16MB RAM; 72MB hard-drive space; D3D video card; DirectX

The year is 2020, and there has been an environmental holocaust of devastating proportions. The population has been decimated, and the rich have fled underground, where they have formed corporate enclaves. Above ground, freaks and survivors wander around, and with 98 percent of the population dead, they find a lot of cars just sitting around. And wouldn't you know it, the freaks and survivors decide to fix those cars up and do some racing. After all, what else are you gonna do after an environmental holocaust of devastating proportions?

You can play one race in single-player mode or set up a race in multiplayer. To change the game options, select Options, and a menu will appear on the right hand side. Here you will be able to change your video and sound options and choose the type of controller you want to use (use the arrows at the top to toggle through your choices). Click on Race Options to change the type of car you want to drive (the demo lets you choose between the Warthog and the Sabre), and set the number of opponents you'll race against, up to eleven.

The demo gives you one track to race on, the Dam Track, which will have you cruising around a devastated dam.

As you're playing the demo, keep in mind that it is called *Powerslide* for a reason — you can take the corners at high speed and slide through them. You generally can't go all-out, or you'll roll your buggy — but a little practice will have you taking those high-speed turns in no time at all.

The demo for *Powerslide* does require that you have a Direct3D-compatible 3D accelerator installed in your machine; if you don't have any type of hardware acceleration, you won't be able to play the demo.

BILLY'S TIP

In order to successfully race in a post-apocalyptic world, you need to put yourself in the correct frame of mind. Think along the lines of *Mad Max* — race fast, and race dirty. Honor and sportsmanship are gone. Put the hammer down and let 'er roll — and if anyone gets in your way, squish him like a bug.



Take the action up on the dam, but watch the edge. If you go over the side, you'll need to repeat that section of the track.



There's a reason it's called *Powerslide*. Take corners at high speed and crank the steering wheel.

Swarm

INSTALL \SWARM\SETUP.EXE
TECH SUPPORT (905) 738-5645
CATEGORY: Arcade
COMPANY: Global Star Software
REQUIRED: Windows 95; Pentium 166; 16MB RAM; 40MB hard-drive space; DirectX; Mouse

You are Rawl, a government prisoner offered a simple choice: death or indentured service for one year. Sounds simple enough, right? Too bad that year of service is to be spent in the depths of space, collecting an energy source called EZT. Oh, and did we mention that there are some really angry aliens who want the EZT for themselves? There's always a catch....

The *Swarm* demo lets you fly around, collect EZT, and blast the daylights out of some aliens. To collect the EZT, simply steer your ship over the big blue dot and you'll automatically haul it in. There are two indicators that will also help you with your task: The red one shows the direction of the nearest alien, and the blue one shows where the nearest EZT can be found. Since finishing a mission is dependent upon collecting a certain amount of EZT, you'll want to collect it as fast as possible. Sometimes the nearest EZT is in an enemy cargo ship (it'll drop its cargo if you blast it to bits).

You steer your craft with the mouse; simply turn in the direction you wish to go and move that way. One thing to keep in mind is that your ship won't turn on a dime, so don't go whipping too close to the space-junk floating around, or it'll be ta-ta, mofo!



Now you're talking! Let 'er rip with the big guns and splatter some aliens. That's what it's all about!

BILLY'S TIP

Since those aliens want to blast you so they can get the EZT, it's a good plan to shoot those buggers while you're out collecting. That way, you're killing two birds with one stone (or some variation thereof). What does this all mean? What does anything mean? There's only one way to find out — fire up this demo and jump in with your guns blazing.

Jazz Jackrabbit 2

INSTALL \JAZZ2\J2SWC123.EXE
TECH SUPPORT (301) 983-9771
CATEGORY: Arcade
COMPANY: Epic MegaGames
REQUIRED: Windows 95; Pentium; 16MB RAM; 11MB hard-drive space; DirectX

That dastardly tortoise Devan Shell is up to his old tricks again. (Will he never learn that his evil deeds will not go unpunished?) This time around, he's created a time machine that should help him stop those damned bunnies once and for all — he will destroy the planet Carrotus' history and keep those lousy lagomorphs from ever existing. Will he succeed? Only our two heroes, Jazz Jackrabbit and his little brother Spaz, can thwart his evil plan. But can they do it in time? (Sheesh, that was a long way to go for a pun.)



Get to work — there are evil turtles to be killed!

Jazz Jackrabbit 2 is the sequel to the 1994 game (anyone want to venture a guess as to its title?) and lets you play as either Jazz or Spaz. You can set up your controls, graphics, and sound by entering the Options menu. After you've tweaked everything to perfection, jump on in.

Playing the demo is pretty simple. You make your way through the level, collecting coins and other goodies, all the while zapping the evil tortoise-folk. Onscreen hints will appear from time to time, offering you advice that will make your journey a bit easier. Be sure to completely explore the level so you can get all the hidden treasures.

The demo also includes one multiplayer game called Treasure Hunt. To start it, enter Party, select how you want to set the game up (split-screen, IPX, etc), pick the number of players, and have at it!

Speed Busters

INSTALL \SBDEMO\SBDEMO.EXE
TECH SUPPORT (888) 893-2648
CATEGORY: Racing
COMPANY: Ubi Soft
REQUIRED: Windows 95; Pentium 166; 24MB RAM; 60MB hard-drive space; 3Dfx graphics accelerator; DirectX

There are few things more fun than racing cars — unless, of course, you're racing old muscle cars through a bizarre version of Hollywood, where Jaws is alive and swimming around, and King Kong is looking to do some smashing. If that sounds like your cup of tea, we've got the demo for you.

In *Speed Busters*, you get the chance to race three exciting laps through Hollywood. You'll see all the sights as you race along the beach, through the Hollywood hills, under King Kong's fist, and in front of a burning dinosaur. Pretty wild, eh?

At the beginning of the demo, you're given the chance to buy your car and deck it out with racing flames and other cool features. Once that's done, click Buy, then Race. You control the action using the arrow keys (up to accelerate; down to brake; left and right to steer in those directions), and the space bar gives you a nitro burst. Have fun, and watch out for those crazy movie characters!

SPECIAL NOTE: This demo does not install a shortcut to your desktop. To get your motor running, you'll need to enter C:\ubisoft\spb\ (or whichever folder you specified during installation) and double-click the file named spb.exe. You will also need a 3Dfx-based video card installed on your machine.



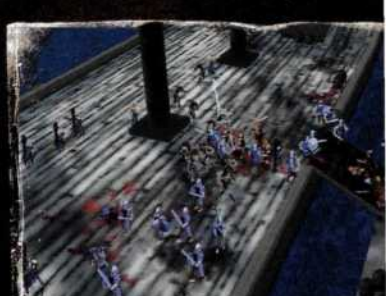
Cool, a burning T-rex in the middle of Hollywood! Now that's something that you don't see every day.


6 December
The Beachhead at Tyr
You're losing men. Can you keep your composure? In Myth II: Soulblighter, panic is your greatest enemy. It's up to you to remain calm and focused during the frenzy of battle. You devise the strategies. You make the crucial decisions. Move forward with the mission and risk massive casualties, or retreat and live to fight another day? Time is running out. The wrong decision may cost you half your men. No decision will cost you your entire army. What's it going to be?
To order Myth II: Soulblighter call 1-800-295-0060 or visit our website at www.bungie.com.
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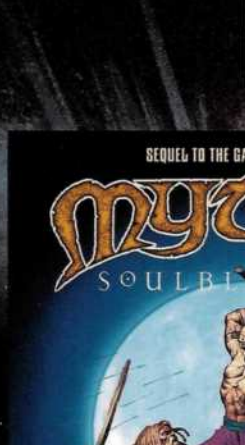




MASTER THE ELEMENTS.
RULE THE BATTLEFIELD.
Myth II: Soulblighter is as close to a real world environment as you can get. Wars aren't fought on a level playing field, they're fought on unforgiving terrain. Use it to your advantage or suffer the consequences. Never before has a 3D environment been so well integrated with game play. Archers shoot farther from hills and bluffs. Dwarven grenades can be rolled down hills. Rain douses fires. Trees block arrows.

A DETAILED ARCHITECTURE OF WA
Bridges are raised and lowered. Gates ca
archers on the castle wall or suffer massiv
and blow it up before the enemy can cros
all. Myth II: Soulblighter features 3D i





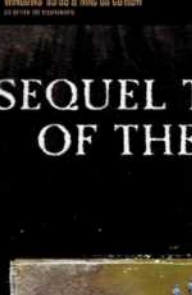
THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS FRIENDLY FIRE.
Myth II: Soulblighter is awash in fire: flaming arrows and lightning bolts set terrain ablaze; explosions trigger white hot flames; sorcerers hurl fireballs. Fire plays no favorites and can wreak havoc on even the most sound battle strategies. Use it or fear it. But always respect it.

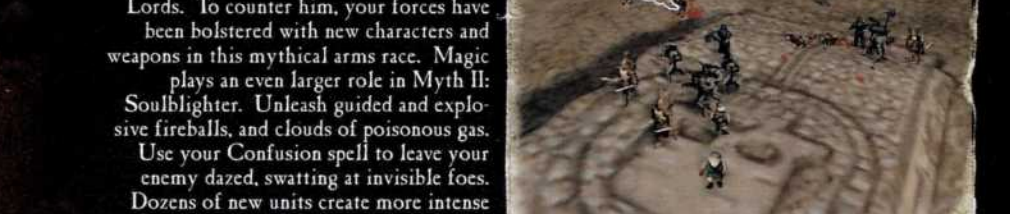


EVIL HAS A NEW FACE.
From the shadows, Soulblighter emerges. And he brings with him a wicked cast of characters not found in Myth: The Fallen Lords. To counter him, your forces have been bolstered with new characters and weapons in this mythical arms race. Magic plays an even larger role in Myth II: Soulblighter. Unleash guided and explosive fireballs, and clouds of poisonous gas. Use your Confusion spell to leave your enemy dazed, swatting at invisible foes. Dozens of new units create more intense and physical confrontations.



SEQUEL
OF THE





The enemy is everyw
has turned against yo
improved bungie.net
unseen enemies from
opponents per game.
other players, do wh
for worldwide indivi

SURVEY THE DAMAGE FROM EVERY ANGLE.
Myth II: Soulblighter's battlefield camera rotates 360 degrees and can zoom into extreme close-up and out to view the bloody carnage of battle. Experience 3D explosions from all angles as they tear through everything in range -- including the enemy. Keep a close eye on all your troops as they carry out their missions. Track your scouts behind hills and guard against sneak attacks on your flanks.



e opened and closed. Find a way to take out the casualties. Lead villagers to safety across the bridge. Sometimes the battlefield isn't necessarily a field at oor maps that challenge the best strategists.





IS YOUR ENEMY SMARTER THAN YOU?
Myth II: Soulblighter's AI puts the emphasis on intelligence. Levels of difficulty are not measured in numbers of troops but in how battle savvy those troops are. The higher you set the level of difficulty, the smarter the opponent. Wars may be fought with the sword, but they are won with the mind.



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al or team ranking.

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CREATE YOUR
OWN MYTH.
Now you can make your own game with Fear and Loathing. Myth II: Soulblighter's powerful and easy-to-use editing tools. Create maps, modify units, even change the force of gravity. Third-party maps are now playable on bungie.net.

Environmental Audio™ by CREATIVE

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TAKE THE HILL. THE EARTH TREMBLING. BLACK WITH BLOOD. HEAVY FOOTSTEPS DISSOLVE INTO A STEADY RHYTHM OF THUNDEROUS BLASTS. MINDS AND LEGS NUMB. GET TO THE HILL. FIERY ARROWS RAINING FROM ABOVE. BLACK WAKES WEAVING A SUFFOCATING BLANKET OF FEAR. MY MEN CHOKING THEIR FINAL BREATHS. JUST MAKE IT TO THE HILL. SCREAMS FROM BEHIND? ARE WE FLANKED? SHADOWS ADVANCING LIKE A DEATH SHROUD. THE HILL. GET TO THE HILL.





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 PC Gamer CD*, the $25 launching fee will be waived. Talk about service!

HAVING PROBLEMS?

We cannot provide technical support for problems you may encounter with demos on *The CD*. Please use the tech support numbers listed with the demos. You can also go to *http://pcgamer.ign.com/static/magazine/cdrom.shtml* for a FAQ and other info.

***The CD* is rigorously tested by the *PC Gamer* staff and certified virus-free. *PC Gamer* cannot be held responsible for any incompatibility problems caused by the use of *The CD*. However, should your copy fail to run, with error messages that indicate your CD drive cannot read the disc, return it to the following address: Customer Service, Imagine Media, The *PC Gamer* December 1998 Disc 4.6 Replacement, 150 North Hill Dr., Brisbane, CA 94005. Please indicate any error message you receive.**

Game Add-Ons

Once again, Billy has spent countless days, nights, and days (again), searching for the best user-created levels out there. His latest expedition has left him exhausted, but he returns to the hallowed *PC Gamer* offices with lots of goodies.

There are two outstanding single-player *Quake II* levels on *The CD* this month: Order and Chaos from Richard Carlson (who works for ION Storm), and Deadline from Jason Fink (we're not sure who Jason works for, but we bet he does a real good job).

Long-time Duke Nukem freak (and friend to PC gamers everywhere) Steve Long contributes a new *Duke Nukem 3D* map called Harmsway. (Hmm, that sounds rather familiar, for some reason.) Steve has been contributing levels for a long time now, and every one of them is top-notch.

Beyond that, we've got a little something for fans of *StarCraft* and *Age of Empires*, and even some *Rainbow Six* plans from the fine folks over at RedStorm. So what are you waiting for? Get gaming, fool!



There are all sorts of baddies to kill in these twisting corridors of death. Enjoy!

Earthlink

INSTALL \EARTHL\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

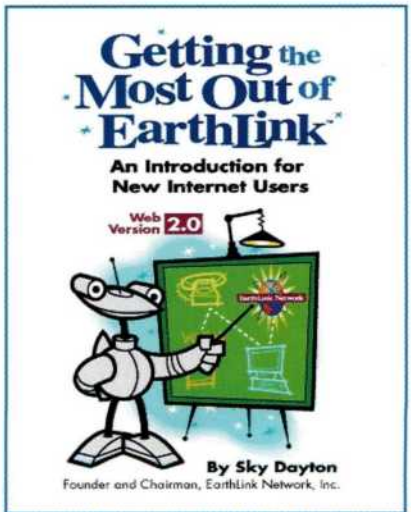
EarthLink Network, winner of the 1997 *PC Magazine* Editors' Choice Award for Best Internet Service Provider, supports all kinds of Internet games and even has its own online gaming site (*www.thearena.com*). EarthLink membership includes unlimited Internet access, unlimited E-mail, a free 6MB of space for your own web site, a free subscription to *bLink*, EarthLink's newsletter, a fully customizable Personal Start page, and your choice of browser.

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ISRAELI AIR FORCE

INSTALL: \IAFDEMO\IAFDEMO.EXE
TECH SUPPORT: *www.janes.ea.com*
CATEGORY: Simulation • **COMPANY:** Jane's Combat Simulations
REQUIRED: Win 95; Pentium 200 with MMX; 32MB RAM; 80MB HD space; SVGA video card with 4MB RAM; Mouse; DirectX 5.0+

WWII FIGHTERS

INSTALL: \WW2DEMO\WWIIFIGHTERSDEMO.EXE
TECH SUPPORT: *www.janes.ea.com*
CATEGORY: Simulation • **COMPANY:** Jane's Combat Simulations
REQUIRED: Win 95; Pentium 200; 32MB RAM; 60MB hard-drive space; Direct3D or Glide 2.43-compatable 3D accelerator card; Mouse; DirectX 5.0+

DETHKARZ

INSTALL: \DETHKARZ\SETUP.EXE
TECH SUPPORT: *www.melbournehouse.com*
CATEGORY: Arcade • **COMPANY:** Melbourne House
REQUIRED: Win 95; Pentium 166; 16MB RAM; 50MB HD space; Glide 2.43-compatable 3D accelerator card; Mouse; DirectX 6.0

VIGILANCE

INSTALL: \VIGDEMO\INSTALL.EXE
TECH SUPPORT: (650) 802-4400
CATEGORY: Action • **COMPANY:** SegaSoft
REQUIRED: Win 95; Pentium 166; 32MB RAM; 50MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse; DirectX 5.0+

3-D ULTRA NASCAR PINBALL

INSTALL: \3DNASCAR\SETUP.EXE
TECH SUPPORT: (206) 644-4343
CATEGORY: Arcade • **COMPANY:** Sierra
REQUIRED: Win 95; Pentium; 16MB RAM; 35MB hard-drive space; SVGA; DirectX 5.0+

ODDWORLD: ABE'S EXODUS

INSTALL: \ABEDEMO\SETUP.EXE
TECH SUPPORT: (800) 434-2637
CATEGORY: Action • **COMPANY:** GT Interactive
REQUIRED: Win 95; Pentium; 32MB RAM; 100MB hard-drive space; SVGA; DirectX 5.0+

WHAT? Even more games?

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RED BARON II (MULTI-PLAYER)

INSTALL: \RB2DEMO\SETUP.EXE
TECH SUPPORT: (206) 644-4343
CATEGORY: Action • **COMPANY:** Sierra
REQUIRED: Win 95; Pentium; 32MB RAM; 50MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse; 26.6Kbps or higher modem; TCP/IP connection to Internet; DirectX 5.0+

LODE RUNNER 2

INSTALL: \LR2DEMO\SETUP.EXE
TECH SUPPORT: (800) 434-2637
CATEGORY: Puzzle • **COMPANY:** GT Interactive
REQUIRED: Win 95; Pentium; 16MB RAM; 20MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse; DirectX 5.0+

WILD RIDE!

INSTALL: \WILDRIDE\INSTALL.EXE
TECH SUPPORT: *www.runandgun.com*
CATEGORY: Action • **COMPANY:** RUNANDGUN! Inc.
REQUIRED: Win 95; Pentium; 16MB RAM; 10MB hard-drive space; SVGA; DirectX 3.0+

CASTROL HONDA SUPERBIKE WORLD CHAMPIONS

INSTALL: \CHSBDEMO\SETUP.EXE
TECH SUPPORT: *www.interactive-entertainment.co.uk*
CATEGORY: Simulation • **COMPANY:** Interactive Entertainment
REQUIRED: Win 95; Pentium; 32MB RAM; 15MB hard-drive space; SVGA; DirectX 5.0+

STAR TREK: STARSHIP CREATOR

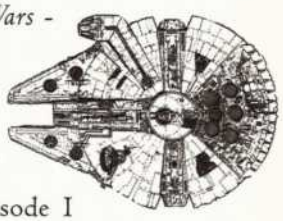
INSTALL: \SSCDEMO\SETUP.EXE
TECH SUPPORT: (970) 339-7137
CATEGORY: Strategy • **COMPANY:** Simon and Schuster Interactive
REQUIRED: Win 95; Pentium; 32MB RAM; 90MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse

SIN (UPDATED)

INSTALL: \SINDEMO\SINDEMO2.EXE
TECH SUPPORT: (310) 255-2050
CATEGORY: Action • **COMPANY:** Activision
REQUIRED: Win 95; Pentium 150; 32MB RAM; 100MB hard-drive space; DirectX 5.0+



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previously unavailable to the general public. All told, it's a galaxy of *Star Wars* facts and fun at a price that's quite down to earth. Look for Behind the Magic wherever PC software is sold.



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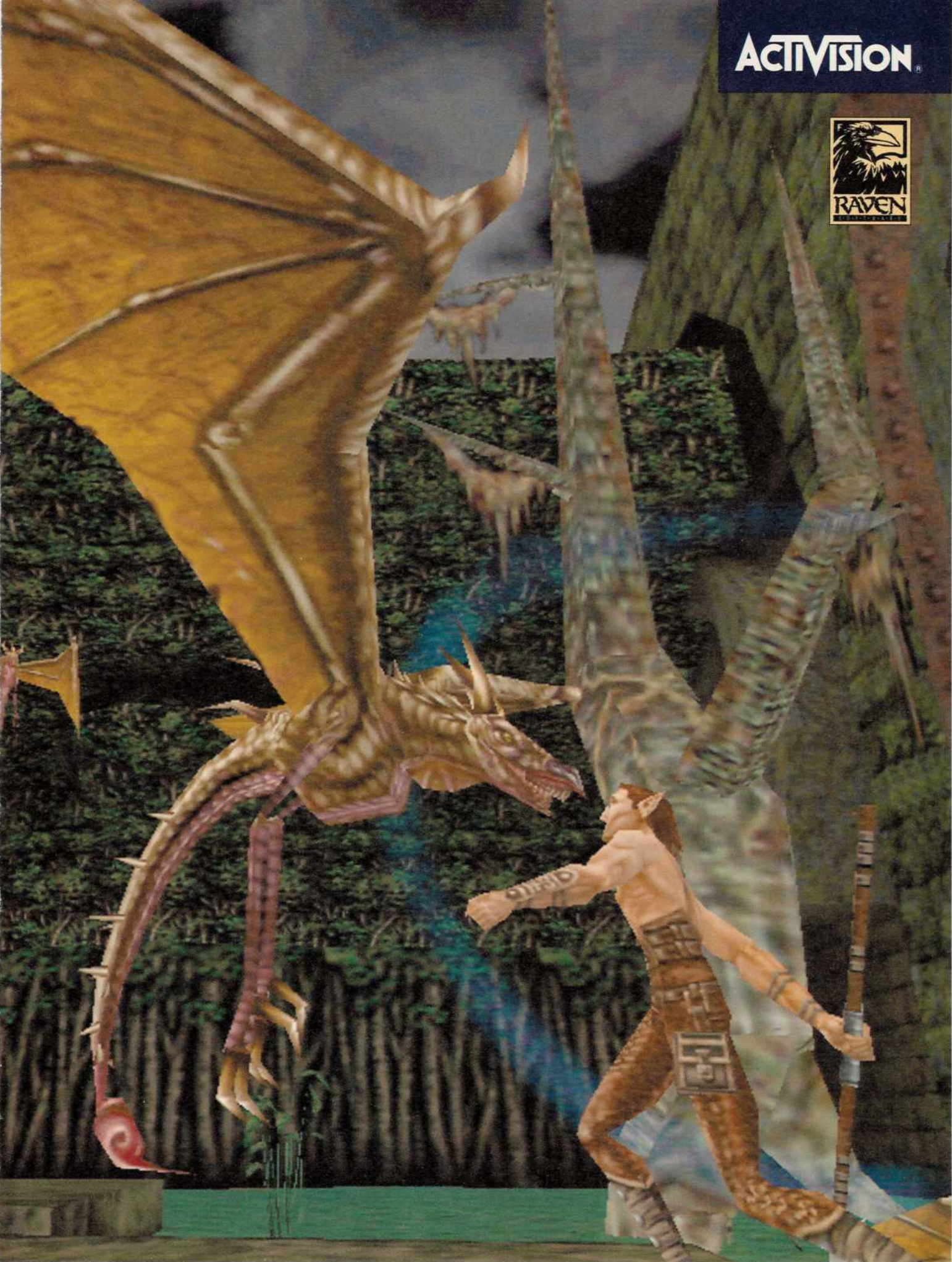
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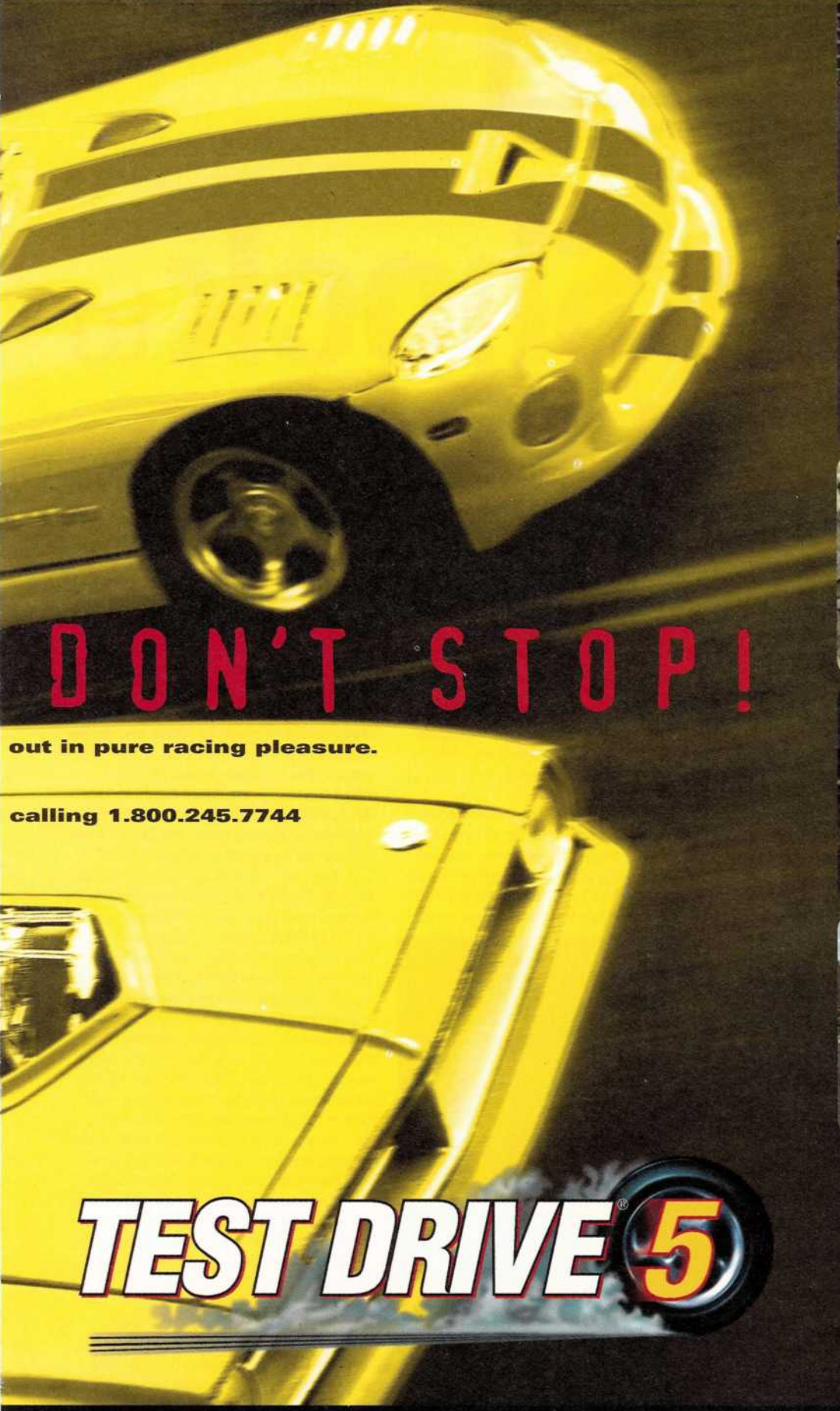
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Another Shock to the System

Looking Glass Studios to develop System Shock 2

Take a look at our 50 Best Games Ever feature in the October 1998 issue, and you'll notice an aging classic called *System Shock* firmly planted in the high-rent district. At a time when *Doom* clones were flooding the market, *System Shock* somehow got lost in the shuffle and was unfairly lumped in with these me-too products. But talk to anyone who actually played the game (and there weren't very many, as the poor sales figures indicate) and you'll hear a tale about a game with one of the most compelling story lines, brilliant designs, and nerve-tingling pacing that you're likely to find on the PC.

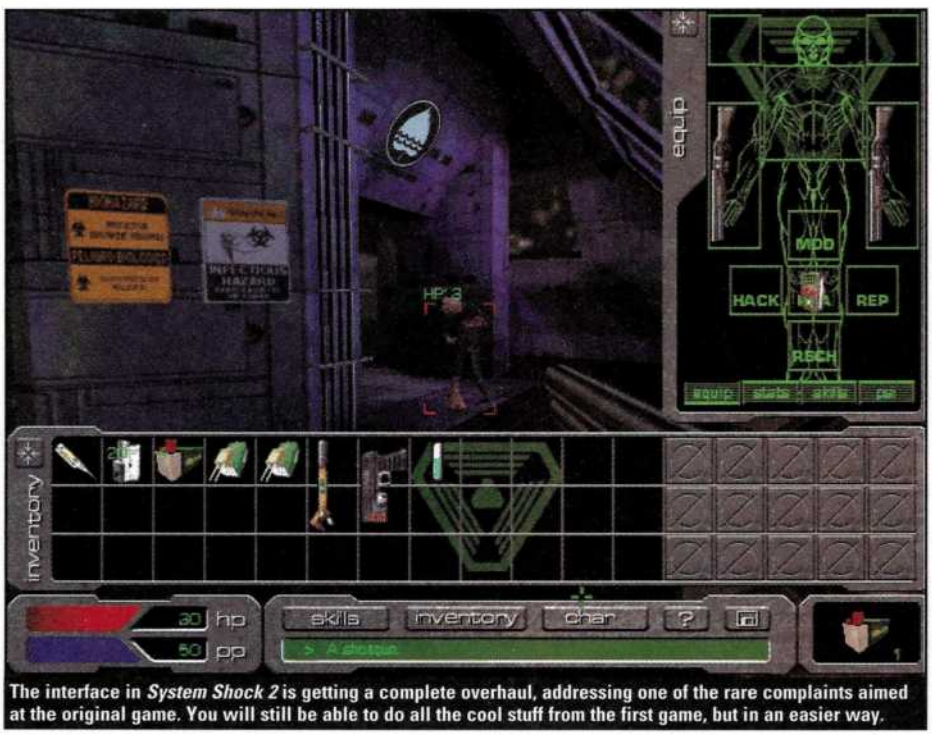
Well, if you were unfortunate enough to have missed *System Shock* the first time around, you're in luck. Looking Glass Studios, the team responsible for the original, is hard at work on the follow-up, called *System Shock 2*. While it's still in the early stages (the tentative release date is mid-1999), a lot of the groundwork has already been laid, and we called up Ken Levine, the project director, to fill us in on some of the details.

Although Looking Glass was the developer of the first game, it's been so long since its release that we were concerned many of the people involved back then might no longer be around. We all know that it's the quality of the people involved that make a great game, not just the name of the company stamped on the box. Ken Levine allayed our fears by saying, "It's an interesting mix. The engine we're using is the same one that's being used for *Thief: The Dark Project*, which was developed pretty much exclusively by people who worked on *System Shock* like Doug Church, Sean Barrett, and Marc LeBlanc. People working directly on the *System Shock 2* team include Rob Fermier, who was one of the lead programmers on the first game, and Gareth Hinds, who worked on the art for *System Shock*."

Don't worry that *System Shock 2* will just be *Thief: The Dark Project* in a space setting though. Levine says, "We're thinking about calling it 'The Shock Engine' because it's so radically enhanced from *Thief*. It has 16-bit color and dynamic colored lighting, which were missing from the engine, plus all of the interface enhancements we've done which are too numerous to mention. We're a different game from *Thief*. In fact, I'd say that of all the engine reuses out there (like *SiN* or *Half Life*), I think we're the most radically different game from the first use of the engine that I've ever seen.

So what's the game going to be like? The intriguing answer from Levine is, "It's sort of like *Ultima Underworld* meets *System Shock* with a hot new engine. What we're trying to do is bring back the heavy RPG element of *Underworld*, which wasn't really in *Shock*, with character generation and character development. We're really an RPG, but in a first person game with a state-of-the-art 3D engine."

From what we've seen of the *Thief* engine, two of the most impressive features are the ambient and dynamic sound effects and the realistic physics model that act on the objects in the game world. *Shock 2* will take full advantage of these features according to Levine, and the powerful engine needed no tweaking in these areas. What *did* need to be altered was the inventory system to make it



The interface in *System Shock 2* is getting a complete overhaul, addressing one of the rare complaints aimed at the original game. You will still be able to do all the cool stuff from the first game, but in an easier way.

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The lovely but evil Shodan makes a triumphant return in *System Shock 2*.

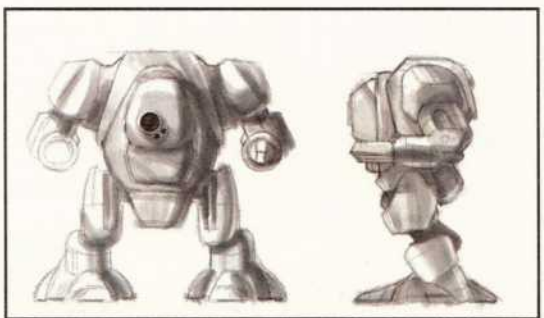
Quake II — if they want a great single player experience but want to enjoy it with a group of friends, they should come play *System Shock 2*."

The setting of the game remains true to the original. "The game takes place mostly on a space ship, some years after the ending of the first game," says Levine. "I can't say too much about it right now, but we've come up with ways to have a lot more variety in the spaces than in *System Shock*. I can also tell you that Shodan (the evil female computer from *System Shock*) is back and plays a very, very significant role in the game. I think that she is perhaps the best villain in any computer game, so we're going to utilize her to the max. You'll see plenty of Shodan plus a new, interesting foe that you haven't seen before."

more RPG friendly. "You'll have a limited number of inventory slots that will go up as your character increases in strength. Like in most RPGs, you'll have a 'paper doll' with different slots to place readied weapons (with hot keys available to switch between them), items, and software you have running. Like in the first game, you have software to install in your cybernetic implants that helps you do different things like hacking computers, repairing, and even modifying weapons. You can only have a limited number of implants installed at one time, and some of the strategy comes in deciding which ones you want to have running."

Another difference from *Thief* will be the inclusion of a multi-player option. Don't expect a frag-fest though, as *System Shock 2* goes about it in a totally different manner. Says Levine, "What we're doing is developing cooperative multi-player. We feel that if people want to play deathmatch, they should go play *Unreal* or

One of the few complaints you'll hear from *System Shock* veterans is the difficulty they had in getting to grips with the movement controls. Says Levine, "One of the key goals we've had is to improve the interface. Anyone who played the first game will tell you that the interface was not exactly the strongest element. The great thing about *System Shock* was that you could do all of this cool stuff (various stages of crouching, peeking around corners, etc.) but it was really hard to do. We're making the game smarter so that it can interpret the players' actions. I would say that the player can do as much or more than in the first game, but the burden is no longer on the player."



These concept sketches translated very nicely into the detailed robots that will populate the ship's corridors in *System Shock 2*.



One of the most memorable puzzles from the first game was the search for the particular head needed to complete a retinal scan. We asked Ken if we would have to go on any headhunting missions this time around. "No, we won't have that exact same quest, but there are a number of blocking quests in the game like that, meaning things you have to do to finish the game. There are also a lot of very interesting sub-quests that you can do that will give you more power-ups, enhancements, or story background. We've worked hard to open up a lot of new avenues of gameplay that I don't think people have seen."

Another fond memory from

Continued on page 52:
See Shock to the System

BRACE YOURSELF!



When you're trying to crack the high score, something like carpal tunnel syndrome just gets in your way. I'm on day three slammin' pucks in **Play This, Play That: Classic Air Hockey**®. The "real physics programming" equates to ultra-realistic puck and paddle motion. I'm talking seamless. And just to ruin me, they put **Skeet Shooter** on the same disk. Trust me, after a frantic 64 player tournament you'll want to steady your hand and take aim at some sporting clays.

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Acclaim's Aim

Three extremely diverse titles are coming down the pipeline soon

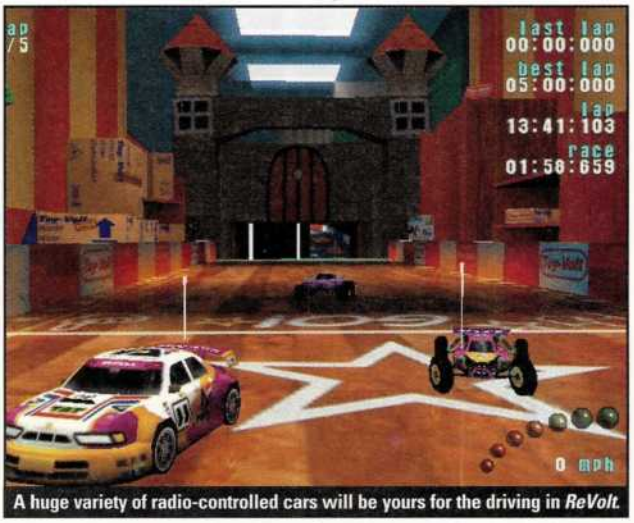
Acclaim, a company known in the past for less-than-stellar games based on high-profile movie licenses, has had something of a resurgence in the past year. Quality titles like *Forsaken* have gone a long way toward winning gamers who viewed the company's efforts with suspicion, and we have word of three more games on the way that could further cement the company in the good graces of the gaming public.



ReVolt **promises gorgeous graphics and a track editor for creating your own masterpieces. Look for it in mid-1999.**

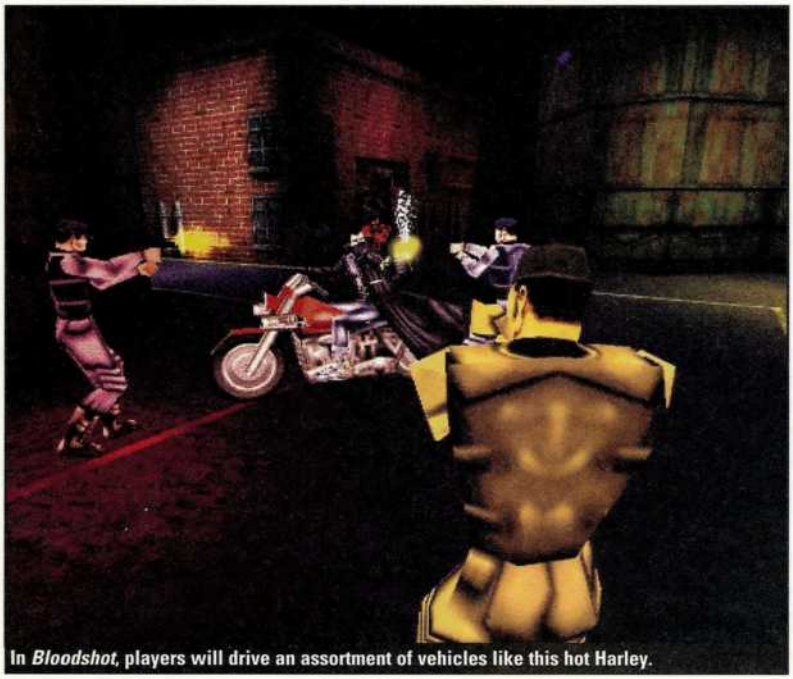
Bloodshot is a third-person action game with plenty of shooting, either on foot or from one of ten vehicles, including jeeps, tanks, trucks, and motorcycles. Based on the comic book of the same name and using the same engine as another upcoming Acclaim game, *Shadowman*, *Bloodshot* pits the player against more than 20 levels of hot action in and around a futuristic city; some areas of the game will only be accessible using particular vehicles. An interesting twist will be the use of Hard-Nanite technology. Many of the elements of the game's world — including vehicles, weapons, objects, and even enemies — are made up of Hard Nanites, which the player can absorb and reproduce later, giving the game's hero new technology, information, and skills. Deathmatch-style play via a network will also be included when *Bloodshot* is released sometime in 1999.

ReVolt is a game based on radio-controlled cars that somehow develop minds of their own. You choose from 28 miniature vehicles and race on more than 16 tracks set in eight environments. There will be five single-player game modes, multi-player support for as many as 12 racers in eight arenas, and a track editor. The graphics look fantastic even at this early stage in development, and control of the cars promises to be very realistic thanks to the game's sophisticated physics engine. There will be a large variety of power-ups and weapons you'll find, too, when *ReVolt* hits store shelves in mid-1999.



A huge variety of radio-controlled cars will be yours for the driving in ***ReVolt.***

Finally, *Machines* takes place on a planet where self-aware robotic contraptions are waging a war for supremacy. This real-time strategy game lets players construct 18 different types of machines with as many as five levels of technological development, making for a huge assortment of individual units. There will also be nine structure types with five levels of technology to build, 25 weapons (including flame throwers, virus launchers, and nukes), and gameplay elements that let you hide, attack, and sneak your units inside enemy buildings to cause chaos. The graphics engine will feature plenty of effects, like fogging, snow, and dust storms, and the game can be played from either a first- or third-person view. Four-player network and Internet support will be included when *Machines* ships this holiday season.

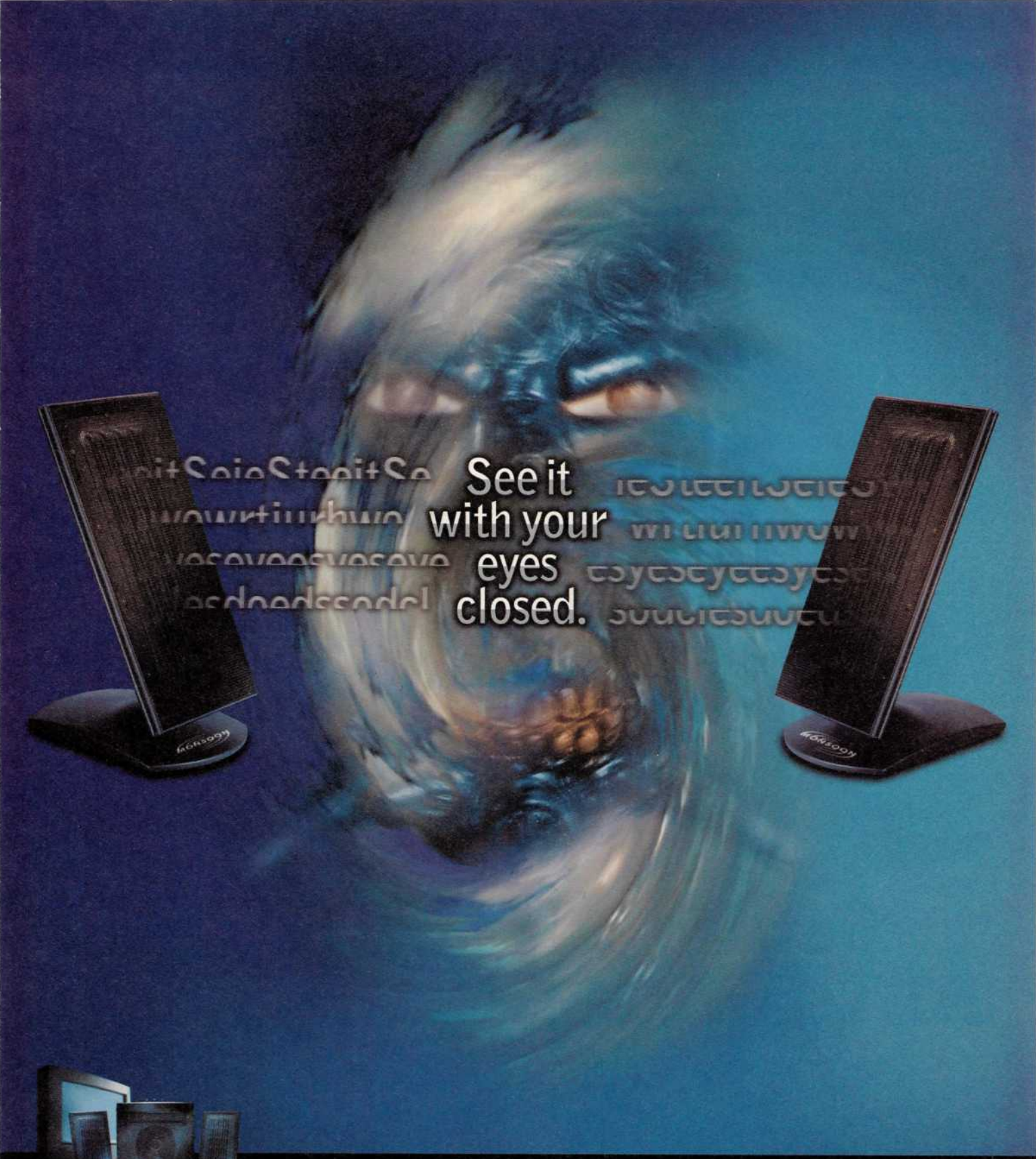


In ***Bloodshot,*** **players will drive an assortment of vehicles like this hot Harley.**



Choose from 18 different base models and equip them from a choice of 25 weapons, including nukes, in ***Machines.***

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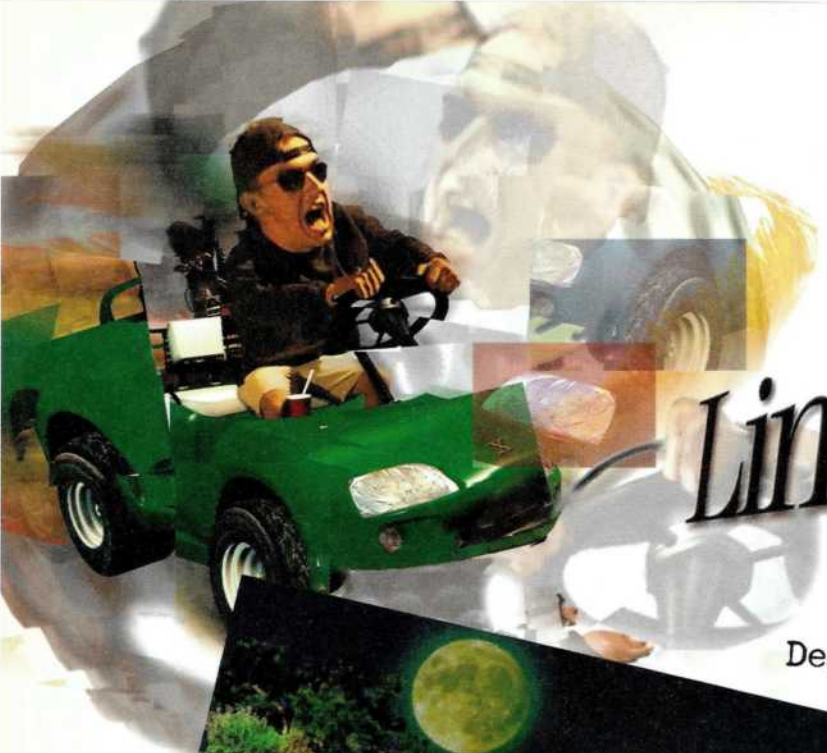
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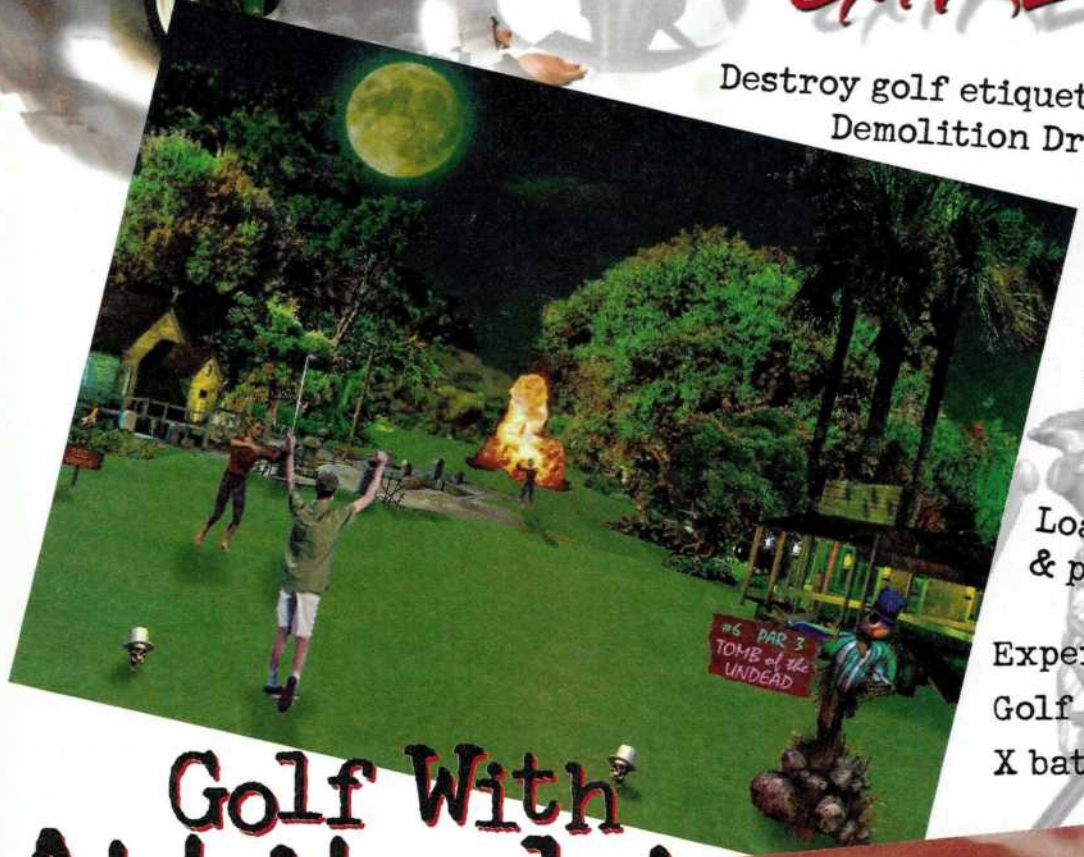
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Activision's Enterprise

Signs deal with Viacom for exclusive Star Trek rights

Activision and Viacom Consumer Products have announced a deal that will give the game publisher exclusive rights to develop and publish all interactive entertainment titles for the entire line of Star Trek properties over the next 10 years.

The alliance gives Activision worldwide publishing rights over multiple platforms — subject to the expiration of some of the existing licensing agreements that Viacom currently maintains with other game companies. Interplay, for instance, has the license to the original "Star Trek" series and movies until the year 2002; MicroProse owns the rights to the "Next Generation" series and its movies through 1999; and Simon & Schuster, a subsidiary of Viacom, owns "Deep Space Nine" rights through 2001. Also included in the agreement are the exclusive rights to base games on any new television series or motion pictures set in the Star Trek universe.

Activision wasted little time in announcing its first product to take advantage of the newly acquired franchise gold mine: a game to be based on the upcoming holiday feature film, *Star Trek: Insurrection*.

Viacom is in the process of getting out of the game industry (see our news story in last month's issue about Viacom's sale of Virgin Interactive assets to Electronic Arts), so selling the entire franchise to one company — rather than having to keep watch on multiple licensees — made a lot of sense.



Fascinating. Activision now has gaming rights to the entire Star Trek universe, including the rights to the original series and "The Next Generation."

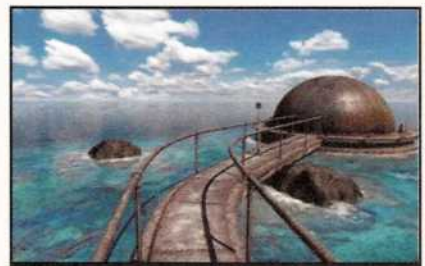
Red Orb to Get a Black Eye?

Fate of some games still up in the air

The Learning Company, the very successful consumer software company that publishes big-name series like Reader Rabbit, Mavis Beacon, and Carmen Sandiego, has purchased Broderbund. Red Orb, the games division at Broderbund, has been merged with Mindscape, the games division of the Learning Company. Got all that?

What is of concern to gamers is the status of titles from Red Orb. When we first learned of the merger, word from The Learning Company was that the *Myst/Riven* series was guaranteed to continue (big surprise there) under the Mindscape label, but the rest of the Red Orb lineup would have to be evaluated.

According to Chuck Kroegel, executive VP of Mindscape, "Identifying key product lines is crucial to our success. We made our decisions based on careful evaluation of the products themselves and our strategic objectives as a business unit." What he has identified as key products are the Prince of Persia and Warlords series, which means the upcoming *Prince of Persia 3D* will not be delayed — not by the need to find a new publisher, anyway.



The ridiculously popular *Myst* and *Riven* world has survived the merger, but titles like *Baja 1000 Racing* are still in jeopardy.

Other Red Orb properties were not so highly regarded. *The Journeyman Project 4* has reverted back to its developer, Presto Studios. Two games in development at Trilobyte — *Extreme Warfare* and *Baja 1000 Racing* — are still under evaluation. Says Kroegel, "These are quality titles, but they don't fit into our strategic plans. We are pursuing alternative plans to bring these titles to market."



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"The game looks beautiful. The 3Dfx graphics that I saw were flat out amazing." -Game Pen

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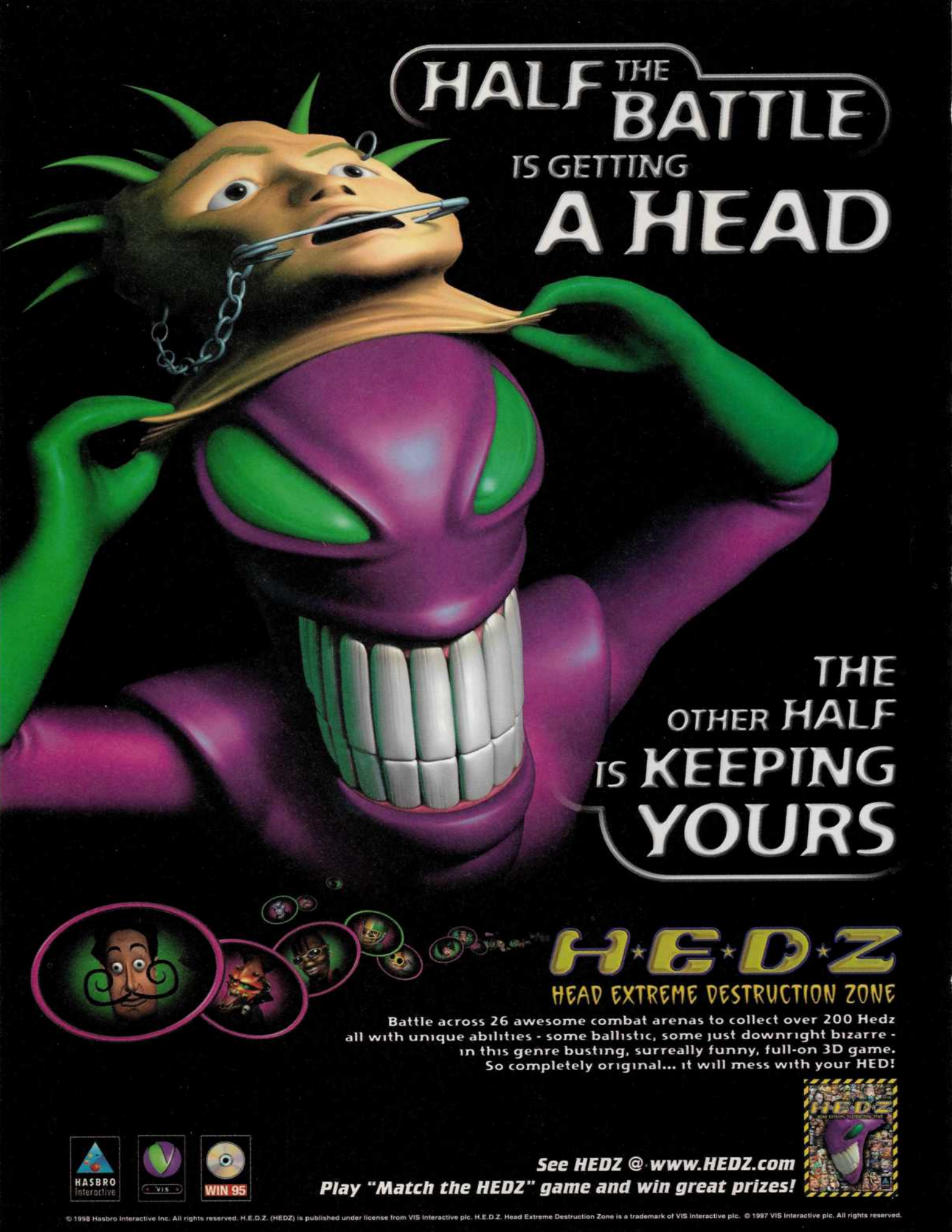
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Zoning In

Eidos prepares to release a new real-time strategy game, Warzone 2100



Like in most other real-time strategy games, a strong and powerful base in *Warzone 2100* will be an important part of any winning plan.

The huge glut of real-time strategy games has slackened off a bit these past few months, but the genre certainly isn't dead. Eidos, the keeper of all things Lara, has a new one in the works called *Warzone 2100*.

Like many games of its ilk, *Warzone 2100* is set in the near future. There was a technical error in one of the world's nuclear facilities, causing a wayward warhead to be launched. This, of course, set off a worldwide panic as each capable nation retaliated against the perceived attack. The result was nuclear devastation on a global scale, leaving less than a million survivors. Your job as one of these survivors is to lead your group to victory by conquering the North American continent and rebuilding the shattered world by reclaiming lost technologies.



The number of units, technologies, and weapons at your disposal in *Warzone 2100* is quite impressive.

Warzone 2100 will feature all the latest graphical advances, such as a totally 3D landscape that can be rotated to give you the best viewing angle, highly detailed terrain that affects the movement of units, and plenty of special effects. You'll be able to design your own units, and the number of permutations stands at a mind-boggling 2,000. There will be more than 400 technologies to research, and 100 different weapon types. The scope of the game sounds daunting.

Three campaigns with seven or eight missions each, plus a number of stand-alone scenarios will keep you plenty busy, and when you tire of taking on the advanced artificial intelligence of the computer, hop on the Internet or a LAN and take on as many as eight other players. *Warzone 2100* is scheduled for release this coming February.



The second of the three campaigns takes place in the burned-out ruins of a bombed city.

Slave to the Grind

Accolade does the giant robot genre

In *Slave Zero*, the upcoming 3D action game from Accolade, gamers will get to control a giant (we're talking 60 feet here!) bio-mechanical robot and do battle in a completely interactive, futuristic, mega-city.

The city is teeming with millions of people and vehicles, and you'll be able to "interact" with the local denizens as you crush cars, pick up and hurl pedestrians, and swat hovercraft and zeppelins out of the sky. The game's engine, dubbed Ecstasy, allows the designers to portray the huge scale differences between Slave and the city with ease.



"Conventional" weapons will be available for Slave's use, but anything you can pick up and throw will serve you well as an attack.

The story behind the destruction casts the player as a member of a rebellion force, who steals the robot from the evil dictator controlling the populace through a mysterious energy force. Your job is, of course, to destroy the evil stereotype and restore peace. Hackneyed, to be sure, but the action is the selling point here.

While turning the city into your personal stomping grounds should be loads of fun, you won't be unopposed. The enemy has plenty of forces to try and thwart you, ranging from human-sized troops on foot and in tanks, all the way up to 100-foot tall behemoths. From the third-person perspective of play, you'll be able to enjoy the amazing agility you possess, considering your size. Slave can run, jump, roll, and hoist himself up onto rooftops. There will also be weapons to use, but picking up a nearby bus and throwing it at your opponent will be probably be the more enjoyable option.



Here you can get a good idea of the scale between your robot, Slave, and the buildings and roads of the city.

Multi-play will be included, too, with support for as many as 16 players via LAN or over the Internet when *Slave Zero* comes crashing into stores next spring.

Payne-less Technology

The power behind Remedy Entertainment's Max Payne

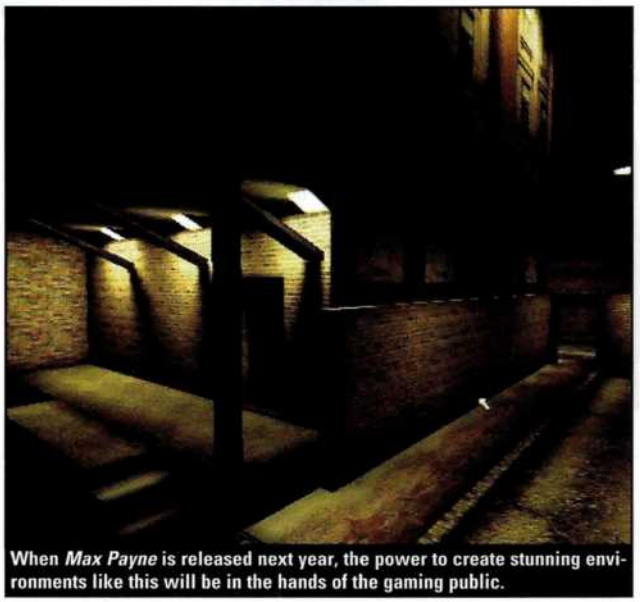
The *Unreal* engine is the current king for those companies looking to license some hot technology and create their own games rather than spending years developing their own. This could change early next year, when Remedy Entertainment starts offering its MAX-FX engine, the foundation of its upcoming first-person shooter, *Max Payne*.

Remedy has released some details about the new technology, and it sounds like it could make quite an impression. The hearty feature list includes radiosity lighting, a feature that up until now has only appeared in high-end architectural applications, particle systems with volumetric environmental special effects, and skeletal animation for ultra-smooth and believable motion. The engine will also be hardware-only, with full support for DirectX6, TCP/IP multi-player, 3D positional audio, and force-feedback controllers.

Three editors will be part of the engine. MaxED is a level-creating tool, ParticleFX is used to add special effects, and ActorFX handles all of the character modeling. All of these editors (with full documentation) will be released to the gaming public, putting an enormous amount of power in the hands of would-be designers.



Skeletal animation lets game artists animate characters' bones, then wrap "skin" around them for some very realistic-looking character models.



When *Max Payne* is released next year, the power to create stunning environments like this will be in the hands of the gaming public.

Drachen Zor No More

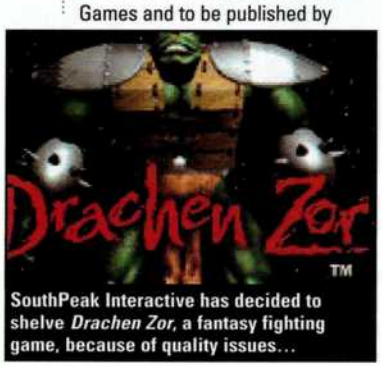
SouthPeak cancels plans to publish title

Way back in our July 1997 issue, we told you about a fighting game called *Drachen Zor*, in development from a company called 8th Wonder Games and to be published by SouthPeak Interactive. The fantasy-themed fighter had some very lofty aspirations, but the execution of those plans just didn't pan out.

Armistead Sapp, president of SouthPeak, says, "*Drachen Zor* just didn't meet the high standards that we've established for ourselves and for our products." While we respect the company's decision, we have to question its judgement when it comes to evaluating games, with releases such as *Temujin* and *Men in Black: The Game* over the previous year.

SouthPeak still believes in the world behind *Drachen Zor*, though, and plans to explore ways to use the back-story as the basis for future games.

In other SouthPeak news, the company has entered into an exclusive two-year agreement with Activision to distribute all upcoming games worldwide, excluding North America, where SouthPeak will continue to handle its own distribution.



SouthPeak Interactive has decided to shelve *Drachen Zor*, a fantasy fighting game, because of quality issues...



...but the company had no qualms about putting out *Temujin* or *Men in Black*. Scary.

Huh-huh...You Said "Hole"

Beavis and Butthead do miniature golf

Straight out of the "why let a license go to waste?" file, GT Interactive has announced yet another game starring MTV Animation's "Beavis and Butthead" cartoon series. Last month, we told you about the upcoming adventure game starring the boys, and now we've gotten word of plans for a miniature golf game based on the depraved and disturbing world of Beavis and Butthead.

Beavis and Butthead: Bunghole In One is being developed by Illusions. Based on places and characters from the show, you'll be treated to 18 holes of mini-golf with themes such as Burger World, Nacho Picchu, Mr. Van Driessen's Psychedelic Playground, and Cornholio. As many as three players will be able to participate as one of the cartoon's characters, including the knuckleheads themselves, Tom Anderson, Van Driessen, and Todd (he's cool). No word yet on an exact release date.



Do a little putting in places like Burger World and Butthead's living room in *Beavis and Butthead: Bunghole In One.*



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News Briefs

Platform 3Dfx

Babbage's and Software Etc. have teamed up with 3D-chipset maker 3Dfx to create dedicated sections in their retail stores for hardware and games that use 3Dfx technology. This will take place in some 450 stores around the nation. Says Dan DeMatteo, president of Babbage's, "3Dfx has legitimized the PC gaming platform and become a standard in the industry for supporting the largest number of software titles and delivering the most immersive 3D gaming experience." Employees will receive special sales training and be expected to wear 3Dfx shirts every weekend during the holidays.

Psygnosis Adjusts

Rumor has it Psygnosis, currently owned by Sony, may be sold to Eidos. While this hasn't been confirmed as of press time, it hasn't stopped Psygnosis from doing a bit of reorganizing. Some projects have reportedly been canceled (although they were in the early stages of development and hadn't been announced yet), and a number of employees have been let go. We'll have more on this possible sale as it develops.

FYI on THQ

Among the 50 fastest-growing companies in Southern California is game publisher THQ. In order to be considered for the list, the company in question must have doubled its revenues in the past five years. Says President and CEO Brian J. Farrell, "THQ, first and foremost, is a business, and to have success you need to be disciplined in your approach. While we are proud of what we have accomplished, we look forward to the challenge of continuing to sustain that growth in the future." Good news for gamers.



Duke Nukem and GT Interactive struck a blow against those pesky shovelware level publishers.

Get Lost

Cherry Coke has been offering a free game on its web site for the past several months. Called *The Lost Island of Alanna*, it's a *Myst*-style adventure that ties in with the Cherry Coke retail product, which gives additional clues on how to solve some of the puzzles. You'll have to hurry if you want to get your free disc, since the game is set to close at the end of November. Point your web browser to *www.cherrycoke.com* and get cracking.

It's Only a Name

Microsoft's Internet Gaming Zone has changed its name to MSN Gaming Zone. The content will remain unchanged, and you won't need to change your bookmarks either, since the web address will remain *www.zone.com*. The moniker manipulation was done to attract more Microsoft Network (*www.msn.com*) users to the gaming site.

EA Stands Accused

Top Ware, a German company, has filed charges against Electronic Arts, alleging industrial espionage and violations of an NDA (non-disclosure agreement). According to Top Ware, during negotiations for the license to market a game compilation, EA was given confidential information, including release dates, pricing, etc. EA then took this information and created its own compilation product and released it on the same date and at the same price point as Top Ware's. More info as we get it.

A Win for GT

GT Interactive has won its court case against Micro Star regarding the release of unauthorized level packs for *Duke Nukem 3D*. This decision goes a long way toward protecting the rights of developers from companies that troll the 'net, compile user-created levels, and stick them on a CD to sell as an original product.

The PC Gamer Playlist

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

Of all the gaming peripherals that come through the office, the Intensor chair (reviewed in this issue's Hard Stuff section) was one of the most highly anticipated. The fighting was fierce as we battled to be the first to try out the coveted, speaker-encrusted office chair we'd come to refer to as the "ass rumbler." Ultimately, Greg Vederman got first dibs, since he'd spent three hours putting the damned thing together. Just moments after he had settled in to enjoy some *Quake*-ing action, however, he began to complain of searing abdominal pain. Most likely this was a result of his consumption of several room-temperature pieces of Kentucky Fried Chicken for breakfast that morning, but afterward we were all wary of the Intensor and its potential effect of its subsonic vibrations on our lower gastrointestinal tracts. Once again, Vederman had ruined a perfectly good gadget for all of us.

1.	*Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six*	*Everybody*
2.	*NHL 99*	*Rob, Todd*
3.	*Shogo*	*Billy, Mluton*
4.	*Half-Life Day One*	*Billy, Mluton*
5.	*Return Fire 2*	*Dean, Jay*
6.	*People's General*	*Dan, Gary*
7.	*Need For Speed III*	*Billy, Wolf*
8.	*Madden NFL 99*	*Rob, Greg*
9.	*The House of the Dead*	*Gary, Billy*
10.	*Head Rush*	*Lisa, Dean*

Shock in the System

Continued from page 41

System Shock is the oddly cool elevator music that, in contrast to the heavy techno-beat that drives the gameplay, plays between levels. "Of course that will return," says Levine. "We're not fools, you know!" We also wanted to know if the trips to cyberspace that you had to make in the original would be part of the new game. "It will be very different, very unique, and very cool, but I can't go into too much detail right now. Let me just say it will not be like it was in the first game," says Levine.

Levine wants to make sure that gamers know that *System Shock 2* will not be just another first-person 3D shooter in a crowded market. He says, "*Shock* was often mistaken for an action shooter, but we're moving even further away with *Shock 2*. This is a full RPG. You choose your character's path through the military of the future, signing on with the equivalent of the Marines, the Navy, or the Secret Service. Those are essentially the character classes, where the Marines are like the fighter class, and the Secret Service would be the equivalent of a magic-user class. You'll be in the service for four years, and you'll get to choose missions to go on each year through a text interface (similar to *Daggerfall* or the pen and paper game *Traveller*) that will determine the development of your character. There will be experience points and the going up in levels that will give you points to assign to your skills, abilities, traits, and cy-powers. I think the great, unique thing about *System Shock 2* is it's a great combination of that RPG stat-based feeling and that first person, simulated, physical world. Very few games really get that mix. We're somewhere in between the *Quake*-type games that are all about the physical world, and the *Fallout*-type games where you have that numbers-and-die-rolling world, and we think it's a really cool place to be."

Wherever *System Shock 2* rests in that gap between the two worlds, we know one thing for sure — we can't wait until next year to experience it for ourselves.

http://pc.ign.com

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...YOUR DEEPEST, DARKEST FEARS HEAD-ON AND WATCH THEM LIMP PITIFULLY AWAY

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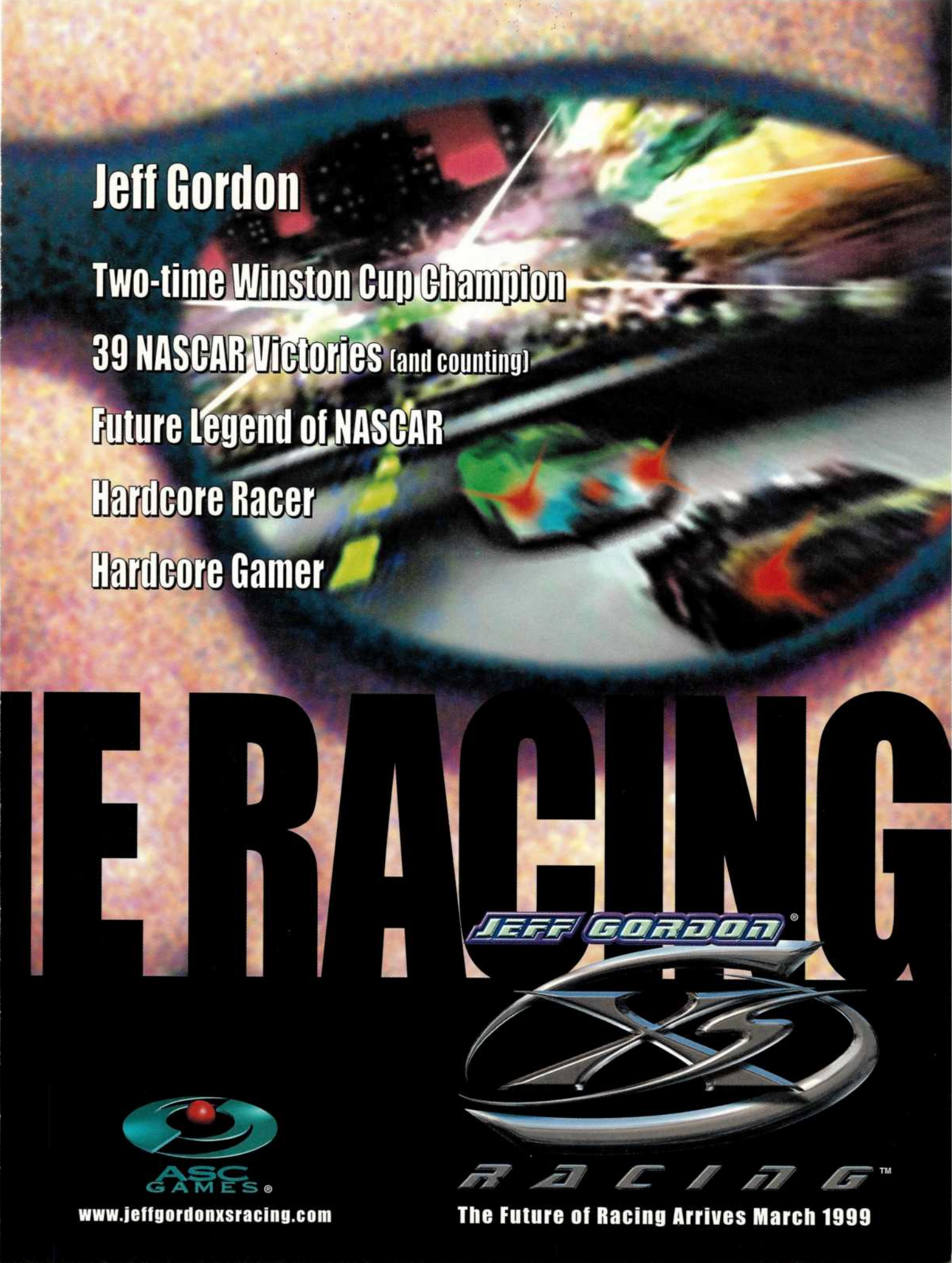
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—Computer Gaming World, September 1998

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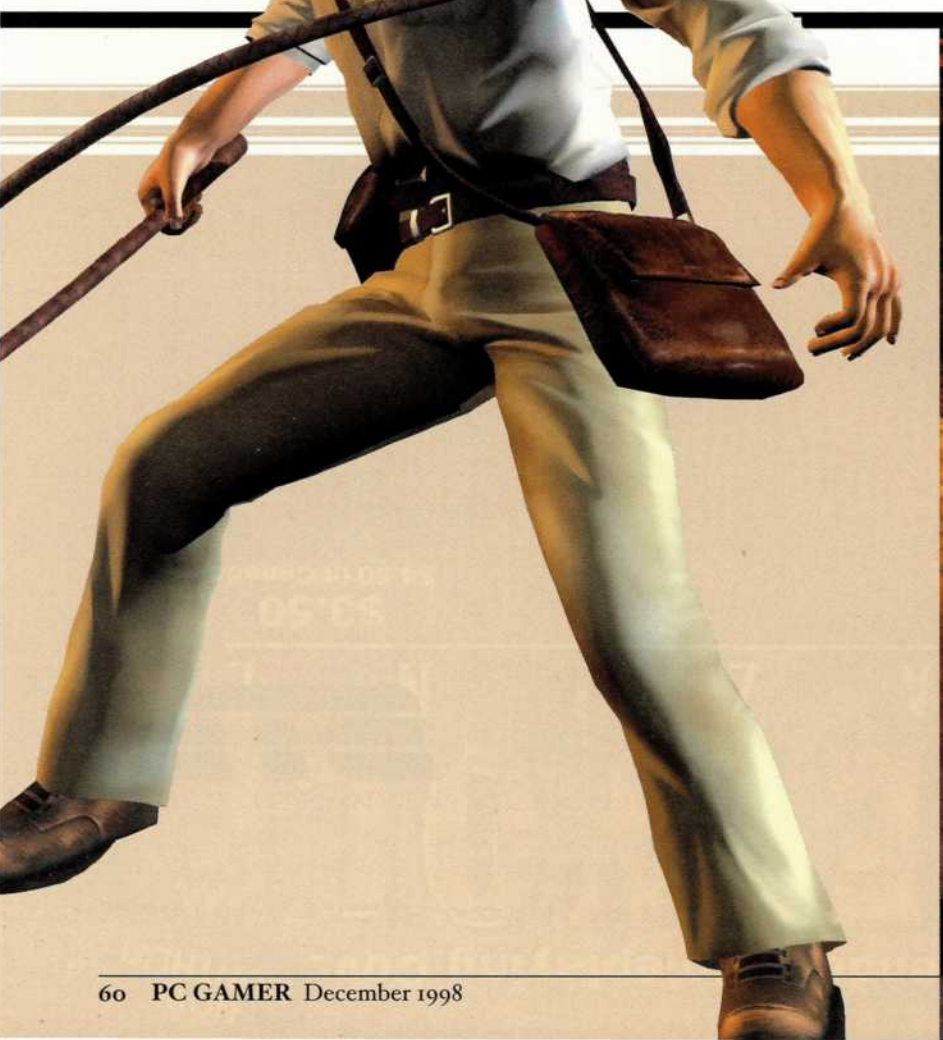
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INDIANA JONES and the UNDISCOVERED GENRE





Indy can pull off many death-defying leaps, but falling *too* far will still have grisly, fatal results.



The 3D graphics engine, re-written from routines originally designed for *Jedi Knight*, allows for some impressive temple interiors, all rendered in lovely 16-bit color.

The man with the hat is back, and this time he's in search of another holy grail: the perfect balance between action and adventure, as he makes the leap into a whole new style of gaming.

By Gary Whitta

In the frenzy surrounding the recent Special Editions and the forthcoming Episode One, It's easy to forget that Star Wars is not the only Lucasfilm movie trilogy that has gone on to become an icon of popular culture. Co-created by George Lucas and Steven Spielberg, the adventurous archeology professor Indiana Jones (or to give him his proper name, of course, Henry Jones, Jr.) has propelled three movies into the world-wide box-office record books, and along the way become one of cinema's most thrilling, likable, and memorable heroes. And as with Star Wars, Indy has grown beyond his cinematic roots into an expanded universe of television ("The


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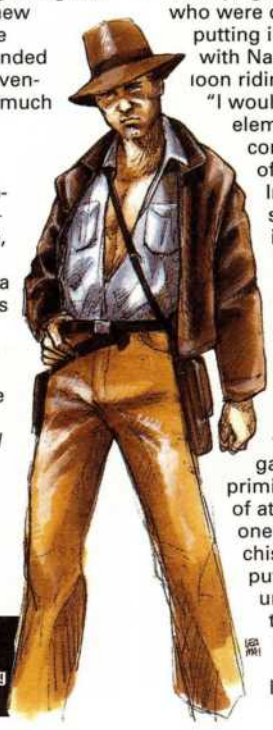
Young Indiana Jones Chronicles"), choose-your-own-adventure novels, Dark Horse comic books, theme park rides and, of course, computer games.

So resonant has Indy's enduring appeal been since his first appearance in *Raiders of the Lost Ark* in 1981 that he's spawned countless imitations — and, to his credit, has fended them all off with ease. But the most recent — and successful — attempt to date at eating Indy's lunch has not come via the big screen, but the computer screen. When *Tomb Raider* burst onto the PC in 1996, everyone recognized its heroine Lara Croft as, basically, a female Indiana Jones, while the game itself borrowed heavily from the trap-dodging, artifact-grabbing action that the Indy movies are famous for. *Tomb Raider*'s debt to Indy is obvious and has now become quite shameless, with one of the promotional tag lines for *Tomb Raider III* reading "Go back to Indiana, Mister Jones."

But the George Lucas empire has never been one to take this sort of thing lying down, and if you thought that Lara Croft knew a thing or two about ancient tombs, LucasArts is about to demonstrate that when it comes to archeological adventuring there is, and will only ever be, one true master.

Indiana Jones and the Infernal Machine is the name of LucasArts' fourth Indy game, and represents a major change in the direction of the franchise. Leaving the bite-sized *Desktop Adventures* aside for a moment, LucasArts' Indy games have always been built around the traditional graphic adventure format for which the company is most famous. The same SCUMM engine that drove *Maniac Mansion, The Secret of Monkey Island,* and many others was also used to create the two Indy adventures, *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, and *Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis*. But now, Indy's gaming life is about to take a dramatic new turn, partially inspired by the arrival of Lara Croft and intended to encapsulate the action/adventure feel of the movies with much greater authenticity.

As the movie poster blurb proclaims: If adventure has a name, it must be Indiana Jones. And if Indiana Jones adventure gaming has a name, it must be Hal Barwood. Formerly a movie screenwriter, producer, and director of note (he co-wrote Steven Spielberg's first theatrical movie *The Sugarland Express,* and was co-writer and producer of the Disney movie *Dragonslayer*), Barwood has since become master of all things Indy at LucasArts. He has been responsible for all the Indy titles to come out of the company so far, and he's now the driving force behind the new direction Indy is taking as project leader of *Indiana Jones and the Infernal Machine*. According to him, this new game is much truer to the Indiana Jones mythos than anything he's done before, and represents the fulfillment of an ambition he's been nursing for years. "Even during *The Fate of Atlantis*, I was horrifying all my friends at the company who were doing adventure games by putting in camel racing and fighting with Nazis out in the desert, and balloon riding and car chases," he says. "I would try to work in these action elements even under the primitive conditions of the early versions of the SCUMM engine because Indy has always struck me as a swashbuckling character, and if he doesn't operate like that, he's not Indy."



All the characters in the game are first devised as color pencil sketches before being turned into "living" 3D models.

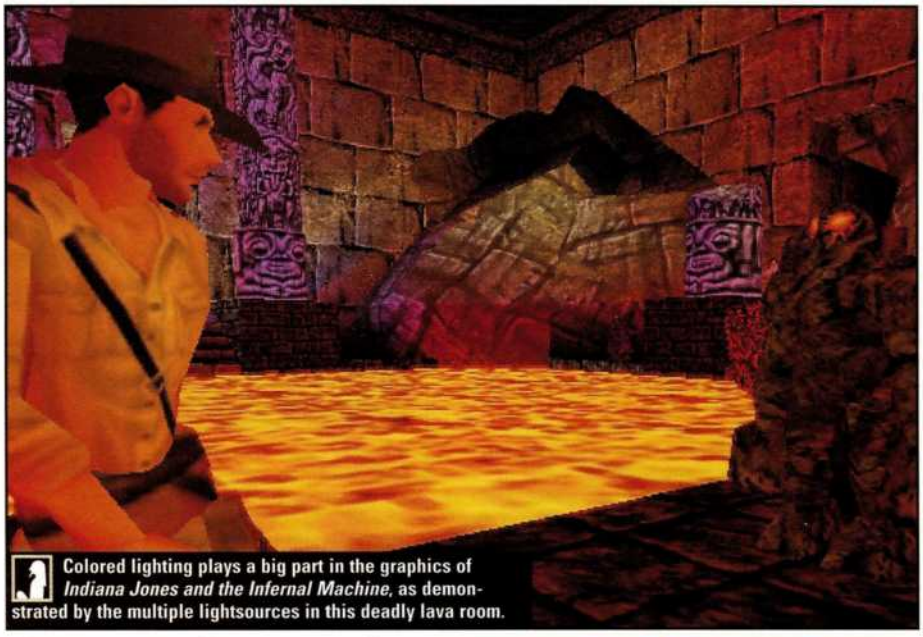
After *The Fate of Atlantis*, it became apparent to Barwood that Indy's gaming potential was growing beyond what could be achieved within the traditional graphic adventure format — but at the time PC gaming technology was still too primitive to offer much in the way of attractive alternatives. "Indy is one of Lucasfilm's flagship franchises, and so we didn't want to put him back onto the screen until we felt we could do justice to him," he says, explaining why it's been six years since LucasArts last released an Indiana Jones game.

But even while he was still working within the confines of the graphic adventure genre, Barwood was envisioning a totally different style of gaming, one that would better showcase the well-crafted mix of adventure, action and smarts we know from the Indy movies. And then, gradually, the technology that could make it happen began to arrive. "I personally started to get interested when *Dark Forces* came out," he says. "But Indy is a character, and a first-person Indy game isn't such a great idea because a lot of the flavor of Indy is in his demeanor and his costuming and his derring-do — if you can't see that happen, you really can't believe in it.

"So *Dark Forces* took us part of the way there, but not all of the way. And it was *Jedi Knight* that eventually got us over the hump. Its third-person view was primitive, but it was there. And all these things made me start thinking," he says. "Technology usually has a way of coming into this company kinda like the thin end of the wedge. And it develops game by game. In this case, the 3D tech-

"I admire *Tomb Raider*, and I think it's wonderful game. But the truth is that Lara Croft stepped on our toes, and now we'll probably step on her toes."

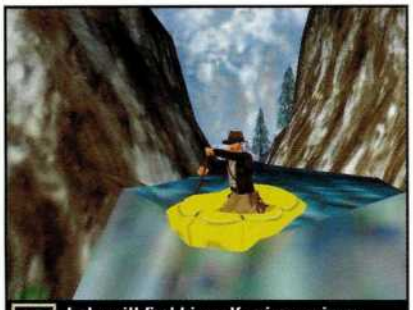
—Hal Barwood



Colored lighting plays a big part in the graphics of *Indiana Jones and the Infernal Machine*, as demonstrated by the multiple lightsources in this deadly lava room.



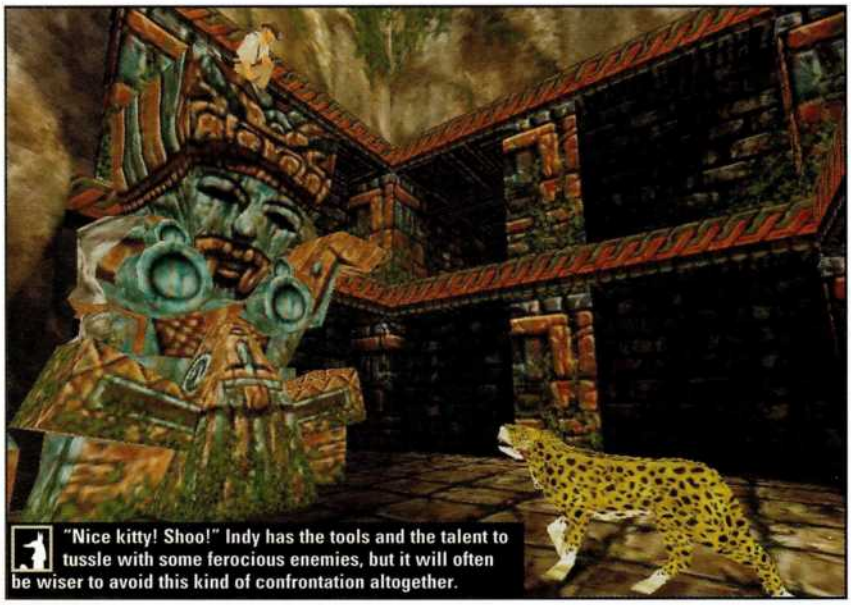
This ancient temple has been smashed by greedy treasure hunters to lay mine-cart tracks.



Indy will find himself using various vehicles, including this emergency raft!

nology was originally developed for shooters, but after a while, technology diffuses around our company, and eventually even people like me get to put their hands on this fabulous real-time 3D stuff and get to develop it further. So I've just been sort of lying in wait for this kind of thing to happen; for the technology to mature to the point at which I think the time is right."

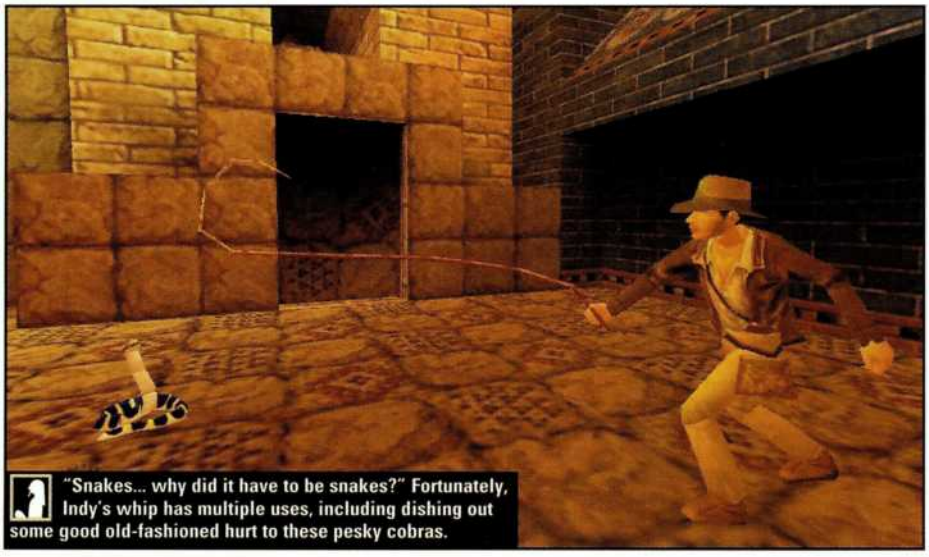
Even so, convincing LucasArts' higher-ups that the time *was* right for Indy to move away from his well-founded (and commercially successful) adventure roots and into something different and unknown was no easy task — and that's where *Tomb Raider* comes in. "The main impact that *Tomb Raider* had for us is that it pricked up the ears of management," says Barwood. "Suddenly, I didn't have quite so much difficulty explaining to them what I was trying to do." And, of course, the idea of doing something to go up against *Tomb Raider*, a game which had so obviously and blatantly stolen from Indy, was appealing too. "In the first or second level of *Tomb Raider*, there's a huge boulder running down after Lara, and we kinda went 'hey'!," says Wayne Cline, product manager for *Indiana Jones and the Infernal Machine*. "And I think we did look at it and say, well let's take what's rightfully ours. As I'm fond of saying, we kinda look on this as us stealing Indy back."



"Nice kitty! Shoo!" Indy has the tools and the talent to tussle with some ferocious enemies, but it will often be wiser to avoid this kind of confrontation altogether.

Barwood himself certainly doesn't shy away from the comparison — his office is littered with copies of the *Tomb Raider* games, along with Lara Croft statuettes and action figures. "I admire *Tomb Raider*, and I think it's wonderful game," he says. "But the truth is that Lara stepped on our toes, and now we'll probably step on her toes. But I don't view this as a game which is trying to come in and stamp on *Tomb Raider*'s territory. They have a certain way of handling what I think of as a large genre. And we're gonna make our own contributions, and they're different from theirs. We have a level of story sophistication, and a level of puzzle complexity in our game that's a step beyond what they do. Their system is fine, and I like it very much, but we're going to take things in a different direction."

Would this new Indy game ever have come about if it hadn't been for *Tomb Raider*, then? "Oh, I think it would have," Barwood says. "It's a natural evolution. We all feel that Indy is a person who must be seen in the game, so the third-person perspective is a natural one for him. If you don't see the whip and the hat and the swagger, what have you got?" he says. "Like I said, I'm a big admirer of *Tomb Raider*, but the thing I admire most about it isn't really the details of the gameplay or even Lara herself —although I think she's a wonderful character. It's the fact that it played out very forcibly to everybody that there was a market for this sort of game, and that may have accelerated things for us a little bit. *Tomb Raider*'s important because it showed that we can use real-time 3D for something besides shooters."

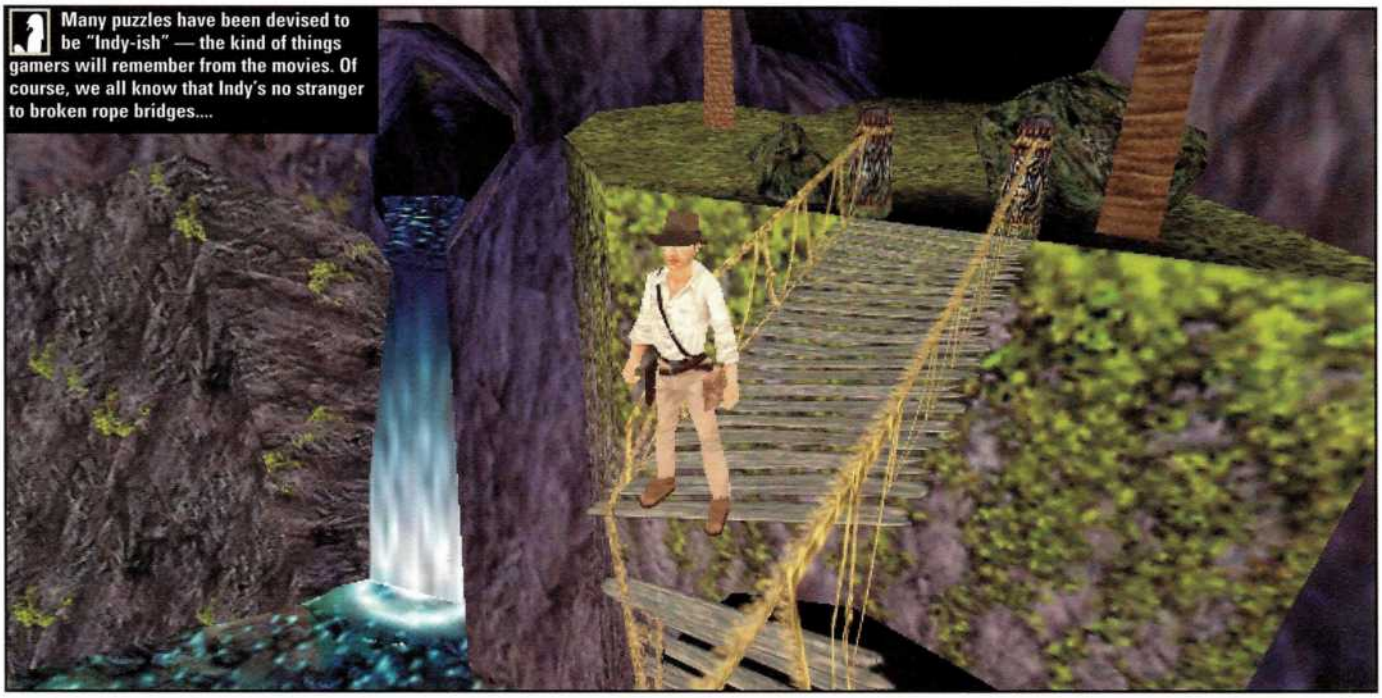


"Snakes... why did it have to be snakes?" Fortunately, Indy's whip has multiple uses, including dishing out some good old-fashioned hurt to these pesky cobras.

"We're beyond cinema. We've gotten to a state now where we can offer gamers a unique experience in entertainment that they can't get going to the movies."

—Hal Barwood

Picture the scene. It's 1947 and World War Two is over, with the once-powerful Nazi menace now lying in ruins. But now the free world finds itself facing a new enemy as the Iron Curtain of Communism descends over Europe and the Cold War begins. Professor Indiana Jones, meanwhile, has turned his back on his adventurous past to concentrate on the academic side of archeology. But of course, that's not going to last long — as becomes obvious when Sophia Hapgood, Indy's old flame from *The Fate of Atlantis* and now a CIA operative, shows up. Seems the Russkies are up to no good out in the Iraqi desert,



Many puzzles have been devised to be "Indy-ish" — the kind of things gamers will remember from the movies. Of course, we all know that Indy's no stranger to broken rope bridges....

and we can still draw them fast enough on our 166MHz minimum machine. That gives our level designers the freedom to make things a lot more complex, and it's also the kind of system that nobody else has, so when you see our worlds on your machine, you'll notice that they're a lot more expansive and detailed than some of the other engines out there."

Getting back to the gameplay itself, and the elusive balance of action and puzzle-solving, Barwood sees that as a sophisticated relationship — and in the case of Indy, one which leans more toward the cerebral side of things. "All the other games I've designed here have always had an action element," he says. "But at the same time, I don't find action to be enough. I'm not content to run around and slay everything. To me, the purpose of being in this world is to discover the mysteries. That's the fun part. And Indy, as a character, has a slightly, dare I say it, intellectual side. He's a thoughtful man as well as a man of action. He's a professor of archeology and a master of ancient languages...he's a puzzle-solving guy. The end of *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, for example, is nothing more nor less than a series of adventure game puzzles — he ducks the saws, and steps on the letters of Jehovah, and does the leap of faith, and so on, and so forth. And I think that the kind of story opportunities that exist when you have a character like that make him a natural for a certain kind of adventure gaming."

As a result, you'll spend more time, say, figuring out the workings of an ancient mechanical doorway or deciphering the markings on a temple wall to gain a clue than you will socking the bad guys or running away from ravenous jungle creatures. As in the movies and the graphic adventures, pulling a gun is rarely the way for Indy to resolve a problem, and it will be possible to become "stuck." Acknowledging this, Barwood's game design includes an automap mode within, which can activate a helpful arrow that points you in the right direction at any given moment. It won't spell out the exact solution to a problem for you, but it will tell you where you need to go next, and in many cases that will be enough to help you figure out the solution for yourself. For anyone who thinks this might be considered cheating, this feature does impact your overall score, or "IQ" (Indy Quotient) each time you use it. Those who want to score a perfect 100 percent will have to figure all the game's secrets out for themselves. But Barwood is keen to assure gamers who may have been put off by the abstract nature of many adventure-style puzzles in the past that his game's brain-teasers will all be satisfyingly logical. "We never have Indy doing puzzles like 'use the waxwork with the rhinoceros'," he says. "I admire that kind of absurdity and the like in games like *Day of the Tentacle* and *Monkey Island*, but they're not the kind of puzzles we do."

As for the game's more action-based, adventurous elements, much of what you may have learned from games like *Tomb Raider* will have to be unlearned, as the finer points of the design have been tailored around Indy's character. The whip is perhaps the one thing that people most immediately associate with Indy, and so a special effort was made to turn this into a full-featured gameplay element. "We use the whip in at least four different ways," says Barwood. "You can whip your opponent or even whip the gun right out of his hand. You can whip pegs in the wall, and swing yourself across distances that are too great to otherwise cross. There's a way to whip on to anchor points and then climb up the whip to reach places you couldn't otherwise get to. And occasionally, there are places where the only way you can get the item you need is to whip it, and snap it off whatever it's on."

Indy is also armed with an all-purpose machete (good for attacking creatures and cutting away vines and cobwebs to pass through) and his trusty revolver, which thankfully is loaded with infinite bullets. More substantial firearms can be gotten along the way, but they're not to be found just conveniently lying around — they must be whipped from the clutches of enemies or taken from their cold, dead hands. In general, though, you're better off trying to avoid trouble rather than going looking for it — again, if it's something Indy wouldn't do, neither should you. "When you first think of Indy, you don't think of a guy who's been working out, who's been pumping a lot of iron," says Barwood. "He's usually a guy who would rather just go about being a professor, but he keeps getting pushed into a corner — and then he fights back. You have to be true to that."

Inevitably, though, there will be times when there's nothing to do but stand and fight. There will be plenty of Commies out to stop you, and a wide variety of perilous creatures...yes, including snakes, which may be made particularly deadly — the idea being to make the player as scared of snakes as Indy famously is.



Indy's sidekick Sophia Hapgood gets the story underway when she asks him to help with a CIA mission.

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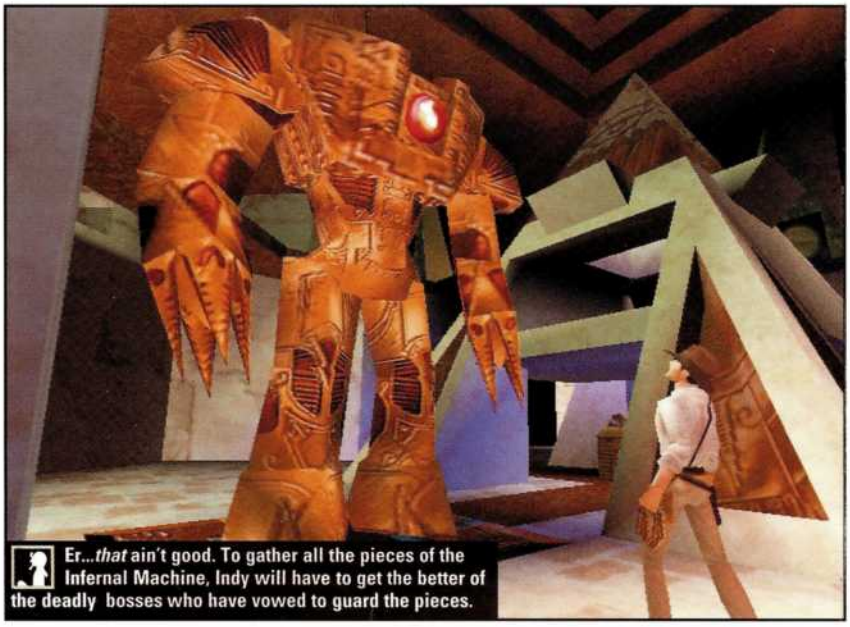
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Er...*that* ain't good. To gather all the pieces of the Infernal Machine, Indy will have to get the better of the deadly bosses who have vowed to guard the pieces.

apparently trying to excavate the Tower of Babel of biblical legend, and Uncle Sam needs Indy to help find out what they're up to. Indy, of course, reluctantly accepts, and that sets the stage for a globe-trotting search for the four parts of an ancient mechanical device which greatly predates the oldest known machine and that could bring about unspeakable horror if re-activated in the wrong hands.

"My first thought was, let's get rid of the Nazis," says Barwood, explaining the ideas behind the game's story. "Let's move Indy along, past World War Two. I always intended this to be set during the Cold War, with Indy going up against the Communists, so that we could advance the story past the stuff you've seen before. I've looked at the various Indy novels and comics, and there's a tremendous amount of stuff, but it all stops at the end of World War Two.

"The thing about Indy, the authentic Indy that I think we're part of, is that he always goes after things that are gigantic," Barwood says. "He found the Ark of the Covenant, he found the Holy Grail...and now he's going to investigate the Biblical legend of the Tower of Babel. He's going to find out what really went on there, and why it got torn down. For us, Indy must tackle some of the larger questions of antiquity."

The Tower of Babel story line wasn't the first that Barwood came up with, however. "When I first started working on this game, there was another possible story I might have done," he says. "And I was warned not to go there, because it was something that they might eventually want to make as a film." Lucasfilm may be dragging its heels over a fourth Indiana Jones movie, but if and when it comes, there's a good chance that the plot will be similar to something currently residing in Barwood's waste paper basket.

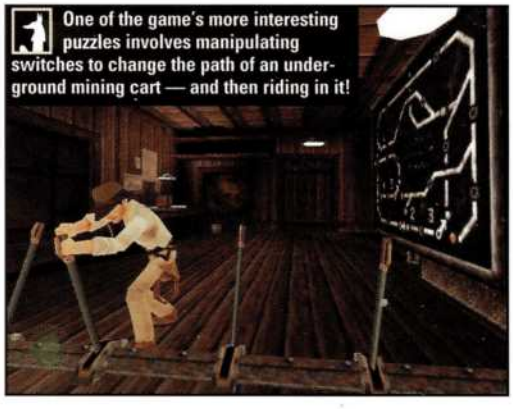


Another typically perilous situation for Indy, as visualized by one of the project's artistic team.

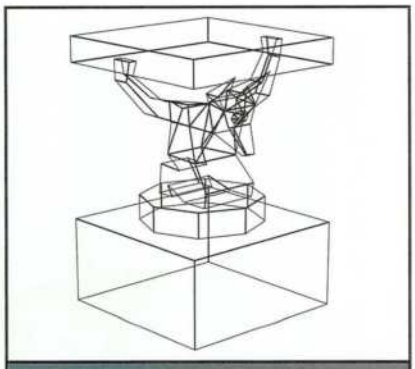
The premise, story, and locations of *Indiana Jones and the Infernal Machine* are certainly rich enough to be worthy of a full-blown graphic adventure — but as you take your first step in Indy's boots, it becomes clear that, while this new game's adventure element remains strong, everything is now built much more around *action*. For the first time, we're seeing Indy in a third-person, 3D world with direct control over his every footstep, glance and crack of the whip. Like *Tomb Raider*, the gameplay aims for a well-balanced mix of exploration, puzzle-solving, and slam-bam confrontations against adversaries both human and animal. But, says Barwood, "I think we're going to find a better balance than *Tomb Raider*, which was a little too abstract for my taste. We're certainly using more sophisticated technology than they are."

This new approach is a far cry from the slower, more ruminative gameplay of Indy's past PC outings, and the technology referred to by Barwood that's making such a drastic change possible is a game engine based on the 3D graphics technology created for LucasArts' award-winning *Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II*. It comes at a price — this will be LucasArts' first PC game that will require hardware acceleration — but according to lead programmer Paul LeFevre, it will be more than worth it. "The very first thing Hal and I decided was that we wanted to make this hardware-only, so that we could go beyond some of the technical limitations that *Jedi Knight* had in terms of polygon count and speed," he says. "Once management agreed that that was a good idea, our first question was, what are we going to do to take advantage of this? How do we go beyond what the *Jedi Knight* team did because they were limited by the fact that they still had to run well in the software renderer? Well, the biggest thing is that we can go full 16-bit color, so that's what we did. All of our textures are true-color instead of being limited to the 256-color palette that *Jedi Knight* had." Interestingly, then, this is the second time that an Indy game has broken a technological barrier for LucasArts, as *The Fate of Atlantis* marked the company's first leap from 16- to 256-color graphics.

When LeFevre boots up his in-progress version of *The Infernal Machine* to show off his work so far, the results of his extensive tweaking to the *Jedi Knight* engine are obvious. The colors, the details, the size of rooms, the speed...everything is a massive leap beyond what we saw in *Jedi Knight*. That's perhaps less surprising when you consider that this really isn't the *Jedi Knight* engine at all — LeFevre rewrote more than 80 percent of the code to make it do all the things the Indy game design required of it. "One of the big things we did was change *Jedi Knight*'s drawing system, which limited the number of sectors we could draw and so prevented us from doing big worlds," he says. "Now we have unlimited size worlds,

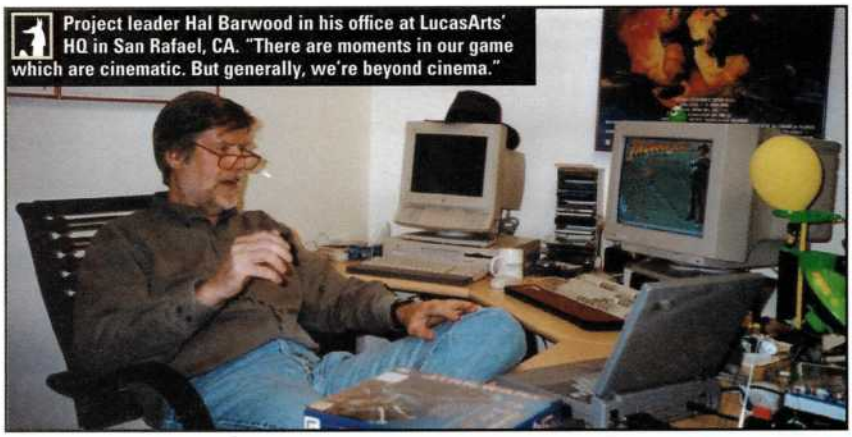


One of the game's more interesting puzzles involves manipulating switches to change the path of an underground mining cart — and then riding in it!





All the game's environments and objects are designed as simple wire frames before being colored and textured.



Project leader Hal Barwood in his office at LucasArts' HQ in San Rafael, CA. "There are moments in our game which are cinematic. But generally, we're beyond cinema."

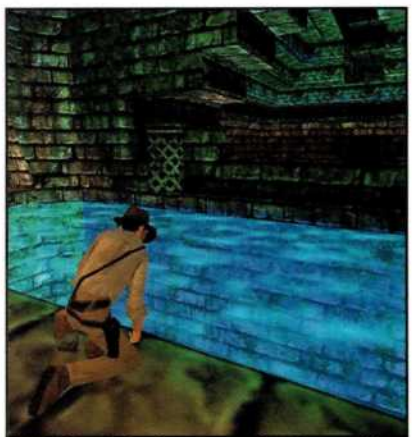
By far, Hal Barwood's most important concern for *Indiana Jones and the Infernal Machine* is level design. As project leader, he outlines the basic foundation of each of the game's environments for a team of level builders to create in a more complex form. Here, Barwood believes that the design team's work goes far beyond the movie-making craft he used to practice. "We have to build environments that go beyond movie sets," he says. "They have to work, you have to be able to walk up to things, and pull on cranks, and move stuff around, and manipulate the world. Level design is an emerging craft that's a step beyond set-building. Someday people won't even think of levels any more — I think it'll be hard to remember that there was ever such a concept as a level." Indeed, Barwood much prefers the ones in his game to be called "chapters."

The atmosphere and feel of an *Infernal Machine* "chapter" is as much a priority as the nuts and bolts of its puzzle structure. The intelligent virtual camera work of *Tomb Raider* and many third-person games has led to this emerging genre often being described as "cinematic," but Barwood doesn't necessarily agree. "The way I look at this is, there are moments in our game which are cinematic," he says. "But generally, we're beyond cinema. That's the way to look at it, and it's a revelation. The reason why you have cuts and camera angles in a movie is that you're busily taking all these snippets and assembling them into a whole. But the psychological continuity you establish through editing and the way you choose your shots is something we don't have to do any more, because we have a continuous experience. We don't have cuts — you're running around in a real virtual world. The most exciting parts of the game are when the player is playing. And when we need to slow down and find out what's going on, then we drop back to cinema," he says. "Overall, we want to create a world that is as palpable to the game player as the movies are to the movie-going audience. And the nice thing about real-time 3D is that we've gotten to a state now where we can offer gamers a unique experience in entertainment that they can't get going to the movies. That's thrilling, so we want to intensify that experience as much as possible, to make it feel as though you're immersed in this world, with all its terrors and its possibilities."

What about some of the more traditional "cinematic" gaming techniques, such as swinging the camera above the player's character and looking down, so we can see just how high up that precarious ledge we're hanging from is? "Yeah, we'll do a lot of that," says Barwood. "It's fun — and we don't need to buy a crane, so it doesn't cost us anything."

Another cinematic technique the game will be used to immerse the player in a movie-like atmosphere is plenty of speech — and we do mean plenty. Not every character that Indy meets along the way is out to kill him. There are good guys (and gals) too, including, of course, his feisty female sidekick Sophia Hapgood, and a mysterious CIA agent by the name of Simon Turner. They'll pop up along the way to pass on the latest plot developments and move the story along — and occasionally the interaction will run deeper than that. "There are scenes where you do have to get other characters to help you," says Barwood. "And eventually you'll have to deal with Volodnikov, the Commie boss. So there's a social side to our world that's sort of missing from most of *Tomb Raider*. They seem to have a great deal of difficulty figuring out how to make Lara express herself verbally. We have no such troubles."

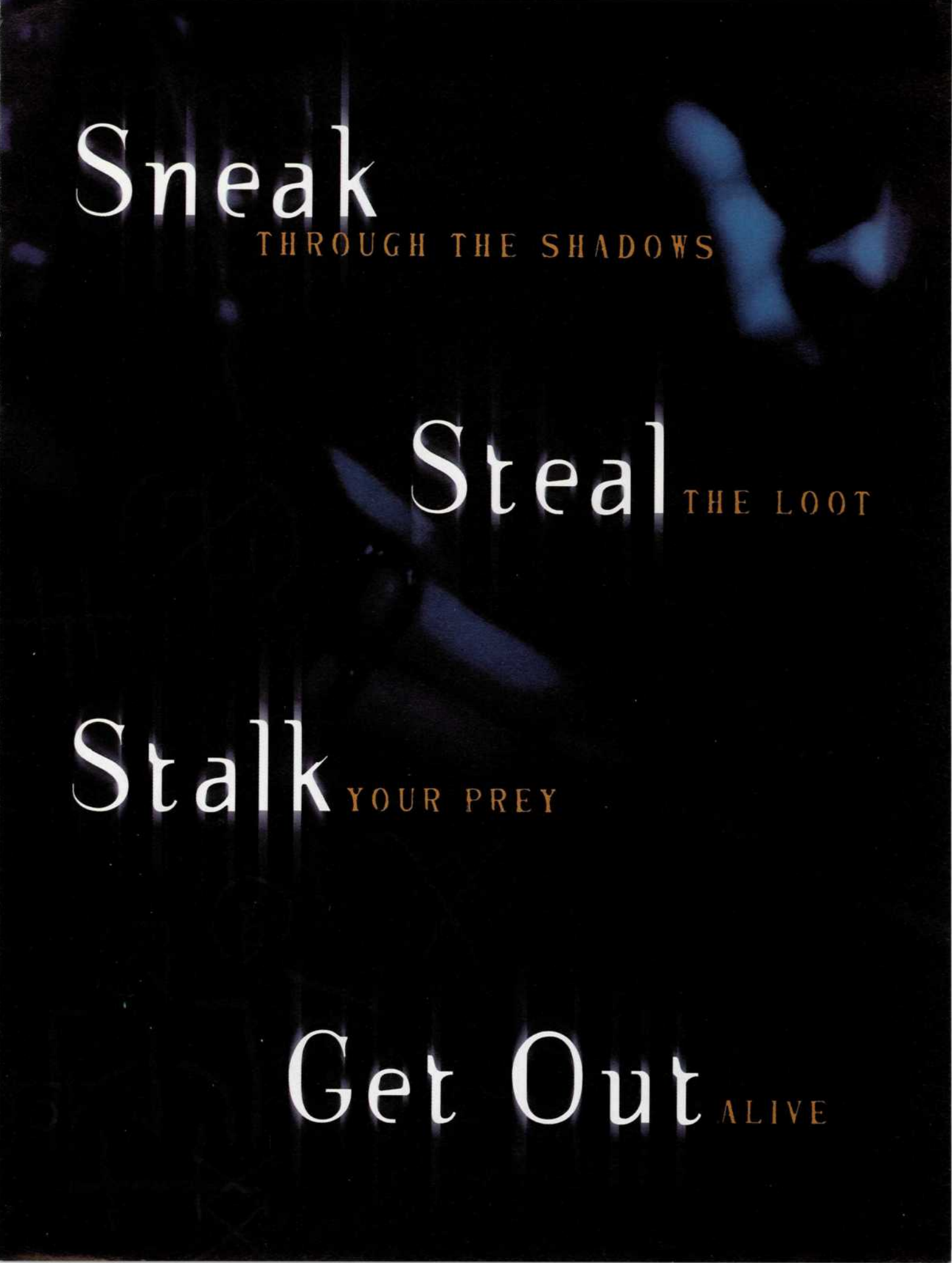
The speech element also comes in handy as a gameplay device, as the player will hear Indy think out loud to himself at opportune moments — what Barwood calls "internal monologue" — and maybe interpret some of those musings as hints. The Indy voice is not, of course, that of Harrison Ford himself. In fact, because the Indiana Jones character and Ford's likeness exist as separate copyrights, an interesting hurdle the team must face is making the character look and sound like Indy...but not like Ford. A difficult thing to do when, after seeing Ford play Indy in three movies, most people associate the two entities as one and the same. Fortunately, the third-person perspective means that, for the most part, you'll be viewing Indy from behind, and so the facial resemblance issue isn't going to be much of a problem.

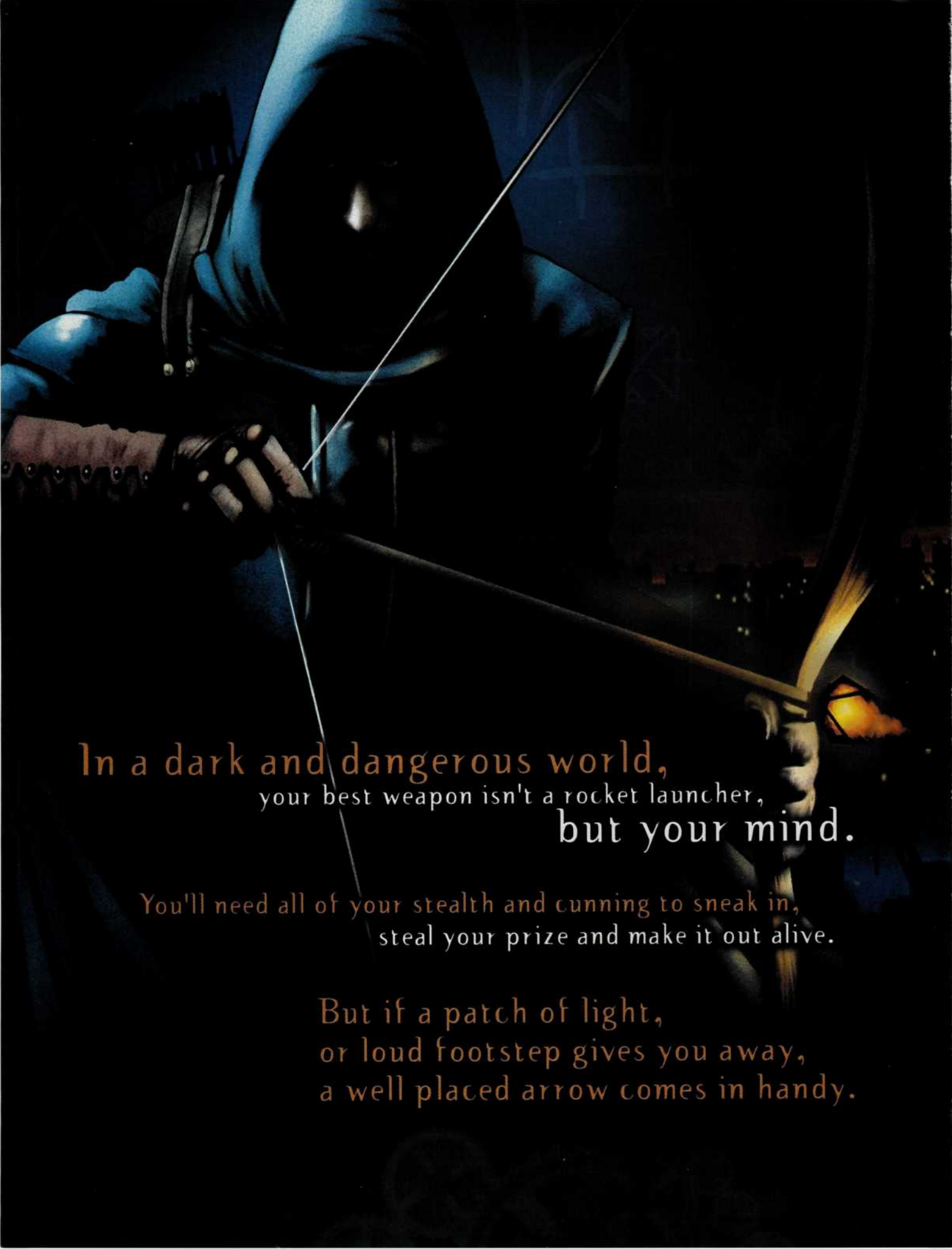


Yes, Indy, chances are there's something bad waiting for you in that water.

Indiana Jones and the Infernal Machine is still currently in what Barwood describes as a "state of disrepair" — there's much work to be done in all departments before the game is ready to release, hopefully around March. But there are already plans for more Indiana Jones games, and Barwood for one hopes that they'll follow in the footsteps of this one. "I hope what we're doing here is laying the groundwork for games in this genre," he says. "I don't know if they'll all be Indy games, but I think this is very fertile ground. This a category now, just like adventures, or flight sims, or golf games, or whatever. It's a category in which it's fun to be involved with a character that has a lot of personality, and in which a wide variety of gameplay elements come at you. I don't see that going away. In fact, I think that as we go along, we'll find more and more ways to exploit this, and it'll just get more intense."

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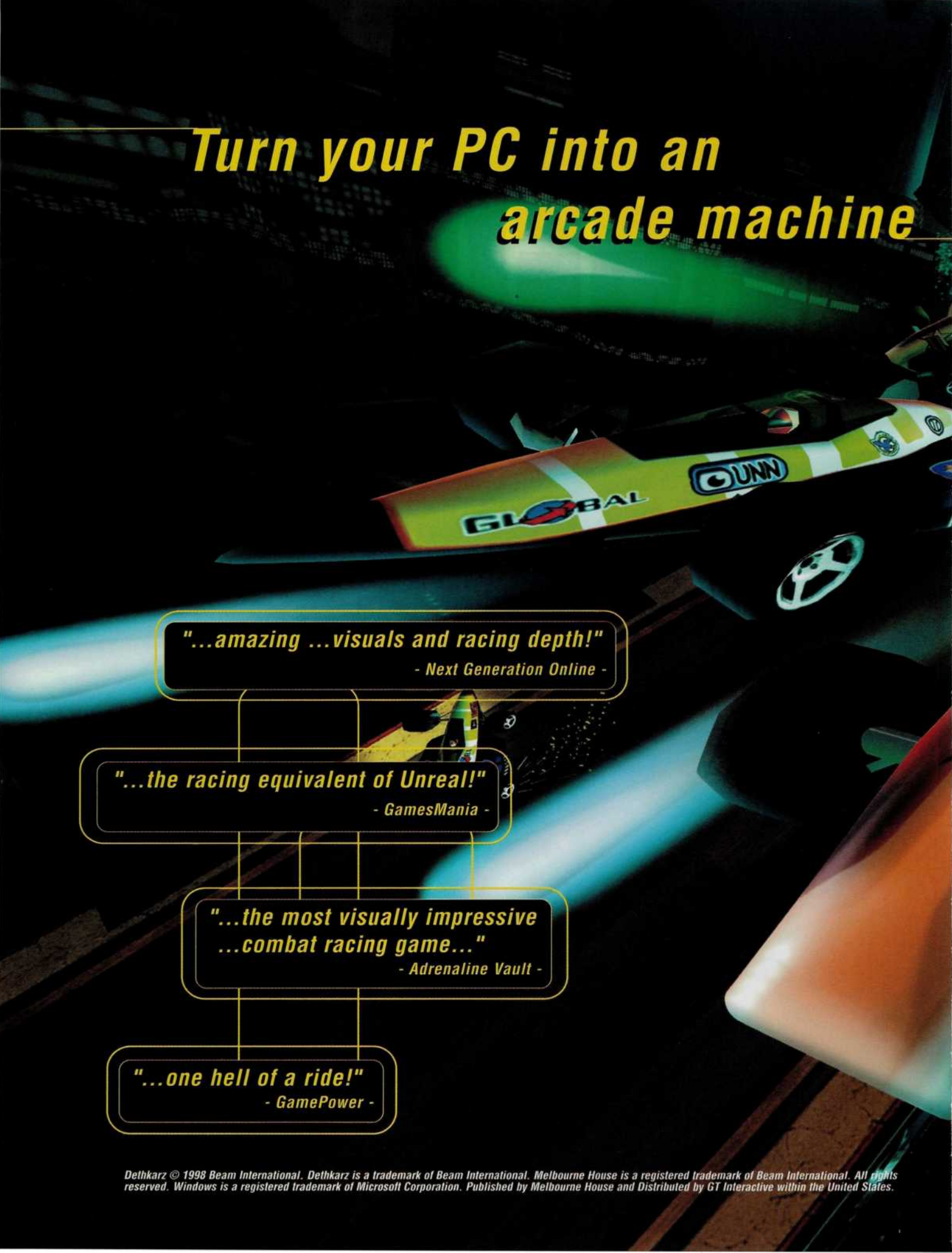
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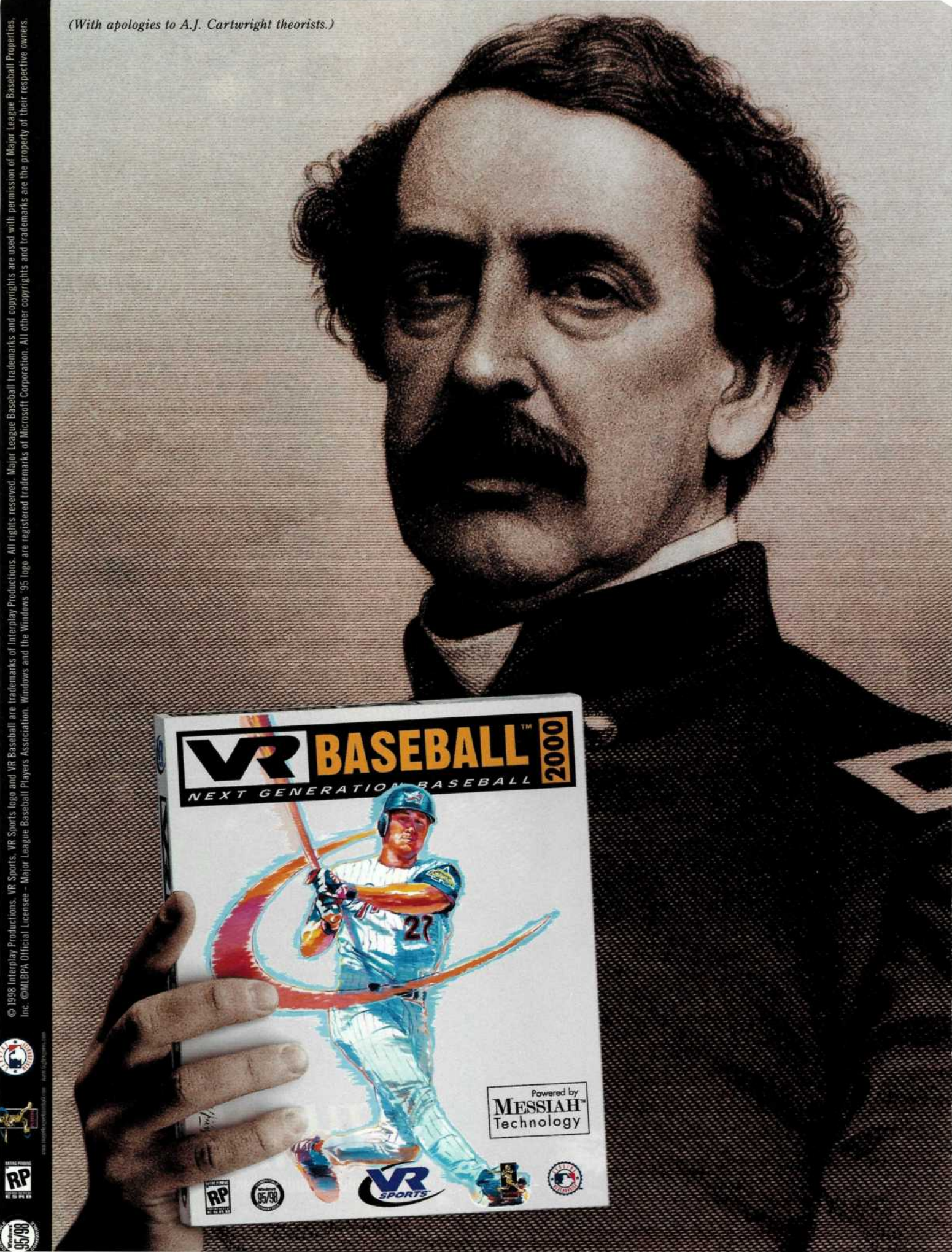
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(With apologies to A.J. Cartwright theorists.)



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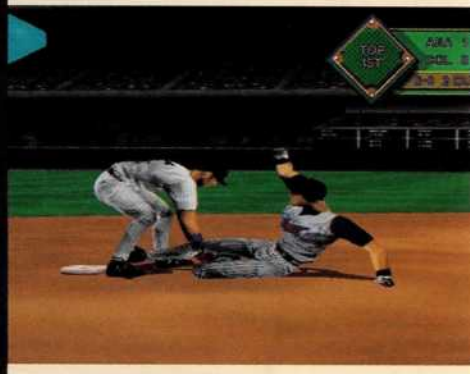
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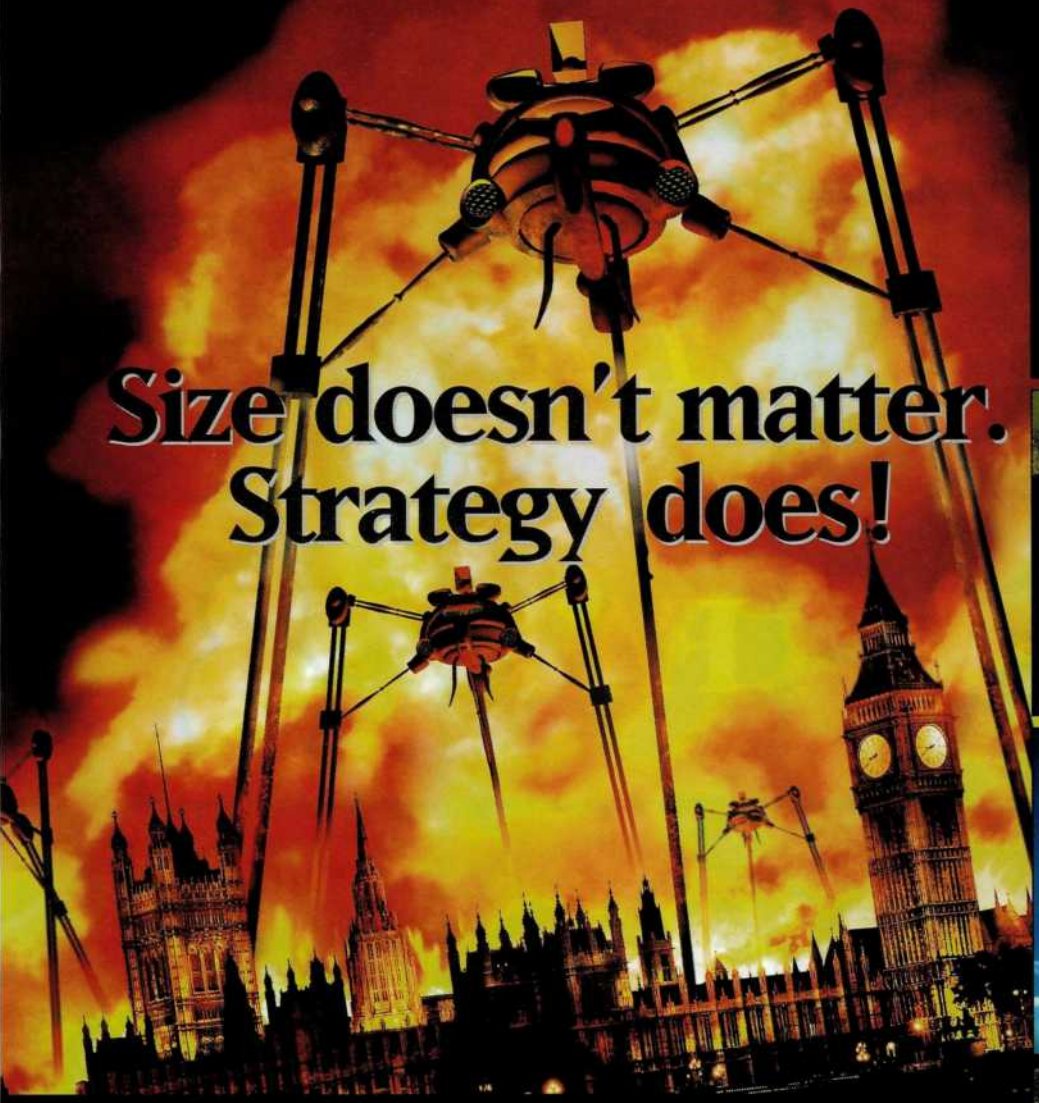
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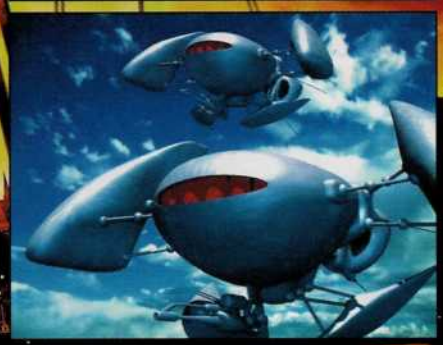
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40 Top Games

Whether you're in the market for a Holiday gift or just looking to treat yourself, the following guide is all you need. We've compiled the 40 best games from the past year, so you can be sure that each one is a winner. With just about every genre represented, there's something for everyone on our list.

Battlezone

Earlier this year, Activision surprised everyone when it re-invented the classic tank combat game *Battlezone* for the 1990s with elements from both first-person action and real-time strategy games.

During the height of the space race, the United States and the Soviet Union are using their highly publicized space programs to cover up a massive build-up of forces on the moon. The reason? Scientists have discovered a mysterious alien metal that allows for great advances in technology — advances that could give both sides a terrible advantage back on Earth. As either a U.S. or Soviet commander, you'll lead these top-secret forces in their fight to control this powerful resource.

And here's where the real fun begins. *Battlezone*'s gameplay is a hybrid that blends elements of action and strategy, so not only do you fight alongside your troops and dish out punishment against enemy tanks whenever trouble strikes, but you'll also build bases, harvest resources, create units, and send them into battle. Though the mix of action and strategy could've proved tricky, *Battlezone* sports an easy-to-use interface that allows players to dive headlong into the carnage and manage their forces with ease.

Throughout its two challenging single-player campaigns, *Battlezone*'s relentless pace and innovative missions will keep you on your toes, and the multi-player mode keeps things interesting long after you've put the solo campaigns to rest. With its potent and seductive mix of action and strategy, jaw-dropping graphics, and killer multi-play, *Battlezone* is a title that should be on any gamer's holiday shopping list.

DEVELOPER
Activision

PUBLISHER
Activision
(800) 477-3650
www.activision.com



Two of PC gaming's most popular genres come together in style in Activision's excellent Battlezone.

Blade Runner

While roleplaying games are currently enjoying a long-overdue renaissance, the genre's older and once-dominant half-brother, adventure gam-

DEVELOPER
Westwood Studios

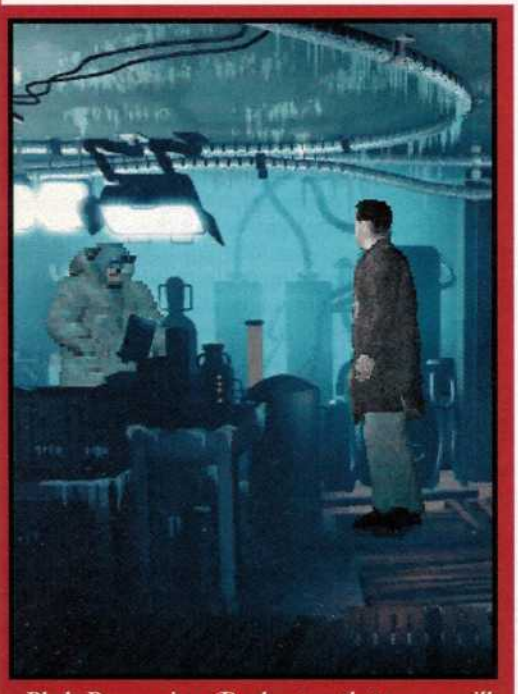
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ing, remains woefully out in the cold these days. And that state of affairs never seems more sad than when a game like *Blade Runner* arrives on the scene and shows just how great an adventure game can be when the right talent and resources are behind it.

Westwood Studios took a bold step away from its RTS and RPG roots to produce this "real-time 3D adventure," and in doing so, demonstrated that it's one of the most adaptable, multi-talented outfits working in gaming today. Re-creating the world of Ridley Scott's brilliant, paranoid science fiction masterpiece in frighteningly vivid detail, *Blade Runner* has the player following in the footsteps of Harrison Ford, interviewing suspects and gathering the clues that will help him track down a cabal of runaway replicants — which may not necessarily be the same characters each time you play. The typical inventory-based style of adventuring is replaced here by a real detective mystery, involving the careful examination of evidence, crime scenes, and a colorful supporting cast of suspicious characters, many voiced by the same actors who portrayed them in the movie.

Gorgeous graphics, amazing technology, an astoundingly cinematic feel and an engaging, complex story line all combine to make *Blade Runner* one of the best adventure games of the year, and a mesmerizing experience for anyone who enjoyed the movie.



Blade Runner *is a 3-D adventure that gamers will love, even if they aren't fans of the movie.*



Recreating Operation Market Garden of World War Two, Microsoft's **Close Combat: A Bridge Too Far** *will fascinate the wargamers on your shopping list.*

Close Combat: A Bridge Too Far

Second World Wargaming is back in vogue this year, but Microsoft's Close Combat series was vividly depicting the horror of WWII back when the more recent pretenders were just a glint in the developer's eye. *A Bridge Too Far* is a worthy sequel to the innovative original, ambitiously played out against one of the biggest backdrops of WWII — Operation Market Garden. The Allies' ill-fated plan in 1944 to wipe out the last remnants of the Nazis' European presence involved seizing five crucial bridges in Holland from German control and consisted of the largest air-drop in military history.

DEVELOPER
Atomic Games

PUBLISHER
Microsoft
(800) 429-9400
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Things, as any history student will know, did not exactly go as planned, and *A Bridge Too Far* allows players to re-create this bloody, protracted conflict as either Allied or Axis forces. Real-time play combines with turn-based complexity for a gaming experience as challenging and intense as anything you'll find. And *Close Combat*'s unique hook — soldiers who may or may not follow your orders depending on their levels of fear, fatigue, and morale — adds a whole other dimension to the strategy and realism.

Microsoft has a third Close Combat game already in the works, and there's more WWII competition on the horizon, but as it stands, *Close Combat: A Bridge Too Far* most effectively bridges the gap between real-time thrills and turn-based depth, and the setting gives it a gut-wrenching edge many "fantasy" wargames just can't compete with.

The Curse of Monkey Island

If any genre was ever synonymous with any one company, it has to be adventure gaming and LucasArts. Back in the day when it was still called Lucasfilm Games, the company pioneered graphic adventuring as the art form we have come to know it as, and in the years that followed, LucasArts has produced some (actually, mostly all) of the genre's most successful and innovative titles. Even through the genre's current "thin" period, LucasArts has remained loyal and continued to pioneer, as evidenced by the fantastic *Curse of Monkey Island.*

DEVELOPER
LucasArts

PUBLISHER
LucasArts
(800) 782-7927
www.lucasarts.com

The third game in this esteemed series, *Curse* once again puts the player inside a vividly colorful world of swashbuckling pirates, tropical islands, buried treasure, voodoo

The Top 40 Games feature continues on page 81

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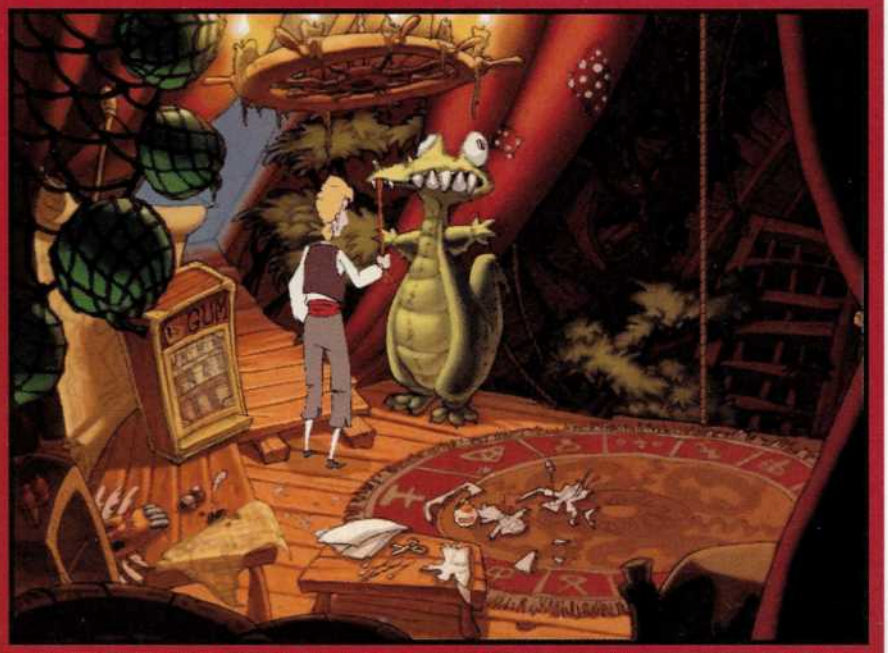
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The Top 40 Games feature is continued from page 79



Switch off the idiot box this Holiday Season and treat yourself to some more stimulating entertainment — LucasArts' fantastic and funny The Curse of Monkey Island.

curses, romance, comedy, and adventure. As the hapless would-be pirate Guybrush Threepwood, you'll once again compete against the nefarious zombie pirate LeChuck for the affections of the lovely Elaine Marley. Along the way, of course, there are puzzles to be solved, one-liners to be quipped, and beautifully realized locations and characters to visit.

Remaining true to the tried-and-tested conventions of this genre while pushing the technical boundaries and cinematic feel to previously unexplored heights, *The Curse Of Monkey Island* is a glorious, feel-good adventure that will have you exploring, puzzling — and laughing — for weeks on end.

Descent: Freespace

It's not often that a new game can give established franchises a run for their money, but Interplay's *Descent: Freespace* muscled its way into the upper echelon of the space combat arena with an array of sexy features, gorgeous graphics, and fast, furious action.

DEVELOPER
Volition

PUBLISHER
Interplay
(800) 969-4263
www.interplay.com

A spin-off from Interplay's popular 3D action game *Descent*, *Freespace* is a space combat game in the *Wing Commander/X-Wing* mold that casts you as a Terran recruit enlisted to fend off an aggressive alien race in a bloody dispute. But just when you think you know what you're up against, a new, more menacing race of aliens appears — and they're intent on having the galaxy all to themselves. It's up to you to pilot an array of sleek, agile fighters, lumbering bombers, and super-chic space superiority craft against wave after wave of alien attackers before they can reach Earth.

In the cockpit, *Freespace* delivers on the intense plot by dishing out surprising twists and turns at a machine-gun pace in missions that plop you in the middle of active mine fields and asteroid fields and pit you against enormous capital ships. The result is taut, breathtaking gameplay. Add in addictive multi-player options and a built-in mission editor, and you've got the best option available for all wannabe space jocks.



Interplay's Descent: Freespace *proves that you don't need a big-name pedigree to cause a major ruckus in the ever-competetive space combat genre.*



Die By The Sword *is the perfect gift idea for the sword-swinging maniac in your family.*

Die by the Sword

If you like nothing better than carving up fairies, dwarves and elves in role-playing games but can't stomach the, er, roleplaying, Interplay's *Die by the Sword* gives you the chance to trade blows with a broad selection of fantasy goons without all the fuss. It's a gutsy third-person action adventure that delivers sword-swinging satisfaction around every corner, and gives you amazing control over your character.

DEVELOPER
Tantrum

PUBLISHER
Interplay
(800) 969-4263
www.interplay.com

Though it comes complete with many of the requisite features you'd expect to find in a modern action game — like tasty hardware-accelerated graphics and multi-player features — *Die by the Sword*'s most impressive feature is its innovative VSIM control interface that allows the player to swing their weapon using real-life physics rather than pre-programmed animations. In other words, when you approach an ogre and slowly swing your sword from left to right, you'll probably only cause a nick, but wind up real good and aim for the neck, and you'll lop off his head! Ho-ho!

With support for all manner of controls (keyboard, mouse, joypad, etc.) this wonderfully versatile control system gives you the opportunity to choose your own fighting style and even create and save your own moves to trade with others. And once you get in the swing of things, you'll be able to power your way through the game's challenging single-player quest, bisecting and bludgeoning all manner of beasts, or challenge human opponents in deadly arena style combat.

For fantasy-based action with a real edge (in more ways than one), *Die by the Sword* is a rare find, and you should snap it up without hesitation.

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F1 Racing Simulation

DEVELOPER
Ubisoft

PUBLISHER
Ubisoft
(415) 547-4000
www.ubisoft.com

While the lead-foot in all of us can have a rollicking good time with *F1 Racing Simulation*'s arcade driving model, this game is clearly aimed at those who revel in spending the time in the garage to slice off that precious tenth of a second on their best lap times. But whether you lean toward simulation or arcade style driving, UbiSoft's racer has something for you.

F1 Racing Simulation sports intricately detailed cars and trackside graphics, blistering frame rates (with the help of a 3D accelerator, natch), and wonderful touches like giant video screens placed around the track showing live footage of the race. And amazingly, the gameplay lives up to the high standard set by the visuals. The garage is a virtual mechanic's dream, allowing you to tweak every conceivable nut, bolt, and spring that a Formula 1 car possesses. The car's handling is spot-on, varying depending on track conditions, fuel load, and the setup you choose. The artificial intelligence of the computer opponents is also noteworthy, offering up a healthy challenge if you don't have access to a network for some eight-player racing madness.

You'd be hard-pressed to find a better racing simulation on the PC than this, so if your favorite gamer has visions of crankshafts and shock absorbers dancing through their head during the holidays, *F1 Racing Simulation* will make the perfect gift.

F-15

DEVELOPER
Jane's Combat Simulations

PUBLISHER
Jane's Combat Simulations
(800) 245-4525
www.janes.ea.com

The painstaking realism and unmatched depth of this air combat simulation make it an absolute must-have for hardcore sim nuts. It's probably not a great game to buy for someone who's just started thinking about getting into simulations — unless he's an F-15 pilot. But if you need a gift for a gamer who picked apart all the technical inaccuracies of the fighter sequences in *Independence Day* and *Air Force One* and never misses an episode of "Wings" (the Discovery Channel show, not the sitcom starring the adorable Crystal Bernard), then shop no more.

This isn't one of those wannabe simulations where you lock up a target by hitting the "T" key and get a full-color, close-up picture of it in your cockpit; *F-15* goes into unprecedented detail in simulating the actual systems, weapons, and performance characteristics of the U.S. Air Force's real F-15E Strike Eagle fighter. Every other nuance feels dead-on, too, from the beautiful 3D models of the Eagle and its adversaries to the sight of anti-aircraft tracers arcing across a night sky. Fly a few tense low-level attack runs over Iraq and Iran, and you'll get the feeling you're beginning to understand what it must be like to fly the real thing — and that's what simulations are all about. You'll also understand why the Strike Eagle is affectionately known as "the starship." (Oh, and Lisa's dad helped design the real plane's tail. That's what she says, anyway.)



If hard-core simulation satisfaction is on your gaming radar for the Holidays, you can't go wrong with Jane's F-15.

F-22 Air Dominance Fighter

DEVELOPER
Digital Image Design

PUBLISHER
Infogrames
(877) INFO-GRAMES
www.infogrames.com

DID's *F-22 ADF* can't be called realistic, exactly — little is known about the Air Force's next-generation F-22 Raptor fighter, so any simulation of it is naturally going to contain a lot of speculation — but it certainly *feels* right.

F-22 ADF isn't the first F-22 sim by any means — the high-tech fighter has also been tackled in games by Mission Studios, NovaLogic, and Interactive Magic — but it's more fun than all of them put together. It has many of the qualities that made DID's *EF2000* an incredible air combat sim: superb graphics, lots of gadgets and systems to twiddle, and a near-perfect balance of convincing detail and entertaining gameplay.

F-22 ADF doesn't have a dynamic campaign engine that generates missions in response to a changing ground war, but its scripted missions provide plenty of challenge and variety. Tutorial scenarios run from simple take-offs and touchdowns to weapons training to a harrowing belly-landing in a jet that has suffered complete engine and electrical failure. Three campaigns have you taking the Raptor to war in the Red Sea, Eritrea, and Saudi Arabia.

Most intriguing of all is *F-22 ADF*'s AWACS mode, which gives you a bird's-eye view of the air war from inside an Airborne Warning and Control System jet; you point and click to direct computer-controlled planes to intercept the enemy — and when you want to give a mission that personal touch, you can jump into the cockpit of any F-22 in the theater to fly it yourself. You'll also want to look for the upcoming *F-22 Total Air War*, a sequel that adds a real-time dynamic campaign system and expands on *ADF*'s multi-player options.



If this stunning screenshot hasn't already convinced you that you need to pick up a copy of UbiSoft's excellent F1 Racing Simulation, *then we doubt anything will.*

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Fallout *won* **PC Gamer***'s Roleplaying Game of the Year award for 1997, and with good reason; it's one of the most inventive, playable, and absorbing RPGs to come around in a long time.*

Fallout

If you're an RPG fan who's grown weary of traditional fantasy themes and settings, Interplay's post-apocalyptic *Fallout* is your ticket to a very different roleplaying destination. The pseudo-sequel to the 8-bit classic *Wasteland* thrusts you into a war-ravaged world where radioactive zombies, brutish mutants, and power-mad cultists are the new rulers of the land, and you're the guy or gal that's got to set things straight.

DEVELOPER
Interplay

PUBLISHER
Interplay
(800) 969-4263
www.interplay.com

But first you've got your own problems to deal with. You're a vault-dweller, one of the lucky few who has survived the horrific nuclear war by hiding away in huge underground bunkers. Though the vault's been good to you, even that way of life is now in trouble. The computer chip that controls the vault's water purification system has given out, and without your help the vault dwellers will perish — you must venture out into the wastes for a replacement chip. But that is only the beginning....

As you explore the devastated ruins, you'll develop skills in vital areas such as weapons handling, survival, and healing, and if you're lucky, pick up a killer arsenal of explosives, firearms, and hand-to-hand weapons just in case things get ugly (which they do).

Thanks to *Fallout*'s fast-paced turn-based combat system and a great selection of weapons, you'll be blowing basketball-sized holes into mutants and caving in the heads of zombies in no time. While the combat is entertaining on its own, *Fallout*'s enthralling story and strong character interaction will keep you riveted to your seat from start to finish. With its lush pre-rendered graphics, deep gameplay, and involving backdrop, *Fallout* is a must-play for roleplaying fans in search of an original challenge.

Final Fantasy VII

This roleplaying game was such a huge hit on the Sony PlayStation that you probably heard about it long before it was released on the PC — even if you don't own a PlayStation. We certainly heard about it; readers E-mailed us every day asking when and if they'd get to play *Final Fantasy VII* on their PCs. Naturally, their enthusiasm rubbed off on us, and by the time the folks at Eidos told us they'd be publishing *FF7* for the PC, we were pretty excited. We couldn't wait to get our hands on this game and find out for ourselves what all the fuss was about.



Final Fantasy VII *is the perfect way to sample the imaginative delights of the fantasy roleplaying genre without any of the hassle.*

And while *Final Fantasy VII* may not be the finest roleplaying game ever made for the PC, its originality, unusual gameplay, and gigantic, compelling story line make it an excellent choice for anyone who loves a good adventure. If you've played a lot of more traditional PC roleplaying games (think *The Bard's Tale*, the Ultima series, or the more recent *Might & Magic VI*), don't let *FF7*'s videogame flavor keep you from giving it a look. You'll miss your chance to become a part of one of the most involving stories ever told in a computer game — and you'll miss the great scene where Red 13 learns that his father didn't die a coward after all.

DEVELOPER
SquareSoft

PUBLISHER
Eidos Interactive
(415) 547-1200
www.eidos.com

Stocking STUFFERS

Quake II may be the Internet's number one fragfest, but there are still plenty of gamers out there who prefer the simpler, "truer" feel of the original. And for those people, Activision and id Software have just released the perfect gift. *Quake: The Offering* is a new box set compilation featuring the original game and both the official mission packs, *Scourge of Armagon* and *Dissolution of Eternity*. Not a bad package at all, especially when you consider that the whole kit and caboodle retails for the reasonable price of just $34.99.

Flight Unlimited II

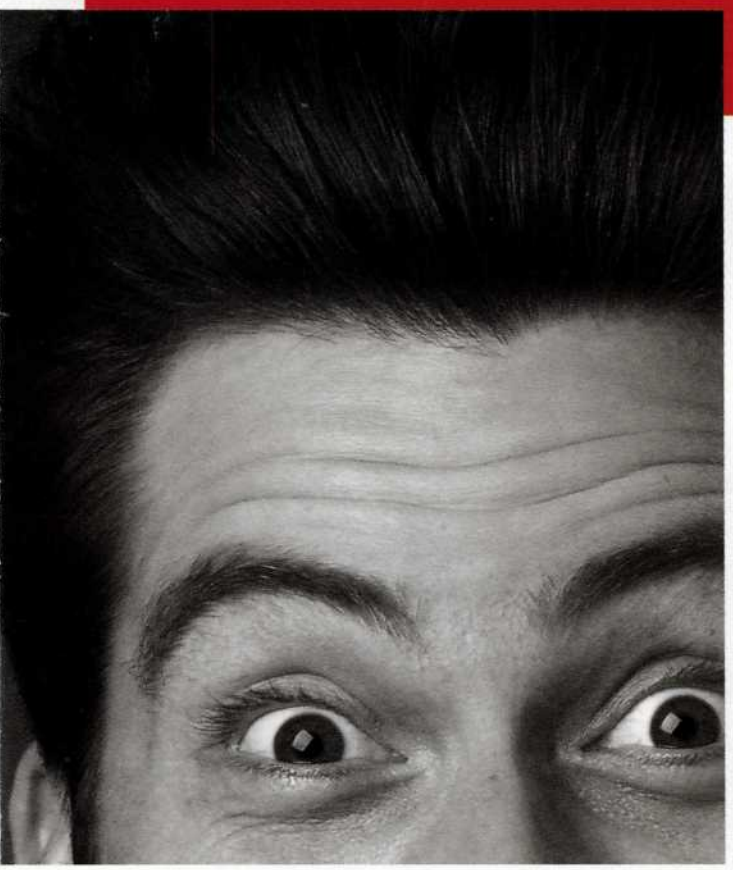
If you're shopping for a gamer who's played every iteration of Microsoft's *Flight Simulator*, consider giving him or her this stunningly gorgeous and engagingly authentic alternative.

Flight Unlimited II is the first flight simulator that can actually give Microsoft a run for its money in the civilian aircraft arena. Like the original *Flight Unlimited*, the sequel sports some of the prettiest graphics and most accurate flight models to be found in any simulation — and this time around it includes a whole slew of airports and real-world naviga-

The Top 40 Games feature continues on page 93

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Albert Szent-Györgyi



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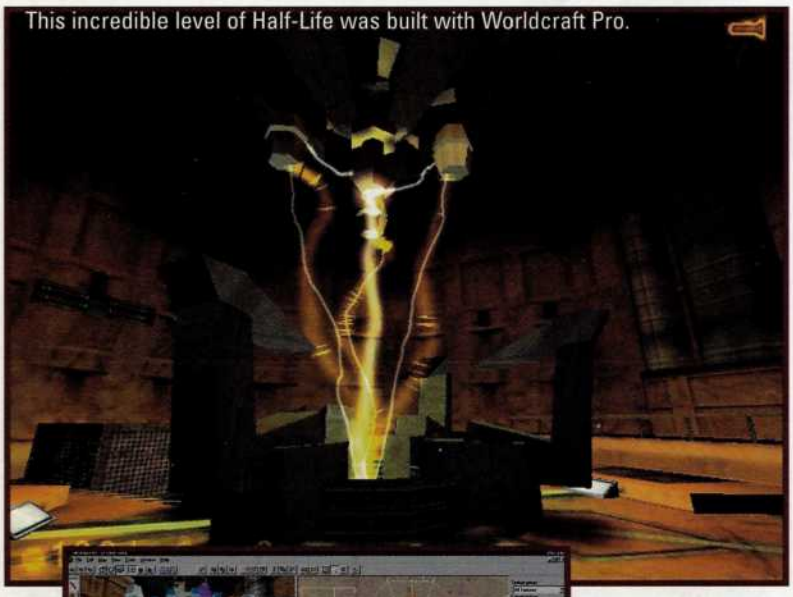


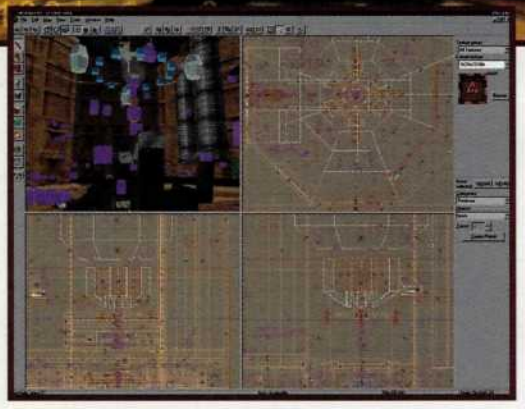
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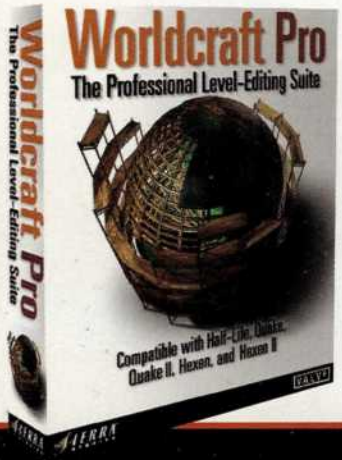
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The Top 40 Games feature is continued from page 84



Flight Unlimited II *proves that you don't have to shoot people down or bomb their houses to have a fun time in the air.*

tional aids (radio beacons, ground control and tower voices, weather reports, etc.). So instead of simply taking off and trying a series of increasingly dangerous aerobatics until you finally crash, you can actually create a flight plan and fly from one real location to another using the same techniques, systems, and rules you'd use in real civilian air travel — just like in Microsoft's *Flight Simulator*. (If that sounds boring, it may be because you're not a member of *Flight Unlimited II*'s intended audience — but if you find it even the least bit intriguing, you owe it to yourself to give it a look.)

DEVELOPER
Looking Glass Technologies

PUBLISHER
Eidos Interactive
(415) 547-1200
www.eidos.com

Flight Unlimited II covers a much smaller region than the Microsoft games — just the lovely San Francisco Bay area and its surroundings — but it's covered in much greater detail than Microsoft usually provides. And *Flight Unlimited II* provides some unusual "adventures" to spice up the flying — everything from coping with bad weather to dropping turkeys on Candlestick Park. The result is a package that's a little more fun than *Flight Simulator* — and a good bit smaller — but every bit as realistic.

Forsaken

In this, the year that the 3D accelerator practically became a mandatory feature of any gaming PC worth its salt, few games have done more to prove the worth of the hardware than *Forsaken*. With its liberal use of every special effect that Direct3D has to offer, *Forsaken* took the classic first person, six-degrees of freedom gameplay of *Descent* and brought it screaming into the modern era.

DEVELOPER
Probe Software

PUBLISHER
Acclaim
(516) 759-7800
www.acclaim.net

The back-story of *Forsaken* is flimsy at best, putting the player in the boots of a scavenger looking for salvage on an earth devastated by war. But once you choose your hover bike and get to grips with the controls (and the fact that directions like "up" and "down" have little meaning in a 360-degree environment), the addicting gameplay will suck you in. Varied levels, loads of weapons with some of the prettiest lighting effects you'll ever see, and numerous enemies with above-average artificial intelligence will keep you playing and exploring long into the night.

Forsaken has proven that stunning graphics don't have to come at the expense of engaging gameplay, and offers a nice change of pace to the *Quake* and *Unreal* style of first-person shooters. *Descent III* make have something to say about all this when it comes out in March, but until then, this is the state of the sub-genre's art.

Incubation

Picture the incredibly addictive, turn-based, alien-busting fun of MicroProse's classic *X-COM*, then add attractive 3D graphics that let you move the "camera" to get any angle on the action, and you've got *Incubation: Time is Running Out*.

This science fiction strategy game tells the story of human colonists locked in battle with the Scay'Ger, native creatures of the planet Scayra who've been mutated into hideous monsters by a human virus. You command a squad of space marines charged with the task of protecting the human colonists until they can evacuate. Some of the game's back-story will be familiar to anyone who's played Blue Byte's Battle Isle series of strategy games, but while *Incubation* has a similarly unique atmosphere, it's a very different game.

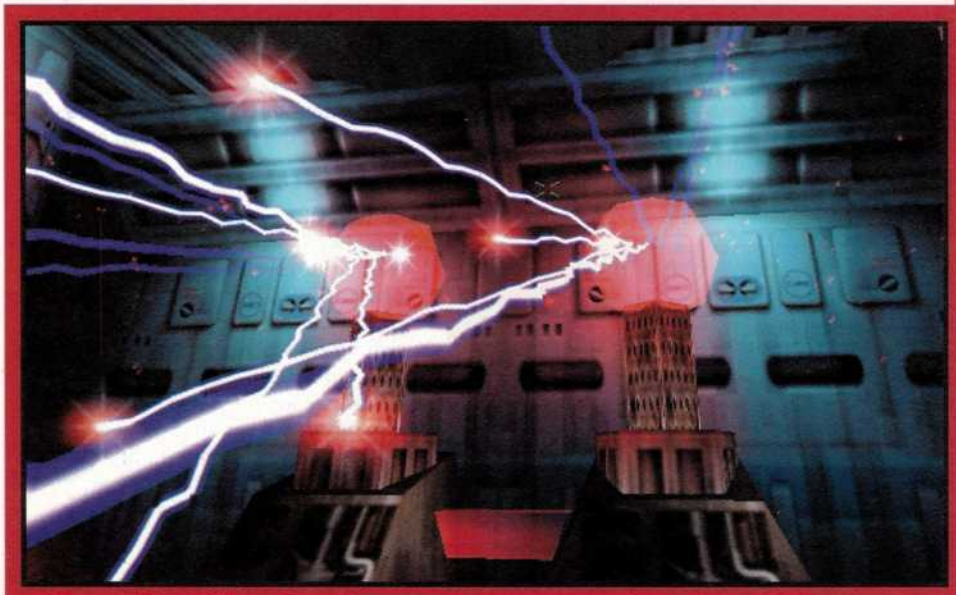
DEVELOPER
Blue Byte

PUBLISHER
Blue Byte
(800) 933-2983
www.bluebyte.net

There are plenty of other squad-level strategy games on the market, most of them cast in the *X-COM* mold — the X-COM games themselves, Sirtech's *Jagged Alliance*, and SSI's *Soldiers at War*, for example — but *Incubation* does the best job of putting you into situations where you really have to think tactically and make the best use of your troops. You can't just clump everybody together and advance on the foe — not with any hope of winning, at least. Aliens who



Thrilling turn-based combat meets gorgeous hardware-accelerated graphics in Incubation.



Concerned that adding a 3D accelerator to your system may not be worth the cash? Just check out Acclaim Entertainment's Forsaken, *and all your worries will be dispelled.*

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can't be damaged by frontal attacks or are invulnerable unless they're attacking, force you to divide and conquer or put some of your soldiers into defensive mode to cover comrades acting as bait. It's a great combination of brain-teaser and tense shoot-'em-up.

Independence War

DEVELOPER
Particle Systems

PUBLISHER
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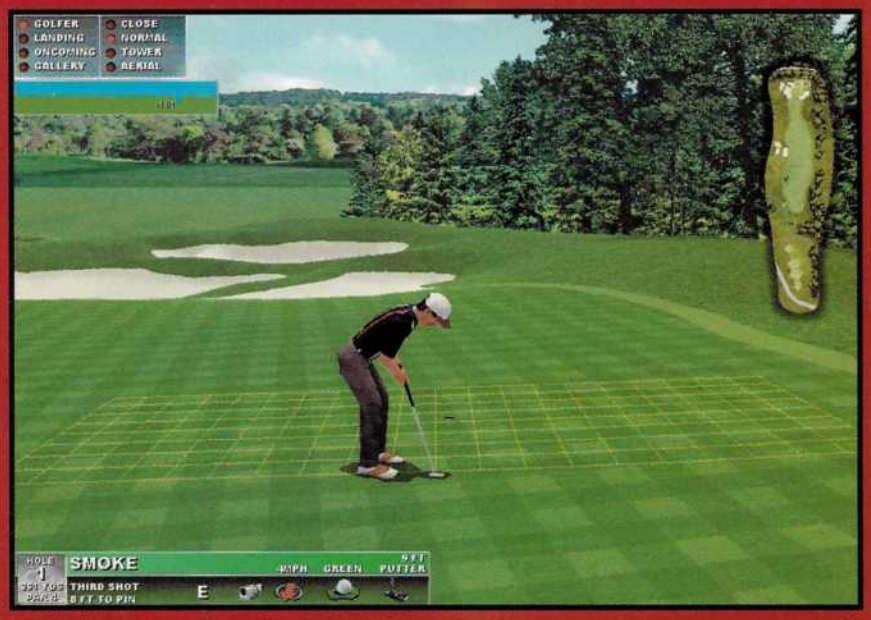
At first glance, *Independence War* might seem like any other space combat game on the market. But take a moment to look a little deeper, and you'll find that this is not just another *Wing Commander* or *X-Wing* knock-off — in fact, it's one of the most refreshing contributions to this genre we've seen in a long, long time.

The difference is in *Independence War*'s skillfully applied concept. Rather than having you fly the ubiquitous snub fighter against sponge-headed aliens, *Independence War* takes a different route, putting you in command of a fully-armed Corvette class vessel caught in the middle of a bloody civil war. As you battle with the rebellious "Indies," you'll have to make good use of each of the ship's main stations (engineering, weapons, command, and navigation) while battling the effects of life in space — a true Newtonian physics model relays an accurate sensation of mass and motion to the player. Through all this, *Independence War*'s smooth control interface enables players to handle nearly any crisis with aplomb.

With its fantastic graphics, excellent variety of missions, and carefully crafted story line, *Independence War* does not deserve to be overlooked merely because it's not a "big name" game. If there's a sci-fi fan in the household, put this one on your shopping list.



Independence War *gives long-established space combat games like* Wing Commander *and* TIE Fighter *a serious run for their money.*



Silly clothing notwithstanding, Jack Nicklaus 5 *is quite pretty, and plays a mean game of golf.*

Jack Nicklaus 5

DEVELOPER
Accolade

PUBLISHER
Accolade
(415) 985-1700
www.accolade.com

There are so many golf games out there that choosing among them can be a real headache. One of the best available is this year's *Jack Nicklaus 5*, the latest version of one of this genre's longest running series.

What makes *Jack 5* stand out from the crowd is the course creation utility. This powerful designer gives you all of the tools you need to make any course, real or imagined, come to life on your home computer. If you don't have the time or the talent to sculpt your own masterpiece, don't worry — there's an active online community of designers who will dazzle you with their abilities. Many of their courses are even better than the ones that come packaged with the game and can be downloaded for free!

Jack 5's gameplay is no slouch either, with a convincing physics model and a choice of swing methods (two or three-click, and mouse swing). The beautiful 3D graphics are the cherry on top of this tasty sundae of golfing goodness.

Links LS just about tops *Jack* for on-course action, but it still doesn't offer course creation. So if it's a solid all-round game with the opportunity to create your own links and access to potentially infinite add-ons you're after, this is definitely the way to go.

Longbow Anthology

DEVELOPER
Jane's Combat Simulations

PUBLISHER
Jane's Combat Simulations
(800) 245-4525
www.janes.ea.com

We named the original *AH-64D Longbow* Best Simulation for 1996, and *Longbow 2* won the same honor for 1997. The sequel took all the great features of its predecessor — the complex radar and weapons systems of the U.S. Army's Longbow Apache attack helicopter, a challenging flight model, and the best hands-on tutorials in the history of combat sims — and added a whole slew of features that *AH-64D* fans had been demanding.

For starters, *Longbow 2* lets you fly two more helicopters: the Kiowa Scout for recon missions and the Black Hawk for inserting and extracting troops behind enemy lines. It also adds a dynamic campaign and built-in support for 3Dfx-based 3D accelerators, which gives the already beautiful graphics a considerable boost.

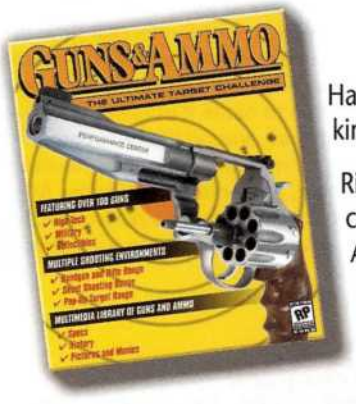


Packed with gaming, Longbow Anthology *from Jane's Combat Simulations represents one of this Holiday season's best bargains.*

http://pc.ign.com

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Rounding out the package is the most robust set of multi-player options we've seen in a sim. As many as four players can link up via LAN or Internet and go head-to-head or cooperate as lead chopper and wingman — or even as pilot and copilot-gunner in the same helicopter. A new patch even lets you hook up with other *Longbow 2* pilots for free on Jane's Combat.Net match-making site (*www.janescombat.net*).

Now we have the compilation box-set *Longbow Anthology*, which packs the original game and *Longbow 2* into one big box, making it easily one of the best buys in sims. If you love a detailed, realistic air combat challenge — or if you're shopping for someone who's interested in trying their first serious sim — you need *Longbow 2* or the *Anthology*.

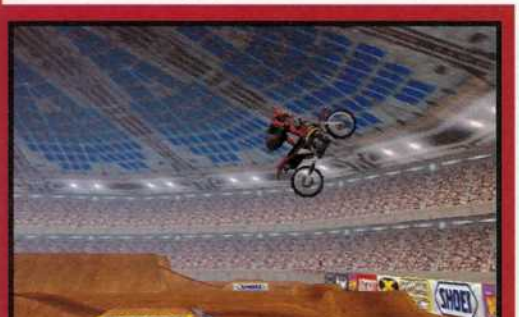
Motocross Madness

If you or someone you know likes to "do it in the dirt," then Microsoft's bone-jarring motocross game *Motocross Madness* is just the thing to appease those filthy desires.

Though it's not a full-on nuts and bolts simulation of the sport of motocross, even the most jaded simulation fan will find that *Motocross Madness* more than makes up for it with style. Sporting gorgeous graphics and superb controls, the game features several different types of events like stunt competitions, Baja and supercross races, which will challenge your reflexes and riding skills to the fullest. Whether you're a supercross fanatic who longs for the victory circle or just a stunt junkie that likes to catch big air, you're sure to find something to tickle your fancy.

DEVELOPER
Microsoft
PUBLISHER
Microsoft
(800) 429-9400
www.microsoft.com

Along with its flexible gameplay options and gorgeous hardware-accelerated graphics, *Motocross Madness* also features a built-in supercross track editor and robust multi-player options that should keep you tearing up the track for some time to come. If you're the least bit interested in motocross racing or like your action fast and furious, we're certain you'll love the gaming goodness found in *Motocross Madness*.



You can catch some serious air, without risk of serious injury, in Microsoft's Motocross Madness.

Medieval

Incredible Simulations is as far from a household name as you can get in the PC market. This one-man operation is best known for its historically accurate wargames, dealing with subjects that the bigger companies tend to shy away from because they're not considered "financially viable." Don't be fooled into thinking that its products are second-rate though; if you're interested in this type of game, the care and dedication that goes into every Incredible Simulations title will win you over.

DEVELOPER
Incredible Simulations
PUBLISHER
Incredible Simulations
(773) 804-7403
www.incredible simulations.com

Medieval, its latest effort, takes an in-depth look at the battles from the pre-gunpowder period. Think of the movie *Braveheart*, and you'll get a good idea of the kinds of confrontations that you'll be involved in. The comprehensive, yet intuitive, interface will allow you to issue orders to your hordes with ease through the numerous historical scenarios (Hastings, Bannockburn, etc.), while the included scenario editor will give you the chance to concoct your own "what-if?" engagements.

You may not see *Medieval* on the shelves of your local software dealer, but if you're a fan of the large-scale and bloody battles of this period, take the time to visit the company's web site and place an order for this well-designed, intriguing look at the past.



The sights and sounds of Medieval *are excellent, especially when you consider the tiny size of the company that produced it.*



Might & Magic VI *has enough action to keep fanatical roleplayers glued to their keyboards for weeks.*

Might & Magic VI: The Mandate of Heaven

After a long absence from the role-playing scene, New World Computing made a triumphant return to the genre with the sixth episode in its long-running Might & Magic series — *Might & Magic VI: The Mandate of Heaven* — and it's essential gaming for all fans of fantasy.

From top to bottom, *Might & Magic VI* marks a welcome return to back-to-basics party-based exploration and combat that plunges the player into a fascinating world of quests, combat, and spell-casting with up to four playable characters (who can be joined by two non-playable companion characters).

DEVELOPER
New World Computing
PUBLISHER
The 3DO Company
(800) 336-3506
www.3do.com

Brought to life with sharp SVGA graphics and richly detailed textures, *M&M VI* looks superb. As you build your party's skills through combat, training, and questing, you'll witness lush rolling landscapes, huge foreboding castles and dank, dark dungeons. The atmosphere is fantastic.

And of course there's lots and lots of monsters to fight, yet with its selectable, user-friendly real-time or turn-based combat system this game allows even the most uncoordinated RPG fan to battle it out with whatever lies in wait around the next corner. With its multitude of quests, flexible combat, and entertaining story, *Might and Magic VI* makes a perfect gift for the roleplaying fanatic in your brood.

Myth: The Fallen Lords

Games like *Dune II*, *WarCraft*, and *Command & Conquer* wrote the rule


You sweat.


You suffer.


You sacrifice.

PGA CHAMPIONSHIP GOLF

From the designer of Links 386

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PGA

WON
www.won.net

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Hey, why are you trying so hard?

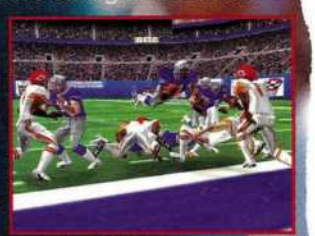
Sit down and play the sport. We know sports. We love sports. And we've done our research the only way there is – by sweating, suffering and sacrificing in competition. Our technology is to competition what Marino's quick release is to football. We'll put you out there. But your victories won't come easy. Because this is the big leagues.

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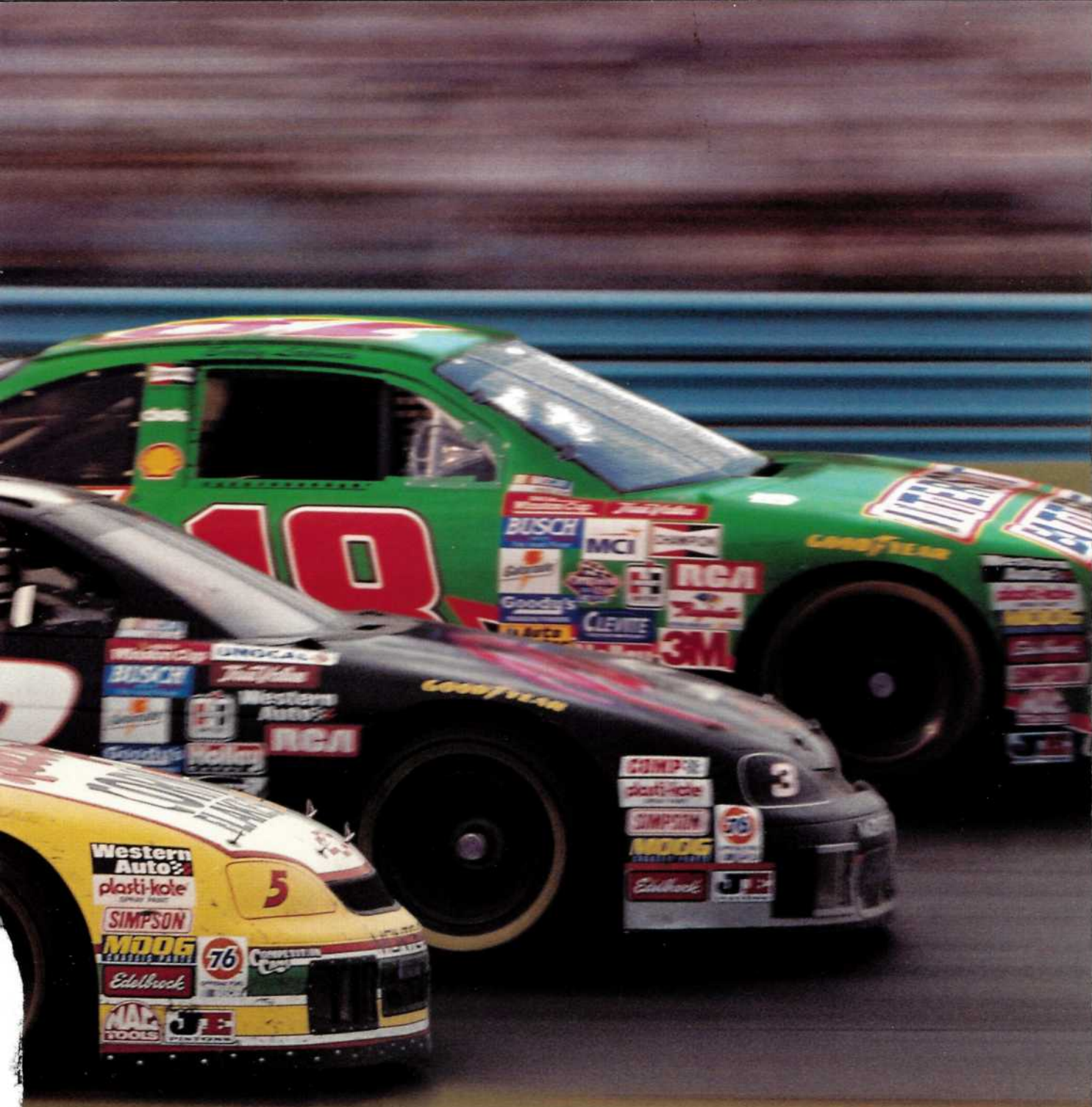




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Bungie Software's Myth *gave the real-time strategy genre a new, bloodier edge than ever before, and the result was our Best Real-Time Strategy Game for 1997.*

book upon which the real-time strategy genre is found...and then Bungie Software came along and happily ripped it to shreds with *Myth*. This satisfyingly bloody strategy epic takes place in a fictional fantasy kingdom where darkness has descended upon the land, and it's your job to round up a few strong-arm boys and give that darkness a jolly good kicking.

DEVELOPER
Bungie Software

PUBLISHER
Bungie Software
(800) 295-0060
www.bungie.com

Instead of the usual "build your base, send out your forces" dogma preached by other RTS games, *Myth* focuses on more tightly focused, squad-level combat as the player advances through a series of battles tied together by a well-crafted story. The scaleable, zoomable, rotatable 3D worlds look beautiful with the help of hardware acceleration, and the battles are the closest we've seen to *Braveheart* on a computer screen. In addition, the game sports some incredibly inventive and well-supported multiplayer modes.

There's no shortage of pretty-looking, 3D-engined, gimmick-laden RTS games on the market right now, but few can hold a candle to the tight design, well-considered features, and beautiful artwork of *Myth*.

NBA Live 98

Even if the real NBA is not offering its usual carnival of entertainment this season (as of press time, the labor dispute has yet to be settled), you can still get your fix of high-flying, fast-breaking basketball action with EA Sports' *NBA Live 98*. The new 1999 version will be arriving this Holiday season, but this version has plenty of life left in it.

With all of the graphics options enabled, *NBA Live 98* is a sight to see; gorgeous lighting effects, shadows, and realistic player animations abound. The gameplay tends more toward an action game than a simulation, but still does a great job of replicating the NBA's exciting style and pace. The player has a plethora of moves at his fingertips, with crossover dribbles, fade-away and hook shots, and the ability to pass to a chosen player with precision. Add the usual high standard of EA Sports' broadcast-style presentation, and you have a winner on your hands. The game shines even brighter in multi-player mode, where it offers you either competitive or cooperative play.

NBA Live 98 may not appeal to die-hard realism fanatics, but as a *game*, it does about everything right and will certainly keep you busy until the real NBA gets back out on the court.

DEVELOPER
EA Sports

PUBLISHER
EA Sports
(650) 572-2787
www.easports.com



With lockouts in the news, it's nice to be able to fire up NBA Live 98 *and forget about the real world.*



You'll have a real ball running the option play in EA Sports' NCAA Football 99.

NCAA Football 99

We're right in the thick of the battle for bowl bids in the college football season, and there's no better way to get in the mood than by taking over your favorite school's program for a little virtual pigskin action in *NCAA Football 99*. Even if the pro game is more to your liking, the outstanding gameplay and excellent graphics will win you over.

DEVELOPER
EA Sports

PUBLISHER
EA Sports
(650) 572-2787
www.easports.com

What makes *NCAA Football 99* so special is the running game model. No football game, before or since, has done such a great job of making you feel as though it's your skill (or lack thereof) with the running back that's responsible for the outcome on the field. The sense of momentum is impeccable, and when you pull off that spin move to get the extra yard you needed for a first down, you'll feel a wonderful sense of accomplishment. Awesome 3D accelerated graphics put this title a cut above the competition too.

Other features that put *NCAA Football 99* at the top of its division include individual school chants and fight songs, and a dynasty mode that allows you to play multiple seasons and have to deal with graduating players and incoming freshmen. Simply put, this game is a touchdown. Go on, give it the old college try!

Nuclear Strike

3D action games may be popping up faster than Greg Vederman on Viagra these days, but when it comes to good old-fashioned arcade-style action, satisfying romps can still be hard to come by. Thank heavens, then, for *Nuclear Strike*, the latest in a long line of helicopter-based action games that dates



Nuclear Strike *will blow you away with its intense pyrotechnic displays and challenging gameplay.*

back to the days of the Sega Genesis.

Players take command of a state-of-the-art attack chopper (at first, at least) as part of a top-secret government agency with orders to crack down on the illegal underground trafficking of stolen nuclear warheads. What follows is one of the most pyrotechics-laden shoot-'em-ups in recent years as you take your weapons-packed chopper through various hotzones, laying waste to enemies left and right, rescuing hostages, and collecting power-ups along the way. Mission orders are radioed in during gameplay to help you keep track of what you're supposed to be doing, but listen up — it might be hard to hear them over the explosions.

DEVELOPER
Electronic Arts

PUBLISHER
Electronic Arts
(800) 245-4525
www.ea.com

In later levels, you'll jump into other vehicles like a hovercraft and a stealth fighter, but the gameplay remains much the same — boom, boom, boom! The 3D hardware-accelerated graphics are gorgeous, and while the game may be a little too "hot" for novice gamers, seasoned arcade fans will appreciate the level of challenge.

The Operational Art of War

Designer Norm Koger is responsible for some of PC gaming's finest wargames — if titles like *Red Lightning*, *Conflict in Korea*, and *Age of Rifles* evoke fond memories, he needs no introduction. And if you're the one PC grognard who's never heard of him, all you need to know is that Koger's *The Operational Art of War* is one of few wargames to earn a 95 percent rating in *PC Gamer*.

The Operational Art of War covers a period from 1939 to 1955, with ready-made scenarios ranging from World War Two to Korea. Many of those scenarios could've been sold on their own as stand-alone games, but in *TOAW* they're just part of an amazingly complete package — a package that also includes a scenario editor so powerful that it delivers nearly infinite replay value. With a database that includes virtually every weapon used by virtually every country from 1939 to the end of the Korean War, you can simulate any historical or hypothetical conflict you can imagine.

DEVELOPER
Norm Koger

PUBLISHER
TalonSoft
(410) 933-9191
www.talonsoft.com

TOAW isn't for every gamer out there; novice wargamers may want to stick with *Panzer General II*. But gamers with a fanatical devotion to incredibly detailed historical wargaming will be fantastically happy with Norm Koger's masterpiece.



The Operational Art of War *may not look like much, but it's one of the best wargames ever made.*

Panzer General II

Panzer General gave PC wargaming a much-needed shot in the arm with a flawless balance of historical authenticity and addictive playability. It brought a lot of people into the wargaming fold who might never have considered the genre; it sold tons of copies; it won oodles of awards; and it spawned a slew of follow-ups built on its powerful but user-friendly engine, including *Allied General*, *Fantasy General*, *Star General*, and *Pacific General*.

DEVELOPER
SSI

PUBLISHER
SSI
(408) 737-6800
www.ssionline.com



Panzer General II*'s deep strategic gameplay will give you real feel for what it's like to be a senior battlefield commander.*

But the follow-up everyone was waiting for was the honest-to-goodness sequel, *Panzer General II*. We all expected it to be even better than its now-classic predecessor — and it truly is. To call the maps in *Panzer General II* photo-realistic would be an insult to the game's artist, David Jensen, who put hundreds of hours of work into painted battlefields that look better than any photo ever could. Combine that with similarly detailed unit icons, and you've got one pretty wargame — but like the original *Panzer General*, its beauty isn't just skin-deep. Under the surface is a wonderfully complex and challenging simulation of some of the best-known (and the most strategically interesting) battles of World War Two. *Panzer General II* is a wargame for the rest of us — but it's also got plenty of the right stuff to please the die-hard grognard on your holiday shopping list.

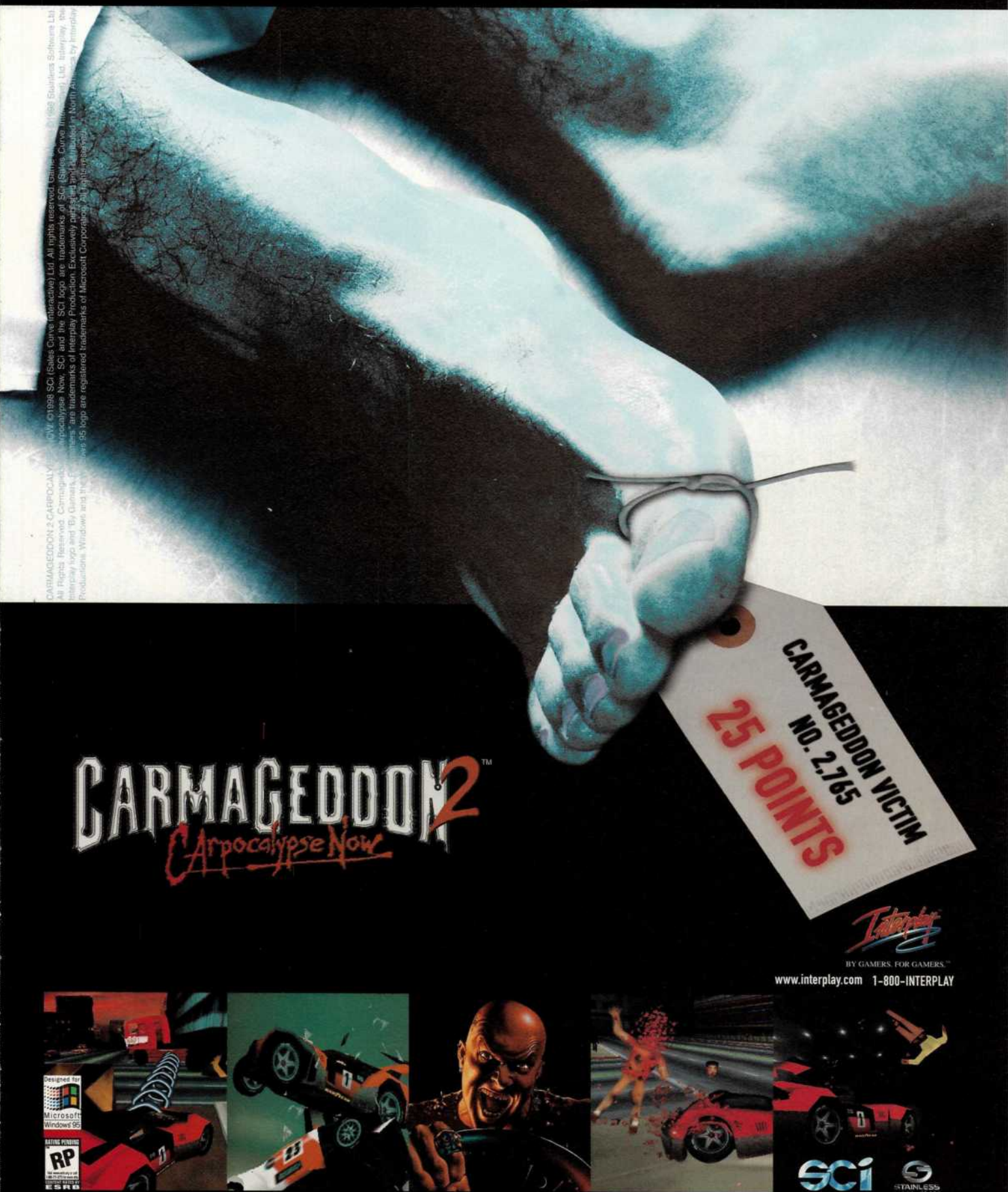
Quake II

Hello? Is there anybody left out there who hasn't heard of *Quake II*? Maybe you haven't if you don't own a PC and you've just picked up this magazine in

The Top 40 Games feature continues on page 107

http://pc.ign.com

Rigor Motorist



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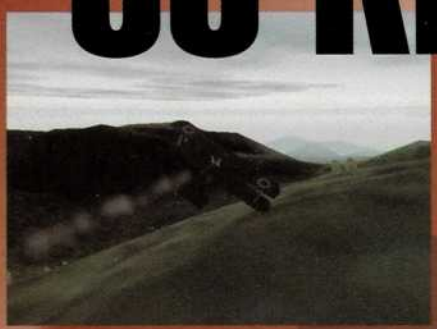
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GamePen.com

RED BARON 3-D returns you to the era when man and machine first took to the skies in up-close and personal battles of skill and tactics. From raging dogfights high above the clouds to deadly strafing runs along the war-torn countryside, you'll take to the cockpit of an aircraft made of wood, canvas, and wire. There are no parachutes, guided missiles, or radar. This is close range dogfighting at its best.

80 Kills.



3D Graphic Acceleration creates a world so real, it requires true courage to step into the cockpit.



Clouds and sun glare for strategic aerial combat tactics. Visible trees appear at low altitude flying.

New cockpit, explosions, smoke, gun fire, hazing and fog effects.



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User definable difficulty levels for players of all skill levels.

Incredible audio realism with wing stress, gun fire, bomb explosions, sirens, church bells, pilot stress, and ejected pilots.





Over 40 unique aircraft with 22 flyable planes.

New and improved flight models with torque and gyroscopic effects.



Convertible.

Only skill, arrogance, and bravery are required.

Bullets riddle your plane shattering wood and canvas. Deafening anti-aircraft gunfire thunders in your ears and fills the skies with smoke and destruction. Distant sirens and church bells ring out through the air, warning of your approach above enemy townships. Enemy aircraft search the sky for any hint of your existence.

But, this is your time and place to become a hero. You cannot deny your chivalrous nature. You are the Ace that your country pins its hopes upon to defeat the darkest of all enemies, the deadly Red Baron.

Manfred Von Richtofen

Red Baron 3-D

The best selling WWI aerial combat sim of all time is now 3D accelerated and massive multiplayer.

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

PlayStation

PC CD ROM

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

PLAYERS

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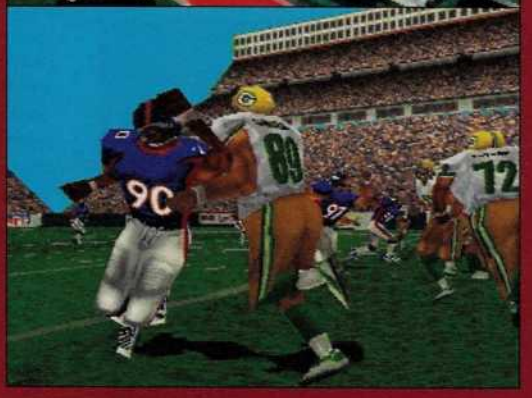
HE WENT 92 YARDS, BROKE TWO TACKLES, JUKED ONE CORNER AND BLEW THE NUMBERS OFF THE FREE SAFETY. C'MON, LET THE GUY DANCE.







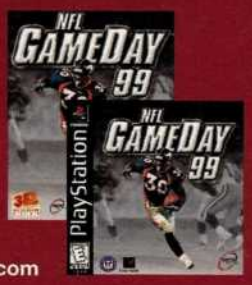




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NFL GAMEDAY 99

989 SPORTS™



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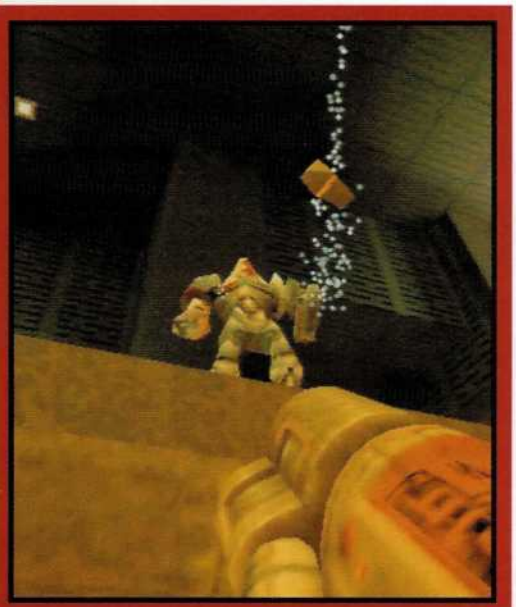
Go to www.pcgamer.com/request Product #735

The Top 40 Games feature is continued from page 98

a dentist's office or something, but there surely can't be any self-respecting PC gamer who's yet to fall under id Software's blood-drenched spell. Its combination of heavy weaponry, killer graphical effects, hideous enemies, atmospheric environments, and lightning-fast gameplay catapulted *Quake II* to the pinnacle of first-person action excellence, and there it has remained unchallenged for an entire year — practically unheard of in this insanely competitive market.

DEVELOPER
id Software
PUBLISHER
id Software
(800) 477-3650
www.activision.com

The serious competition is at last beginning to arrive, but while there's every chance that there will be bigger, badder, and better first-person shooters to choose from by the end of the Holiday season, for now, *Quake II* remains your best bet for non-stop, high-speed carnage and, in particular, sizzlingly intense multi-play. They may promise more on paper, but it'll be a while before rivals like *SiN*, *Half-Life*, and *Shogo: Mobile Armor Division* have anything like the online presence of *Quake II*, which plays host to more Internet slaughter than any other game. And if you're on the lookout for extended single-player goodness, don't forget to look out for the excellent mission packs, *The Reckoning* and the recently released *Ground Zero*. Quite simply, *Quake II* rocks hard. And if you don't have a copy yet, there's something seriously wrong with you.



Oh baby, it's... Quake II! *Screenshots like this just make you wanna fire up that railgun and dish out some hurt to those ugly Stroggs, don't they?*



A nearly transparent interface helps to keep you immersed in the strange world that is ASC Games' Sanitarium.

Sanitarium

This psychological thriller from ASC Games proves rather convincingly that there's still plenty of life in the adventure game yet. *Sanitarium* takes the traditional gameplay of the genre and mixes it with an intriguing story, bizarre locales, and a cast of characters straight out of your worst nightmares.

DEVELOPER
ASC Games
PUBLISHER
ASC Games
(203) 655-0032
www.ascgames.com

To give too many details would be giving away the strength of the game, which is the mysterious, unfolding tale of a man named Max. In fact, even your name is a mystery in the beginning — as you wake up to find yourself trapped in an asylum with no memory of who you are and how you got there. As you make your way through the game's chapters, you'll slowly learn the truth about yourself and your situation — although you might not like everything you find out.

With beautifully integrated puzzles that never have you scratching your head when you finally work out the solution, more than 80 demented denizens to interact with, and lovely (yet twisted) graphics, *Sanitarium* offers adventure gamers an engrossing trip to a world that you'd only ever want to experience through your computer. Turn down the lights, turn up the sound...and get freaky.

Seven Kingdoms

After releasing the lackluster *War Inc.*, Interactive Magic went back to the real-time strategy well with Trevor Chan's *Seven Kingdoms* — and came up with one of the company's few unqualified critical successes. The game combines the more traditional real-time strategy trappings with the elements of an empire-building game like *Civilization* — diplomacy, research, trade, espionage, morale — to produce a brilliant hybrid with some of the non-stop action of a *Command & Conquer* and some of the strategic depth of a *Civilization II*.

In *Seven Kingdoms*, you choose one of seven nationalities — Mayan, Norman, Chinese, Japanese, Persian, Greek, or Viking — and build an empire by taking over neutral and hostile cities. You can get pretty far in the game just by building big armies and marching over your opponents, real-time strategy-style, but eventually you'll have to get into the real meat of the game — backing up your military might with subtler methods, taking over cities via grants and spies, or winning hearts and minds by providing jobs and goods. Think of it as real-time strategy for the thinking gamer.

If you (or your holiday giftee) have already discovered *Seven Kingdoms*, you'll want to look for *Seven Kingdoms: Ancient Adversaries*, a new, improved version of the game that adds three new nationalities — the Egyptians, the Mughuls, and the Zulu — all with their own special attacks and Greater Beings.

DEVELOPER
Trevor Chan
PUBLISHER
Interactive Magic
(919) 461-0948
www.imagicgames.com



Seven Kingdoms *was such a success that a sequel is already on the way. Play it, and you'll understand why.*

Sid Meier's Gettysburg!

Having created some of PC gaming's landmark moments, Sid Meier is undoubtedly the industry's most revered talent. But when he announced plans for the first title from his new company Firaxis Games, a simulation of the Battle of Gettysburg, even the wargaming faithful were

DEVELOPER
Firaxis Games
PUBLISHER
Electronic Arts
(800) 245-4525
www.ea.com



Re-live the Civil War's decisive battle in vivid and compelling detail with Sid Meier's Gettysburg!

unsure of what to expect. After all, Gettysburg has been re-created and re-created over and over again, perhaps more times than any other military scenario in the history of PC gaming. Faced with such a seemingly exhausted subject, could even Meier breathe fresh life into it?

The answer, which Meier's fans knew all along, was yes, of course he could. Meier tackled the stuffy conventions of historical wargaming head on, re-creating the Civil War's decisive engagement in real time, and with a lush graphical presentation that had never been seen before in a game of this type. Detailed modelling of every conceivable battlefield variable allows for amazing depth of play, while an array of multi-player modes makes for some stirring adversarial and cooperative encounters with other wargamers.

Sid Meier's Gettysburg! is still complex enough that it may not be everybody's cup of tea, but for anyone whose interest has ever been piqued by the idea of historical wargaming, or is looking for a more compelling strategic challenge than merely building bases and pumping out units, this game could open up a whole new world for you.

StarCraft

The past year has seen more real-time strategy games come and go than anyone really cared for as publishers everywhere tried to replicate the success of the Command & Conquer and WarCraft franchises. But just as we thought this fledgling genre was in danger of burning itself out all too soon, Blizzard once again proved that all you need is a strong game design, powerful presentation, and a few innovative ideas to keep things fresh and stimulating.

DEVELOPER
Blizzard

PUBLISHER
Blizzard
(800) 953-7669
www.blizzard.com



Three radically different races battle for stellar supremacy, and the result is one of the most addictive real-time strategy games since the genre was conceived in Blizzard's epic StarCraft.

StarCraft ups the ante for the RTS genre by allowing not just two, but three opposing races to battle for supremacy. But it's more than just a cheap gimmick (as showcased in many of those me-too games) — it makes for oodles of additional challenge, as the races are so divergent that *StarCraft*'s strategic gameplay changes massively depending on who you're fighting and who you're playing as. Mastery of all three races is a lofty ambition — most players choose to become expert with the one that suits their style of gaming.

Whichever race you choose to play, you'll have access to an intriguing inventory of structures, units, and tactics as you make your way through the single-player campaigns or engage in intense multi-player battles of up to eight players via LAN or Blizzard's free Internet gaming service, which is crammed with opponents day in, day out. Whether you're a seasoned expert or someone keen to find out what this real-time strategy stuff is all about, *StarCraft* will suck you in and refuse to let go.

Stocking STUFFERS

A mouse pad may seem a somewhat Scrooge-like gift at first glance, but once the lucky recipient slides their rodent over EverGlide's new moulded-plastic mousing surface for the first time, they'll thank you forever. It may look more like a food chopping board than a mouse mat, but quite simply, we've never had a better time with our mice than when using this top-quality gizmo. Although there are other pads on the market that claim to offer smooth mouse movement, none come close to matching the super-responsive performance of an EverGlide. It's wear and age resistant, washable, and cheap at the newly released price of just $5.95. Call EverGlide at (800) 808-5720 to order or check out *www.everglide.com*.



TOCA Championship Racing

If you can't bear the thought of tinkering with your car set-up, but you're looking for more than the "racing lite" experience most arcade racers have to offer, *TOCA Championship Racing* is the game for you.

This simulation of the British touring car championship puts you in the seat of a vehicle that is perfectly balanced with the

DEVELOPER
Codemasters

PUBLISHER
The 3DO Company
(415) 261-3454
www.3do.com



Contact between cars is inevitable — and fun — in 3DO's TOCA Championship Racing.



Go to http://pcgamer.ign.com/request Product #197

competition. Although they have different handling characteristics, none of the cars has any big advantage over the others, making for some of the most tightly packed, exciting racing you'll find. The graphics are not going to blow you away, but they more than get the job done, especially in the details of the cars and the weather effects. The artificial intelligence of the computer drivers is also top-notch, each having its own idea of how it wants to get around the track. You'll need to use your head when encountering the aggressive drivers if you want to avoid a tussle in the turns and remain at the head of the pack.

Challenging solo play and a full array of multi-player options, including a four-player split screen mode, network and Internet play for as many as eight, will ensure *TOCA Championship Racing* of a long life on most racing fans' hard drives.

Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six

Who'd have thought it? A game with no pedigree, and seemingly nothing behind it but a big-name license, entering one of the PC's most fiercely competitive arenas and re-writing the rule book? It sounds absurd, but that's exactly what happened when *Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six* kicked down the doors of the first-person action genre earlier this year.

DEVELOPER
RedStorm Entertainment

PUBLISHER
RedStorm Entertainment
(800) 863-3550
www.redstorm.com

Strictly speaking, *Rainbow Six* is as much a strategy game as it is action, putting the player in command of an elite squad of anti-terrorist commandos. Through 16 nail-biting missions, it's your responsibility to pick the right men for each job, outfit them properly, plan the attack, give orders, and take direct control of the assault team leaders. Failure in any of these departments can equal dead soldiers, and worse, dead hostages.

The key to *Rainbow Six*'s unique appeal is its cast-iron adherence to realism. The weapons and tactics are all authentically modeled, and unlike other first-person games, all it takes is one good shot to a vital organ to put down a bad guy — or, indeed, for a bad guy to put down you and your team. This makes for some tense moments in the campaigns, but especially in the multi-player mode, where *Rainbow Six* is currently introducing Internet players to a whole new world of realism-induced hurt.

If you think you're hot stuff when it comes to games like *Quake* and *Unreal*, give *Rainbow Six* a try — and let it reduce you to the cowering sissy-boy that you are until you learn to fight like a *real* soldier.



"Surrender? You should've thought of that before you tried to stick it to Uncle Sam!" It's up to you to cool down global hot-spots and save the world in Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six.

Ultim@te Race Pro

This game began life humbly, as a technology demo for the PowerVR chip set, and probably had a hand in selling a few video cards for NEC. But soon after, MicroProse expanded the game into a full retail product, adding more tracks, features, and support for other video cards such as those powered by 3Dfx. The result? One of the prettiest and exciting arcade racers around.



Ultim@te Race Pro *shows off the abilities of your 3-D accelerator card very nicely indeed.*

Ultim@te Race Pro takes full advantage of your 3D card's power, and the lighting effects of the night racing and weather will dazzle you. The driving model's a winner, too. It's strictly arcade, but the power slides feel just right, the cars respond to the road and weather conditions appropriately, and the computer drivers will give you a real run for your money.

DEVELOPER
MicroProse

PUBLISHER
MicroProse
(800) 864-4550
www.microprose.com

Where the game really earns its stripes is in the multi-player mode. The standard racing is great, but you're likely to spend the bulk of your time in the Ultim@te Arena. This gladiatorial competition comes complete with ramps and power-ups, the goal being to smash your opponent's cars into undriveable write-offs.

It's not the deepest game in the world, but for pure driving fun, *Ultim@te Race Pro* delivers the goods better than most.

Unreal

After nearly four years in development, Epic MegaGames' *Unreal* finally hit store shelves in mid 1998, giving eager fans a chance to witness first-hand its much-hyped graphics technology, but to many people's surprise, *Unreal* was a great deal more than just a showpiece technology demo — it was a also a surprisingly robust and addictive game that's sure to leave an indelible mark on the first-person landscape.

DEVELOPER
Epic MegaGames

PUBLISHER
GT Interactive
(800) 610-4847
www.gtinteractive.com

If you're looking for a moody, intense single player experience, *Unreal* delivers in spades. As a prisoner locked on board a transport spaceship bound for a penal colony, you thought life

http://pcgamer.ign.com



Provided your PC has the power to run it properly, Unreal *is sure to make your Holiday visitors' jaws drop with its incredible graphics and amazingly intense gameplay. Take that, Skaarj!*

couldn't get any worse — but when the ship crash lands on an alien world, things not only get worse, they get downright deadly. The ship's crash was no accident; it was brought down by a deliberate attack from a race of terrifying aliens, and they're none too pleased to have a survivor roaming around.

From its breathtaking introduction to its hair-raising final showdown, *Unreal* delivers solid puzzling and frantic combat that will always keep you on your toes. Advanced artificial intelligence makes *Unreal*'s enemies a lot more ferocious than we've seen before, as they duck, run for cover, and make coordinated attacks groups. You'll need a high-end system to get the best out of it, but for those with enough muscle, *Unreal* is one of the best-looking PC games ever made.

Though the unstable Internet play is still a sore spot for a long-term relationship with *Unreal*, this remains a superlative piece of gaming, and the perfect way to showcase that ninja-powered PC your rich, crazy uncle bought you for the Holidays.

Uprising

Uprising will go down in PC gaming history as the first game that successfully crossed the 3D action of a first-person shooter with the challenge of a real-time strategy game. You spend most of your time in *Uprising* in the cockpit of a futuristic Wraith tank, prowling battlefields and blasting away at enemies on far-flung planets — but while you're doing that, you're also claiming territory, building bases and defensive turrets, and calling in ground troops, air strikes, and more tanks to help you defeat your foes.

Uprising's genius lies in its successful mix of the elements of a *Quake II* DeathMatch with those of *Command & Conquer* or *StarCraft*; it gets your eyes, fingers, and brain twitching all at once as you constantly switch from your tank to the gun turrets defending your bases and back again, effecting repairs, making improvements, and blowing enemy tanks, troops, and fliers to smithereens. A campaign made up of cleverly designed single-player missions prepares you for some truly unique multi-player action, and the beautiful 3D-accelerated graphics never fail to dazzle your eyes. The first time you see (and hear) an approaching enemy fighter go into an uncontrollable spin and smash into the ground just behind your tank — either as a result of your skillful marksmanship or your clever deployment of SAM turrets — you'll be hooked.

DEVELOPER
The 3DO Company

PUBLISHER
The 3DO Company
(415) 261-3454
www.3do.com



Uprising *proved that two very different styles of gameplay can work well together, as you'll discover when it hooks you after the first mission.*

Virtual Pool 2

Playing pool on your PC may not seem like the most exciting way to while away the time, but once you experience the realistic representation of the game that *Virtual Pool 2* delivers, you might just change your mind.

When the original *Virtual Pool* came out a few years ago, it was accepted with open arms by pool aficionados, but there were still some gripes. The major one was the inability of the balls to come off the table, making certain trick shots an impossibility. The other downside was the bland graphics with little use of textures. Both of these issues have been remedied in this latest version, and even the nit-pickiest of players will have little to complain about now.

DEVELOPER
Interplay

PUBLISHER
Interplay
(714) 553-6678
www.interplay.com



If you play pool in real life, your game can only get better by mastering Virtual Pool 2.

Virtual Pool 2 offers a complete package, with tutorials, computer opponents of varying skills, a host of game types, and the ability to link up with your buddies for some multi-player cueing. One of the game's biggest selling points, though, is that it can actually improve your real game down at the local bar. The accuracy of the physics model and the instructional features will teach you all you need to know about this game of skill, so you even justify the hours you waste playing it by telling yourself it's "educational."

Wing Commander: Prophecy

Ever since the original *Wing Commander* hit store shelves in 1991, Origin

http://pc.ign.com

Drakan
Order of the Flame

Funny things happen
when people play with
a flame-throwing dragon...





Terrific space-based combat and a great storyline make Wing Commander: Prophecy *a winner.*

has captivated gamers with its cinematic space combat series — but in recent years, many fans have felt the series has become less like a game and more like a movie.

For *Wing Commander: Prophecy*, Origin chose a back-to-basics approach that restores the fast, engaging dogfights fans have been asking for while cutting back on the Full Motion Video fluff. The result is one of this long-established series' finest hours.

DEVELOPER
Origin

PUBLISHER
Origin
(800) 245-4525
www.origin.ea.com

With the Kilrathi eliminated and the revolution put to rest, *Wing Commander: Prophecy*'s story casts you as a new recruit assigned to the newly designed supercarrier *TCS Midway* for some non-combat space trials. But you're quickly called into action as a sinister new race of aliens begins its hostile push into Confederation space. From here you're in a frantic fight against the alien horde, using your wits and your reflexes to keep the aliens from devastating everything in their path. Brought to life with a gorgeous new graphics engine, *Wing Commander: Prophecy* delivers fast, brutal action as you pitch and wheel above large capital ships and battle sleek alien craft throughout dozens of missions.

Once again, you'll need a high-end machine to get the best out of the experience, but *Prophecy*'s well-balanced mix of intense space battles and captivating cinematics makes this a far more engaging experience than the inevitably banal Holiday TV line-up.

Worms 2

Cartoon worms throwing hand grenades, sheep, and crazy old ladies at each other? On paper, it might not sound like the ultimate gaming experience, but in reality, *Worms 2* was one of the most pleasing surprises of 1998.



It might look silly on the surface, but Worms 2 *features an extremely clever game design, and it'll have you coming back for "one more game" more often than you might think.*

Over a series of potentially infinite 2D landscapes, opposing teams of angry little worms (we don't know what grudges they hold against each other, nor do we care) are intent on each other's destruction — and they're going to get it. Players take turns controlling their worms (this is much less phallic than it sounds, honest), who come armed with a devastating arsenal of deadly, often comic, weapons, and attempt to take out as many of the opposing worms as possible.

It sounds simple, but the cartoon graphics belie this game's fiendishly intricate tactical nature. There are so many ways to use the various weapons and powers, and so many ways to confound your opponents that *Worms 2* soon becomes an intense battle of wits. Flexible multi-play, infinite user customization, and an over-riding good-natured sense of humor makes *Worms 2* one of the year's delights.

DEVELOPER
Team 17

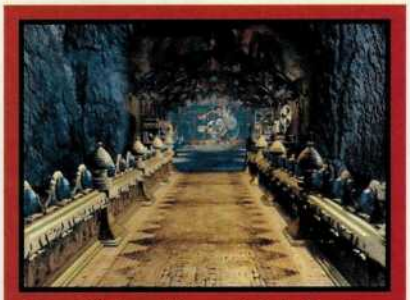
PUBLISHER
MicroProse
(800) 864-4550
www.microprose.com

Zork Grand Inquisitor

Combining the humor of Infocom's classic Zork text adventures with a updated variation of the same engine used for *Zork Nemesis*, *Grand Inquisitor* is an excellent choice for adventure gamers of all ages. Don't be put off by the fact that the game's format seems similar to that of *Myst* and its ilk — the puzzles, the beauty of the environment, the simplicity of the interface, and the flow of the gameplay make it far and away a more entertaining experience than those other games.

DEVELOPER
Activision

PUBLISHER
Activision
(310) 255-2050
www.activision.com



Beautiful graphics, an intriguing story and a wacky sense of humor are among Zork Grand Inquisitor's *strengths.*

The story involves an egocentric maniacal ruler who outlaws magic, a wisecracking wizard trapped in an adventurer's lamp, and a film star who gets caught up in intrigue he wasn't looking for. The enthusiastic cast includes Dirk Benedict (from "The A-Team" and "Battlestar Galactica," er, fame), as well as Michael McKean and David Lander (Lenny and Squiggy from "Laverne and Shirley," although we prefer to remember McKean from his role in "This is Spinal Tap").

In the adventure genre, *Zork* has always stood the test of time, and *Grand Inquisitor* proudly carries on the tradition — it's an excellent choice for gamers looking for laughs as well as mind-bending puzzles.

PCG

The Holiday Previews feature starts on page 121

http://pc.ign.com

...they get all fired up!

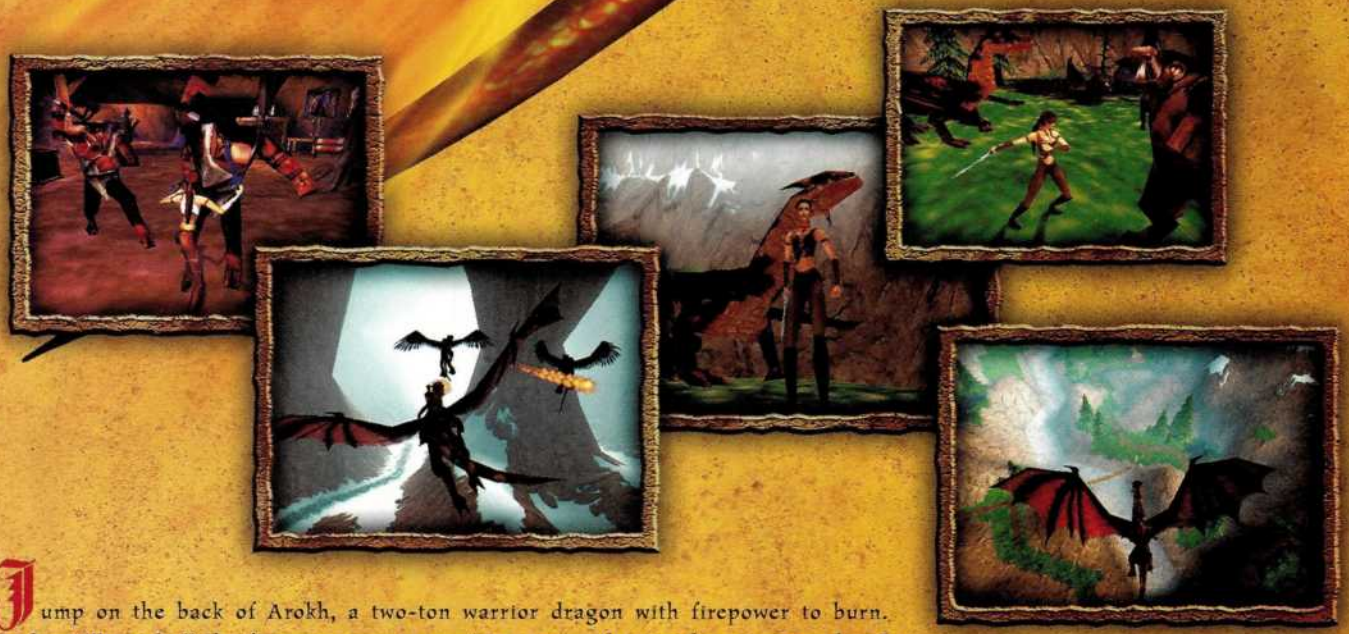


"Drakan... steps beyond the safety of me-too game design." - PC Accelerator

"Drakan has 'play me' written all over it." - PC Gamer

"Never before seen level of continuity in a 3D environment." - NextGeneration

"E3 Sizzler." - Computer Gaming World



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DRAKAN
Order of the Flame

PC CD ROM

RP

Surreal

ARRIVING FEBRUARY 99

More screen shots and a chance to win cool prizes at **www.psygnosis.com/drakan**

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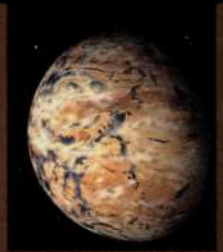
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Holiday Previews

Have you been a good boy or girl all year long? You have? Good! Then maybe you'll be treated to a gift of one of the following — 20 hot new titles that didn't make it in time for review this issue, but should be on retail shelves in time for the Holidays.

By T. Liam McDonald and Colin Williamson

Carmageddon 2

The original *Carmageddon* was a delightfully addicting racing game for a number of reasons — one, you could smash your opponents into twisted metal as in *Destruction Derby*, and two, you could ram into innocent jaywalkers who had been conveniently positioned at every single street corner. Though the graphics were poor, the gameplay was great fun, and *Carmageddon* made a lot of reviewer's top ten lists last year.

DEVELOPER
SCI

PUBLISHER
Interplay
(800) 468-3775
www.interplay.com

Now, *Carmageddon 2* seeks to improve upon the "guilty pleasure" formula that made the original such a success. Full Direct3D support is now incorporated, and everything looks infinitely better. The innocent civilians, (strangely, replaced by zombies in the European version we played), are full polygon models that can completely splatter apart. There's more emphasis on exaggerated real-world physics, to the extent that it's possible to toss a zombie through a plate glass window and watch him fall to the street below. As always, flashy bystander-killing equals mega bonus points. Powerslide into a person for an "Artistic Impression" bonus, or try sandwiching a pedestrian between your bumper and a brick wall for the "Piledriver" bonus. Even better, there are a lot more pedestrians to hit-and-run because the 3D engine is capable of displaying dozens of the poor suckers running around the screen at once.



Blood, car-racing mayhem, and even more blood are the main elements in Carmageddon 2.

The city maps are much more detailed than in the original *Carmageddon*, with lots of back alleys, multi-layered complexes, and underground pipes. There's even the opportunity for some *San Francisco Rush*-style jumps, as one stage has you bouncing from rooftop to rooftop. Ledges also play an important part — there's nothing quite like getting the Enemy Repulsifier power-up and bouncing an enemy vehicle ten stories to its doom. There are more than 40 new vehicles to do battle with — and that includes a full-size Boeing 747!

Even though you're supposed to be racing in *Carmageddon 2*, the fun

http://pcgamer.ign.com

of smashing into your opponents, killing pedestrians, and setting yourself up for insane stunts is enough to make you forget the sissy "first to the finish line" stuff. If the rest of *Carmageddon 2* is as tasty as the one-level demo that's been making the rounds, expect a lot of missed productivity around the *PC Gamer* offices.

Civilization: Call to Power

DEVELOPER
Activision

PUBLISHER
Activision
(800) 477-3650
www.activision.com

Don't you dare call it *Civilization III*! After a protracted legal battle with MicroProse, Activision finally won the right to produce a new game in the Civilization series, even though the use of the "III" moniker remained a no-no. With the forthcoming *Alpha Centauri* from original Civ creator Sid Meier inviting inevitable comparisons, the question is: can the Civilization fans at Activision charged with creating *Call to Power* come up with a game that lives up to its name?

If you've never played either of the Civilization games (shame, shame!), the basic premise is to create a civilization that will "stand the test of time," moving from primitive, pre-industrial cultures to space-age technology barons. What makes the new Civ intriguing is the use of unconventional warfare — religious fanatics and eco-terrorists are among the off-beat new units that set the game apart.

But will the game be truly engrossing, or will it be the equivalent of *Civ 2.5*? The *Call to Power* team promises a perfectly balanced mix of old and new. "Like its predecessors, it's so incredibly addictive that you forget it's 3a.m., and you have to go to work in the morning," says director Cecilia Barajas. "With *Civilization: Call to Power*, we expanded on what was so great about the Civilization games: the essential fantasy of creating a civilization, and the millions of strategies you can use to that purpose. We let you create your own future by going to the year 3000; we allow for a ton of really cool and subtle strategies." Sounds good to us.



With its familiar gameplay and "unconventional warfare," Civilization: Call to Power may be a worthy addition to the classic series.



Will it be worth the wait? Tiberian Sun aims to show the pretenders that Command & Conquer is still the pre-eminent real-time strategy brand.

Command & Conquer: Tiberian Sun

DEVELOPER
Westwood Studios

PUBLISHER
Westwood Studios
(800) 874-4607
www.westwood.com

At the end of the epoch-making *Command & Conquer*, gamers were teased with cut-scenes for something called *Tiberian Sun*. Then along came *Red Alert, Sole Survivor, Dune 2000,* and a long series of add-on discs, and fans wondered if a full-blown sequel of the game that kicked off the real-time strategy boom was ever coming.

It is. In the years since then end of the war between The Brotherhood of NOD and the GDI, Tiberium has grown out of control and contaminated the planet, forcing the NOD underground (literally), confining the GDI to small patches of land, and spawning a new race of mutants. Now the war is ready to begin again in earnest.

Tiberian Sun should arrive in time for the big Holiday shopping season with a brand-spanking-new engine, new gameplay features, and a whole new look. Gone are the bitmaps of yesterday, replaced with 16-bit high-color fully rendered 3D vehicles and landscapes. Dynamic lighting, deformable landscapes, massive explosions, and a more complex environment have all been incorporated to enhance the core *C&C* game experience. In fundamentals, the gameplay is vintage: harvest resources, build bases, build units, and attack. Westwood is too smart to mess with the formula that launched a thousand crappy clones.

But the nuances are much different. The view is slightly more skewed to take advantage of the 3D visuals. Units can improve with time and experience, gaining intelligence, weapons, armor, and other abilities. And slathering the countryside with more and more structures is no longer the way to expand. Instead, bases are modular, and you can add new pods to expand their functionality. The true 3D landscape changes (ice forms on rivers, fires burn, mountains fall), leading to new tactics as you can gain the high ground, create obstacles, and even drop a bridge on your enemy's head. Overall, there's simply a greater attention to detail, right down to the little rotating turrets and functional light poles.

Command & Conquer fans have waited patiently for more than two years (well, maybe not so patiently) for a full-blown sequel, and now they finally look set to be rewarded with all they could ask for: the fundamental gameplay they love brought to a higher level of sophistication.

The Holiday Previews feature continues on page 125

http://pc.ign.com





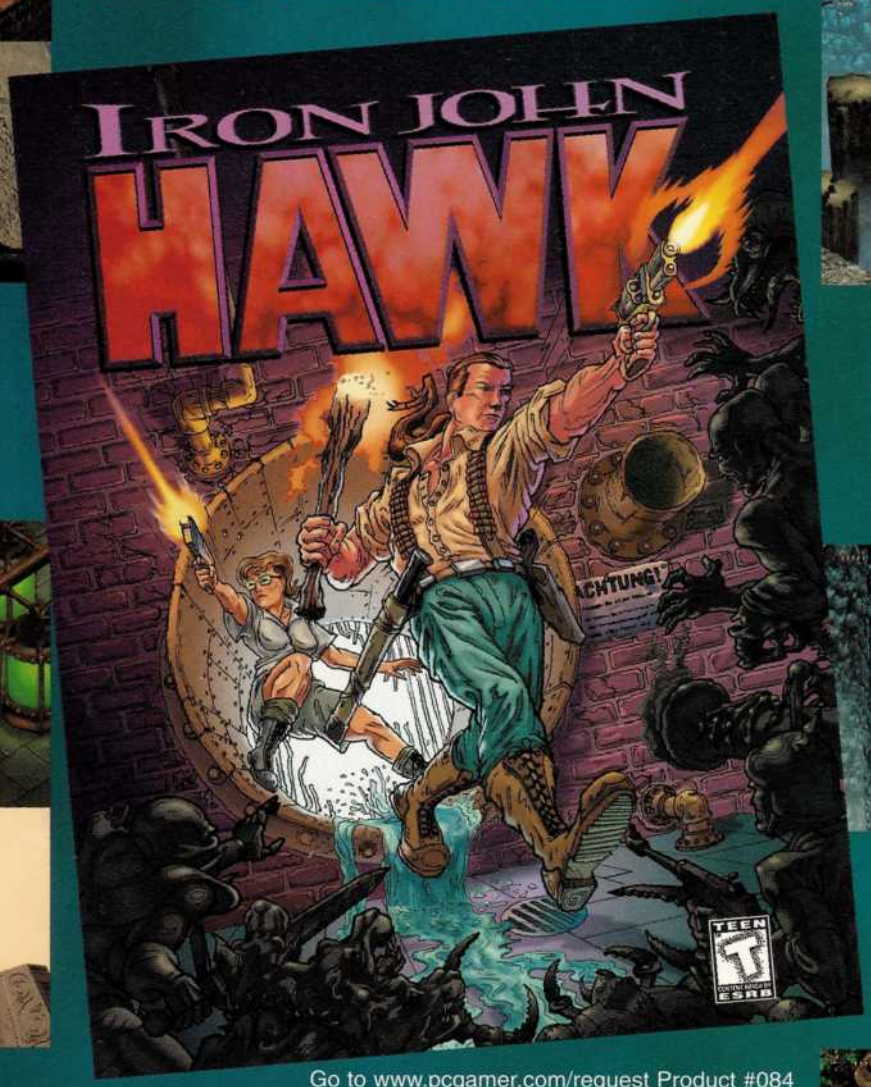
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The Holiday Previews feature is continued from page 122

Dominant Species

The action/strategy hybrid is well on its way to becoming as ubiquitous as the real-time strategy game, driven by the success of *Battlezone* and *Uprising*. And as long as the ideas stay as fresh as those on display in *Dominant Species*, that's no bad thing.

Hot off the success of *Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six*, RedStorm Entertainment isn't sitting back and counting its awards. In its own way, *Dominant Species* looks as rich and original as *Rainbow Six* — as an omnipotent alien force known as the Mindlord, you find yourself battling for survival against other species on the world of Mur. The goal is the possession of Anima: a vital substance that drives life of Mur. As if this wasn't trouble enough, humans are now invading to steal the Anima.

DEVELOPER
RedStorm Entertainment

PUBLISHER
RedStorm Entertainment
(800) 863-3550
www.redstorm.com

To effectively fight this war, you are given control over a vast assembly of mutant species and nasty critters. The monsters are the real selling point here — they're bizarre and inventive critters, with plenty of teeth, acid attacks, special powers, and other nasty surprises. Missions are complex and can get pretty furry as you simultaneously defend your hive from attacks and work toward completing objectives.

The organic, mutating units, multiple camera angles, huge terrain, and unique art design should all help *Dominant Species* stand out in a genre that will be particularly competitive this Holiday season. Look out for it soon.

Fallout 2

Fallout was *PC Gamer*'s Roleplaying Game of 1997 and with good reason: It made RPGs fun again. Its vast world and engrossing gameplay were matched to a unique visual style, creating a post-apocalyptic world in vivid detail, and the game was a huge success. No wonder, then, that Interplay has not prevaricated when it comes to producing a sequel. *Fallout 2* doesn't feature any quantum leap forward in engine design or technology, but it does deliver more of what we loved about the original.

DEVELOPER
Black Isle Studios

PUBLISHER
Interplay
(800) 468-3775
www.interplay.com

Set some 80 years after the end of *Fallout*, this sequel centers around a descendent of the Vault Dwells from the first game. This Chosen One is on a quest to find his ancestor's vault and get the Garden of Eden Creation Kit. In the course of the unfolding story, he travels to new and larger locations, including the mob-ruled New Reno, Vault City, and a crumbling San Francisco. Getting around will be made easier by a stylish set of wheels: a vintage 1950s Chevy.

Plenty of enhanced weaponry is on hand as well, such as the M72 Gauss Rifle, M3A1 "Grease Gun" SMG, Louisville Slugger baseball bat, H&K CAWS, and the Solar Scorcher. Users can even create hybrid weapons: attach a grenade launcher to an M27 for a multi-function death-tool, for example, or add a laser sight to your rifle for increased accuracy.

NPC interactions and overall AI have both been revamped to provide a more interactive experience this time around. Plenty of new monsters, mutants, lizards, droids, ghouls, scientists, and other characters will be populating the world, and not all are mere cannon fodder. And since the player can now choose either a good or evil approach, there are some interesting new dark elements, such as the ability to pimp your wife for cash. If all these features come through as good as they sound, *Fallout 2* will be a worthy successor to last year's best RPG.

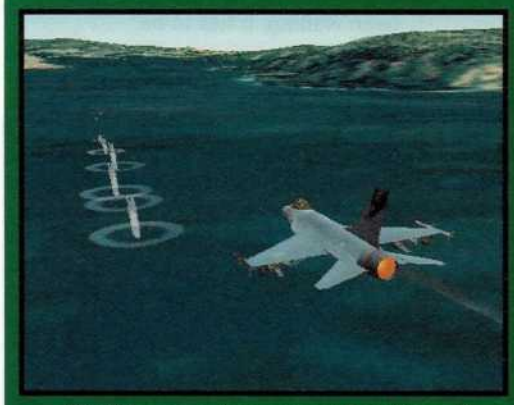
Falcon 4.0

Do not adjust your monitor. You are not hallucinating. It is real. It is here. At last.

Falcon 4.0 has been down some rocky roads during the past four years, when it seemed as though it might never be completed. The task of living up to the most revered hard-core flight sim brand name of all time seemed almost too much for the developers, but it looks like they've come through with a worthy follow-up. The only serious F-16 simulation, and for some, the

DEVELOPER
MicroProse

PUBLISHER
MicroProse
(800) 656-5443
www.microprose.com



The Falcon 4.0 *demo may not have been all that hot, but the final game looks great — is the king back at last?*



The strange and stylized critters of Dominant Species *are under your control as you try to fend off humans and other alien forces.*



Fallout 2 *has more mutants, more wastelands, and more nuke-inspired action for a much-awaited follow-up to the best roleplaying game of 1997.*

http://pcgamer.ign.com

only serious simulation at all, is back.

And it looks as though the wait has been worth it — *Falcon 4.0* boasts incredible hardware-accelerated graphics, a truly dynamic campaign, and the rigidly accurate modeling we have come to expect from the series. The action, set in and around the Korean peninsula, is being brought to life with highly detailed terrain and object graphics. The world has a dynamic feel, due in no small part to the hundreds of aircraft and ground vehicles moving about. An elaborate campaign system creates a constantly changing battlefield situation, and there promises to be a real feeling that a war is going on, as you choose which missions to fly and then execute them in an evolving environment.

Avionics, flight, and AI modeling should be top-notch, which is no less than we would demand from a Falcon game. Plenty of missions modes — instant action, single missions, custom missions, the campaign, and multi-play — promise to provide all the gameplay sim nuts could want. This, major last-minute catastrophes aside, could be the flight sim of the year. Considering how long we've been waiting, it has to be.

Stocking STUFFERS

If you're stumped for a gaming gift idea this Holiday season, LucasArts has a new non-game title on the market that every PC owner is sure to love. *Star Wars: Behind The Magic* is a feature-packed multimedia encyclopedia of everyone's favorite movie trilogy, and much more besides: Aside from scene-by-scene breakdowns of all the movies and guides to *Star Wars* characters, locations, events, spacecraft, and weapons, *Behind The Magic* also features a behind-the-scenes look at the making of the movies (and a sneak preview of *Star Wars: Episode 1 — The Phantom Menace*), lost footage from the original movie, a testing lab where you can try out various *Star Wars* weapons on an unfortunate stormtrooper, a *Myst*-style first-person walkthrough of the Millennium Falcon, and a trivia section consisting of 300 questions aimed at all levels, from the casual fan to the devotee. It may not go into as much depth as the recently released *Star Wars Encyclopedia*, but *Star Wars: Behind The Magic* is a treat that any *Star Wars*-loving PC gamer would love to unwrap. It's available now.





As the dead travel agent Manny Calavera, you'll get to interact with bizarre demons and even more bizarre machinery in Grim Fandango.

Grim Fandango

Stemming from the creative mind of design guru Tim Shafer, *Grim Fandango* is LucasArts' latest and most innovative entry into the graphic adventure market. Set in the fabled Mexican Land of the Dead, the game casts you as skeletal travel agent Manny Calavera, who's been fired for his unintentional involvement in a travel package scam. Out of work and without friends, Manny must make his way out of the dangerous, art-deco Land of the Dead.

DEVELOPER
LucasArts

PUBLISHER
LucasArts
(800) 782-7927
www.lucasarts.com

Grim Fandango's interface varies greatly from the tried-and-true system that LucasArts has used in the past. Adopting a more *Alone in the Dark*-style feel, you directly control Manny's movements and actions inside the the 3D environments via the arrow keys. As Manny approaches an item of interest, he smoothly turns his head to look at it, so you no longer have to run your mouse over every pixel on the screen to find something you need. The inventory is handled through Manny's coat; with one press of a key, Manny reaches into his jacket and pulls out whatever happens to be on his person at the time. The illusion is seamless, seeming more like an animated film than a typical adventure.

Grim Fandango will support Direct3D-compliant cards to smooth out the visuals, and the dozens of character voices are being performed by a Latino Shakespeare troupe. If you enjoyed Shafer's previous offerings, *The Day of the Tentacle* and *Full Throttle*, make sure to drop plenty of hints about this one to your friends and relatives.

Half-Life

You know you want this.

Designed by the Seattle-based startup company Valve, *Half-Life* takes the first-person genre to the extreme. Loosely based on the *Quake II* engine — with improvements and optimizations aplenty — *Half-Life* is set in the Black Mesa research base, a hush-hush government facility. You play Gordon Freeman, a scientist with a Ph.D. in theoretical physics who's about to have a very bad day at the office. After a unique science experiment goes hideously awry, a dimensional gate is created, opening the door for untold horrors to spring forth.

DEVELOPER
Valve

PUBLISHER
Sierra
(800) 757-7707
www.sierra.com

Gordon's job is to escape from the tattered leftovers of the underground base. But he isn't alone; a handful of personnel have managed to survive, and security guards and scientists will be happy to help out whenever needed. Don't expect any aid from the military forces that have been sent in, though; they'll wipe you out without a second thought. The rich, cinematic atmosphere and the number

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Yee-ikes! You'll run into waterbound critters whenever you take a dip in the depths of Half-Life.

of scripted cut-scenes keep the game from ever becoming boring; in fact, there's so much going on, there's no way to catch it all in one play-through.

"After two years working on *Half-Life*, it's very gratifying to finally be able to put it into gamers' hands and hear what they have to say," says Valve's Managing Director Gabe Newell. "Watching someone go through the disaster sequence and take their hands off of the controls, turn around, and say 'I didn't do that,' or hear them scream the first time they blow someone up in DeathMatch using a laser claymore just puts silly grins on all of our faces."

OpenGL support, colored lighting, amazing map design, fantastic AI, and a skeletal animation system should combine to create the often-heralded — but never before realized — interactive movie. If the full version is half as good as the pre-release OEM version (which was bundled with several 3D cards released in September), there's no doubt that *Half-Life* should be the first and foremost must-buy title of the season.

Heavy Gear II

Even though *Heavy Gear* limped to PCs on an outdated engine, it managed to look and play well, proving that Activision has some innate ability to make masterful battling 'bot games. The anime-flavored world and deep source material (based on a popular pen-and-paper RPG by Dream Pod 9) showed real promise. Now, Activision has tossed out its ancient *MechWarrior II* engine and built a new one based exclusively on hardware acceleration and dubbed "Dark Side" — and it's *sweeeet*.

As leader of an elite deep-strike team, you command a force of small mechs ("Gears") on covert missions into a wide variety of complex battlefields. The game's swamps, cities, frozen wastes, and interior environments are all bigger and more complex than before with environmental effects like rain and lightning adding to the realism. The detail level of the new engine is extremely high, creating the same impact for today's systems that *MechWarrior II* did for yesterday's.

More complex squad tactics, improved AI, and more elaborate mission and campaign scripting should combine to give *Heavy Gear II* a slightly more satisfying feel than most 'bot games. The shift in focus from the original, which was really just MechWarrior-style gaming with smaller bots, to the more *Terra Nova*-like feel of small, maneuverable powered battle suits and squad-level tactics makes *Heavy Gear II* look like a substantially different and better prospect than its predecessor.

DEVELOPER
Activision

PUBLISHER
Activision
(800) 477-3650
www.activision.com



They're not Mechs, they're Gears: smaller, more maneuverable, and twice as deadly, with a new hardware-only engine to bring them to life. Welcome to Heavy Gear II.

Myth II: Soulblighter

Myth proved two things: a real game *could* be made by a Macintosh developer, and something new *could* be done with the seemingly tired real-time strategy formula. Its combination of true strategy, incredible hardware-accelerated graphics and explicit carnage was instantly appealing, and it positively screamed "franchise."

DEVELOPER
Bungie Software

PUBLISHER
Bungie Software
(800) 295-0060
www.bungie.com

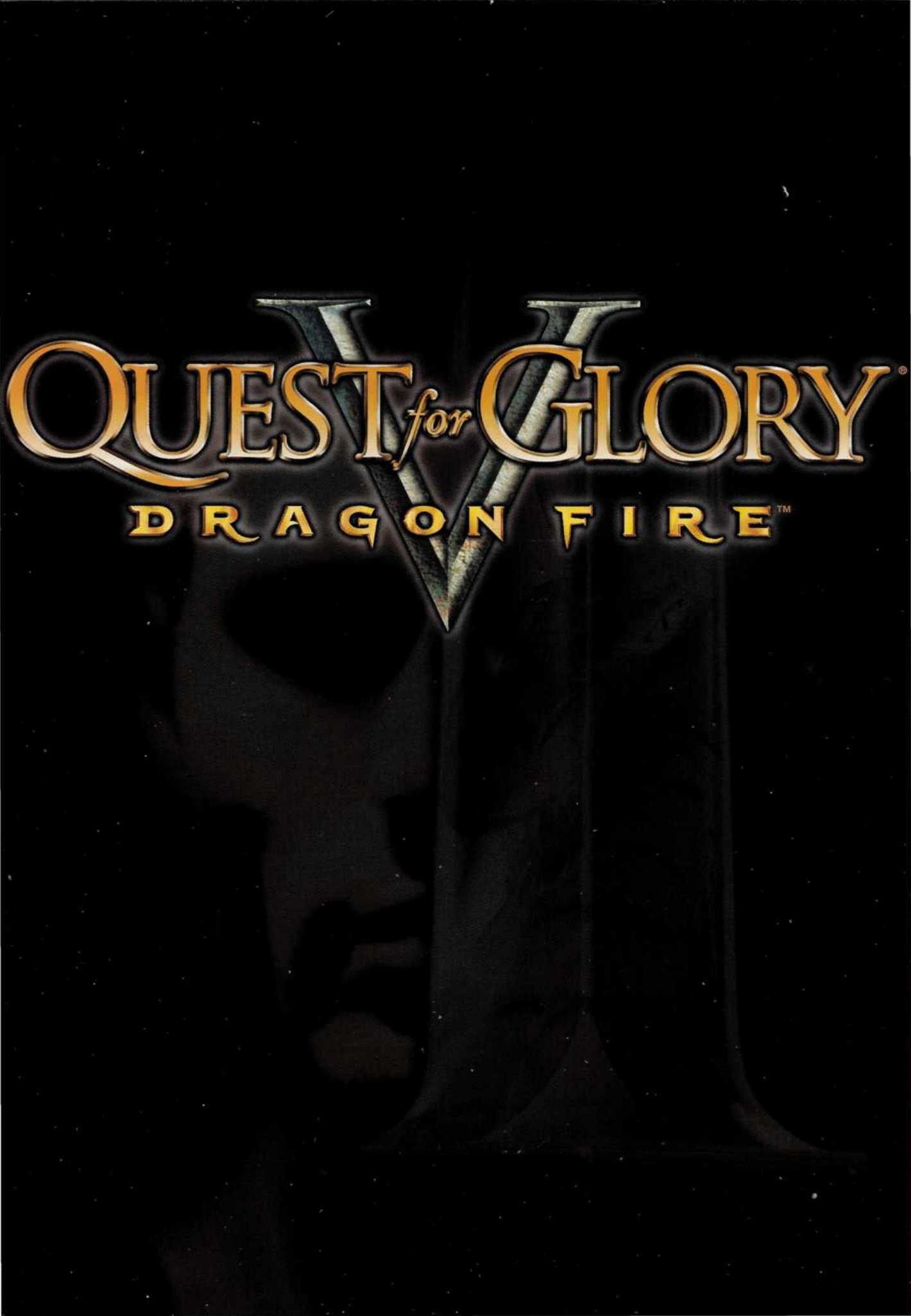
Bungie has not disappointed. *Myth II: Soulblighter* is exponentially bigger, badder, and bloodier than the original. Gameplay begins 60 years after the player threw Balor's Head into the Great Devoid. Alric is now King, and his realm is facing new threats. The world maps are substantially larger with more town battles and several indoor levels. The object detail has been almost doubled, and the terrain mesh quadrupled, creating much sharper maps.



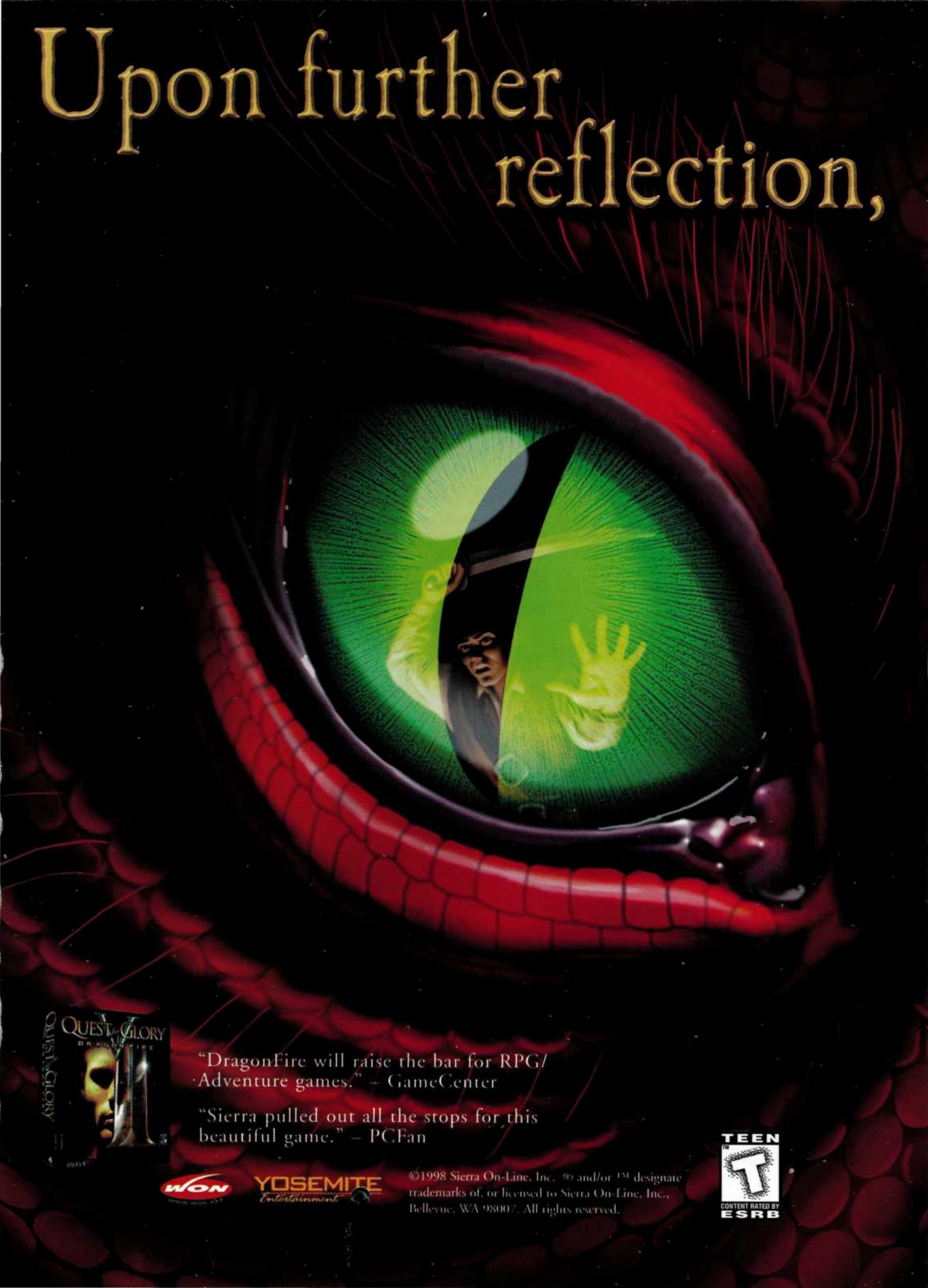
Grab a sword and let the decapitations begin: Myth II *is bigger and bloodier than the original, with an improved graphics engine to render every brain splatter in awesome detail.*

The big news is the addition of moving, destroyable terrain. Drawbridges rise, castle walls fall, and ships float while new units, fire, and magic raise the strategic bar. There'll also be more ambient life, such as chickens and birds, to make the world seem more real (and, of course, give you moving objects for target practice). Bungie says that the AI, pathfinding, and interface have all been improved, and the inclusion of the "Fear and Loathing" level creator finally gives *Myth* gamers something they'd been crying out for since the original. All-in-all, *Myth II* looks set to be a brain-splattering good time.

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Pro Pinball: Big Race USA

This Holiday season, fans of Empire Interactive's brilliant *Pro Pinball: Timeshock* will have plenty to cheer about. A sequel of sorts, *Pro Pinball: Big Race USA*, is slated for a late November release, and anyone who has the slightest penchant for digital pinball should stand up and take notice.

Timeshock impressed everyone at *PC Gamer* and even made our 50 Best Games Ever List thanks to its stellar graphics, customization features, and a level of adherence to table physics that could only be described as anal. *Big Race USA* takes that formula and runs with it, producing another stunning game.

DEVELOPER
Another Cunning Development

PUBLISHER
Empire Interactive
(415) 439-4854
www.empire.com

Big Race USA has a taxi-racing theme, with progressive skill shots transforming into collected "passengers," and mega bonus points. In playtesting a beta version, it looked and felt just as good to us as the pro tables that are out there, with well-placed ramps, bumpers, and art design. Other features include an operator's bookkeeping mode, an adjustment screen that allows you to fiddle with everything from flipper strength to the table's tilt, and the ability to edit every aspect of the scoring system. Best of all, most of the tweaking takes place on the table's actual LED screen — you'll get to play arcade manager!

Also in the works are multiple view angles and high-resolution modes up to a monitor-shattering 1600x1400 at 16.7 million colors. An extremely funky "motion blur" effect on the reflection-mapped ball adds a noteworthy twinge of realism, as does the visible spin on the ball. And for all you pinball masters who want to see who's really got "da skillz," you can challenge each other with an online Pinball Duel mode.

If you've got a thing for the silver ball, *Big Race USA* looks like it's going to be right up your alley.



Dead-on physics and outstanding multimedia content make Big Race USA *one of the strongest computer pinball contenders out there.*



Buy low! Sell high! It may have been almost a decade coming, but Railroad Tycoon II *should be well worth the wait.*

Railroad Tycoon II

It's been too damn long a-comin', but the sequel to *Railroad Tycoon* is now almost upon us, and we may rejoice. Skeptics may doubt that any *Railroad Tycoon* without original creator Sid Meier in the engineer's seat is just a pretender, but in this case, the man re-tooling Sid's classic concept is none other than *Heroes of Might and Magic*'s Phil Steinmeyer. In a design that looks forward as much as it does back, *Railroad Tycoon II* looks to revive a niche that was all but swept away in the wave of real-time strategy games: the economic strategy game.

DEVELOPER
PopTop Software

PUBLISHER
Gathering of Developers
(800) GOD-GAMES
www.godgames.com

The genius of *Railroad Tycoon* is that it couches its economic gameplay in the world of robber barons and trains: two things gamers are bound to find instantly appealing. Part virtual train set, part cut-throat business sim, *Railroad Tycoon II*'s aim is to deliver its action without mayhem and keep it interesting. You can buy and sell stock, create train routes, lay rail, build stations, and (hopefully) crush the competition. Zoomable, rotatable graphics, with resolutions up to 1024x768 and 16-bit color, give the game's terrain (allegedly based on satellite info), trains, and buildings vivid detail. Thirty-four cargo types, 51 train engines, and a timespan ranging from 1804 to beyond 2000 should provide the epic sweep of the buy-low/sell-high games of yesteryear.

With landscapes and scenarios spanning the globe, real-time gameplay, 16-player multi-play (LAN and Internet), and a host of other features, this looks set to be a worthy sequel to one of the most important and entertaining games ever brought to PC.

Sin

After wowing us all with the first *Quake* mission pack, *Scourge of Armagon*, the upstart developers at Ritual Entertainment have wrapped up their first full-blown *Quake* engine-based 3D shooter, a dark little gem called *Sin*.

DEVELOPER
Ritual Entertainment

PUBLISHER
Activision
(800) 477-3650
www.activision.com

Set in a foreboding future where police work is carried out by private companies, you play law enforcement officer John Blade. Your job is to get to the bottom of an apocalyptic plan, spearheaded by the beautiful — but mentally deranged — Elexis Sinclaire.

The Holiday Previews feature continues on page 135

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But beware, this game contains material that may be objectionable to some people.

Mainly, the folks at the FBI.









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0 00000 078520 2

A game this funny requires a certain degree of preparation.



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BERKELEY SYSTEMS

Jellyvision®

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The Holiday Previews feature is continued from page 129a

While *Half-Life* is a slower-paced game with more human interaction, *Sin* goes straight for the jugular, dishing out those old *Doom II*-style chaingun mowdowns in spades. Enemies have a high degree of intelligence, can drop from the roof using ropes, and best of all, take locational damage — a few slugs in the gut typically equals one shot to the head. Almost every object in the game can be destroyed, and shooting at a billboard high above can result in it toppling over and smashing through a skylight several stories below.

As the game progresses, you're kept in radio contact with a hacker-type named JC, who gives Blade his mission objectives and provides fodder for snappy one-liners. *Sin* also features scripted events aplenty, and in-game cut-scenes that further reinforce the game's no-holds-barred attitude. "Our own unique style for telling a compelling story, combined with the diverse paths that you can take throughout the game, will offer much more replayability," says Ritual CEO Harry Miller. "We'll challenge you to think about what you're doing and what you've done as the game world changes around you."

With equal amounts of effort placed on both single-player and deathmatch play, *Sin* will probably be sticking around on your hard drive for a long time. "This group has pushed every design idea to the limit to make sure that *Sin* is one over-the-top action-thriller that will keep your heart pumping and your palms sweating along the way," Miller says. Sounds like a good sell to us.

Stocking STUFFERS

Blizzard's got the perfect gift for the real-time strategy gamer in your life — a new range of *StarCraft* and *WarCraft* action figures. The Terran Marine, Protoss Zealot, Zerg Hydralisk, Human Footman, and Orc Grunt have all been lovingly modeled, stand 6.5 inches tall, and are in stores now, including EB and Babbage's. Price? $10-12.











StarCraft: Brood War

If you couldn't get enough of this year's most polished strategy-fest, Blizzard is giving you a chance to prolong your addiction with *StarCraft: Brood War*, a beefed-up add-on disc that looks sure to satisfy.

DEVELOPER
Blizzard

PUBLISHER
Blizzard
(800) 953-7669
www.blizzard.com

Set after the original *StarCraft* conflict, the storyline has a civil war within the Zerg faction resulting in a decimated fighting force, while the Zerg "Queen of Blades" Kerrigan has a grudge with the Terran Emperor. "The new campaign will have a story that picks right up where the *StarCraft* story left off," Producer Rob Pardo says. "With the addition of new editor features, *Brood War* will tell the story even better than the original game did with in-game story sequences."

Each force has been given two or three new types of troops. "Players will have to adapt all-new tactics to compensate for the new units," Pardo says. And what a nasty bunch they are — the Zerg Lurker is a spiny beast that rips up the ground and shreds its targets, the Terran Valkyrie is an air-



Sin features top-notch level design from the best mappers in the industry — including Duke 3D's Levelord. We can't wait to get our hands on it.

http://pcgamer.ign.com



I got your Zerg right here! StarCraft: Brood War *features a handful of new units for your destructive pleasure as well as tons of new levels to test your skills.*

borne missile frigate, and the Protoss have been given Dark Archons — psionic entities that leave mass destruction in their wake.

And for those addicted to Battle.Net, *Brood War* comes complete with a whopping one hundred new multi-player maps. *Brood War* will also ship with a new version of the mission editor *StarEdit*, which will allow prospective level designers to design their own missions using the new units and tilesets. All in all, this looks like an essential purchase for rabid *StarCraft* fans everywhere.

Star Trek: The Next Generation – Birth of the Federation

DEVELOPER
MicroProse
PUBLISHER
MicroProse
(800) 656-3443
www.microprose.com

MicroProse hasn't had much luck translating its expensive *Star Trek: The Next Generation* license into compelling games, but things have lately been improving as *Klingon Honor Guard* and now *Birth of the Federation* hope to demonstrate. *Birth of the Federation* is a turn-based *Civilization*-style resource management and conquest game set in the Star Trek universe. The concept seems like a natural — but then again so did *Star Wars: Rebellion*.

Birth of the Federation boasts all the ingredients of a standard galactic conquest game, with the added benefit of the familiar and expansive Star Trek universe. There are five races to play as, each with their own strengths and weaknesses. Romulans are strong in espionage and stealth, Klingons in combat, Cardassians in ruthless efficiency, and the Ferengi in finance and trading, while the Federation represents a balanced mix of all these skills. Each race also has unique victory conditions, creating a different style of game depending on who you're playing as. To keep things interesting, there are also thirty minor races who may help or hinder you.

The core of the game is resource management and territorial exploration. Building ships, investigating unknown planets and objects, and expanding the fleet is the order of the day. Combat can be either automatically resolved or fought in a tactical mode with 3D ship models. As the first Trek strategy game in a long time, and coming from the company that brought us the definitive space-strategy game *Master of Orion*, it definitely has an eager fan base ready and waiting.

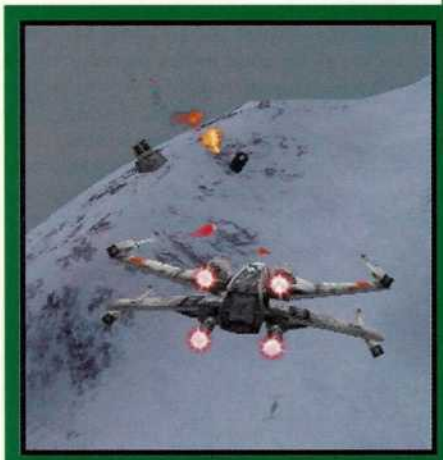


The Federation may not normally be a conquer-the-galaxy-type organization, but with you in charge in Birth of the Federation, *you can make it so.*

Star Wars: Rogue Squadron

When the PC version of *Shadows of the Empire* hit software shelves last year, critics rightly bemoaned a lumpy mix of gameplay that combined fantastic flight sequences with a stale, run-and-gun third-person mode. LucasArts took a long, hard look at what *Shadows* did right, and then went to the German development group Factor 5. The developer's goal? Take the flight sequences from *Shadows* and refine them to perfection in *Rogue Squadron*.

DEVELOPER
Factor 5
PUBLISHER
LucasArts
(800) 782-7927
www.lucasarts.com



Rogue Squadron *lets you gracefully sail over the icy plains of Hoth. Watch out for AT-ATs, though.*

Taking place between *Star Wars* and *The Empire Strikes Back*, *Rogue Squadron* follows the adventures of Luke Skywalker's elite group of Rebel pilots. But don't expect a sim along the lines of *X-Wing* or *TIE Fighter* — *Rogue Squadron* is all about fast-paced arcade-style action. You can select from a number of Rebel ships (including the beloved X-Wing, Y-Wing, and Snowspeeder), and take on those pesky Imperial forces. Remember the classic sequence in *Shadows of the Empire* where you used the grappling hook to trip an

The Holiday Previews feature continues on page 139

http://pc.ign.com

Microsoft

Move

...The Controller hard right and your bike moves hard right to avoid a pile-up

...The Controller hard left and use muscles you never knew you had as you dive into a loop-to-loop

...The Controller hardly at all and command the game with ever so subtle movements that'll leave your opponent in tears



Freestyle Pro

MICROSOFT SIDEWINDER

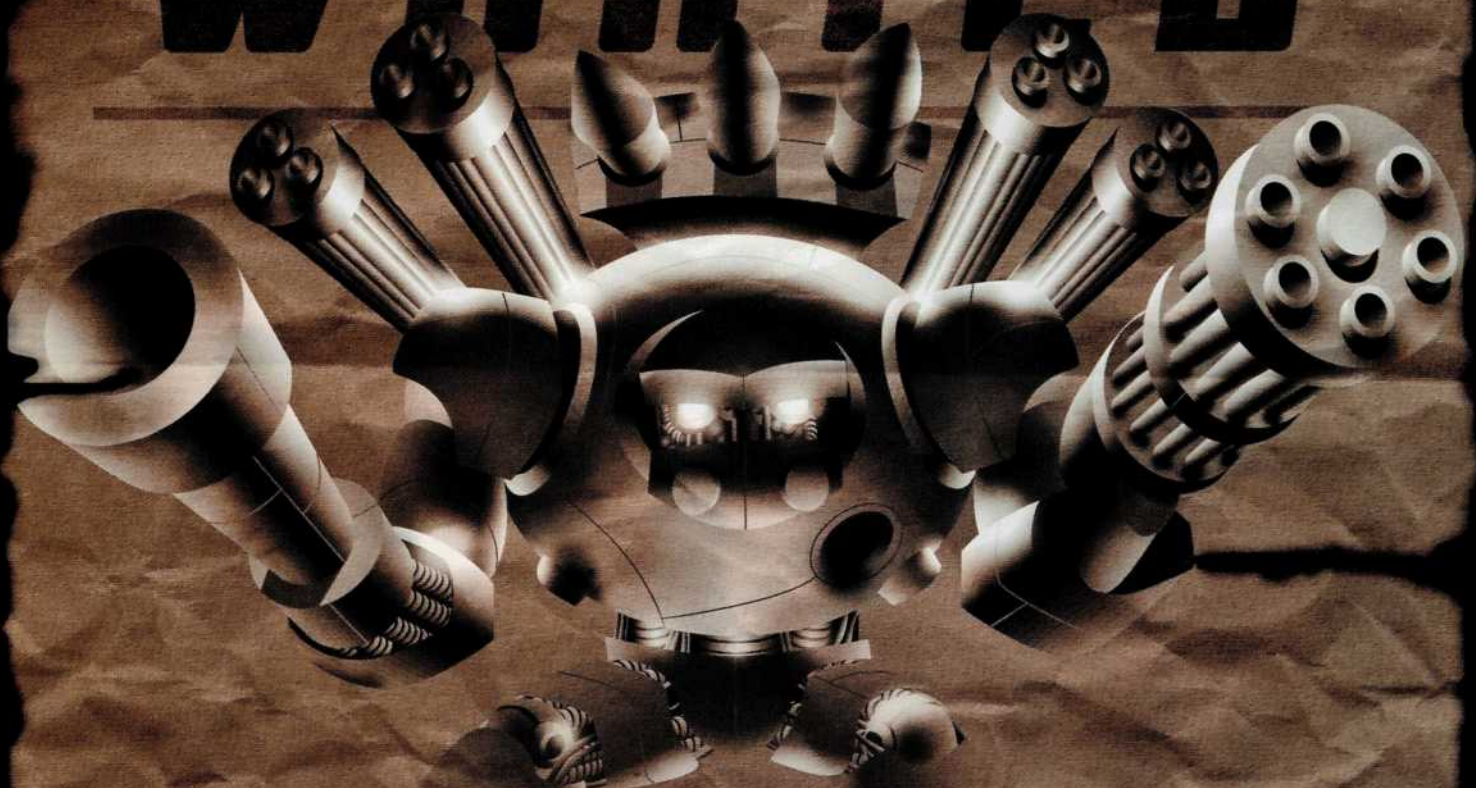
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The Holiday Previews feature is continued from page 136

Imperial Walker? Expect plenty more of those thrills.

In *Rogue Squadron*, you'll get to blast over hotspots like the Tatooine desert, Jabba's Palace, and even Luke's Ranch. You're not on a fixed path, so you can go off in any direction you fancy during the multiple dogfights and rescue missions. But don't deviate from your mission plan and forget about your AI wingmen, as they'll be counting on your performance.

With tasty visual effects — along with a killer John Williams score — *Rogue Squadron* should feature all the imperial-blastin' fun we've come to expect from those crazy LucasArts folks.

Tomb Raider III

Love her or hate her, digital diva Lara Croft is set for another return to the PC — conveniently, just in time for the holiday season. While some have labeled *Tomb Raider III: Adventures of Lara Croft* as a shameless attempt to milk the cash cow without offering any gameplay innovations, the designers at Core have been stressing the opposite, and the game has been massively reworked since its lackluster E3 showing.

DEVELOPER
Core Design

PUBLISHER
Eidos Interactive
(415) 547-1200
www.eidosinteractive.com

A good chunk of the aging engine has been rewritten from scratch, and new lighting and texturing routines have been implemented to give the game a more realistic, smoothed-out look. The game is also less linear, allowing players to go off and explore on their own as opposed to having to follow a straight path through the game.

Aside from the expected new outfits, Lara's swanky new moves include a running dash and the ability to crawl. And those of you who got a kick out of driving a motorboat through the channels of Venice in *Tomb Raider II* will be glad to hear that a slew of new vehicles will be included. "We've really made some leaps with technology and gameplay over the prior two games," Producer Mike Schmitz says. "We're heading back to the roots in regard to the original *Tomb Raider*'s style of gameplay that made it a classic, and gamers are really looking forward to it."

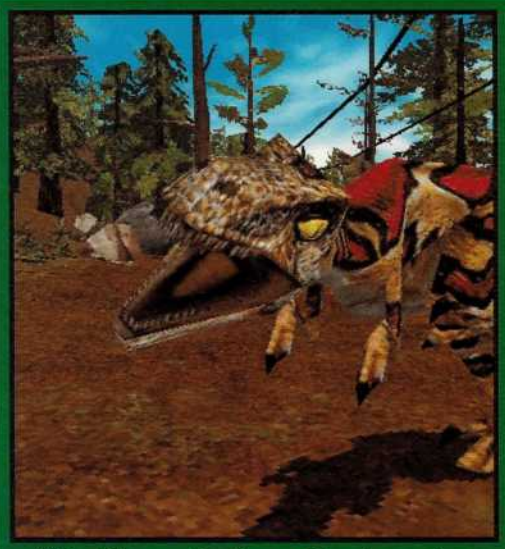


Lara Croft sports a whole wardrobe of new costumes, along with new weapons, vehicles, and moves in Eidos Interactive's Tomb Raider III *— and she'll need all of 'em to survive.*

Trespasser

Trespasser's lead programmer, Seamus Blackley, is a true physics guru. His work on the original *Flight Unlimited* from Looking glass was heralded as revolutionary with perfect flight modeling and amazing visuals. Now he's looking to carry his experience into the first-person action genre with *Trespasser*, the latest title from Dreamworks Interactive.

Trespasser is set shortly after the events that occurred in the *Jurassic Park* sequel *The Lost World*, with the player (a girl called Jane, voiced by Minnie Driver) stuck on the menacing Site B. Your only goal is to get the hell off the island by any means necessary. The bad news is that you don't have any weapons — but the good news is that you can do just about anything in the world of *Trespasser* that you could do in real life: break barrels, float wooden objects, stack crates, etc., giving you dozens of ways to attack each puzzle you encounter.



"Shoo! Go away!" Alas, you'll need more than harsh language to fend of the ravenous Raptors in Dreamworks Interactive's Trespasser.

DEVELOPER
Dreamworks Interactive

PUBLISHER
Dreamworks Interactive
www.dreamworks games.com

Trespasser contains no individual game 'levels' — it's all one giant, continuous 3D world, with dozens of acres of realistically modeled jungle terrain. And you're not alone because herds of dinos that realistically flock, attack, and hold their distance will be sharing space with you. The AI system adds a twinge of raw, terrifying unpredictability — a raptor that materializes ten feet in front of you may not be hungry at all...or it may be poised to strike. And yes, the T-Rex is in there, and she's rarely in a good mood.

Trespasser's aim is to play the way the player wants it to — you can go in guns-a-blazin', or you can trick dinos with physics-based traps. It'll be interesting to see if the game can feature such amazing complexity while actually still being fun to play — but we should to be able to find out when it hits shelves this December.

Turok 2: Seeds of Evil

Though the PC version of the Nintendo 64 hit *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter* suffered

http://pcgamer.ign.com



Rippling water, realistic fire, and other atmospheric effects make Turok 2 *easy on the eyes.*

from a small case of consoleitis, it was still a decent shooter with healthy doses of dinosaurs, destruction, and death. Now, the developers at Iguana have set out to make a sequel to one of the best-selling N64 games of all time, and the result looks to set right the niggling problems that affected the original.

DEVELOPER
Iguana

PUBLISHER
Acclaim
(656) 759-7800
www.acclaim.net

The original *Turok* ended with our hero retrieving the mighty Chronoscepter from the beefy madman known as The Campaigner. Turok tosses the Chronoscepter into a volcano, hoping to destroy it once and for all. But instead, a giant creature named The Primagen spews forth from the broken Chronoscepter, ready to kick ass and take names. Turok, you klutz! At least there's plenty of new monsters to kill, and that's what matters in the long run.

Turok 2: Seeds of Evil looks a good deal better than its predecessor with less of the pea-soup fogging that made keeping your bearings difficult. The jaw-dropping animation is also present, giving life to 40 deformable-mesh monsters that react to pinpoint shots, can run around with arrows stuck in their bodies, and bleed real good. The over-the-top weapons have also been carried over with new ones added — 24 of them in total — ranging from the standard combat knife to the cerebral bore, a delicious little device that attaches to an enemy's head and sucks their brains out.

With moody 3D graphics and dead-on multi-player modes, it looks like *Turok 2* is ready to go head-to-head with the numerous 3D shooters that are hitting this holiday season. This might just turn out to be a winner....

WWII Fighters

The next few months are shaping up to be a real battleground for World War Two flight sims (no less than six are on the horizon), but *WWII Fighters* is already the most hotly anticipated. And that's no surprise — after all, its pedigree is outstanding. If it were a hunting dog, it would be blue ribbon, with genes traceable to one of the most venerated sims of all time: *Chuck Yeager's Air Combat*. As the newest installment in the "fun" (rather than the "realistic") wing of the Jane's collection, it's the successor to *U.S. Navy Fighters* and *ATF*, but completely rewritten from the ground up, sporting an astounding new graphics engine and improved realism, as well as the thorough Jane's attention to details and features.

When we last saw it in development, *WWII Fighters'* hardware-accelerated, scalable graphics were state-of-the-art. Object models, particularly aircraft, are lovingly detailed. Effects such as fluffy clouds, billowing smoke, spent gun cartridges, and individual bullet hits help to create a great sense of "being there." Mid-range systems should run it fine, but a powerful PII-300+ system will be required for it to really scream to its full potential.

DEVELOPER
Jane's Combat Simulations

PUBLISHER
Jane's Combat Simulations
(800)245-4525
www.janes.ea.com

More important for fighter jocks are the seven flyable aircraft: the Spitfire, P-51D Mustang, P-47D Thunderbolt, P-38J Lightning, ME BF 109G6, ME 262, and Focke-Wulf 190A8. The game boasts more flight and damage modeling than previous Jane's sims, which should further add to the sense of realism. And like its brand-name brothers, it's full of individual, custom, and campaign missions, as well as strong online support. If all goes well, this will be *the* dogfighting sim of the season for jaded jet jocks and sim-starved prop-heads alike.

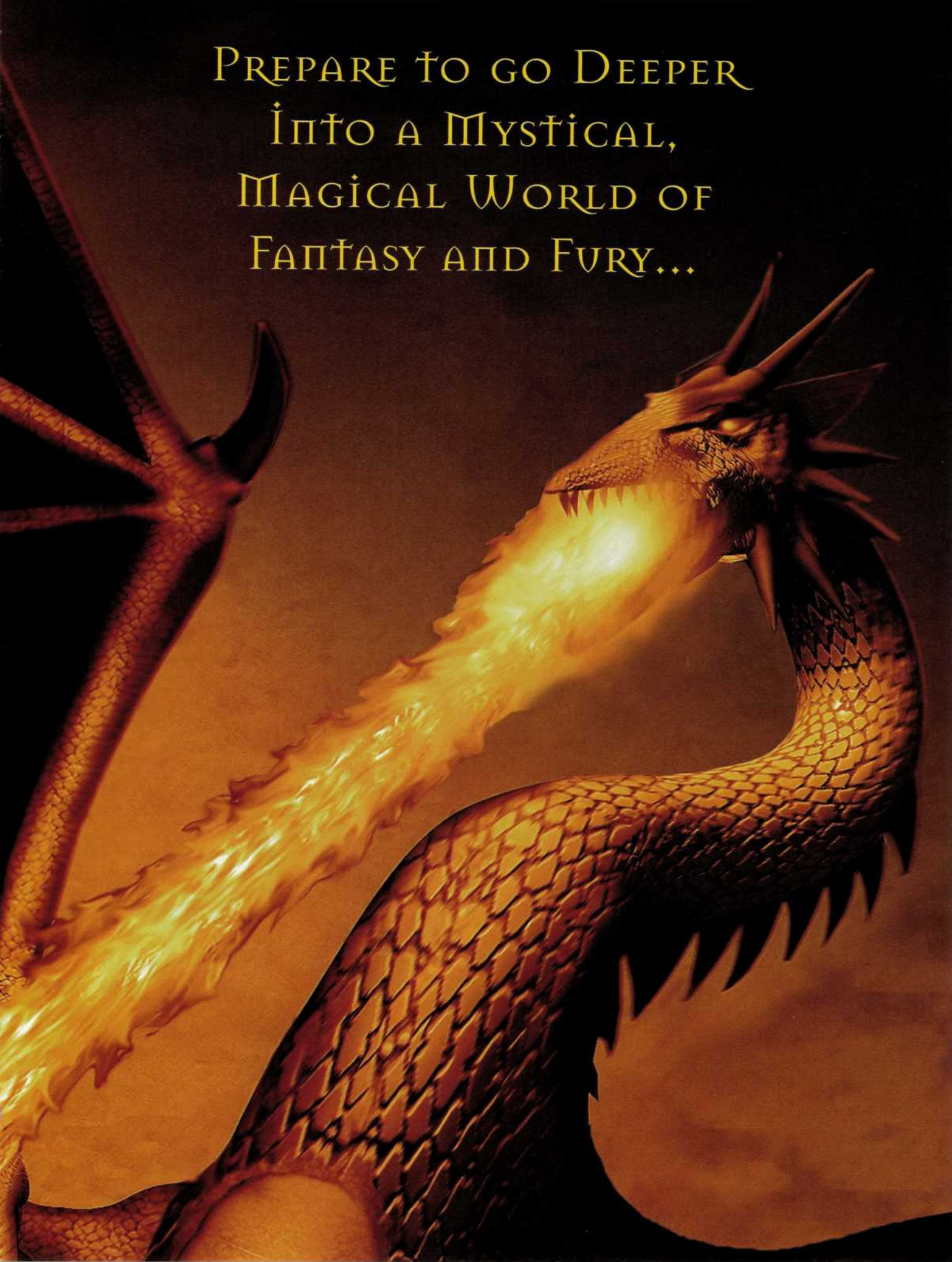
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The Hardware feature starts on page 149



After modeling every modern fighter in service, Jane's turns its prodigious talents back to the 1940s with WWII Fighters.

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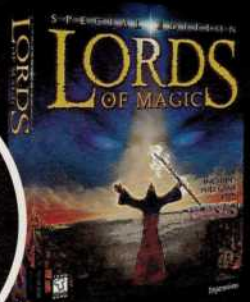
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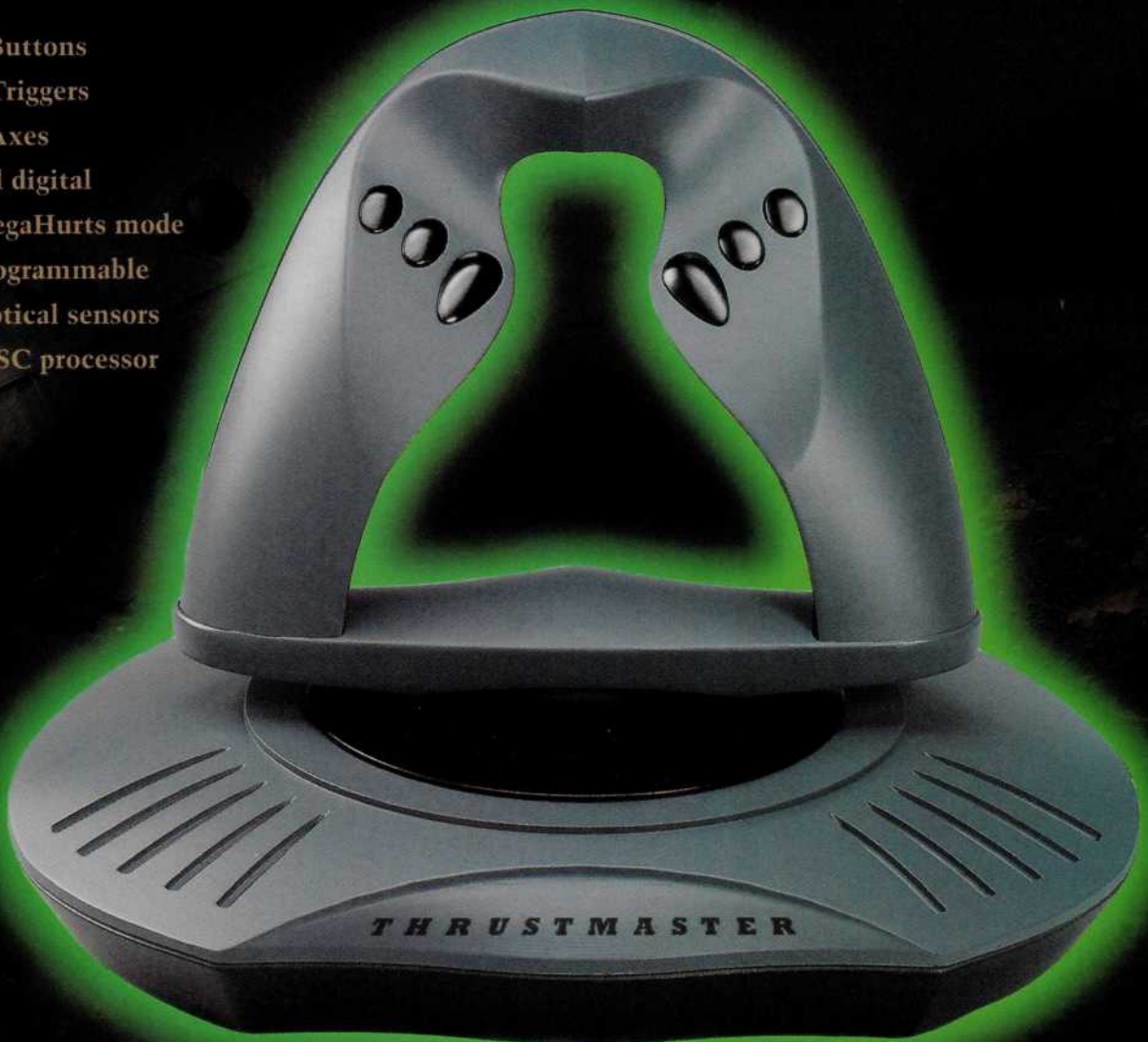
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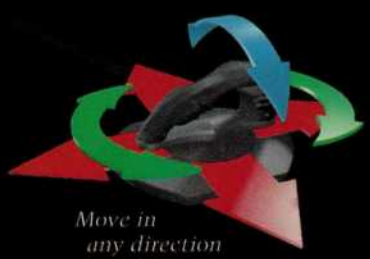
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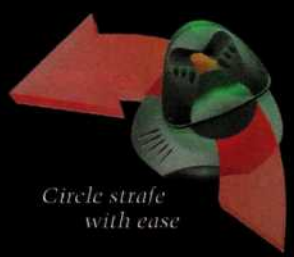
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Hardware

Are you wondering what manor of powerful gaming hardware you'll be receiving from your loving holiday gift bearers? Educate your loved ones on what to buy with this guide, which focuses on the best of the best from this year — and even a few from the past.

By Greg Vederman

Game Controllers

What's a PC game without a way to control it? A really boring TV show. From sports games to air combat sims, the right controller can make all the difference — and we've had our hands on everything the industry has to offer. Here are some of the best:

Gravis Exterminator

MANUFACTURER: *Advanced Gravis Computer, (800) 535-4242, www.gravis.com*
PRICE: *$59.99*

One of the best gamepads to come across our desks this year (or any year, for that matter), the Gravis Exterminator has just about everything you could hope for in a controller. It has an analog-style thumbpad; an eight-way digital pad; a throttle slider; an eight-way "hat" switch; two proportional flipper buttons; and ten programmable push-buttons. If you're a fan of action or sports games, the Exterminator should be on the top of your wish list.



The Gravis Exterminator is as versatile as gamepads get.

Microsoft SideWinder Gamepad

MANUFACTURER: *Microsoft, (800) 426-9400, www.microsoft.com*
PRICE: *$34.95*

The first SideWinders arrived in our offices many moons ago, but there can be no question that this controller has survived the test of time. Since its arrival, very few gamepads have come anywhere close to being as comfortable and user-friendly. For the gamer looking for the best "vanilla" gamepad out there — not a lot of frills, but virtually no flaws — the original SideWinder gamepad is tough to beat.



The SideWinder is still one of the best pads on the market.

Microsoft SideWinder Freestyle Pro

MANUFACTURER: *Microsoft, (800) 426-9400, www.microsoft.com*
PRICE: *$74.95*

In terms of bang for the buck, the Freestyle Pro doesn't quite match the original Microsoft SideWinder gamepad — or the Gravis Exterminator — but when it comes to motorcycle racing games, the Pro offers something unique: its ability to detect motion and translate it into control inputs, allowing for smooth, proportional control in response to the slightest tilt. We had loads of fun playing motorcycle games like *MotoRacer GP* and *Motocross Madness* with this one; it really brings you into the game. If you're looking for a new angle in gamepads, the Freestyle Pro may be your ticket to the races.



The Freestyle Pro's motion-sensitive control seems to have been developed specifically for motorcycle racing games.

Logitech WingMan Extreme Digital

MANUFACTURER: *Logitech, (510) 795-8500, www.logitech.com*
PRICE: *$39.95*

The WingMan Extreme is still one of the most comfortable joysticks in the *PC Gamer* office, and since it's able to perform in both analog and digital mode, using this stick in both DOS and Windows is as simple as flipping a switch. In Windows mode, the WingMan has a very easy-to-use programming utility that makes cus-



The WingMan Extreme is one of the few peripherals to make it into the buyer's guide two years running.

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tomization a breeze. All in all, the WingMan extreme proves that not being the new kid on the block isn't always an important factor when considering a joystick.

Act Labs RS Racing System

MANUFACTURER: *Act Labs, (800) 980-9997, www.actlabs.com*
PRICE: *$69*

One of only two wheels to earn an Editors' Choice rating this year, the Act Labs RS Racing System is a great choice for racing fans on a budget. With its faux-leather cover, it's very comfortable to hold; it's responsive; and the RS can be upgraded via a cartridge to operate with a Sony PlayStation or Nintendo 64 videogame console, as well as the PC. With comfort and cross-platform functionality like this, we're surprised the Act Labs RS Racing System isn't selling for more than it is.



The Act Labs RS Racing System is a great choice for just about any racing fan.

Saitek Cyborg 3D Stick

MANUFACTURER: *Saitek, (310) 212-5412, www.saitek.com*
PRICE: *$69.95*

Saitek's new Cyborg 3D Stick may turn out to be the joystick to beat in the new year. Not only does it look darn cool, it's the most physically customizable stick we've ever seen. The Cyborg comes with a special tool that lets gamers adjust the position of the buttons at the top of the stick as well as adjustments that allow it to be used by either right- or left-handed gamers. The Cyborg probably won't just be eye-candy either; since it takes advantage of what Saitek calls its Ratio Digital technology, it may also prove to be one of the most accurate and responsive joysticks for the PC.



If the Saitek Cyborg isn't one of the sexiest joysticks we've ever seen, we don't know what sexy is, baby.



Logitech's WingMan Force looks to be one of most promising force-feedback sticks yet.

Thrustmaster NASCAR Pro Racing Wheel

MANUFACTURER: *Thrustmaster, (503) 615-3200, www.thrustmaster.com*
PRICE: *$179.95*

Thrustmaster's NASCAR Pro Racing Wheel is far and away the best-feeling wheel in its price range (less than $200); its perfectly tweaked spring tension makes it seem as if it were almost the real deal. If you're a hard-core racing enthusiast and don't mind coughing up nearly a hundred dollars more than you would for the Act Labs RS Racing System, the NASCAR Pro has what it takes to thrust you into your rightful place at pole position.



Thrustmaster's NASCAR Pro Racing Wheel can make you feel like a pro driver in your own right.

Logitech WingMan Force

MANUFACTURER: *Logitech, (510) 795-8500, www.logitech.com*
PRICE: *$179.95*

Logitech's long-awaited entry into the force-feedback arena has the potential to be the best force-feedback joystick to date. Unlike other sticks that use servos or stepping motors, the Logitech WingMan Force uses a unique (and jealously guarded) cable and pulley system to create smoother, more powerful force effects. It's also capable of such accuracy and such high-frequency vibrations that we've seen it used to play simple tunes. Microsoft's SideWinder Force Feedback joystick has been firmly ensconced at the top of the best-seller list for months, but it may have something to fear when the holidays come rolling around.



You can't go wrong with any of these three outstanding mice from Logitech.

Logitech Mice

MANUFACTURER: *Logitech, (510) 795-8500, www.logitech.com*
PRICE: *$29.95 (Mouse+)*
$59.95 (MouseMan)
$59.95 (MouseMan+)

Logitech's mice would make great stocking stuffers for any gamer.

Logitech MouseMan: A four-button mouse, the MouseMan is form-fitted to your right hand, and is quite comfortable for adult hands. It has three buttons on top and a fourth button on the side where your thumb rests.

Logitech MouseMan+: Same appearance and functionality as the standard MouseMan, with the addition of a clickable scrolling wheel for use in scrolling up or down pages in Windows 95/98. The wheel moves much more smoothly than the one on Microsoft's Intellimouse, and Logitech's software makes it more versatile.

First Mouse+: This is a more conventional two-button mouse with the added bonus of the clickable, scrolling wheel found on the MouseMan+.

Saitek PC Dash

MANUFACTURER: *Saitek, (310) 212-5412, www.saitek.com*
PRICE: *$69.95*

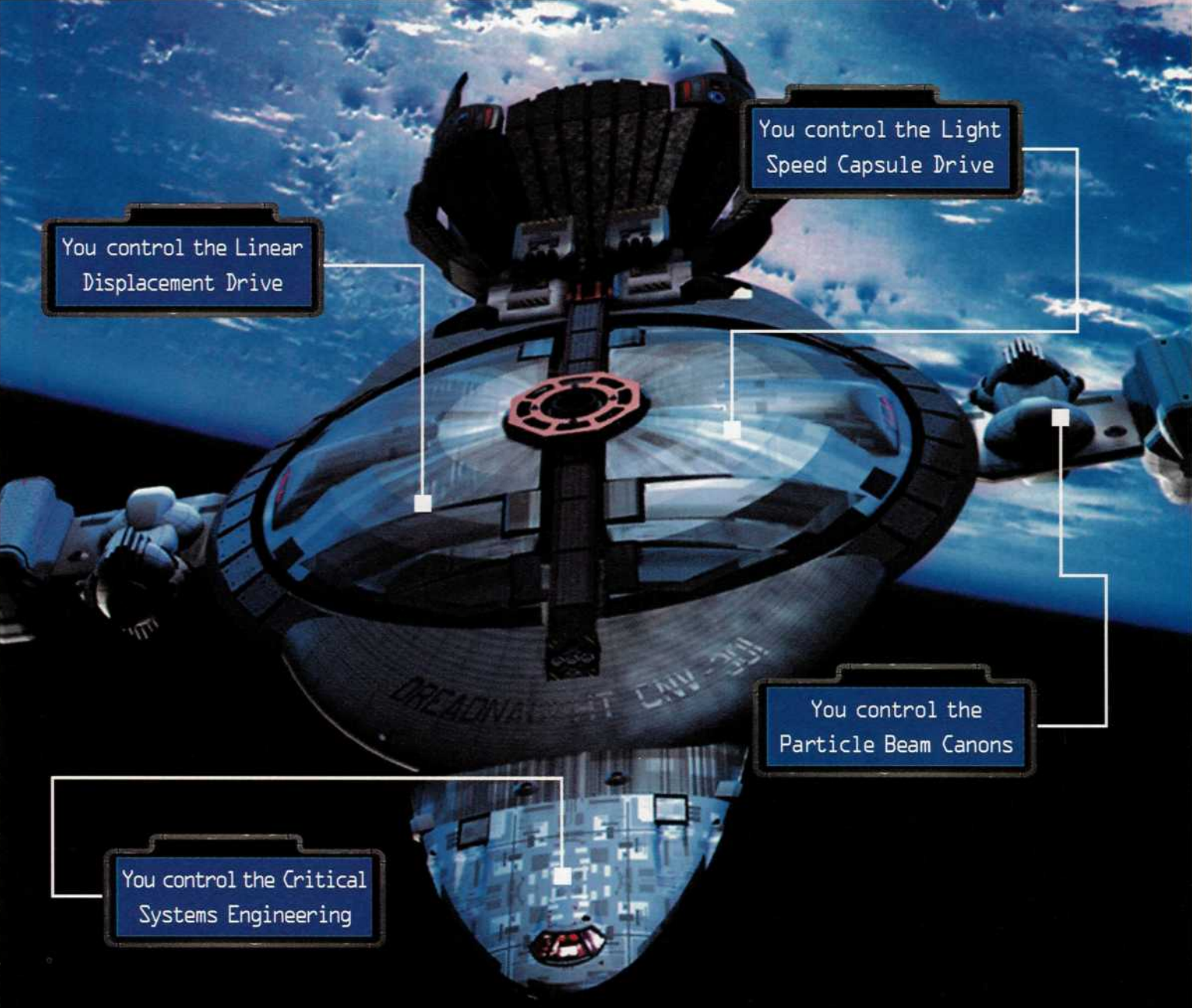
A fancy keyboard emulator, Saitek's PC Dash connects between your PC and keyboard. A hinged frame lets you place new templates you create or download from Saitek's web site (you'll need a printer to print them out) over its programmable buttons to save you the hassle of memorizing a game's keyboard commands. A handy little device, the PC Dash is a great addition for the gamer looking for a little oomph.



There are more than 100 PC Dash templates.

The Hardware feature continues on page 153

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Graphics Accelerators

Of all the hardware we've seen this year, no category has been more crowded than 3D accelerators. Since this market is growing by leaps and bounds, some boards that were great at the beginning of the year have lost their leading-edge status as better cards have arrived. Such is life in the video card business. Here's the best the industry has to offer for the holiday season:

Real 3D StarFighter

MANUFACTURER: *Real 3D, (800) 393-7730, www.real3d.com*
PRICE: *$149.99*

Moving away from the mass of 3Dfx-based accelerators, we reach our first 2D/3D integrated solutions. One of the better ones out there for the price-conscious gamer is Real3D's StarFighter. Making use of Intel's i740 chip, the StarFighter is a 2x AGP card that supports both OpenGL and Direct3D, with excellent image quality in both. While it isn't as fast as some of its newer competition — and, like all non-3Dfx cards, doesn't work with Glide-only games — the StarFighter is still a great card at a great price, especially when paired with a Voodoo2.

Matrox Mystique G200

MANUFACTURER: *Matrox, (800) 361-1408, www.matrox.com*
PRICE: *$149*

Another next-generation 2D/3D card, the Mystique G200 takes full advantage of AGP's 2x advanced features and supports both OpenGL and Direct3D. The G200 has impressive visuals, and it can render them quicker than any i740-based card. The G200 is an excellent 2D Windows accelerator, as well — arguably the best of any new graphics board (not surprising because Matrox was one of the firstest with the mostest way back when 2D Windows accelerators were new). On average, the G200 is

3Dfx Voodoo2-based 3D Accelerators

If last year was the year of the Voodoo Graphics chipset, then without a doubt this year belongs to 3D accelerators based on the Voodoo2. This year, we reviewed *nine* of them, and there are still a handful we haven't gotten to yet. Performance is generally the same from one Voodoo2-based card to the next, so you're pretty safe in buying whichever one offers the best price. There *are* some feature differences to be aware of, though. Below is a listing of most of the cards we've looked at and what each has to offer.

Creative Labs 3D Blaster Voodoo2

MANUFACTURER: *Real 3D, (800) 998-1000, www.soundblaster.com*
PRICE: *$299*



Creative Labs' 3D Blaster Voodoo2 was the first V2 to hit the market.

The First Voodoo2 to arrive in our offices, Creative Labs' 3D Blaster Voodoo2, is still a great "vanilla" Voodoo2 card. It doesn't have any special features, but the 3D Blaster is still a great card if you don't mind paying a "brand-name" price. Creative's customer service is top-notch, so if you're new to gaming, having reliable help on the other end of the phone line might be something worth considering. Creative offers both 8MB and 12MB versions.

Best Data Arcade FXII

MANUFACTURER: *Best Data, (818) 773-9600, www.bestdata.com*
PRICE: *$169*



The Arcade FXII came a little late to the game, but its price should be attractive to anyone still looking for a Voodoo2.

Another "vanilla" Voodoo2, the Arcade FXII is nearly identical to most of the brand-name Voodoo2s out there and delivers the exact same performance — but for much less money. If you're in the market for an inexpensive Voodoo2 without any frills, and from a smaller company, the Arcade FXII might be your best choice. 12MB version only.

Canopus Pure 3D II

MANUFACTURER: *Canopus, (888) 868-2533, www.canopuscorp.com*
PRICE: *$329*

Canopus is one of the few companies on the list that actually improved on 3Dfx's reference design with its own proprietary layout. The Pure 3D II is considerably smaller than any of the other Voodoo2s, it has a built-in fan to dissipate heat, built-in TV output, and even a small LED that lights when 3D games are utilizing it — a great feature if you've also got a 2D/3D board in your machine and you're not sure which board a game is using. Although the Pure 3D II doesn't perform any faster than any of its competition, its added features make it one of the few Voodoo2 cards worth the extra cash it'll cost for being a "brand-name" product. Canopus makes two 12MB versions: one with TV output and one without; if you don't plan on plugging into a TV set, you can save some dough.



The Canopus Pure 3D II has many nifty features its competition lacks.

Diamond Monster 3D II

MANUFACTURER: *Diamond Multimedia, (800) 468-5846, www.diamondmm.com*
PRICE: *$299*



Diamond Multimedia offers Voodoo2 boards with very stable drivers.

In last year's Holiday Gift guide, Diamond's original Monster 3D was listed as the creme de la creme of Voodoo Graphics-based accelerators. This year, Diamond is still a good choice, if only because Diamond's support is good, and its continually updated drivers are always feature-filled. You'll pay a premium price for the name, but as far as reliability is concerned, it's tough to beat Diamond products. Diamond makes both 8MB and 12MB versions.

Guillemot Maxi Gamer 3D II

MANUFACTURER: *Guillemot International, (800) 967-0823*
PRICE: *$179.99*

Just when you thought there couldn't possibly be another "vanilla" Voodoo2, here it is

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in the form of Guillemot's Maxi Gamer 3D II. Like all of the other boards in this category, the Maxi Gamer is fast as a speeding bullet. Guillemot may not be a name you're familiar with, but in our tests, the Maxi Gamer proved to be every bit as reliable as its competition.

While the name Guillemot may be new to most, it's actually a division of Ubi Soft.

Metabyte Wicked 3D

MANUFACTURER: *Metabyte, (510) 494-9700, www.metabyte.com*
PRICE: *$269*

Metabyte, like Canopus, took what 3Dfx had to offer and improved upon it. Not in hardware this time, but in software — specifically, its drivers. Whereas all other Voodoo2s are limited to resolutions of 800x600 with a single card, and 1024x768 with two running in scan-line interleave (SLI) mode, the Wicked3D is able to attain much higher resolutions in Direct3D, OpenGL, and Glide titles via its Re2Flex driver technology. Additionally, Wicked 3D is optimized to make use of H3D's stereoscopic 3D glasses. If these features appeal to you, Metabyte's Wicked 3D is a great choice. Metabyte offers a 12MB version only.



Metabyte's Wicked 3D goes above and beyond the call of duty with its Voodoo2 card.

Orchid Righteous 3D II

MANUFACTURER: *Orchid, (800) 577-0977, www.orchid.com*
PRICE: *$299*

While the future of the Orchid line was cast in doubt when Diamond purchased it, Diamond has no plans to discontinue the Orchid Righteous 3D II. Like the Diamond, the Righteous 3D II is a "vanilla" Voodoo2 with very stable drivers. If you can find this card for a low price, it'll prove to be every bit as good as the Diamond Monster 3D II.



Diamond Multimedia has decided to get rid of its competition by buying it. It now owns Orchid.

Quantum Obsidian X-24

MANUFACTURER: *Quantum 3D, (888) 747-1020, www.quantum3d.com*
PRICE: *$599*

If you're one of those gamers who has managed to fill up just about every free PCI slot in your system — and if you're still drooling over the idea of linking two Voodoo2s in SLI mode — Quantum's Obsidian X-24 may be your Voodoo2 of choice. Quantum has combined the equivalent of two 12MB Voodoo2s into one board, so it only takes up a single PCI slot. Additionally, the X-24 is capable of clock speeds as high as 100MHz — up from the 95MHz all other Voodoo2s are limited to. The only downside to this card is that it costs more than two separate Voodoo2s, but if you don't have the space, or if the idea of being able to overclock this card higher than any of its competition appeals to you, the X-24 is worth a look. The X-24 also has TV outputs.

The Quantum Obsidian X-24 is the only Voodoo2 that'll give you SLI in a single PCI slot.



Skywell Magic 3D II

MANUFACTURER: *Skywell, (909) 468-5535, www.ares-marketing.com*
PRICE: *$199*

Using the standard 3Dfx reference design, the Skywell Magic 3D II is yet another Voodoo2 that blends into the crowd — unless you can find it for less than any of the other cards. It offers nothing new; then again, it performs as well as any Voodoo2. This card may be a bit difficult to track down because it's just started selling in the United States, but if you can find one, you won't be disappointed — after all, it's a Voodoo2, so how bad can it be?

Skywell's Magic 3D II is new to the U.S. and may be a bit difficult to find in stores.



going to be more expensive than the StarFighter, but the improved 3D speed and top-notch 2D performance may be worth the extra cost. Like the i740, the G200 is a great partner for a Voodoo2.

Diamond Monster Fusion

MANUFACTURER:
Diamond Multimedia, (800) 468-5846, www.diamondmm.com
PRICE: *$129*

The first of what will surely prove to be many boards based on 3Dfx's Voodoo Banshee 2D/3D chip, the Monster Fusion packs a lot of power. Nearly identical to the Voodoo2 (but without a second texture-mapping unit and with a slightly higher clock speed), the Banshee is capable of running OpenGL, Direct3D, and Glide-based games. In titles that don't take advantage of a second texture-mapping unit, the Fusion is actually a bit faster than a Voodoo2. In games that can use the extra unit, performance slides off a bit. All in all, the Monster Fusion is a great stand-alone card. If you already have a Voodoo2, however, pick up something else that'll do more for you in different areas.

Diamond Viper V550

MANUFACTURER:
Diamond Multimedia, (800) 468-5846, www.diamondmm.com
PRICE: *$199*

True to form, Diamond brings out yet another video card based on the hottest new technology — NVIDIA's RIVA TNT chip. The TNT is the fastest all-around 2D/3D chip on the market today. In many cases, it is actually as fast or faster than two Voodoo2s in SLI mode, and its image quality is on par with any other next-generation card out there. Like the Voodoo Banshee, the TNT was designed as an alternative to Voodoo2, and it can be — as long as you don't intend to play Glide-only 3D games. A truly impressive showing, the Diamond Viper V550 is *the* 2D/3D card to get if money is no object. Available in AGP or PCI varieties.

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Sound Cards

In case you hadn't heard, 16-bit ISA sound cards are officially dead. They're still manufactured, and they still do the job, but with all of the affordable PCI sound accelerators on the market today, actually buying an ISA sound card shouldn't even be the last resort of a desperate gamer. We reviewed several ISA sound cards this year but only PCI cards got the Editors' Choice nod. Here's why:

Creative Labs Sound Blaster Live!

MANUFACTURER: *Creative Labs, (800) 998-5227, www.creativelabs.com*
PRICE: *$199*

With the gaming industry now firmly supporting 3D positional audio, Creative Labs has entered into the fray with its new Sound Blaster Live! PCI sound card. Supporting DirectSound, DirectSound3D, and Creative's own Environmental Audio extensions — all backed up with full support for your old DOS-only games, the Live! is the best sound card we've heard all year. Differing from its Aureal A3D-based competition, the Sound Blaster Live! was built with four speakers in mind to create a true surround sound environment — and even with only two speakers, the Live! is easily on par with any A3D card.



Creative Labs is back in business with its new Sound Blaster Live!

Turtle Beach Montego A3Dxstream

MANUFACTURER: *Turtle Beach, (800) 233-9377, www.tbeach.com*
PRICE: *$129.95*

This PCI sound accelerator from Turtle Beach supports DirectSound, DirectSound3D, and Aureal's A3D positional audio — not to mention legacy support for DOS games. Running under DirectSound3D and A3D, the Montego is capable of reproducing a very convincing surround-sound effect with only two speakers. Although we feel that the current version of A3D has been surpassed by Creative Lab's EAX, the fact that A3D support is growing by leaps and bounds on a daily basis makes it hard to deny that this card has just about everything a gamer could want in 3D gaming sound.



The A3DXstream is a fantastic PCI sound card for just about any gamer.

Diamond Monster MX200

MANUFACTURER: *Diamond Multimedia, (800) 468-5846, www.diamondmm.com*
PRICE: *$149*

Also an A3D-based PCI accelerator, Diamond's Monster MX200 supports DirectSound and DirectSound3D. Unlike the Montego, however, the MX200 will not replace your existing Sound Blaster-compatible ISA sound card — unless you don't care to run any of your older DOS games. What the MX200 offers instead is the ability to listen to 3D audio with as many as four speakers. While the effect is not as impressive as a Sound Blaster Live! running in the same configuration, this Diamond card is the only A3D card capable of four-speaker output, so if you want to listen to A3D with true surround, the MX200 is the only way to go.



Diamond's MX200 is the only A3D card that supports four speakers.

Stocking STUFFERS

Just when you thought you'd seen it all... we all know that *Quake* inspires a level of obsession in its devotees rarely exhibited by other, regular gamers, but how do you tell the hard-core from the merely keen? Well, Queen Village Trinkets has a few ideas about that. Located in Central New York, this little company has come up with a smart range of *Quake* jewelry. Yes, that's right, *Quake* jewelry. You can now show your *Quake* devotion to the world by adorning yourself with the famous "Q" logo in the form of gold and silver necklaces, lapel pins, ear rings, bracelets, dog tags, key rings, money clips, and more. Prices range from around $10 to $150, and the company's web site is updating with more trinkets as they're designed. Check out Queen Village Trinkets at *www.qvt.com* and see if anything tickles your fancy.



While a gaming gift obviously shows you care, sometimes it's the simpler things in life that really mean the most. So if you're stumped for a gift-giving idea this year, we'd like to suggest that you simply can't go wrong with a can of Campbell's Chunky Soup. Featuring heart-warming flavors like Sirloin Burger, Split Pea 'n' Ham, Potato Ham Chowder, Pepper Steak, Chicken Corn Chowder, and Cheese Tortellini, and available just about everywhere for around a measly buck fifty a can, a warm 'n' hearty can o' Chunky Soup is truly the gift that keeps on giving, particularly for PC gamers who may find themselves stranded in colder climes this Holiday season. Mmmm... chunky!



Mmmm.... doesn't this Cheese Tortellini soup look o' so scrumptious? You bet it does. Now go get some!

http://pcgamer.ign.com

Speakers

Lets face it: There can be no gaming without sound, so doesn't it follows that there can be no gaming without speakers? Unfortunately, playing games on a set of poor-sounding speakers can sometimes be worse than having none at all. So here's what we think are the best PC speakers money can buy.

Cambridge MicroWorks

MANUFACTURER: *Cambridge SoundWorks, (800) 367-4434, www.hifi.com*
PRICE: *$249.99*

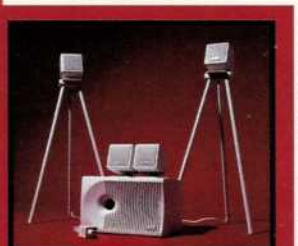


Cambridge has a winner on its hands two years in a row with the MicroWorks.

Still the reigning champion two years running, the MicroWorks is an amazing three-piece speaker system. Though plain to look at, these speakers serve up rich sound the likes of which can only be equaled by a true home-stereo speaker system — and a high-quality one at that. The MicroWorks lacks the tone controls found in other systems, but they aren't missed — highs are crisp, mids are strong but not overbearing, and the lows provide plenty of definition or thump. These speakers aren't cheap, but they're worth the money.

Cambridge PCWorks FourPointSurround

MANUFACTURER: *Cambridge SoundWorks, (800) 367-4434, www.hifi.com*
PRICE: *$99.99*



Once again, Cambridge SoundWorks packs a lot of sound in a small package.

A new addition the Cambridge family, the PCWorks FourPointSurround speaker system adds two more speakers to the original, budget-priced PCWorks system — perfect for use with four-speaker positional audio cards, such as the Sound Blaster Live! or the Diamond Monster Sound MX200. Although it's not as powerful as its big brother the MicroWorks, FourPoint-Surround's sound quality is nearly as good. And you'd be hard pressed to find even a two-speaker system that gives you as much quality for the price.

Logitech SoundMan Extreme

MANUFACTURER: *Logitech, (800) 231-7717, www.logitech.com*
PRICE: *$129*

Seemingly out of nowhere, Logitech has decided to get into the PC speaker market — and the results are excellent. While they won't replace bigger PC speakers, they cost a lot less, and offer sound quality that's rare for speakers so small. The people at Logitech are particularly proud of the sturdiness of their new design — in fact, they've proved just how durable the SoundMan Extreme is by running these speakers over with a Jeep. Pretty impressive, and it's a guarantee that this system will stand up to anything your kids can throw at it. The solid construction delivers another dividend, too: the Extreme system gives you clean, rich sound with no distortion even at high volumes. On the price-performance curve, the Extreme is way ahead of the pack for moderately priced three-piece systems.



Logitech may be new to the speaker market, but you wouldn't know it to hear its new SoundMan Extreme system.

S2/MidiLand 4100

MANUFACTURER: *MidiLand, Inc., (888) 592-1168, www.midiland.com*
PRICE: *$399*

Essentially the same speakers as the Diamond Audio S2 Multimedia HPM-4060s we had in last year's Holiday Guide, the 4100 system produces the same great sound with even more power. In addition to great sound, the 4100 comes equipped with a separate control module that can be mounted in any PC's 5.25" drive bay, or simply placed on your desk or monitor to give you convenient control over bass, treble, and balance. Four buttons on the module toggle mute, loudness (amplifies highs and lows for better sound at low volumes), input selection, and 3DSP, MidiLand's proprietary stereo expander. The 4100 is a powerful system for the gamer who isn't worried about cost.



MidiLand serves up a lot of sound with the 4100 system.

Microsoft Digital Sound System 80

MANUFACTURER: *Microsoft, (800) 426-9400, www.microsoft.com*
PRICE: *$259*

The DSS80s are unlike any speakers you've seen in the past. They're the first USB, digital audio speakers we've tested, and they sound great. They connect via a USB port on the back of your PC, and altogether remove the need for a sound card (assuming you don't need the sound card's joystick port). Because sound remains in digital form until it leaves the electrically "noisy" confinement of your PC's case to be processed by the speakers themselves, sound quality is rich and bold — and the subwoofer unit backs it all up with a thump. Because this is new technology — and because, hey, its Microsoft — these speakers will cost you, but if you're looking for something different, of if you're putting together a new machine and don't want to bother with a sound card, the DSS80 system is a good choice; just make sure you purchase a CD- or DVD-ROM drive capable of outputting digital audio, or you'll be stuck having to keep your sound card for redbook (audio CD format) sound.



Microsoft is the first company to deliver on the promise of true digital audio.

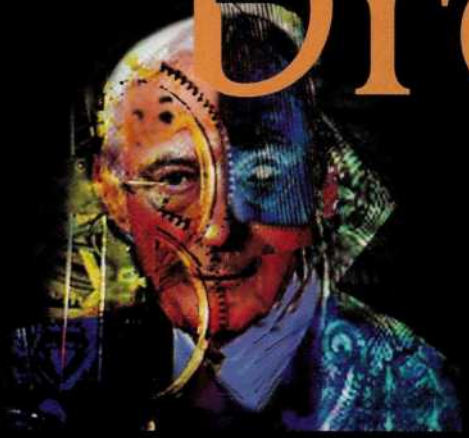
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Red Storm ENTERTAINMENT

Systems

You'd think that it wouldn't be that difficult to build a PC for gamers — after all, there's only so many components you can put in them. But time and time again, companies prove that they just don't know what we gamers really want. And to get a PC gaming machine worthy of the name, you generally have to spend some extra cash. But since the holidays season is a time of dreams and wishes, here are a couple machines we've been dreaming of....

Falcon Mach V

MANUFACTURER:
Falcon Northwest, (888) FALCON1
www.falconnw.com
PRICE: *$5,995*

This is the one. This is the king-daddy of all gaming systems.

Falcon builds systems like nobody's business, and it's been doing it since before the current bull market for gaming PCs even existed. In the past two years we've reviewed two systems from Falcon, and in both cases, performance was second to none — then again, so was the price. That's the one caveat: If you want the best, you'd best be ready to pay through the nose — Falcon's Mach V systems can cost as much as $5,000+!

If you've been living alongside PCs for more than a few years, you'll likely remember the time when all new computers came with nice, large user manuals instead of the "online tutorials" (i.e., giant, unmanageable Help files) that come installed on just about every PC today. Well, Falcon busts out old-school style and includes not just a detailed manual of a generic Mach V, but one that is specifically made for your system and it's custom configuration. Your name even appears on the cover.

As if that weren't enough, Falcon has begun shipping computers with restore CDs that are actual mirrors of your hard-drive contents. If you ever need to restore your system — all the drivers, all the settings, and all the software that came with it — they can be easily copied right back onto your hard drive.

Looking for a no-compromise system? The Falcon Mach V will give the wealthy/willing-to-starve-and-not-pay-rent gamer just about everything he or she could ever want in a gaming system — and them some.



Like the secret military base whose name it bears, the Area 51 packs a lot of high-tech gadgetry under its hood.



Few companies can compete with Falcon when it comes to raw gaming muscle (although lots of companies beat 'em on price).

Alienware Area 51

MANUFACTURER: *Alienware, (800) 494-3382, www.alienwarepc.com*
PRICE: *$3,999*

Yet another company that will build you the gaming system of your dreams, Alienware received Editors' Choice ratings for the last two Area 51 systems we were sent to review — and with good reason. Like Falcon's Mach V, the Area 51 can be easily configured to your exact specifications, all with brand-name parts — something that is important to a lot of gamers out there.

Although it may be an afterthought to some, the Area 51's case is one of its better features. On all of Alienware systems, holes are drilled directly in the side of the case and an extra fan installed to blow directly on the cards in your AGP and PCI slots. With newer 3D chipsets getting hotter and hotter, this extra fan is a welcome addition — and it's little features like this that go to show these guys know what they're doing when it comes to building a gaming PC. Like Falcon, Alienware builds the best of the best when it comes to gaming PCs.

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Miscellaneous

Some great gadgets just don't fit into any of the above categories, but we just couldn't leave them out. So, without further ado....

Creative Labs PC-DVD Encore DXR2

MANUFACTURER: *Creative Labs, (800) 998-1000, www.soundblaster.com*
PRICE: *$379.99*

Creative Labs' second-generation DVD-ROM drive kit delivers everything we've come to expect from a DVD-ROM drive, and more. While Creative's initial offering was hampered by having an extremely large decoder board that was difficult to fit into smaller cases — as well as unreliability in reading recordable CDs — its newest DVD player isn't hampered by either of these problems, and it has the highest quality MPEG-2 playback of any drive-decoder combination we've seen to date.

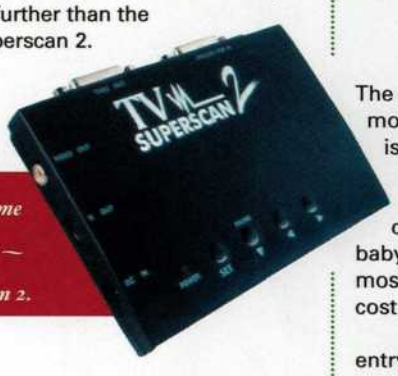


The Encore DXR2 kit is a great way to add DVD-ROM to your system — and its decoder board and TV outputs make it an economical way to get into DVD movies.

ADS Superscan 2

MANUFACTURER:
ADS Technologies, (800) 888-5244, www.adstech.com
PRICE: *$5,995*

For the gamer looking to play his favorite games on his TV, ADS delivers one of the best PC-to-TV converters we've seen. The Superscan 2 allows for resolutions on your TV as high as 1024x768 — although anything above 800x600 tends to get a bit blurry. To compensate for the differing aspect ratio of a monitor and a TV, the Superscan 2 has all of the controls to adjust position and size that a standard monitor would have. If you want PC games on your TV to look their best, look no further than the ADS Superscan 2.



Great things come in small packages — like the Superscan 2.

OptiQuest V95

MANUFACTURER: *OptiQuest, (800) 888-8583, www.optiquest.com*
PRICE: *$789*

As every gamer knows, bigger is better — at least when you're talking monitors. OptiQuest (a division of ViewSonic) knows this; that's the reason for its affordable V95 19" monitor. Rarely does a monitor this large have a reasonable price *and* do so many things right, but we were hard pressed to find anything wrong with this big boy (other than a slight blurriness at the screen's center at 1600x1280 resolution). The V95 supports resolutions as high as 1600x1280 at 77Hz and is every gamer's dream come true — a large monitor with a small price.

Panasonic PanaSync E110

MANUFACTURER:
Panasonic, www.panasonic.com
PRICE: *$1,049*

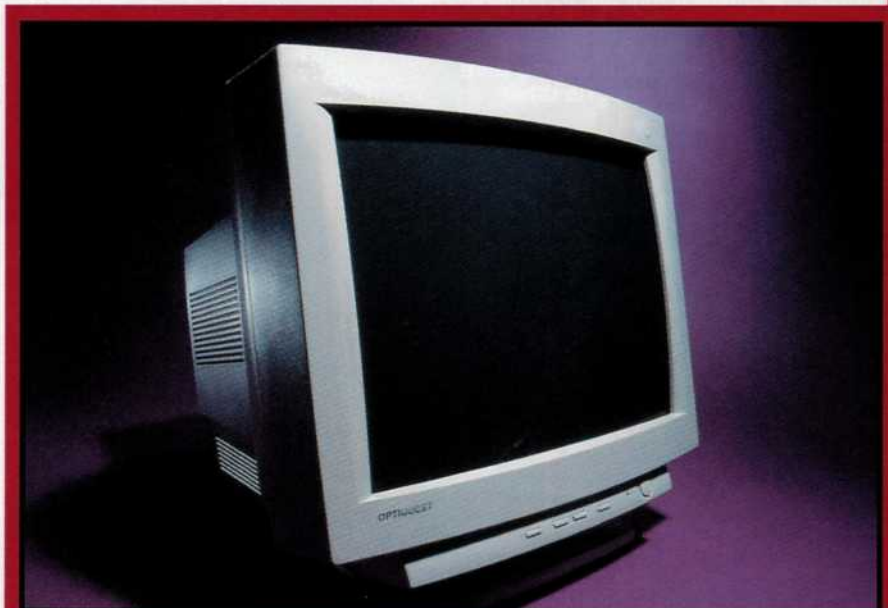
The only thing better than a good 19" monitor for the price of a quality 17" is a 21" monitor for the price of a 19." That's what Panasonic delivers with the PanaSync E110. Of course, the price you'll pay for this baby isn't anything to sneeze at, but most monitors of this quality and size cost as much as $500 dollars more.

Panasonic calls this monitor its entry-level 21," but with resolutions as high as 1600x1280 and refresh rates as high as 180Hz, we think you'll have a hard time finding anything entry-level about it.

PCG



When it comes to monitors, bigger is better, and the PanaSync E110 is about as big as we can handle without a forklift.



The OptiQuest V95 is a gamer's dream come true — a quality 19" monitor that just about anyone considering a 17" monitor could afford.

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— PC GAMES

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Welcome to the Bucket

The hardest part about working at *PC Gamer* is figuring out how to spend our time between issues. Working on a magazine involves three weeks of intense, 12-hour-plus days of work, followed by a week of regrouping and slacking. It's a never-ending cycle, and after a while, it becomes more and more difficult to while away that week where nothing much happens. Well, as we close out the December issue, we have settled upon a bold and powerful new experiment that will challenge our minds and our bodies, and possibly make us question our own sanity.



Bucket Week.

Long-time readers of *PC Gamer* know how much we love food, particularly the fast food variety. We've eaten more greasy slabs of meat than anyone else (and have the bellies to prove it), but above all else, there is one sublime food that truly makes us go goofy — the Colonel's Original Recipe. Ah, nothing beats the sensation of sinking one's teeth into a piece of the Colonel's tender, sweet chicken.

And so the *PC Gamer* team has decided to eat a bucket of chicken every day for a week. Tensions ran high, as Gary and Greg fought for nearly two hours about what fixin's should be included with the bucket. Greg wanted slaw, but Gary wanted nothing to do with it. Eventually, Billy and Todd intervened and created a compromise — two sides of potatoes, one side of slaw.

Undoubtedly, Bucket Week will prove to be our undoing. Beyond the slaw incident, Greg was upset that he was not allowed to partake in the most recent bucket (he was in a meeting when we ordered). Once again, a compromise was reached, and he was allowed one cold piece of chicken, a bit of slaw, and half a biscuit. The most distressing trend, however, is those among us who refuse to eat from the bucket, instead ordering the current rage (or outrage, if you will) — popcorn chicken. Brrrr.

But like mountaineers, we shall push onward, past the non-believers, past the mockers, past the people who say we will be dead by the end of it all. They just don't understand. Bucket Week is merely a precursor to the ultimate challenge:

Bucket Month.

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

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

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.

NEED FOR SPEED III: HOT PURSUIT

p.177a

NHL 99

p.187

PEOPLE'S GENERAL

p.201

RETURN FIRE 2

p.195

SHOGO: MOBILE ARMOR DIVISION

p.176

THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD

p.218

Madden NFL 99

Category:	Sports
Developer:	EA Sports
Publisher:	Electronic Arts, (800) 245-4525 *www.easports.com*

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Eight-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 166 (with supported Direct3D accelerator); Pentium 200 (software only); 16MB RAM; 20MB hard-drive space	16-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium II 300; 64MB RAM; 100MB hard-drive space; 3Dfx Voodoo or Voodoo 2 based accelerator

Multi-player: Serial/Null modem; Modem: 28.8; IPX; TCP/IP; Maximum Players: 4

It's back and better than ever — but a few gameplay blemishes keep Madden's return from achieving true greatness.



The graphics in *Madden 99* look great; just take a look at the steam coming from the players' mouths!

If you follow console games, you probably know that EA Sports' long-running Madden series has been a force to be reckoned with on most home systems, but the translation to the PC has yet to yield a superior game. Now, after two shaky outings, the Madden franchise is finally beginning to show signs of greatness. With a new graphic engine and several new coaching and franchise options, it's obvious that EA Sports is intent on establishing Madden as the game to beat on *any* platform, and though *Madden NFL 99* comes very close to achieving this goal, it falters slightly where it counts the most — on the field.

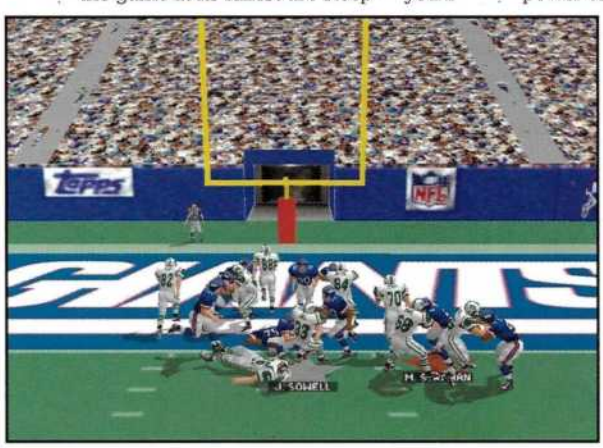
There is a lot to like about this new Madden. The refinements in this year's game are staggering, starting with the lush hardware-accelerated graphics. If you've got the system to run *Madden NFL 99* in all its glory, you will be treated to some of the most eye-popping graphics and animations to ever grace a PC sports game. The requirements to run the game at its fullest are steep — you'll want at least a Pentium II/300 and a couple of Voodoo 2s under the hood — but if you've got the horsepower, *Madden* is a knockout, displaying every subtle nuance of the game. Every curve on the player models is smooth, and the high-resolution textures are outstanding, going so far as showing wrinkles on the jerseys and the pads under the uniform in startling clarity. As you crank down the options and resolution, the details start to fade away, but the game never loses its power to mesmerize. Even at the absolute minimum settings, the game looks nearly as good as anything else out there. The player models start to look a bit funky, with heads resembling deflated footballs and limbs that lack useful items such as hands, but the quality and variety of the players' animations remain thoroughly convincing. The many different tackles are a sight to see and push the believability level up another notch. Weather effects are exceptional — when it's cold, you can even see the steam coming from the players' mouths as they exhale.

The stadiums look wonderful as well, with one exception — the sidelines. As we've seen in many 3D-accelerated sports titles, the bench players and animated cheerleaders are depicted using low-res sprites that look absolutely ridiculous and scale horribly as you move closer or farther away. Luckily, the whole crew of eyesores can be turned off, but it does make the field seem empty and lifeless.



If you score a touchdown or make a big play, you'll get to see one of the many celebrations by the players. You go, boy!

In terms of new options and features, one of the most interesting new additions is the franchise mode. The players' ratings will change as they age, and they'll eventually retire. The salary cap becomes a factor, and players must be signed to new contracts. After each season, you'll have a chance to try and re-sign your players or let them test the free agency waters. The free agent period



The many different types of tackles are incredible. Pre-built plays can be used or you can custom build your own.

http://pc.ign.com

Xs and Os

If the plethora of pre-built plays isn't enough for you, **Madden NFL 99** *lets you design your own. While it's not as robust as that of Sierra's Front Page Sports series, where you can give multiple commands to a player depending on how a play unfolds, it's a lot simpler to use. Both offensive and defensive plays can be created, and each player is given an assignment such as which direction to block or pull (for linemen), passing routes for receivers (some 50 different patterns are available), and the number of steps the QB should take when he drops back to pass. After drawing up a play, you can fine-tune it on the practice field, and then add it to your custom playbook for use in a game.*



Being able to send Jerry Rice out on a 10-yard in pattern is the dream of every coach.



Use your other receivers as decoys, and set up your blocking scheme.



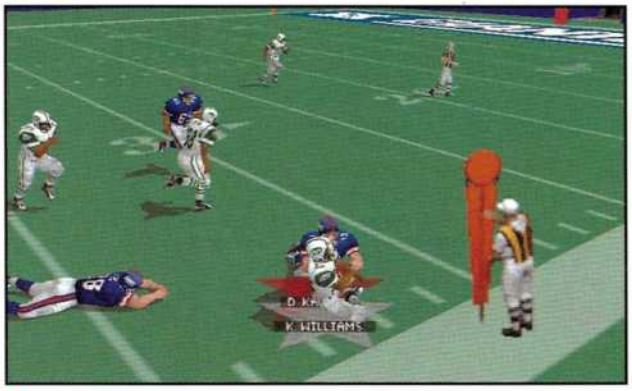
Practice against a variety of defenses until you get the timing down.

runs for 75 days, and the game becomes something of a real-time strategy affair as you must monitor the available players and see what offers they have on the board from other teams. Make sure you save some dough though, because the next step is the draft. Here you'll have four rounds to fill the gaps in your roster with some rookie talent. Depending on their draft position, these guys might demand the farm, and if you don't have room under the cap, they'll have to be released to the free agent pool. All in all, it's a full-featured simulation of the off-field game, and I've had as much fun being the GM for my team as I had in actually playing the game on the gridiron. It adds a ton of depth, and the interface does a great job of presenting the information you need concisely and coherently — the only gripe is the 15-season limit.

Other features include customizable playbooks and a play editor (see sidebar), custom seasons using any combination of past and present teams (more than 110 in all), and a Fantasy Draft. The latter is a great feature, but it's limited. You can only have four, eight, or 16 teams in the 48-round draft, and you can only play in a tournament format (no franchise mode).

Rounding out the healthy feature list is a practice field, a player editor (simple but effective), a coaching-only mode, adjustable penalty levels, and Internet support. Full action play is available in multi-player, but with the inherent lag over the 'net, it's almost impossible to get low enough latencies to make this a viable option.

So, *Madden NFL 99* has all the bases covered as far as features and presentation, but how does it perform on the field? Quite well, but with a few annoying exceptions. The computer coaches have a handle on the flow of the game and use the clock correctly. The play-calling is perfectly acceptable, the number of plays that are run during full 15 minute quarters is fairly accurate (and you can adjust the time from one to 15 minutes), and the playbooks are brimming with a nice selection of formations and plays.



Madden 99 **improved many features, including realistic player movement.**

Things go a little wrong, however, in the fine-tuning of both the gameplay and the difficulty levels. At all skill levels (three in all), there's an inordinate number of passes that are tipped at the line, resulting in some skewed passing accuracy numbers. Interceptions and sacks are a bit on the high side, and playing defense against the run is a tad too easy. On the easiest setting, the running game against the computer allows you to rack up ridiculous amounts of yardage, but go up one level of difficulty, and you'll be lucky to escape the backfield before a linebacker has you in his clutches. If you do manage to break free, you're almost assured of a huge gain. These all-or-nothing play results may give an accurate average of yards gained, but it doesn't truly simulate what actually goes on during a game. The frustrating passing game is still here too, with triple covered receivers that have just as good or better chances of hauling in a pass as an open man.

Once you accept these gameplay niggles and adjust accordingly, you'll be impressed with almost everything else about *Madden NFL 99*. It really is fun to play, and the franchise mode will have you pinching your pennies for a good long time...or at least the next fifteen game years.

—Rob Smolka



On second thought, maybe I should have thrown it to number 87 instead!



It's Mile High Stadium in the snow...a perfect setting for some football.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

85%

HIGHS: Beautiful on high-end systems; loaded with features; franchise mode is great fun.

LOWS: Needs some adjustments to both the on-field action and the difficulty levels.

BOTTOM LINE: Died-in-the-wool simmers will pass, but Madden fans will love the new look.

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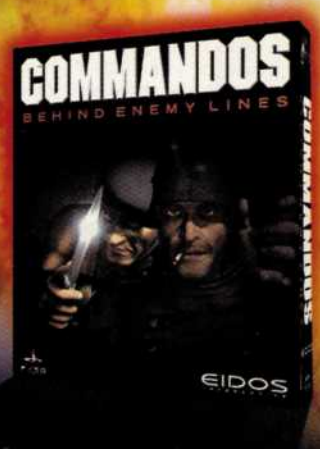
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Shogo

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Monolith's anime-inspired shoot-'em-up crashes on to the scene with a double-pronged attack.

Category:	Action
Developer:	Monolith
Publisher:	Monolith, (800) 241-4263 *www.lith.com*

Required	We Recommend
Win95; 4x CD drive; P200 (software only); P166 (w/Direct 3D compatible hardware acceleration); 16MB RAM; DirectX 6.0 compatible video and sound card	PII 300; 64MB RAM; 3Dfx Voodoo 2-based graphics accelerator

Multi-player: Serial/Null Modem; Modem; IPX; TCP/IP; Free 'net Service: Server listings generated via built-in GameSpy utility

As the developers of the sickly-satisfying Build-engine game *Blood*, the folks at Monolith have shown they know a thing or two about first-person action, but their latest effort — *Shogo: Mobile Armor Division* — shows they've been holding back the *real* good stuff until now. Loaded to the gills with over-the-top weapons, colorful graphics, and fantastically violent gameplay, *Shogo* is one of the most adrenaline-charged shooters we've seen since *Duke Nukem 3D*.

Set in an imaginative Japanese anime-style universe filled with doe-eyed characters, colorful scenery, and giant robots called Mobile Combat Armor (MCA), *Shogo* puts you in the shoes of Sanjuro, an MCA pilot caught in the middle of a bloody war. Like most good anime flicks, the war is merely a backdrop to a more personal battle, as rivalries and loyalties and tested. Revealed through brief in-game cutscenes and scripted events, the story isn't intrusive, but it does have some bearing on the gameplay as you'll make decisions that will lead you to one of two separate endings.

With its anime set-up in full effect, *Shogo*'s levels are divided equally between piloting the MCAs and duking it out on foot. While this mix could've been difficult to manage, Monolith wisely made sure the MCA moves and responds just like on foot (no bulky 'Mechs here) resulting in smooth, fluid transitions for players as they move from on-foot to MCA-based levels.



During the on-foot levels, you'll leave bullet holes in the walls. Vandalism isn't my middle name, Hoser is.

Both styles of play look and act the part thanks to skillful use of textures, effects, and objects. In large urban areas, you'll get a real sense of size and scale as you tower over vehicles and pedestrians in your MCA (yes, you can squish the pedestrians), while on foot you're regular ol' Sanjuro beatin' feet through city streets, and multi-floored buildings.



In-game cut-scenes reveal the information you need to decide who's your friend and who's you're enemy. Here, the Admiral gives you some lip about your next mission. Tickle him with that knife, and his guards will bring a world of hurt down on you.

While having two separate mission types and environments is a nice change of pace for this genre, the real treat of this double bill is the weaponry at your disposal. In the MCA, you'll have weapons like sniper and laser rifles, a spider mine launcher, and multiple types of rocket launchers, and without exception, they chew up scenery like nobody's business. Fire off a few rounds of the Bullgut missile launcher, and you'll see four spiraling missiles trail to their target and explode in a shower of shrapnel, smoke, and fire.

On foot, the weapons you're equipped with are more familiar first-person mainstays like the pistol (actually two, for some double-handed John Woo-style gunplay), shotgun, Uzi, assault rifle (with the obligatory sniper mode), and grenade launcher. While the effects of these weapons are not quite as impressive as those for the MCA, the taut design and intense action of the on-foot levels assures that you'll be too busy spilling out hundreds of rounds of hot lead to notice.

It's in these smartly designed levels where Shogo really shines. In the MCA or on foot, there's very little puzzling to get in the way as you cut down enemies in the race for the end of the level. Monolith wisely avoided CPU-hungry showpieces that drag down the gameplay, with levels that are, for the most part, short and sweet, with clearly defined goals. There's very little instruction needed — just shoot everything and get out. The result is a game that piles on the intensity by giving you lots of things to shoot, and less things to worry about.

About the only significant downside is that the single-player game is terribly short — it took me little more than a couple days of off-and-on play to work my way through both endings. However, like most modern shooters, there is a cure. *Shogo* features the full range of multiplayer hookups, and even includes a specially created version of *GameSpy* for automatic server lookup so you can easily find any active *Shogo* matches on the 'net. While the selection of DeathMatch maps are limited to variations of single-player levels, the ability to play either MCA or on-foot levels should keep things interesting for quite a while.

The first-person action genre is getting set to peak next year, and Monolith is showing the way forward in style. Though I would've like to have seen more longevity in the single-player game, *Shogo*'s exciting levels and fast-paced action results in a back-to-basics blast-fest that no self-respecting gamer should pass up.

—Todd Vaughn

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Gorgeous accelerated graphics, fast paced levels, and excellent production values.

90%

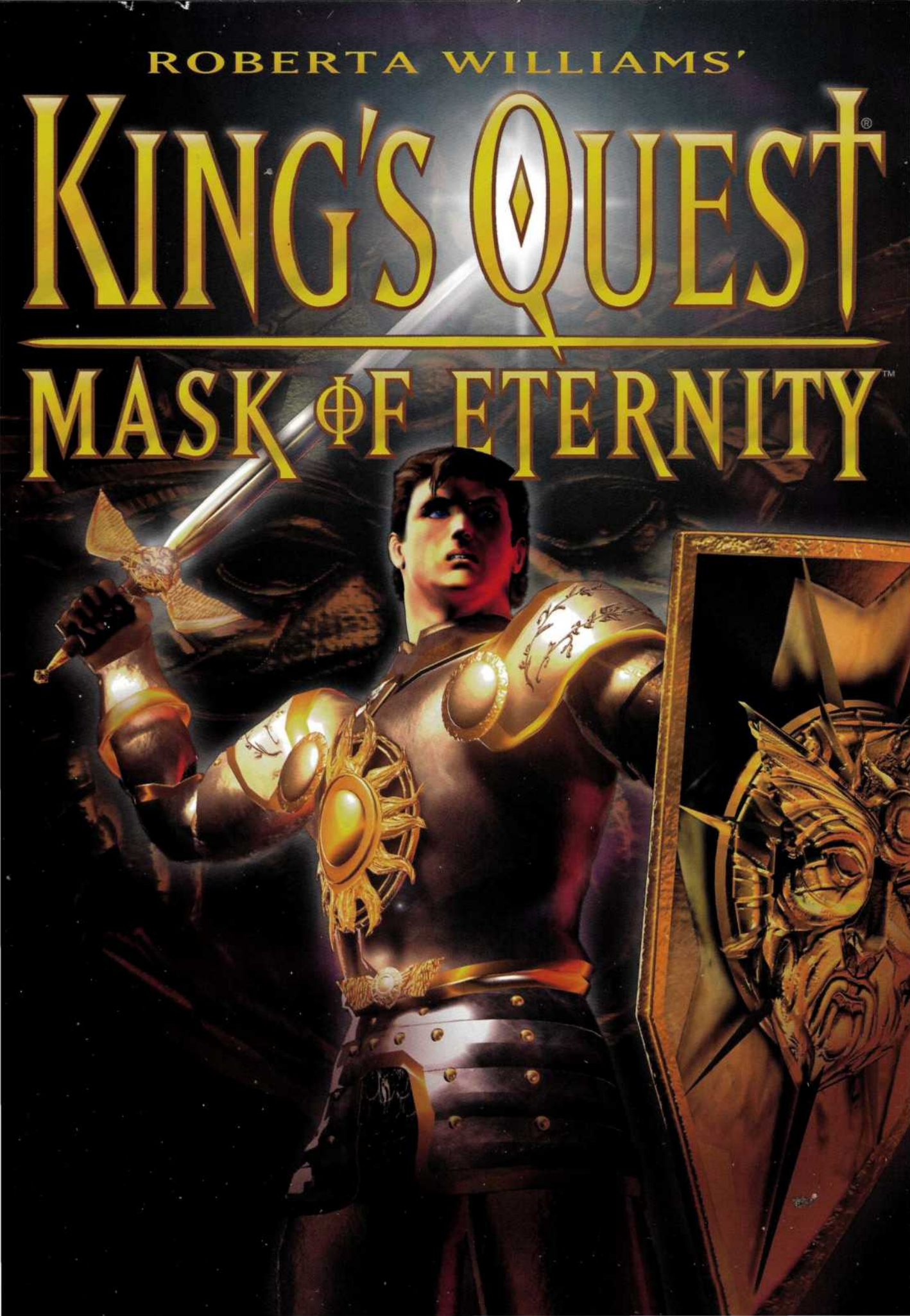
LOWS: No DeathMatch-only maps. Short single-player game.

BOTTOM LINE: If you like your action games fast and furious, *Shogo* is your one way ticket to nirvana.

ROBERTA WILLIAMS'

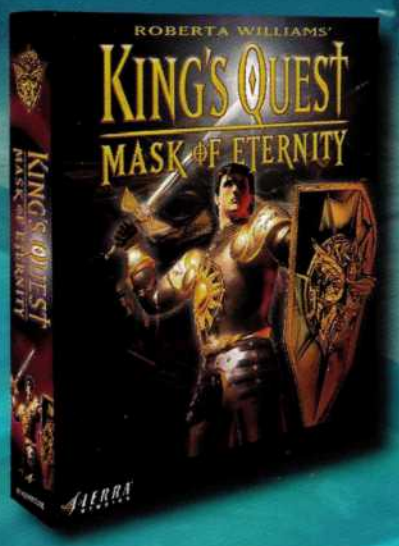
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Need For Speed III

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Category: Arcade

Developer: Electronic Arts

Publisher: Electronic Arts, (800) 245-4525
www.ea.com

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Quad-speed CD-ROM; Pentium 166; 16MB RAM; Supported sound card	16-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium II 233; 32MB RAM; 3Dfx Voodoo or Voodoo II based accelerator; Gamepad

Multi-player: Split-screen; Serial/Null modem; Modem: 28.8; IPX; TCP/IP; Maximum players: 8; Spawnable

Take this beauty for a spin; it's got gorgeous graphics, fast cars, and run-ins with the law.

After spinning its wheels in the mud with *Need for Speed II*, Electronic Arts' third installment in its glossy driving franchise brings the series back up to speed with sharp new features, hair-raising cop chases, and a greatly enhanced graphics engine. The result is an arcade racing game that's a real blast to play.

The only catch (and it's a pretty big one at that) is that you'll need a high-end system with the latest 3Dfx hardware to enjoy the game to its fullest. If you've got a fast Pentium II with a Voodoo2-based accelerator, *Need for Speed III: Hot Pursuit* is breathtaking, with gorgeous car models, lush tracks, amazing special effects, and blazing frame rates. For machines closer to EA's "recommended" specs, the graphics suffer a bit, but still look crisp and sharp, with many of the impressive effects intact. However, if you're using anything below what we recommend above, expect a serious dip in graphic quality and performance. You'll need to turn off most of the features to get the game to run acceptably, and even then you may experience some slowdown — and in a game filled with four-wheeled screamers like the Chevrolet Corvette, Lamborghini Countach, ItalDesign Scighera, and many other high-performance street machines, the *last* thing you want is slowdown.

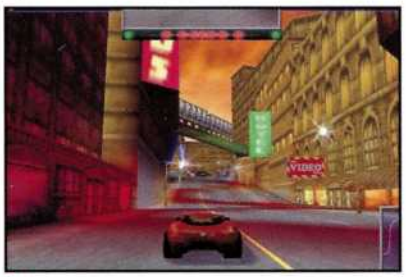


Ah, the good old cargo truck. How could racing possibly get better than this?

While the game still leans heavily toward arcade-style play, there are a good number of things to fiddle with, including gear ratios, steering speed, and brake balance, which should satisfy shade-tree mechanics everywhere. In addition, you can set up various driving aids, and determine your computer opponents' level of driving skill.



The weather effects are top notch, as the snow will splatter on the windshield, partially obstructing your view.



The Empire City track will have you tearing through one cool-looking urban environment.

As with previous *Need For Speed* titles, the single-player game features single race and tournament modes, but this time around, there are a couple of addictive new additions that give the game a lot of replay value. Knockout is a variation on tournament racing that "knocks out" the driver that comes in last until the pack is whittled down to the final two drivers. Hot Pursuit, on the other hand, puts its own unique twist on things by reviving the cop chases from the first game — however, these cops aren't the speed-trap loving tailgaters they once were. Now they come at you with tactics that include ramming into you, setting up roadblocks, and using spike strips. You can even take on the role of the police using a Pursuit Corvette to chase down speeders, and if you bag enough bad guys, unlock the Pursuit Lamborghini.

The tracks are the only real disappointment. Though most are an improvement over the tracks featured in *Need For Speed II*, variety is still not their strong suit. The courses are based on a limited number of locales, with subsequent tracks offering minor variations on the theme. While some of the designs are inspired (like the Empire City bonus course, easily the best one in the game), most are on the banal side, as you race around a ski lodge or farm country. It would've been nice to see more outlandish tracks, with jumps, alternate paths and varied scenery.

All of the single-player events are playable in *Need For Speed III*'s multiplayer mode. You can choose to race in standard events with or without traffic or police, but the real treat comes when you enter the Hot Pursuit mode that allows you to play as the cops and chase down your joyriding buddies. Trust me, there's nothing more satisfying than seeing one of your buddies hit a spike belt at more than a hundred miles an hour and then hauling his butt off to the big house.

And to you folks who enjoy driving around in a school bus, or a cargo truck, the cheat codes are back, adding a full range of outlandish vehicles. In addition, EA plans to add new cars to the game via its web site. That's an unexpectedly cool move on EA's part, but one that's in line with the care and thoughtfulness that went into every aspect of making this strikingly beautiful and playable game.

—William Harms

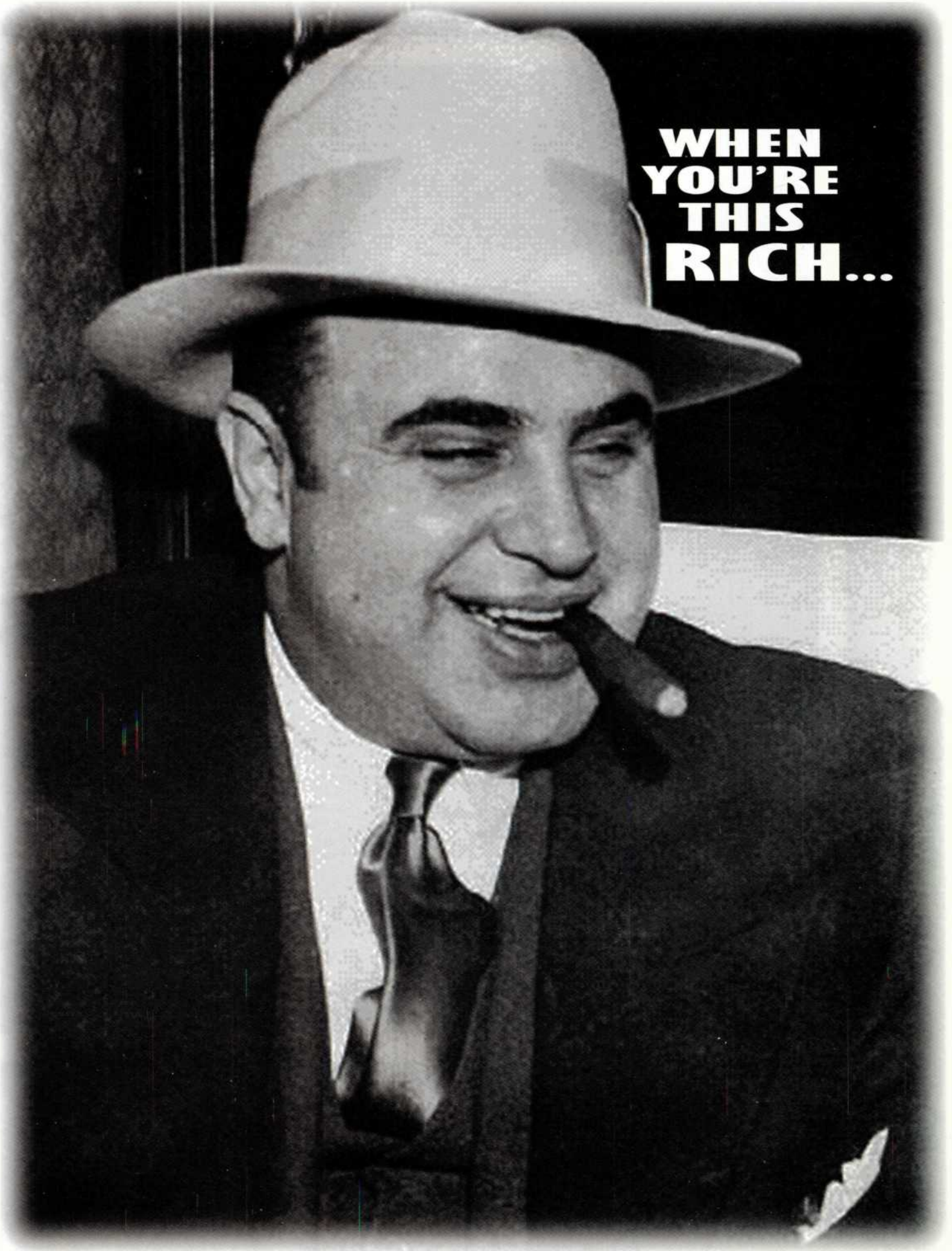
PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

88%

HIGHS: The graphics are amazing at full detail; kick-ass cars; the cops are back!

LOWS: Not enough variety in tracks; opponents' AI is shaky; steep system requirements.

BOTTOM LINE: If you like fast cars and outrunning Johnny Law, you can't do much better than this.


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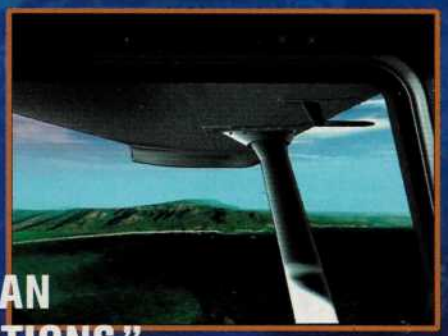
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Israeli Air Force

Category:	Simulation
Developer:	Pixel Multimedia
Publisher:	Jane's, (800) 245-4525 *www.janes.ea.com*

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95/98; 200MHz Pentium MMX; 8-speed CD-ROM drive; 32MB RAM; 351MB hard-drive space; SVGA graphics with 4MB RAM; DirectX 5-compatible sound card	300MHz Pentium II; 64MB RAM; 735MB hard-drive space; 3Dfx-based 3D accelerator; Joystick

Multi-player: 2-8 players; Modem: 33.6Kbps; LAN (IPX or TCP/IP); 'Net Play: *www.janes combat.net*; Each player must have CD

You've flown for the U.S., you've flown for the Russians — now Jane's invites you to join the IAF.

What's so great about the Israeli Air Force, you ask?

Check out these numbers: In 1967, during the Six Day War, the IAF took on the air forces of four countries simultaneously, executing a coordinated attack that destroyed more than 400 enemy planes in a single day; in 1973's Yom Kippur War, Israeli fighters shot down 450 planes; and in 1982, the U.S.-built F-15 and F-16 saw real combat for the first time when the IAF destroyed 100 Syrian planes without suffering a single loss. Our World History teachers may not have given us all those details, but you can bet no one in the Middle East takes the Israeli Air Force lightly. The IAF is a serious force to be reckoned with, and Jane's Combat Simulations' *Israeli Air Force* is some serious fun.

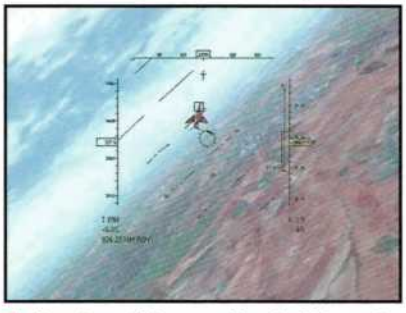
IAF was developed by Israel's own Pixel Multimedia, but it was produced under the auspices of Jane's VP Paul Grace (of *U.S. Navy Fighters* and *Advanced Tactical Fighters* fame) — and it bears a lot of similarities to those games. *IAF* is a "survey sim" — in other words, rather than covering one plane in great detail (as in Jane's *F15*), it covers a bunch of different planes in less detail.

In *IAF*'s case, that bunch includes seven Israeli jets — the F-4E, F-4 2000, F-15, F-16, Kfir, Lavi, and Mirage III — plus two enemy fighters — the MiG-23 and MiG-29 — available only in multi-player and the game's custom Mission Creator. As in *USNF* and *ATF*, each plane has its own cockpit art, but all of the essential systems (radar, tactical display, autopilot, weapons) work the same way in every plane. And while each plane performs a little differently from all the others, there's nothing resembling a painstakingly realistic flight model here.

That lack of depth and plane-specific detail is what made some hard-core sim fans turn up their noses at *USNF* and *ATF* — which resulted in their missing out on some major fun. Those games certainly weren't the most realistic air combat sims ever made, but they were an unqualified blast to play. And *Israeli Air Force* is cast in that same mold.



The Sea of Galilee as seen from Lavi-level. What do *you* think of the terrain graphics? Seems everyone in *PC Gamer* territory either loves 'em or hates 'em.



Close-in gunfights are a blast in *IAF* — and easy to set up via multi-player or the Mission Creator.



A Kfir C-7 pops off a Python air-to-air missile. *Israeli Air Force* lets you fly it and six other IAF jets — plus two different MiGs in multi-player.

IAF offers a total of 42 scripted missions divided among three historical campaigns (The Six Day War, the Yom Kippur War, and the Lebanon War) and three future campaigns (Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon). The Scramble option is a nod to the fact that any of Israel's enemies can hit just about any part of the country at any time — it drops you into a randomly selected emergency mission in which you get airborne as quickly as possible and receive your orders en route. Eleven training missions, a custom Mission Creator, and cooperative and head-to-head multi-player options round out the package. *IAF* has about as much replay value as you could hope for from a sim without a dynamic campaign system.

The sim does have its shortcomings, though. While 3D objects in the air and on the ground look great, *IAF*'s terrain is a mixed bag. The accurate elevation data makes for some exciting low-level flying, with lots of tactically useful hills and valleys to take advantage of — and the photo-realistic ground textures make it look great at high altitude. Unfortunately, the resolution of the textures is pretty low; they get very blocky as you descend to moderate and low altitudes — which is where you'll spend most of your time.

Another problem is one *IAF* shares with *USNF* and *ATF*: the puzzle-like nature of *IAF*'s scripted missions. Too often, it's necessary to fly the same

In the Office

Nine Views to a Kill

While the avionics and weapons systems work the same way for all the planes in *IAF*, each has its own unique cockpit and instrument layout.



F-4E Phantom II: This all-weather attack fighter first flew in 1958 and has served with the U.S. Air Force and Navy since Vietnam.

F-4 2000 Phantom: The IAF ordered this upgrade to the Phantom to extend its life past 2000; improvements include reinforced skins and fuel cells, improved maneuverability, modernized avionics — even a more comfortable cockpit.





F-15C/D Eagle: This is the original, single-seat Eagle, not to be confused with the F-15E Strike Eagle; the IAF uses it for air superiority. In Israel, it's known as Baz, for "Falcon."

F-16D: This two-seat variant of the U.S. Falcon incorporates a number of structural changes and improvements to radar and avionics.





Kfir C-7: The first fighter built entirely by Israel, the Kfir (it means "Lion Cub") was intended as an economy model, but proved its worth in combat.

Lavi ATF: The advanced Lavi multirole fighter, another homegrown jet. It made its first flight only nine years ago, but the Israeli government had already canceled its program. It's included in *IAF* presumably because it's very cool.





Mirage III: This French-built jet is a contemporary of the F-4 and has seen service in 20 countries; in 1967, it played a major role in the Six Day War.

MiG-23: This Russian swing-wing fighter replaced the MiG-21 in the 1970s and is itself being replaced by the MiG-29 and Su-27. (Only available via multi-player and the Mission Creator.)

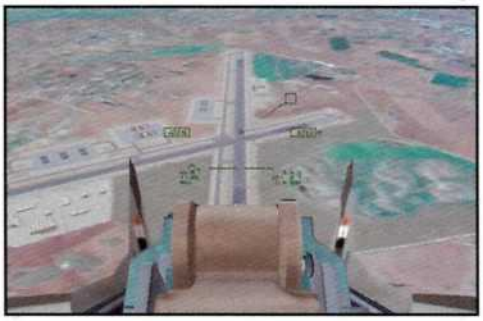




MiG-29: Russia's all-weather interceptor went operational in 1985; it's still one of the best combat aircraft in the world. (Only available via multi-player and the Mission Creator.)



Where else can you take a two-seat Falcon into combat? In the IAF, the F-16D is known as Brakeet, for "Thunderbolt."



Blocky terrain aside, *IAF*'s airfields and ground targets look very good. And not only does every plane have its own cockpit; it has its own unique rear-view; this is from the MiG-29.

mission several times just to figure out exactly what you're supposed to be doing. Reading the detailed briefing and looking at the reconnaissance pictures isn't always enough; sometimes you're required to hit targets that aren't specifically mentioned in the briefing. Miss just one of those targets, and the mission goes on your record as a complete failure, even if you met all the briefed objectives. And while it's nifty to be able to jump from one flight to another during the same mission — intercepting enemy fighters in an F-15 sweep, then taking control of one of your F-4s just in time to make the bombing run, for instance — it's frustrating that some missions *require* you to do this jumping around simply because your computer-controlled teammates aren't sharp enough to handle their part of the mission without help.

But those problems can't quite rob *IAF* of its simple, missile-shooting, bomb-dropping joy. If you liked *U.S. Navy Fighters* and *Advanced Tactical Fighters* — and you're looking for a simulated stint in some very different conflicts and some aircraft you can't fly anywhere else, *Israeli Air Force* belongs on your hard-drive.

— Dan Bennett

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

83%

HIGHS: Lots of planes, lots of missions; intriguing step outside usual East-vs.-West fare.

LOWS: Some missions feel like puzzles; terrain graphics can be blocky; steep hardware requirements.

BOTTOM LINE: It doesn't have the detail of Jane's *F-15* or *Longbow 2*, but *IAF* is just plain fun.

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Zerg Heavy Strike Flyer

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Lurker:
Zerg Heavy Support Beast

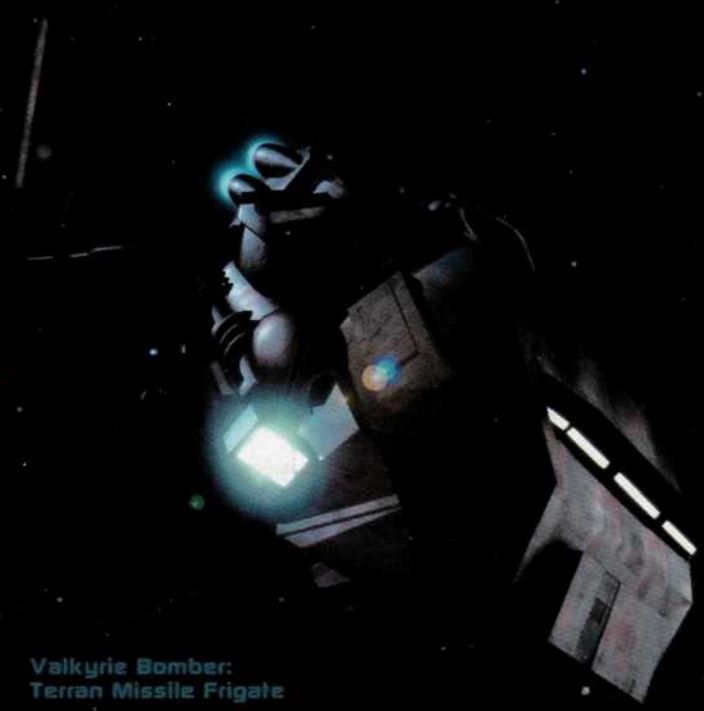
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NHL 99

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Category:	Sports
Developer:	EA Sports
Publisher:	Electronic Arts, (650) 628-1001 *www.easports.com*

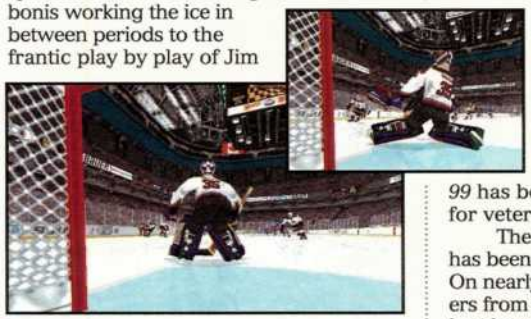
Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 166 with Direct3D accelerator; Pentium 200 for software only; 16MB RAM; 30MB hard-drive space	Eight-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 200; 32MB RAM; 100MB hard-drive space; Direct3D accelerator

Multi-player: Serial/Null modem; Modem: 28.8; IPX; Maximum Players: 12

Another year, and another great version of the NHL series from EA Sports.

It's no secret that EA Sports' NHL series has been one of our favorite sports franchises over the past few years. Our love of the game has had little to do with its statistical authenticity, because in reality, it never handled that side of things very well. No, we love it for its awesome presentation, blazing action, and big, hard hits. *NHL 99* carries on this grand tradition with a number of refinements, and even goes a small way toward addressing some of the glaring realism issues that have turned off simulation fans in the past.

One thing that gamers could never complain about in the NHL games is the graphics, and with the addition of higher resolutions, more animations, and new effects such as ice spray coming off the rink when players stop quickly to change direction, the series' already high standards have been ratcheted up yet another notch. However, the differences over last year's version are, for the most part, subtle, and gamers may be disappointed to find that it doesn't look *that* much better than *NHL 98*. Aside from menu changes and a few on-ice graphic tweaks, much of the game has a familiar feel. But there's a lot to be said for consistency, and *NHL 99* still delivers its broadcast style hockey spectacle with all the fixings. From zambonis working the ice in between periods to the frantic play by play of Jim Hughson and Daryl Reaugh, *NHL 99* is dripping with authentic sights and sounds.



In *NHL 99*, the automatic replays can be set to show more than just goal scoring plays.

Annual aesthetic enhancements are a given for EA Sports titles, but it's not always a sure bet that the gameplay will be improved — this year's disappointing *Triple Play 99* being a classic example. Thankfully, *NHL 99* boasts some cool new play features both on and off the ice. For starters, the occasionally spastic control of the players has been tightened up considerably. When you gain control of a player, you have direct control right from the start — they'll no longer head off in a random direction before you can right them. The passing game is more productive as well, as your teammates finally understand the importance of waiting for the puck before crossing the blue line, cutting down on a lot of those annoying offside penalties. The computer-controlled players now position themselves better on both offense and defense, and follow your coaching strategies (which can now be issued on the fly) much better. Defensemen are now a more formidable force, ensuring that many more shots are deflected and redirected before peppering the goalie, cutting down on the ludicrously high shot totals of past years (although 10 minute periods are still a must to replicate some sense of reality in this area).

One change that will please a few and frustrate the hell out of most others is the increased ability of the goalies to stop shots. There were a few tricks over the years that, once learned, could be used to fake the net-minders out of their pads. These seem to have been eliminated, and the goalies are rock solid, stopping most shots with ease. You'll have to be very clever with your passing or get lucky on a rebound to get one past these brick walls. Overall, the challenge of *NHL 99* has been upped considerably, even for veterans of the series.

The biggest boner is that fighting has been changed, and not for the better. On nearly every occasion, the same players from a given team will begin throwing down with no real rhyme or reason, and the penalty minutes will come in bunches. If real NHL players racked up this much time in the box, the commissioner would have to hold weekly meetings to hold hearings on whether or not they should be banned from the game.



A neat new graphical touch is the spray of ice off the players' skates when they pull up or change direction.



There's no denying that *NHL 99* is a beautiful game, but something needs to be done about those cheesy grins on the players' faces.

Aside from the fights, nearly every aspect of the series has undergone at least *some* improvement, and *NHL 99* is a worthy addition to the PC's most consistently brilliant sporting series.

—Rob Smolka

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

91%

HIGHS: Presentation is second to none; tighter control and more realistic results.

LOWS: Computer goalies are supermen; promised draft feature missing; sim crowd won't like it.

BOTTOM LINE: An already great game gets a minor facelift and some adjustments under the hood.

Dune 2000

Category:	Strategy
Developer:	Westwood Studios
Publisher:	Westwood Studios, (888) 212-1702 *www.westwood.com*

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 90; 16MB RAM; Super VGA video card; 60MB hard-drive space; DirectX compatible sound card	Pentium 166; 32MB RAM; 28.8 Modem and Internet connection

Multi-player: Serial/Null Modem; Modem: 28.8; IPX; TCP/IP; Free Internet Service: *www.westwood.com* (Westwood Online)

Take a humbling, nostalgia trip back to the planet Arrakis as Westwood's remake of *Dune II* revives some aging gameplay.

In 1992, Westwood Studios' *Dune II: The Building of a Dynasty* exposed gamers to the concepts of real-time strategy long before games like *Command & Conquer* and *WarCraft* swaggered to the top of the sales charts. Yet in the years since its release, the wheels of progress haven't stopped turning, and were you to pick up a copy today, *Dune II* would seem little more than an collectable oddity with a clunky interface and coarse graphics. Unfortunately, Westwood's attempt to remake the classic for a new generation suffers from the same fate due to its dated visuals and overly familiar gameplay.

A true remake in every sense of the word, *Dune 2000* follows the same plot as its forebear. It details the trials and tribulations of three houses, Atreides, Harkonnen, and Ordos, in their attempts to win control of the planet Arrakis and ultimately control of the prized commodity known as Spice (better known as sandworm doo-doo to those in the know). As a field commander for one of the three houses, you'll harvest the spice, build structures, and pump out units such as tanks, trikes, and infantry to lead against your rivals.



The tank/trike rush proves to be a major tactic in *Dune 2000*'s multi-player game.

Unlike a lot of games that hastily dismiss the story line once the credits roll, the concepts of resource collection, base construction, and incessant combat fit very neatly into the Dune universe. As in the book, the open desert is your greatest enemy, as sandworms defend their territory by destroying any vehicle that intrudes with one ferocious gulp. As a result, you can only build on rock formations found scattered across the sand. To achieve a building's full strength, you'll need to place concrete slabs as a foundation to reinforce each structure or waste valuable resources repairing it to temporarily boost its strength. If you opt not to build on concrete, a structure will only have half its hit points, and some structures, like wind generators, will only produce half their output. In other words, it pays to lay concrete. Unfortunately, doing so is a pain. Some changes have been made from the original game to facilitate faster building that allow you to place large slabs of concrete at a time — but it's still a pain.



Though the three houses do feature slightly different units, the biggest difference is in the artistic style for their buildings. Here a Harkonnen base is beginning the build-up for an attack on the Atreides.

On the combat side of things, if you've played *Command & Conquer* or *Red Alert*, you've got a pretty good idea what's in store — you'll pump out as many units as you possibly can and use them to crush your enemy. The only problem is that many of the convenient features found in today's RTS games are absent. You'll have to manually build each unit since the game does not support construction queuing. There are no rally points or waypoints either, and the few features that the game does boast, such as hotkeys to group units, scatter troops or jump quickly to various locations on the map, are little more than carry-overs from *Command & Conquer*. Having to manually create and position every single unit puts a lot of strain on your ability to manage both your troops and the involving construction concerns.

What you end up with is a slower-paced game that favors patient gamers. While the single-player game is challenging and actually quite fun in each of the three campaigns, many of the missions can take hours to complete, and that's a lot of effort and time to invest in a game most of us have, effectively, already played. The multi-player game is a reversal of the campaign mode as the infamous *Red Alert* tactic known as the tank rush (or in this case, the trike rush) rears its ugly head. These fast, nimble little vehicles can be pumped out in great numbers early on, and can sweep in and destroy a base very quickly. Since the construction restrictions make it difficult to build base defenses in a hurry, most games devolve into a race to see which player can build the most trikes first.



Lush animations and top notch full-motion video punctuate the action between missions.

Dune 2000 isn't a terrible game — it has simply been outpaced by its competition in nearly every area. While I'd recommend *Dune 2000* to casual fans of real-time strategy who've yet to sample games like *Red Alert*, *Total Annihilation*, or *StarCraft*, the familiar gameplay is sure to grate on more experienced players who are longing for something new.

—Todd Vaughn

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

70%

HIGHS: Excellent full-motion video sequences and challenging missions.

LOWS: Boring in-game graphics, weak artificial intelligence, and all-too familiar gameplay.

BOTTOM LINE: An underwhelming remake of one of gaming's true classics.

http://pc.ign.com

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At the end of the millennium, acts of terrorism plague the world more and more frequently. Only one strike force can defend humanity from the rising tide of violence–the Special Intelligence Operations Network, or SION.

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Get started now with this ***Vigilance*** preview, then complete your espionage training with ***Brady's Official Vigilance Strategy Guide***! With this invaluable education, you will become a full-fledged member of SION and dedicate your life (for at least a few weeks) to ridding the world of the scourge of terrorism once and for all.



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STRATEGY GUIDES

chapter 4

Mission 1
oil rig

mission profile : SION's headquarters on an abandoned oil rig somewhere near Papua, New Guinea has come under attack by unknown terrorists. They appear to be after vital computer files. You must destroy the files and our satellite up-link to keep the files out of enemy hands.

Objectives

- **Recover C4 explosives from the Security Center.**
- **Use the C4 to destroy the Satellite Dish.**
- **Insert a virus into the computer core.**

Deep Cover Operative Briefing

Much as you hate to do it, this unexpected attack from some unknown terrorist force has compelled you to "soil your nest," destroying any information useful to your enemies. Alas, this newly christened base of operations must be abandoned and scuttled, but you're just the agent to do it.

Your first visit to the Oil Rig is a fairly basic trip: find keys, unlock doors, and complete your objectives. It's a long level, but navigation is relatively simple with a linear progression of rooms and very little backtracking. And there are lots of landmarks to help you find your way.

The Order forces populating the Oil Rig are pretty easy to beat, but they are (often) moderately armed. There are a few sniper nests to circumvent and one near-hopeless attack on a large squad of foes. Both of these traps can, however, be avoided through stealth and some long-distance marksmanship.

To pass through the Oil Rig, you must:

1. Snag the CD containing the virus.
2. Scavenge the Blue Keycard.
3. Pocket the C4 in the Security Center.
4. Get the Yellow Keycard.
5. Go topside and blow up the Satellite Dish.
6. Pick up the Red Keycard.
7. Insert the virus into the computer core.
8. Exit the Oil Rig.

Items

AMR 50 Sniper Rifle
Blue Keycard
G-12 Caseless Assault Rifle
G-20 Silenced Assassin's Pistol
Heavy Armor
Light Armor
Med Kits
Pistol Clips
Red Keycard
Rifle Clips
Super Med Kits
Viper Submachine Gun
Yellow Keycard

Recommended Agent



Kestrel

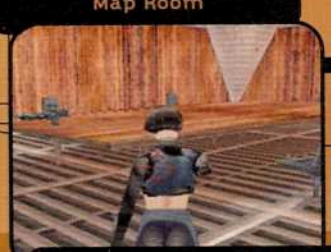
Skills Required

- Marksmanship
- Speed
- High Heavy Armor
- Moderate Demolitions
- Recon, low
- Computer Hacking
- Stealth

Enemies

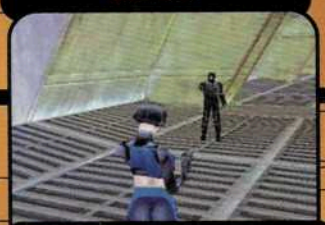
- Mercenaries
- Mercenary Captains
- Male Fanatic (Level Boss)

Map Room



You'll need this handy rifle to get anywhere in this level..

Corridor



Keep your eyes peeled for these guys lurking behind the pillars.

Upper Deck, Section 2



Jump this rail and walk along the duct to seize the Sniper Rifle.

Walkthrough

1. Command Office

You begin your self-destructive mission in the command office of SION headquarters. Exit into the next room with the large map and submerged floor.

2. Map Room

Exchange fire with a half dozen Mercenaries and gather up some Light Armor, two Med Kits, and two Pistol Clips.

Cross the room and pass through the door into the conference room.

3. Conference Room

Grab the G-12 Rifle (and arm it), note two Super Med Kits, and return to the Map Room. Pick up the virus CD from this room—you'll need it later to complete the mission.

4. Map Room

Turn left and follow the green corridor.

5. Corridor

Creep down the Corridor, plugging the two pistol-wielding Mercenaries hiding in dark corners. Duel with the remaining trio of Mercenaries, then turn right at the end of the hall and board the elevator.

Keep your eyes peeled for these guys lurking behind the pillars.

6. Elevator

Ride the elevator to the top deck and exit.

7. Upper Deck, Section 1

Turn left, take out the Mercenary lurking around the corner, and pass through the armored door.

8., 9., 10. Blue Box Room, Ladder, Catwalk

The door opens to a large blue shipping container and a black clad Mercenary. If you don't kill him before he spots you, another Mercenary wielding a Viper will rush around the corner to greet you. Once you've taken care of the first two Mercs, drop the third Merc on the catwalk above. The Mercenary on the catwalk will leave behind a Viper Submachine Gun. Snap up two Med Kits, climb the ladder to the catwalk, and cross through the door to Upper Deck Section 2. For some additional power-ups, you can jump from the catwalk to a stack of crates and find some Heavy Armor and a batch of Fragmentation Grenades.

11. Upper Deck, Section 2

Peek out from the green room and nail the Mercenary on the deck and the Mercenary Captain on the high platform.

Tip

Remember this Spot! Before you head down the staircase to Upper Deck Section 3, you should take note of two great sniper posts that will come in handy later.

Tip

Look ahead and to the left. You should see a large tower and the Satellite Dish that will be your final destination. Later in the mission, these two points will be very heavily defended. But you can pick off the opposition from a safe distance at this spot.

Upper Deck, Section 2



Keep this view in mind, as it is your key to picking off some baddie clusters from a safe distance.

Upper Deck, Section 2



Off in the distance is your final goal, the Satellite Dish.

Upper Deck, Section 2



Peer through this gap to find a 2-for-1 sniper post.

Upper Deck, Section 3



This Mercenary and clutch of others are best picked off from the safety of this high deck.

Tip

Now, facing the Main Deck, turn around to face a large, blue shipping container and an air conditioner. If you look carefully, you'll see a gap between the air unit and the container, walk through it. You'll want to return to this point twice in the course of this level. From here you should see a box suspended by a cable and, to your right, the Rig's Heli-pad.

At the top of this staircase, hop over the railing and walk along the duct to a platform on which you'll find an AMR 50 Sniper Rifle and a Rifle Clip. Fire away at the Mercenary who takes aim when you grab the rifle. Return to where you jumped the rail.

12. Upper Deck, Section 3

Turn right and descend to the deck, peer down the next staircase heading below deck, and open fire on the Mercenary at the base of the stairs and the reinforcing Merc who you will follow you from the upper deck. Grab the two Med Kits before heading down.

13. Pipe Room

Follow the passages of this room. At the first intersection,

STEALTH POINT:

Instead of taking the next step to the balcony containing two Super Med Kits and suffering the fire from the Mercenary Captain above, try this stealth move instead. Return to the top deck and walk between the ductwork and the blue shipping container. You should be able to see the Mercenary Captain killing time on a suspended box. Fire away (grab the Heavy Armor) and return to the pair of Super Med Kits.

beware the cluster of Mercenaries lurking around both corners.

As you round the next corner, pump the Mercenary Captain and inspect his lifeless body for a Blue Keycard. Keep your eyes peeled for Light Armor.

Grab any health boost you need here and take out the Mercenary Captain lurking above (if you didn't use the Stealth Point). Round the blue shipping container and ambush the Mercenary waiting there.

Continue to the left and shoot the Mercenary in the back–don't forget his stash of Rifle and Pistol Clips and the 4-Gauge Shotgun he drops. Proceed onto the Catwalk.

14. Blue Door Porch

Follow the catwalk around to the Blue Door. Open it and enter the Security Reception Area. Get ready for an ambush from around the corners as you approach this door—black clad Mercenaries will rush you from either side.

15. Security Reception Area

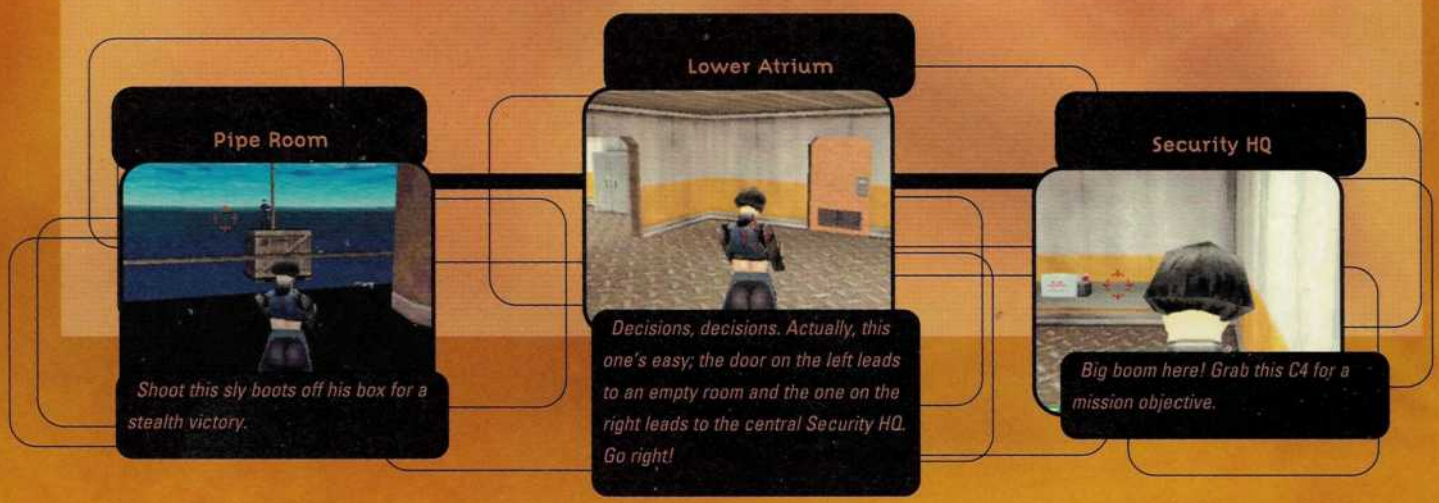
Pass through the Blue Door into the Office of the Security Center and snuff the two Mercenaries guarding the entrance.

16. Lower Atrium

Pass through the office door. Open doorway into the lower atrium where a G-12-wielding Mercenary waits. Inspect and clear the open rooms of this atrium and go to the corner with two closed doors. The door on the left leads to an empty room, but the one on the right goes to the Security Center headquarters and the site of your first mission objective.

17. Security HQ

Enter the room carefully and take out the Mercenaries above you. Climb the stairs (and grab the two Med Kits behind the bars if you need them). Enter the office and grab the C4 Explosive Pack. Return to the Lower Atrium.



MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

18. Lower Atrium

Pop the two Mercenaries chewing the fat in the Atrium, then check out the open rooms and head up either of the two staircases to the Upper Atrium, taking out any Mercenaries you find in your way.

19. Upper Atrium

Upstairs, clear the hallways of resistance and inspect each of the three open rooms. You should find three Light Armor and three Med Kits. Now, proceed upstairs to the heli-pad.

STEALTH POINT:

Instead of rushing onto the heli-pad, this little detour makes your trip easier. Return to the same spot from the last Stealth Point (next to the hanging box) and turn to the right to look over to the heli-pad. Pull out your Sniper Rifle and nail the Mercenary and his Captain who guard the pad. Now return to the heli-pad and claim the Yellow Key the Captain dropped.

20. Heli-pad

Go through the doorway to the heli-pad and plug the Mercenary and his Captain. The Captain drops the Yellow Keycard. Before you go, hop over the railing to the wide metal deck and grab the Heavy Armor next to the large wooden crate. Return now to the Blue Door. After you plug the Mercenary Captain with the Yellow Keycard, two more Mercenaries will appear to guard the exit from the Blue Door. Creep up to them carefully along the edge of the helipad roof and plug them before they are aware of you.

21. Blue Door Porch

Open the door but beware the twin Viper-toting Mercenaries that have arrived on the scene. Turn to the left and follow the catwalk to the Yellow Door.

22. Yellow Door Catwalk

Open the Yellow Door to the Control Room.

23. Control Room

Pass through the Yellow Door and clear the area (note the Red Door here that leads to the level exit). Enter the open door to the Computer Room.

24. Computer Room

Step into the Computer Room, nail the Mercenary, and recover the Super Med Kit and Universal Ammo.

Return to the Control Room.

25. Control Room

Climb the stairs to the Satellite Dish.

STEALTH POINT:

Return again to the sniper point. Look across the rig to the deck containing the Satellite Dish. Using your Sniper Rifle, ventilate as many of the waiting Mercenaries as you can. This will make your assault on the dish itself far less dangerous. Once you have cleared the plate, you can return to the Satellite Dish deck.

26. Satellite Dish

Pass through the door, but be careful–a whole squad of Mercenaries and their Captain await. Plant the C4, and let 'er rip.

BradyGAMES STRATEGY GUIDES

Upper Atrium



Sniper, sniper, sniper. Whip out the ARM 50 and bag these blokes before they even know where you are.

Heli-pad



It's worth it to hop over this rail and get the Heavy Armor.

Control Room



Fish in a Barrel. Take your shots!

Tip

To plant the C4, arm it as you would a weapon (press F5 for its hotkey) and point your crosshairs on the dish. Press fire and the C4 will arc gracefully onto the dish. The count-down starts immediately, so get far away.

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

With the Satellite Dish decimated, head for the Control Room. Below, another Mercenary Captain will have appeared. Kill him and he will drop the Red Keycard that will allow you to open the door to the elevator. Go though the Red Door and take the elevator down to the computer core.

27. Control Room

Open the Red Door and take the elevator down.

28. Red Elevator

Go through the door, down the passage, make a right at the T-junction, pass through another door and enter the computer core.

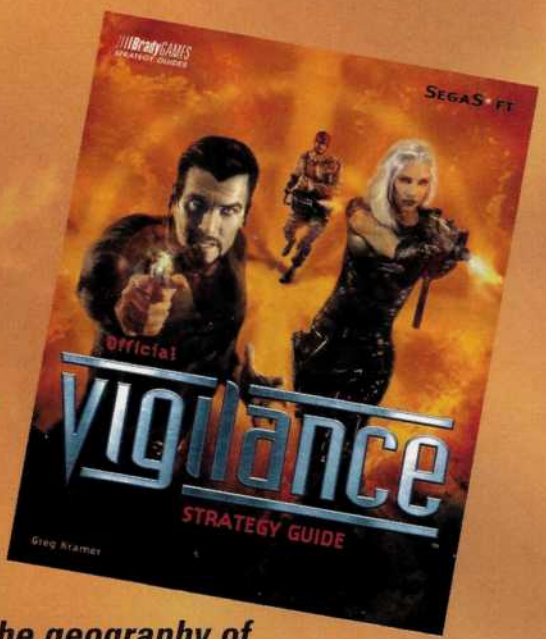
29. Op Center

Quickly dispatch the big, hairy Male Fanatic guarding this operations center. Keep moving to avoid his nasty Grenade Launcher.

After you drop the Male Fanatic, find the CD Slot on one of the main terminals and insert the virus CD. Doing so will complete the mission!



Oh the humanity! The charred remains of this Satellite Dish signal your success on this final mission objective.



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Return Fire 2

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Ripcord's latest serves up equal doses of high-powered action and brain-teasing strategy.

Category:	Action-strategy
Developer:	Silent Software
Publisher:	Ripcord Games, (408) 653-1897 *www.ripcordgames.com*

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 100; 16MB RAM; 150MB hard-drive space; 16-bit sound card; PCI video card	24-speed CD-ROM Drive; Pentium 200MHz; 32MB RAM; 32-bit sound card; PCI video card with 3D accelerator

Multi-player: Serial/null modem: Modem; IPX; TCP\IP; Max. players: 16; Spawnable: No; Free Internet service: Mplayer

Back in the spring of 1996, I was asked to review the PC port of the console game *Return Fire*. A variation on "Capture the Flag" using military hardware like jeeps, tanks, and helicopters, the concept behind *Return Fire* was refreshingly simple — just snag your opponent's flag and haul it back to base. Although the graphics were merely passable and the gameplay options quite limited, *Return Fire* quickly started to grow on me; it was easy to get into, fun to play, and sported a wonderful musical score of classical compositions that perfectly complimented the action.

After a while, though, I longed for a stronger opponent than the computer-controlled player, so naturally I checked out the game's multi-player options — only to discover that all it had to offer was a lame split-screen mode, primitive even by 1996 standards. Amazed and befuddled that there wasn't even an option for modem play, my hopes for a long-running relationship with *Return Fire* were brought to a halt once the single player game ended.

Now *Return Fire 2* is here, and judging from the vast array of multi-player options here, it's pretty obvious that the folks at Silent Software knew the multi-player mode was the original game's Achilles Heel. Modem play, serial link, LAN, Internet, split-screen — every method you could possibly imagine of playing against another person is supported. And while it wasn't available when the game shipped, *Return Fire 2* is due to be supported free of charge on Mplayer by the time you read this.

Unfortunately, I've got to admit that despite my best efforts, I didn't get a chance to check out just how well *Return Fire 2*'s multi-player mode works in action. Without the mass exposure of Mplayer or a dedicated *Return Fire 2* server at the time of this review, I had to search for opponents on IRC channels — and trust me when I say it wasn't for lack of trying that I came up empty-handed. Still, all the options are there, and if Silent Software and Ripcord Games put as much effort into supporting them as it did in massaging the single-player game, there shouldn't be too much to worry about (aside from the usual Internet problems of latency and bandwidth, of course).

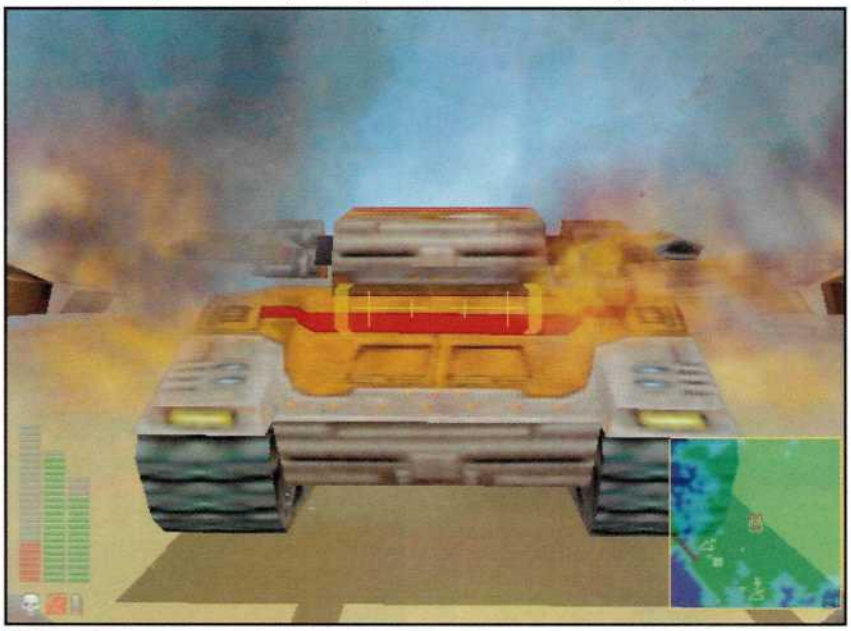
For those of you who have played *Return Fire*, the gameplay in the sequel is essentially more of the same — but you might not recognize it at first glance. The cartoonish top-down graphics of the original have been replaced with full 3D objects and terrain, and this time out the game sports some tasty 3Dfx visuals, replete with fancy effects like missile trails, fiery explosions, translucent plumes of smoke, and more. The graphics aren't as eye-popping as what you'll find in *Incoming*, but they're more than good enough to immerse you in the action. And the same classical



Bringing down enemy turrets is crucial if you hope to enter his base in the Jeep — if the enemy's flag is located on land, the Jeep is the only vehicle capable of grabbing it.



Burn, baby, burn! Snow-capped hills make for a perfect contrast with the burning buildings.



Computer-controlled tanks have a nasty habit of ramming you as they fire.

Gentlemen, Man Your Units

Although there are many different tactics you can use in *Return Fire 2*, the key to all of them is understanding your units' capabilities and weaknesses. Whether you opt for a quick strike or a battle of attrition, success depends on meeting each challenge with the right response. Here is a quick run down on the strengths and pitfalls of the fighting force.



The Tank is the backbone of your offensive forces. Heavy armor plating allows it to endure insane amounts of punishment from enemy missiles, making it the perfect unit to kick down the doors of enemy installations. Experienced tankers can also use its dual cannon to bring down enemy helicopters.



Although the Armored Support Vehicle (ASV) isn't as fast or heavily armored as the tank, it makes up for those weaknesses with heat-seeking missiles that can home in on enemy vehicles that might not even be in your line of sight. These missiles can also be used as mortars, but landing shots consistently takes considerable practice.



The name of the game in *Return Fire 2* is discovering which of the enemy's Flag Towers *really* holds the flag — and there's no quicker way to find out than with the Jet. Those half-ton bombs will open a Flag Tower with a single blast, but watch out for SAMs or enemy jets as you go about your business. Also useful for scouting purposes.



Jeeps are good for only one thing: grabbing the enemy's flag and bringing it back to base. Be careful with these babies, though — they're fast, but extremely vulnerable to damage from rocks, trees, and hard landings after cresting ridges or hills.



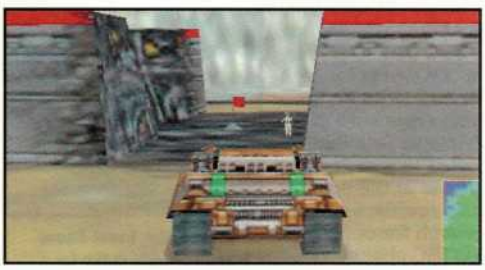
Delivering death from above is always satisfying — especially when you can pump out dumb-fire rockets faster than you can say "I love the smell of napalm in the morning." If an enemy jeep has the flag, the Helicopter's probably your best bet for running it down and putting an end to its trip back home.



PT boats are the slowest and least maneuverable units at your disposal, but the long range of its cannon means you can pound an opposing installation into dust from relative safety. Auto-firing SAMs mean you don't have to worry about air attacks as you go about your business, and PT boats can also carry flags that have been dropped in the water.

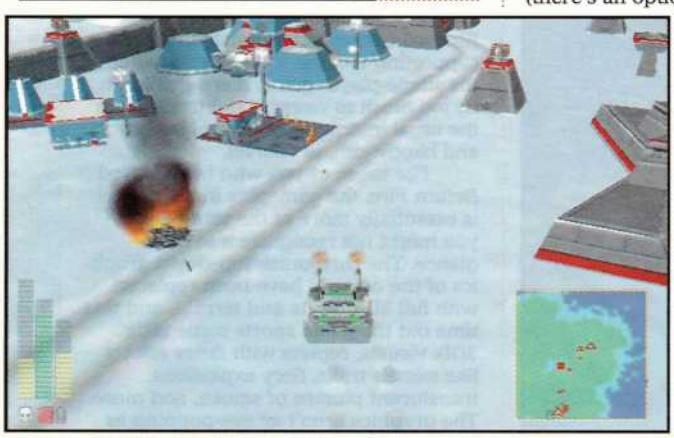
selections that worked so well in the first game — "Flight of the Bumblebee," "Ride of the Valkyries," "William Tell Overture," and many more — are all back and sounding as fantastic as ever.

Speaking of *Incoming*, *Return Fire 2* offers a slight similar style of play: at various points you control a tank, a mobile missile launcher, and minelayer (called an "armored support vehicle," or ASV), a jeep, a jet, a helicopter, and even a PT boat. But unlike *Incoming*, which tossed you into different units with hardly a warning, what type of vehicle you drive (or fly) in *Return Fire 2* is entirely up to you — provided you've got the vehicle in your armory, that is.



He can run, but he can't hide! Actually, there's no need to bother taking out foot soldiers, but sometimes the temptation's so strong you just can't resist.

At the start of each mission, you decide which unit you'll use to begin your search for the enemy flag, then head out for battle from either a first-person perspective or a chase view directly behind or overhead the vehicle. When you die, you're sent back to home base, where you can once again choose which vehicle you want to control (you can also head back whenever you like for repairs or to switch rides). You've got a limited supply of each vehicle type (there's an option to give you unlimited vehicles, but it robs you of medals and awards), and since the jeep is the only unit that can grab a flag and return it to base, you must carefully guard your supply of them. Enemy installations are heavily guarded with missile turrets and SAM batteries, but with the right combo of air, ground, and sea assaults, you can bring down even the most elaborate defenses.

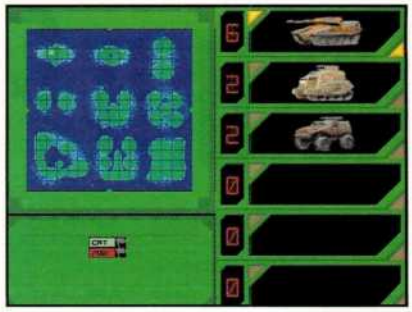


This looks dangerous, but in fact, this Tank is in a pretty good position: many of the turrets can't fire because friendly buildings block the line of sight.

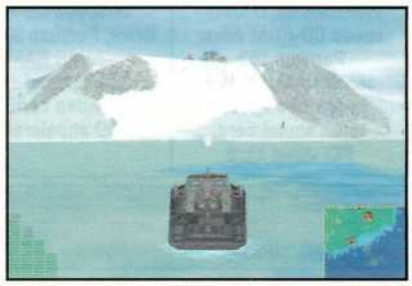
That might sound terrible simplistic, but the joy of *Return Fire 2* is in the playing, and this time around, it's better than ever. It's not just the potential for multi-player mayhem that gives this game such a great replayability — the multitude of tactics and strategies that are available each time out give it strong replay value even in single-player mode. You can opt for a defensive strategy, teaming up your tank's firepower with that of your turrets to stop marauding units in their tracks, or in missions with only one or two jeeps you can try a "roper dope" and help your opponent expose your flag — then lie in wait and pick off his jeeps as they move in for the booty. Of course, there's always something to be said for putting the pedal to the metal and making a full frontal assault.

I could go on and on about this game, but suffice it to say that I wasn't just pleasantly surprised at how good *Return Fire 2* is — I was practically bowled over. There's no game around that can please all the people all the time, but *Return Fire 2* has just the right mix of action and strategy that makes it come pretty damn close. Whether you're a real-time strategy fanatic or a died-in-the-wool action hound, *Return Fire 2*'s got something for you.

—Stephen Poole



You'll only have two or three unit types available in early battles, but even so, things can get pretty hectic.



PT Boats are the slowest units in the game — and also some of the most powerful with their long-range cannons. With careful aim, you can reduce an enemy base to rubble and return home with no damage to your boat.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

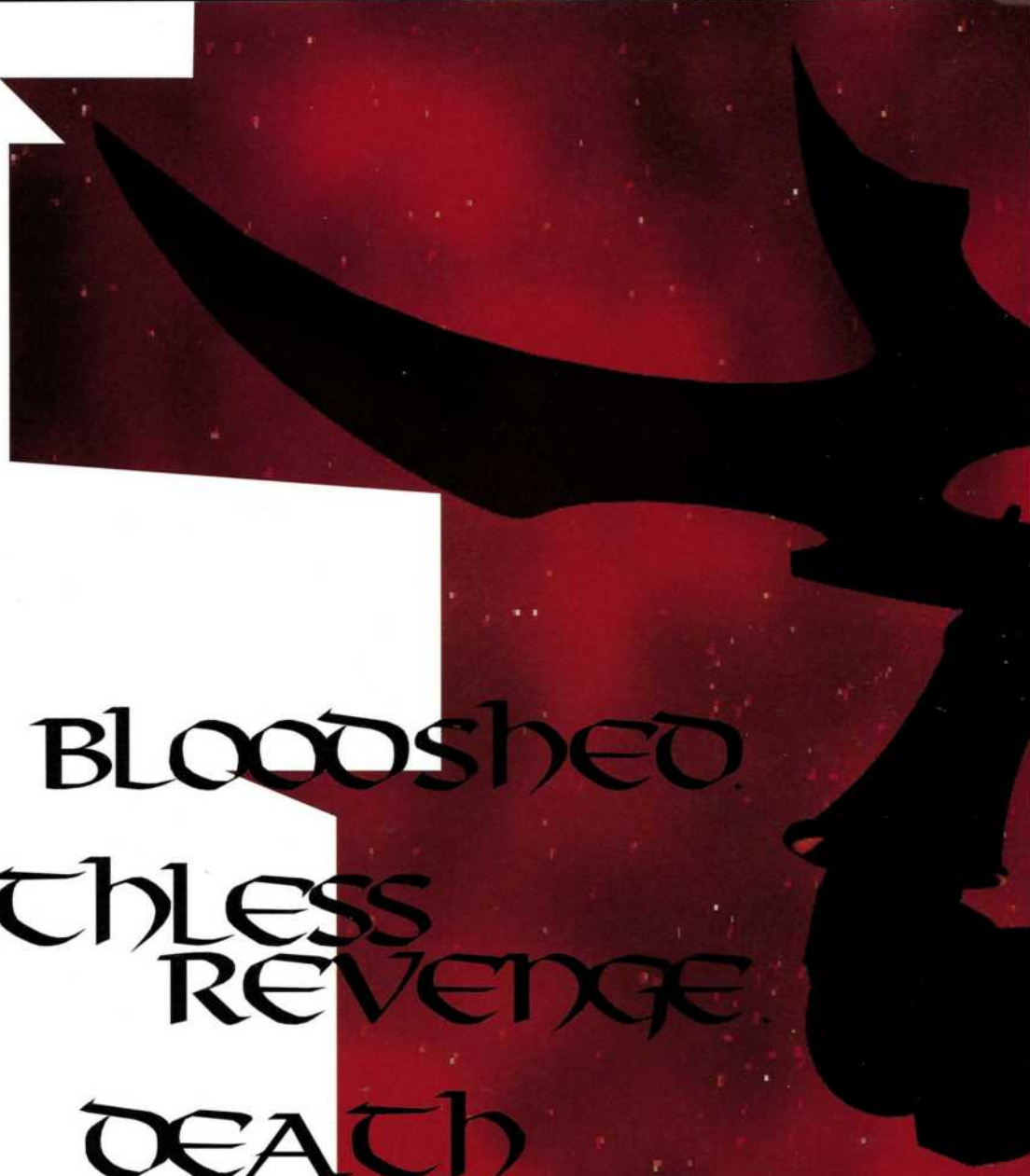
88%

HIGHS: Great game design; wonderful visual effects and music score.

LOWS: Bewildering setup screens and a poor manual; controlling some vehicles can be tricky.

BOTTOM LINE: Kudos to Silent for turning an arcade game into a compelling strategy affair.

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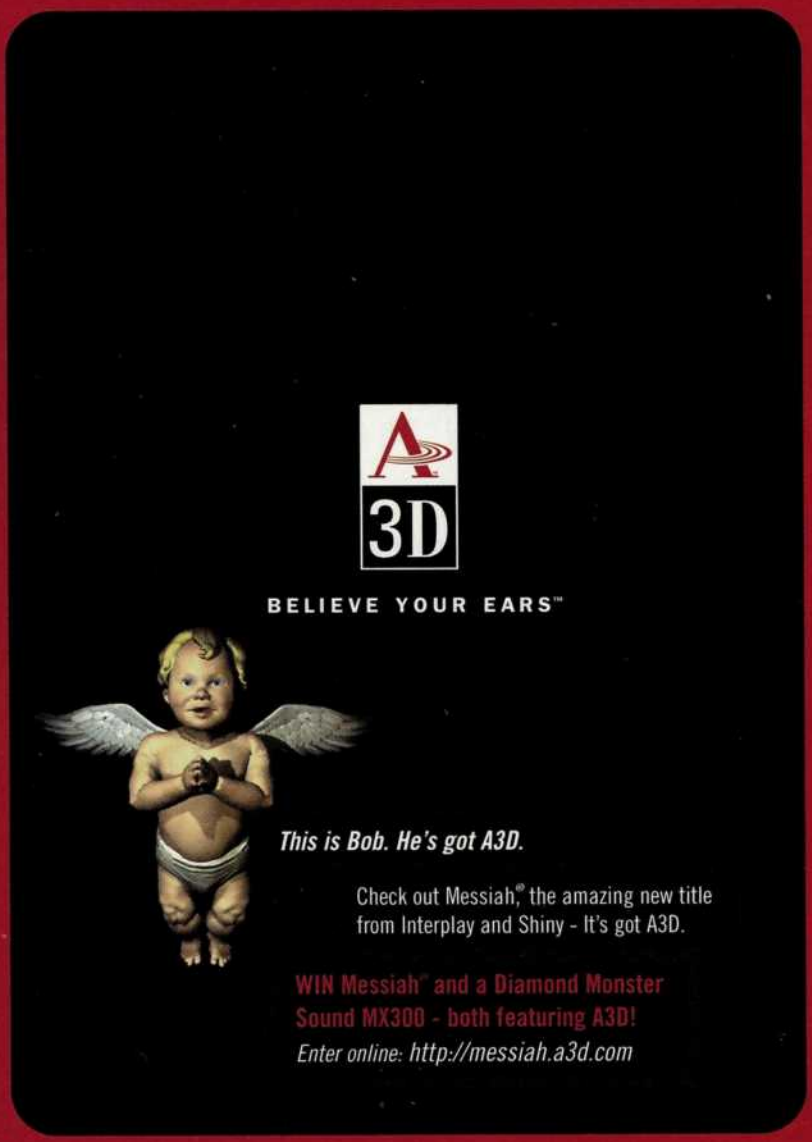
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People's General

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Category:	Strategy
Developer:	Strategic Simulations, Inc.
Publisher:	SSI, (408) 737-6800 *www.ssionline.com*

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Eight-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 166; 32MB RAM; 175MB uncompressed hard-drive space; DirectX 6; Super VGA video card with 2MB RAM	16-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 233

Multi-player: Play-by-E-mail; IPX; TCP/IP; Maximum Players: 4; Free Internet Service: *www.mplayer.com*

SSI's mutation of the *Panzer General II* engine offers excitement set in an apocalyptic near-future background.

Shortly after the original *Panzer General* stormed onto the wargaming landscape with its friendly, approachable design, SSI labored hard to turn the success of one game into five. However, the steady march of me-too games based on the *PG* formula often betrayed the original game's casual appeal and authenticity with questionable designs. *Allied General* was an uninspired, cash-in-on-the-fad-while-it's-hot sequel; *Fantasy General* was just too damned hard for anyone to finish; *Star General* was forgettable, and *Pacific General*, aside from some major distortions of history, was saturated by a weariness that indicated that the series had exhausted itself.

Luckily, the sequel to *Panzer General*, *Panzer General II*, redeemed SSI from its previous sins with a renewed sense of vigor. Now with *People's General*, SSI is trying to see if lightning can truly strike twice by building a monumental strategic edifice atop *Panzer General II*'s engine, creating a game that may be the most captivating of the lot.

Taking its inspiration from the break-up of the Soviet Union, the awesome increase in military capability recently shown by the People's Republic of China, and the very real possibility of conflict over Taiwan, *People's General* revives the ancient Western fear of a mass conflict in Asia — or, as one newsman quipped to MacArthur during the first winter of the Korean War, "How many battalions make up a 'horde'?"



With its crisp-rendered landscapes *People's General* is one of the most eye-pleasing wargames around.

Wisely, it gives the player the option of controlling either the Chinese or the NATO side (aided, in some scenarios, by remnants of South Korean and Russian units), which results in very different styles of play. There are two huge campaigns and three smaller ones (as well as a bonus downloadable invasion of Taiwan scenario). If you want self-contained battles, rather than campaigns, the scenario builder does a solid job of showing you how to set them up. And for the ultimate challenge, there's even a campaign in which a united Vietnam sets out to conquer the Far East.

Combat rages across the length and breadth of Asia. There are units from a dozen nations, so you have the choice of sticking with tried-and-true U.S. weapons, or forming, as it were, a Rainbow Coalition, mixing French, British, and German units. The latter, I think, is more fun (I've become especially fond of the German self-propelled artillery…but then, they have a *lot* of experience in that field!), even though it may take you a considerable while to become familiar with the various units' capabilities. From time to time, successful commanders are given prototypes of near-future weapons to play with, such as the "Schwarzkopf" tank (think of an Abrams on steroids).

Firing ranges are, of course, considerably greater than those of the WWII-era hardware found in *Panzer General II*. The U.S. mobile rocket launchers, for example, can hammer the bejeezus out of enemy units *ten* hexes away, but they can only fire three salvos before you have to reload them, and they're highly vulnerable to air strikes, so they're something of a mixed blessing.

Prestige is still the medium of currency for upgrading and purchasing new units. The system works pretty much as it did in the previous games, but SSI has included some interesting new refinements. For extra points, you can now purchase veteran or elite units straight from the depot. You can also purchase

I'm a Seoul Man! or, How to Recapture Seoul

One of the toughest NATO assignments in *People's General* is the recapture of Seoul, the capital city of Korea. Aside from the congested city itself, there are numerous far-flung objectives around and beyond it which must be rapidly captured if you want to win those coveted "Brilliant Victory" laurels.

It's important to note that the city and its suburbs are one gigantic flak-trap that can chew up your expensive helicopter units, and learning when and where to strike is the key to success. For the first two turns, use cheap recon flights to draw fire and locate the Chinese AAA positions. Then spend the rest of your air points flying Wild Weasel strikes against them. There's a particularly nasty cross-fire arrangement near the airfield south of the city. Don't just damage those batteries, *eliminate* them, even if it takes two or three Weasel strikes to do it — otherwise, they'll be back at full strength on the next enemy turn. It make take three or four turns to whittle down the flak, but once you've done that, you can employ your helicopters with relative impunity.

Use your heavy tanks, choppers, and arty to wipe out the elite Chinese armor on the southeastern tip of the city, then flank the city on both sides (do *not* get your tanks embroiled in street-fighting!). You *will* suffer air attacks, so, in addition to your ponderously slow Patriot unit, invest in a Linebacker or some cheap missile-infantry. Don't neglect the hilltop positions northeast of the city — enemy infiltrators can emerge suddenly from those areas. While your mobile units encircle the city in a pincer movement, use beefed-up engineers or Foreign Legion units to do the house-to-house fighting.

Units with bridging capability will help greatly as you strike for those final objectives in the northwestern corner of the map. Maintain momentum at all costs, and watch out for the mobile flak unit hidden in the valley near the airfield to the northeast. I lost an entire squadron of Hinds once, because I forgot to recon that desolate-looking area before attacking the airfield.

Approach the siege methodically, neutralize the enemy flak early in the game, and you should win with a turn or two to spare.



Though the cost is high, an investment in reconnaissance units can save valuable units like helicopters and tanks from being cut to pieces by hidden infantry.



Using prestige points, you can purchase or upgrade units to gain new abilities in battle.

special abilities for any unit. These might include bridging capability, limited stealth, extra-long recon range, added points for anti-tank or anti-aircraft defense, and shoot-and-scoot for your artillery. Each of these extras depletes your prestige points, but judicious investments can pay crucial dividends in combat. A unit of Gurhkas, for instance, invested with skilled recon and a forward observer icon, not only make excellent scouts, but any airstrikes they call in will have a "plus 2" effect on the target.

Some of the biggest assets come from the assortment of modern air power. Helicopters rule. Their extended range and firepower make them your most powerful assets — unless, of course, they run into an ambush of shoulder-fired missiles and/or mobile flak units, in which case you'll witness an 850-point asset blown from the sky by units worth 150 points to the enemy!

Perhaps the biggest change from the previous games is the treatment of air power. Before each campaign battle begins, you can invest in air supremacy (but it'll cost you 400 points!), and on each turn you'll have 25-40 points to invest in aerial operations. A full scale strike costs 10 points, a Wild Weasel flak-suppression mission will set you back six points, and a reconnaissance flight will only cost you two. I heartily recommend spending at least a third of your points on recon missions, on each and every turn, or you'll suffer some nasty surprises.

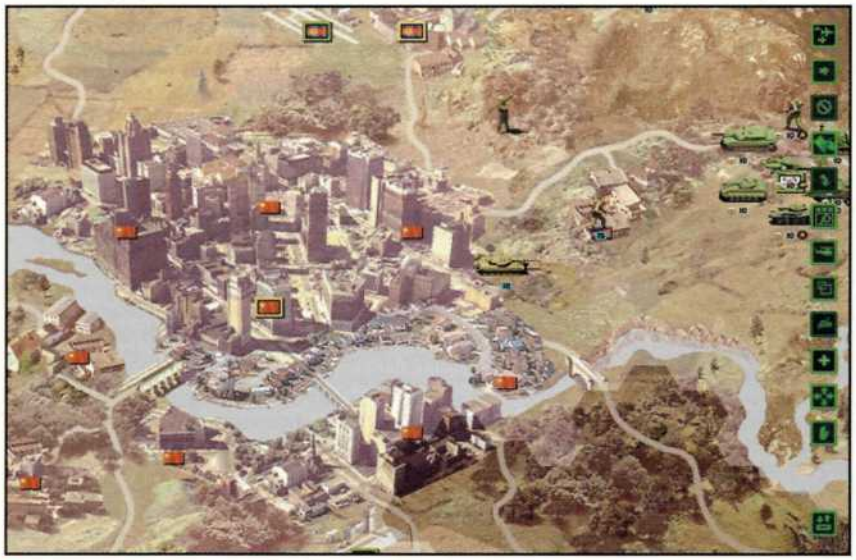
The gaming experience is, predictably, significantly different on the Chinese side. Chinese infantry units (the horde, the horde!) are half-again as large as NATO units, they pack a lot of shoulder-fired missiles, and they can take terrific punishment. They are also very adept at infiltration tactics and are liable to appear suddenly behind your lines, wreaking havoc with your logistics and overrunning supply depots with ease. Thus, the two sides are nicely matched: masses of infantry and lots of AAA units (their artillery and choppers are good, too) versus a smaller NATO force equipped with devastating but enormously expensive high-tech weapons.

As in all the previous games, your ideal goal is to achieve a "brilliant" victory, which usually means capturing numerous, far-flung objectives in a fairly small number of turns. It's tough to do: you can't be strong everywhere at once, and the artificial intelligence is robust enough to thwart you when you think victory is within easy grasp. Maybe it's just my imagination, but brilliant victories do seem a wee bit easier to achieve in this game than in *Panzer General II*, on both sides. Boldness and dashing maneuvers often bring rewards from HQ, in the form of prestige points or increased aerial support. This is a refreshing change from some of the Russian Front scenarios in *Panzer General II* where, no matter how cunning you thought your tactics were, that brilliant victory always seemed just one or two turns beyond the possible.

Air-mobile units help sustain the tempo of advance (helicopters drop them anywhere on the map, just outside of enemy detection), and air-portable units (heavy stuff that must be loaded and offloaded at captured airfields), add a new and fascinating layer to your strategic possibilities. Every gameplay element, in fact, is exquisitely balanced against every other element. There's even a truck-like support unit that allows you to deploy newly purchased units anywhere within one hex of its location, rather than having to start them out in the original shaded deployment hexes. A minor feature, perhaps, but under the right circumstances, it can contribute a lot to your operations' momentum.

Subtle, beautiful, vast in scope, and filled with exotic and futuristic weaponry, *People's General* is absolutely riveting to play. It's one of the best games SSI has given us in a long time, and considering its distinguished forebears, that's saying a lot.

—William R. Trotter



Launching attacks inside these cluttered Chinese-held cities will require a great deal of tactical finesse, especially if you rely heavily on armor.

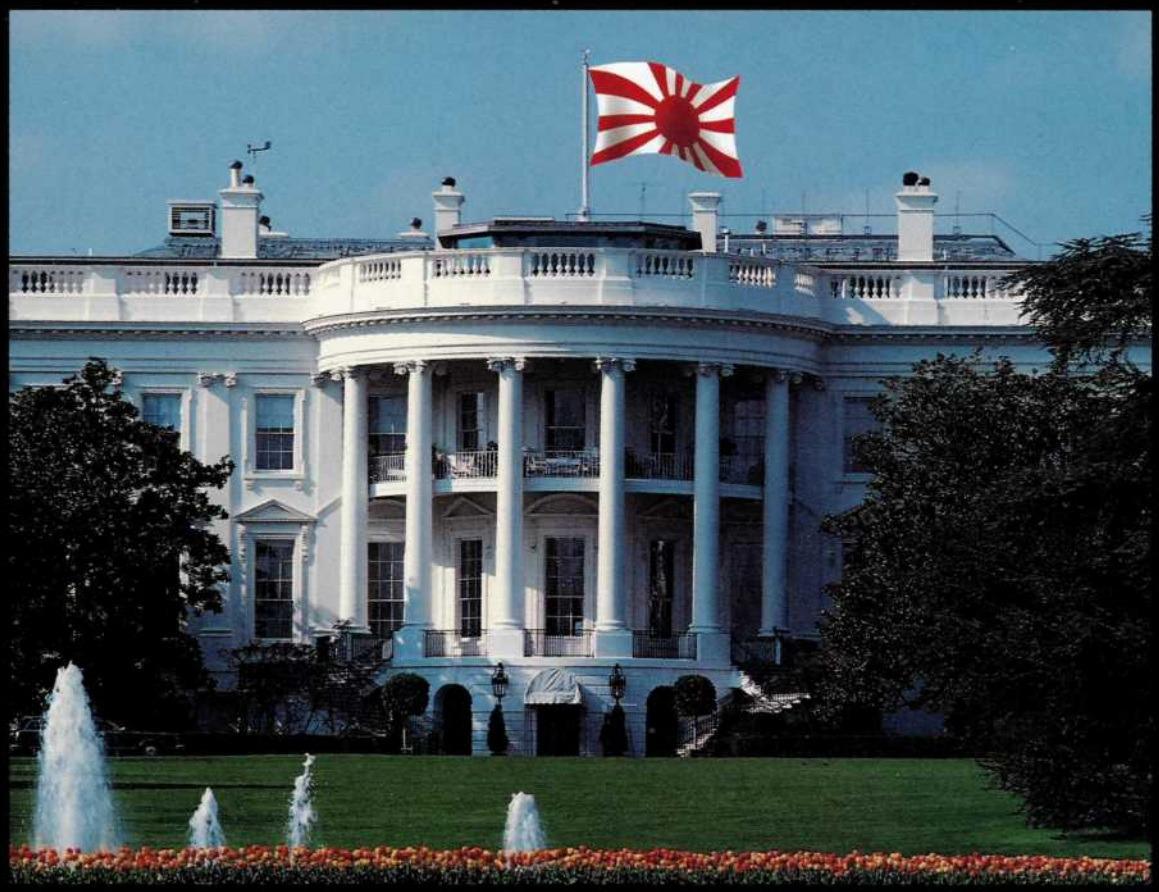
PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

94%

HIGHS: Lots of new and interesting features; marvelous graphics; plenty of exotic units.

LOWS: The Chinese have perhaps too much of an advantage in the anti-aircraft department.

BOTTOM LINE: This is the crowning title in the General series.



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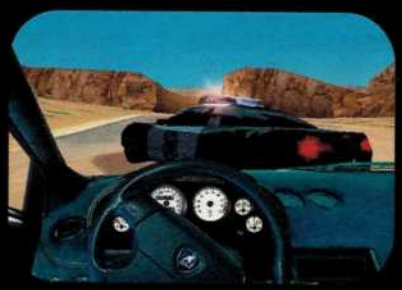
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iF/A-18E Carrier Strike Figh

Category: Simulation

Developer: iMagic Labs

Publisher: Interactive Magic, (919) 461-0722
www.imagicgames.com

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Eight-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 166; 24MB RAM; 150MB hard-drive space; Windows-compatible sound card	16-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 300; 32MB RAM; 3Dfx Voodoo- or Voodoo II-based accelerator; 400MB hard-drive space; Joystick; Throttle; Rudder

Multi-player: Serial/Null Modem; Modem: 28.8; IPX; TCP/IP; Maximum Players: 4; Free Internet Service: *www.imagiconline.com*

What could've been a terrific flight simulation is brought to its knees by dated graphics and buggy gameplay.

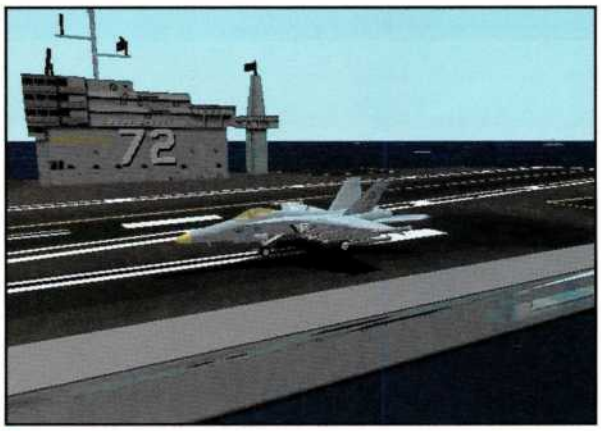
Interactive Magic's second in-house flight sim is a rather sad affair. The designers have crafted a simulation that, from a pure design (rather than a programming) standpoint is often superb. The attention to detail is sharp, the level of realism is perfectly acceptable, and the variety and structure of missions is admirable. As a hardcore carrier-based fighter simulation, it has all the features you could want, equaling and surpassing *F/A-18 Korea* in many particulars. But despite all these positives, its failings are impossible to ignore.

iF/A-18E Carrier Strike Fighter follows the now-traditional iMagic recipe of mixing realistic flight models and a good campaign system with mediocre graphics — and then utterly failing to properly test it. With *iF-22*, we could cut iMagic a bit of slack because it was the company's first home-brew simulation, and with *iF-22 5.0* we could at least be glad that it was running at all. However, with *iF/A-18*, there are no excuses left. This is the third time to the well for the DEMON graphics engine, and it's not only not getting better, it's getting worse.

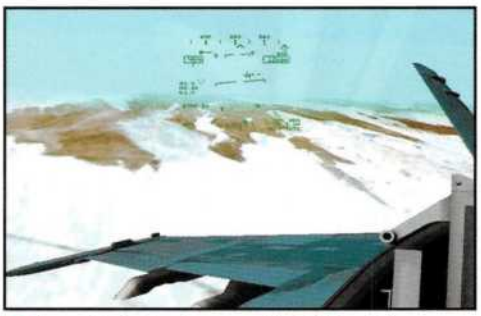
The focal point of the game is the Super Hornet, a perennial favorite among simmers for its agility, flexibility, and systems. In this regard, *iF/A-18E* is admirable in almost all details. First and foremost is the outstanding performance modeling. Using the realistic flight modes, bad flying and jerky moves will land you in the drink right fast. The Super Hornet's good sustained turn and quick maneuvering capabilities are in here, as is the need for careful power management. On my first shot off the carrier, I made an overly aggressive banking climb, quickly stalled, and went straight in the water. Catapult launches and carrier landings are ably executed, presenting a good feel for the challenge of taking off and setting down on a heaving, tiny deck. (We'll get to the problems with this portion of the game in a minute.)



Gun-firing graphics are pretty pathetic, with tracers that look like yellow lines scratched onto film.



Carrier takeoffs and landings are well executed from a modeling standpoint, if you don't count the annoying tendency for your plane to leap into the water and blow up seconds after a successful landing.



The padlock view from your F/A-18E is a little cumbersome, but it does give you a good view of the tasty frosting that covers most of the Middle East.

The accuracy extends to the avionics suite, which is as thorough as any simmer could want. FLIR, IFDL, Laser Spot Tracking, and Radar Homing and Tracking are all recreated within their performance envelopes. Radar submodes include Auto-Boresight, Track While Scan, Range While Scan, and Velocity Search, along with a complete range of slew settings. On realistic settings, all perform within their limitations, giving veracity to the electronic elements of the game. Also included is a complete set of autopilot options, with course, heading, and speed settings and automatic carrier landings.

Wide-ranging mission options give these models a good in-game workout. There are training missions, single missions, custom missions, multi-player, and two campaign theaters (Persian Gulf and Aegean). As with *iF-22*, the missions are the real strength here. The TALON campaign system generates a dynamic battlefield and creates flight missions on the fly, and you have the ability to manage crews, set force packages, and edit missions. There are some bugs in the mission planner, however; sometimes the waypoint orders are wrong, ordering a patrol where an attack is necessary. I also had trouble drag-and-dropping waypoints.

Unfortunately, the strong elements listed so far begin to get swallowed whole in light of the flaws, and almost all the flaws can be summed up in one word: bugs. There are many problems with *iF/A-18* that may be fixed in a patch, but it's simply too late for that. The game crashes regularly. It crashes on startup, it crashes in-mission, and it crashes at mission end. A "Compiling Intel" load-screen that never ends is enough to send you into conniptions. The most stunning bug is one that seems to bounce your plane off the deck and/or blow it up after a successful landing, thus eliminating any credit you might get for mission completion. iMagic's "fix"? Be sure you smack Crtl-Q to end the mission within *four seconds* of hitting the deck to prevent this. There are other lockups and crashes after mission completion, but this is the most

http://pc.ign.com

ter

astounding. How could this have been missed if the game was tested at all?

AI fares little better. Enemies are only average even on harder settings, and wingmen are often pretty foggy, too. Some go through entire missions doing rolls, taking dramatic and unnecessary evasive maneuvers, and ignoring orders. It's still far better than the idiot wingmen of *iF-22*, who would fire all their weapons within a few seconds and then whine about it, but it's not where it should be. Protracted load and mission-exit times add to the frustration.

Visually, *iF/A-18* is very weak, compared to the sharp hardware-accelerated competition, such as *F-15*, or the clean polys of *F/A-18 Korea*. Both hardware and software rendering is available, but the software-only mode is untenably slow and ugly. Accelerated graphics are a bit better, and performance is drastically improved over the constant disc hits of *iF-22*. The problem is that the graphics are simply not very appealing. They are flat, lifeless, and uninteresting. The technique of using satellite images for textures (even if those images were taken on cloudy days) leaves the entire game with what Dan Bennett has called the "Grandma's Frosted Cookie Effect," where all the landscapes looks slathered with a thin layer of white icing. Object rendering is okay, but we're seeing much better these days. Fogging seems extreme, with a good chunk of the horizon fogged out. Clouds are not translucent, and afterburner glow is not implemented. The DEMON graphics engine, which was no great shakes to begin with, is aging badly, and the announced retirement of DEMON is sensible and welcome.

The minor details are strong in many places. The interface and menuing system is effectively laid out, and documentation is sufficient. Realism and difficulty levels are plentiful. Complete keyboard remapping is included. Two-person multi-player (cooperative and head-to-head) is largely stable. The problems are concentrated in two areas: weak graphics and egregious bugs. The graphics can be overlooked somewhat, since they're serviceable. The bugs cannot. I had a gold disc labeled "Master Candidate" between a month and two months before I got a final gold master for review, which means there was at least one substantial testing cycle with what the developers believed to be locked-down code. What went wrong?

Designer Jim Harler is promising fixes to many of the crash problems, and is spending a great deal of time putting out fires on the Internet and in the press. His intentions are noble, and as a former pilot, his considerable expertise shines in the modeling and missions of *iF/A-18*. The problem, however, runs much deeper, and is endemic to the entire system of game development. Interactive Magic, which is no stranger to bug-ridden software, is simply the most notorious example of this industry's enduring inability to properly test complex software, as well as its "ship-now-patch-later" mindset. It must stop.

—T. Liam McDonald



At extreme heights, some of the terrain graphics don't look so bad. They don't fare quite as well at lower altitude, where Dan Bennett's "Grandma's Frosted Cookie Effect" takes place.



Here's more proof that the DEMON engine is out dated; this terrain looks like a bedspread, doesn't it?



A crippled transport trails smoke. Or maybe he just hooked someone's laundry line.

The DEMON is in the DETAILS

The DEMON engine was intended to power a whole line of sims for Interactive Magic. It was the company's first attempt to play with the big boys by developing an in-house engine and sim from the ground up, rather than using external developers such as Digital Integration (which did *Apache*, *Hind*, and *iF-16* for iMagic). When I spoke to iMagic VP of Technology Doug Kubel more than a year and a half ago, he had high hopes for DEMON:

"In addition to simply increasing the frame rate, the increased rendering performance will allow us to add some more geometric detail to each 3D model. More raw polygon-processing power also means that we can add more objects, including true 3D clouds and improved smoke and flames. It also gives us back some of the CPU cycles that used to be consumed by generating graphics, to do more things in the gamer's virtual world, such as smarter, more lifelike AI, increased sophistication in the flight model, more accurate sensor and weapon modeling, and so on."

Some of these intentions, such as better systems and flight modeling, did indeed come to pass in *iF/A-18E*. Others never really materialized. DEMON's 3D objects have a decent level of detail, but are often poorly integrated into the landscape. The "3D clouds" are not translucent, so it's like simply flying through a cotton ball. The increased performance never came to pass; smoke and flames never did look quite right; and the AI had some serious problems. iMagic went into DEMON with good intentions, but like so many before them, got dashed on the rocks of reality.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

58%

HIGHS: Great flight model, good avionics; very strong campaign generator; mission options.

LOWS: Very buggy. Terrain graphics are mediocre. Crashes are common. AI could be better.

BOTTOM LINE: The major crash bugs need to be fixed; then *iF/A-18* may be a good sim.

GREAT GAMES DEMAND RESPECT.



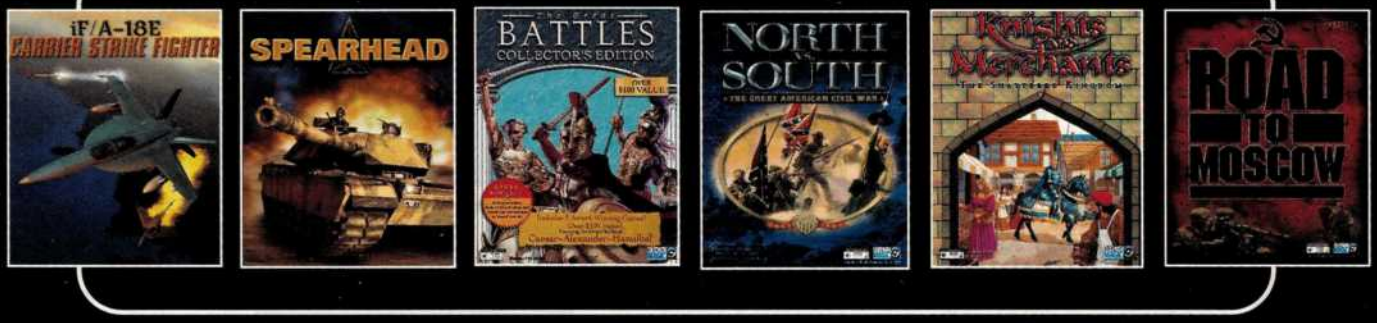
HERE'S WHY.

"(In iF/A-18E CSF)...you'll never have to fly the same mission twice, and you'll experience an unprecedented degree of interaction between allied and opposing forces on the land, in the air, and on the seas."

- All About Games

"Beyond the very realistic gameplay (In Spearhead), the graphics in this Tunisia based combat game look fantastic."

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Titanic

Category:	Adventure
Developer:	Maris Multimedia
Publisher:	Panasonic Int. Media, (408) 653-1888 *www.pimcom.com*

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 120; 16MB RAM; 120MB hard-drive space; DirectX compatible 16-bit sound card	24-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium II; 32MB RAM; Direct3D compatible accelerator

Multi-player: None

Scouring the ocean floor with high tech equipment to find the *Bismarck* and *Titanic* sounds like fun, right? Wrong.

In *Titanic: Challenge of Discovery* you're given the opportunity to retrace the steps of Robert D. Ballard, the famous undersea explorer who earned acclaim when he successfully located such famous wrecks as the *Titanic* and the German World War Two battleship *Bismarck*. The game allows you to relive these and other exciting moments, in a hunt for sunken relics (including both the aforementioned famous wrecks) using the same tactics, technology, and techniques that Ballard used.

It's an interesting concept. The problem is that the game is hindered by bad programming, poor graphics, and dull atmosphere. The result is a title that, despite its redeeming premise, should've never put to sea.

Before you launch your first voyage, you wander through a pre-rendered town consisting of your workshop, your office, and a museum. This entails clicking on everything and everyone around you and watching video clips that have the production values of grade school film strips. Supposedly this portion was included to help you learn how to search for undersea stuff, but I invested many hours of pointless clicking only to discover that it doesn't.



That little window is as close as you'll ever get to experiencing sea and weather conditions in this game.



Since the Discovery submarine doesn't work in the current release of this game, piloting a remote controlled submersible is as exciting as it gets. You'll see thousands of those blotchy plants before you find anything interesting.



Your crew members pop up with oh-so-useful tidbits every so often.

No matter, the real action is out on the ocean, right? Well, kinda. Once you've clicked on everything in town, or, more likely, you've gotten sick of clicking, you assemble your equipment and head out to sea. As you scour the sea floor for the wreck site of each ship, the game tries to simulate the trials and tribulations of life on board the exploration vessel. You'll have to keep an eye on crew morale, which is represented by a line graph along the top of the screen. If you have "crew comments" turned on, you'll also be treated to seemingly random videos of various crew members telling you about the weather, or how tired they are, or that you should take a closer look at something on the sea floor.

Unfortunately, the atmosphere — rather, the lack of it — is downright dull and unappealing, and feels nothing like life aboard a ship that's supposedly bustling with activity. You spend each voyage below deck in the so-called "control van". The only way you become aware of the weather is by clicking on a "check weather" icon; the same goes for sea conditions. In fact, the only time you ever see outside the boat is through a camera mounted on a submersible exploration device.

The search itself could have been more interesting, too. Nearly every gadget employed by Ballard in the hunt for these sunken relics can be put to use here, including sonar devices, a remote-controlled undersea probe called Jason, and a submarine called Discovery. However, a big portion of Discovery's usefulness is negated by a particularly nasty bug — whenever you try to launch the sucker for a first-hand inspection of the sea floor, the game will crash.

With the Discovery effectively out of action, you'll search the spartan sea floor via the remote-piloted probe, which turns out to be monotonous work — all you'll see are poorly drawn plant sprites and an occasional brownish sunken vessel displayed on the remote viewing monitor. In the words of my wife, who observed about two hours of this, "if this is the whole point of the game, they could have at least made it look better." So much for my theory that the game may appeal to non-gamers.

The sad thing is that the premise is intriguing, and I was more than willing to give it a chance; it simply fails due to poor execution. If the game had good undersea graphics, thorough play testing, better documentation, and a *lot* more attention to the at-sea experience *Titanic: Challenge of Discovery*, could've been a treasure all its own. As it is, it will doubtless sink without a trace.

—Joel Durham Jr.

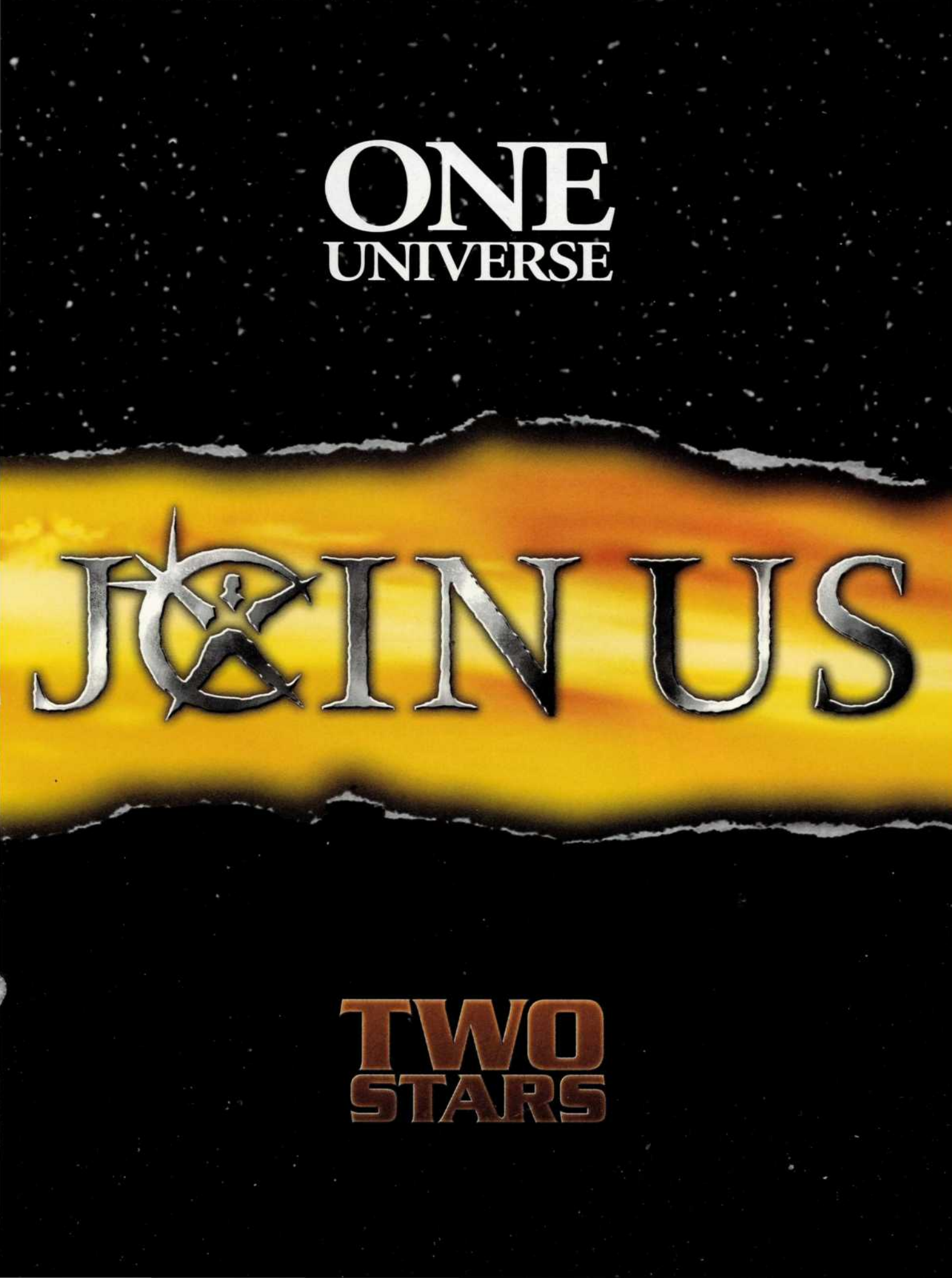
PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

23%

HIGHS: The game does hint at the excitement of undersea exploration, however...

LOWS: ...bugs, bad graphics, poor interface, and monotony ruin the effect.

BOTTOM LINE: Maybe someday there will be a good game on this topic; this ain't it.


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2471

Sentinel Cybertronix unveils Prometheus.

2602

The Fire. *The Cybrids turn on humanity and destroy the Age of Hope. Earthsiege begins.*

2605

A series of defeats forces Earth's people to withdraw support for the fledgling colonies on Luna, Mars, Venus, and outlying mining stations. The colonists suffer massive casualties.

2627

End of The Fire. *The daring destruction of Prometheus's moon base fails to uncover signs of the Dark Intellect* ITSELF.





Inception of the Great Human Empire. Petresun I crowned Emperor.

2652

2800

The Empire and the Cybrids have amassed huge armadas, but no one really knows the extent of the buildup.

Martian rebels discover advanced alien technology which shifts the balance of power. Rebels become a legitimate challenge to the Empire.

2826

2829

Hostilities break out on Mars and Venus. The Emperor unleashes the Imperial Fleet to crush the rebellion. The Cybrids seize the opportunity and launch a massive invasion armada. STARSIEGE *begins.*





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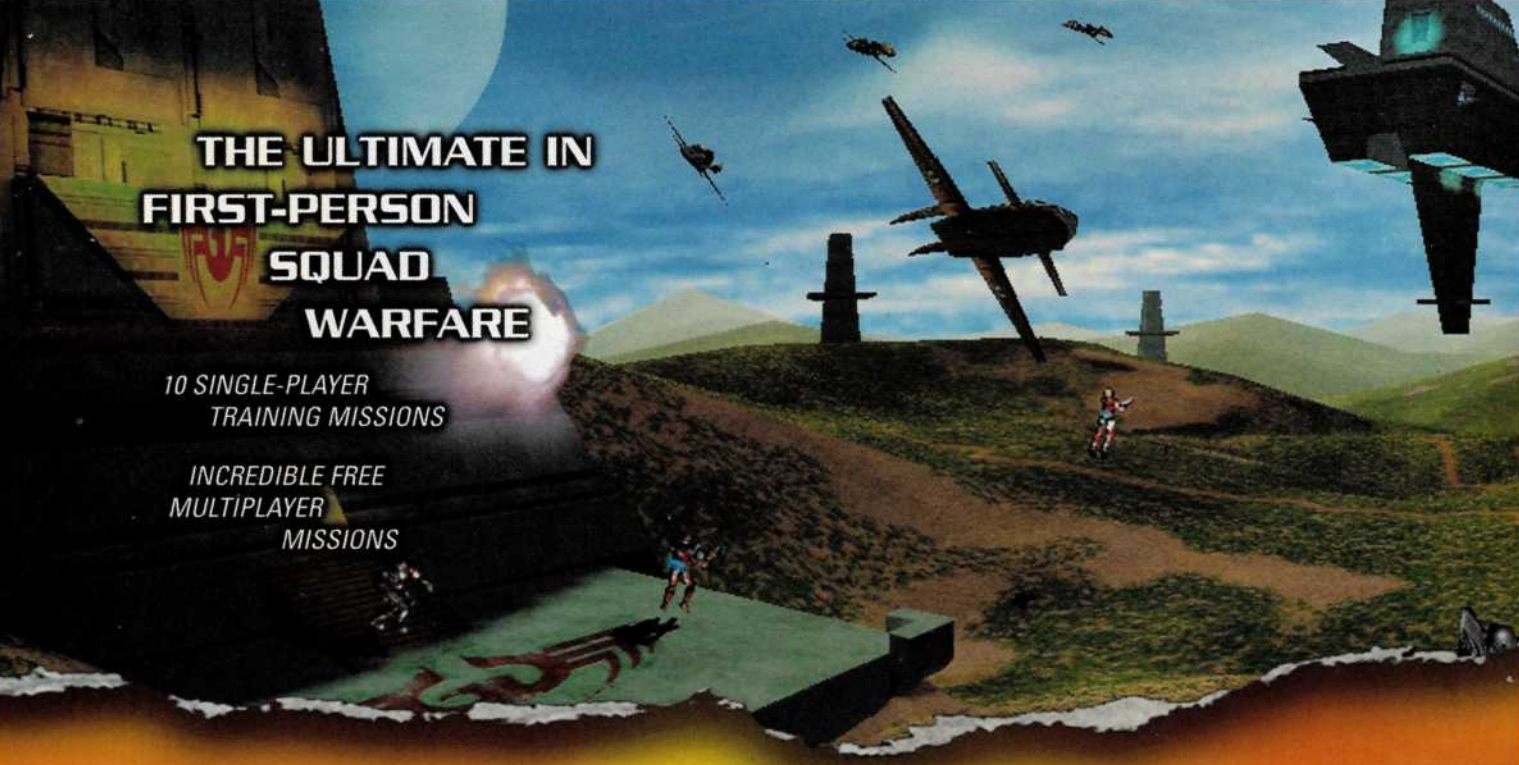
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2832

STARSIEGE ends.

3350

Meta-jumpgate discovered to be part of a network of interstellar gates. The Diaspora begins. Humanity begins to spread throughout the galaxy. "Those Who Jumped," the first people travelling through the jumpgate, forsake the security of the Great Human Empire to journey into the unknown.

3400

Settlers refer to themselves as a "tribe," the Children of the Phoenix. They claim to follow the teachings of the renowned warrior Harabec Weathers, hero of the Cybrid Wars.

3450

A powerful force of Imperial Knights, the Blood Eagle, appear in tribe space to subdue the Children of the Phoenix for the Great Human Empire. The conflict fractures the Children, as groups break away to form new tribes. This event becomes known as The Splintering.

3455

The Starwolf tribe forms, supposedly founded by renegades from the Children of the Phoenix and Blood Eagle.





Tribal culture is now in a perpetual state of war. The Blood Eagle, far from their homes for decades, have come to consider themselves a "tribe." Finding HERCs impossible to maintain, they adopt the flexible armors used by the many tribes.

3480

3530

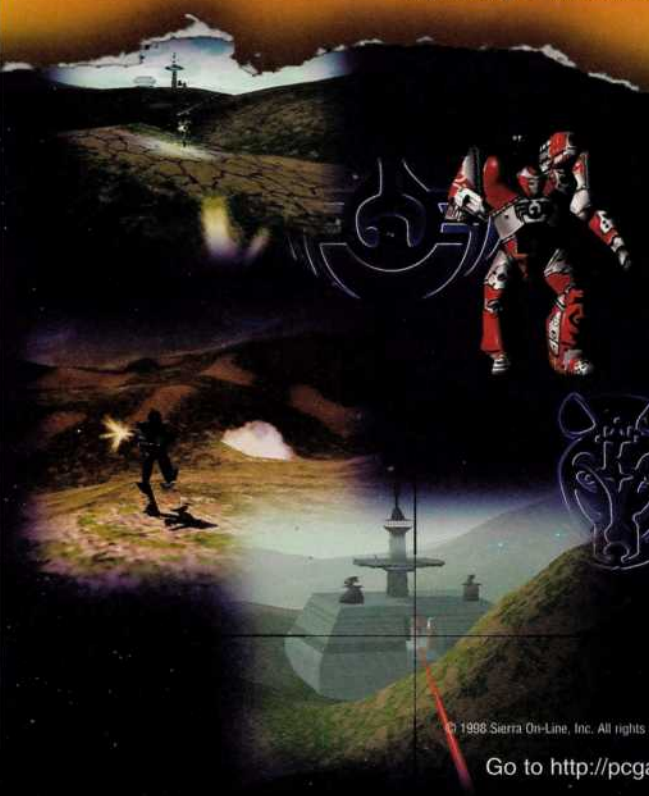
Formation of the Diamond Sword tribe under the tutelage of the Enlightened Master. Using innovative strategies and striking with precision and economy, the Diamond Sword rapidly carve out a large holding for themselves.

Blood Eagle forces prevail in the Hepta Ourubis system following use of ecocidal weapons. Starwolf losses are high.

3932

3940

Rough census by the Children of the Phoenix shows that of the hundreds of smaller, independent tribes, an "alarming number" have either allied with or agreed to non-aggression pacts with either the Starwolf or Blood Eagle. Already the skirmishes have increased, and bloodfeuds grow more common.



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– Next Generation



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HeadRush

Category:	Trivia
Developer:	Berkeley Systems/Jellyvision
Publisher:	Sierra, (800) 757-7707 *www.headrush.com*

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486DX2/66; 16MB RAM; 30MB free hard-drive space; Supported sound card	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive

Multi-player: Up to 3 people on one keyboard

WARNING: This game is definitely not suitable for most geezers." If you're anything like the average *PC Gamer* reader — 31 years-old, male, and college-educated, the term "geezer" is, unfortunately, probably referring to you. Berkeley's new trivia title is essentially a teenage offshoot of its popular You Don't Know Jack trivia series, and an old geezer (like me) is apparently too old to "get it". The questions focus on Hanson, the Spice Girls, "Friends", "Sabrina The Teenage Witch", and more teenage pop culture icons. If you have no idea who these people are, then this ain't for you. However, if there's a teenager on your holiday shopping list, you'll definitely want to pick this game up.

HeadRush has all of the attitude and humor found in the Jack games. The trivia questions come fast and furious from an engaging host that makes jokes appropriate for the teenage crowd. Many of the animations that introduce the questions focus on such teenage staples as kissing, acne, and cartoon characters, but I found these animated snippets to be the weakest part of the game. In other Jack games, the animations were clever and original, and accompanied by catchy musical snippets, but in *HeadRush* the intros are boring and often quite juvenile (then again, I'm 27 years old, so perhaps I'm too old to appreciate them).

Overall, *HeadRush* is a polished, frenetic addition to the Jack franchise that will go down a treat with its target audience. A word of warning, however — there is a potential problem with *HeadRush* in the form of some foul language (usually the word "damn"), and there are several questions that cover the ultimate teenage topic: sex. There's nothing explicit — the game seems to be aimed squarely at the 12 to 15 year-old set — but I don't know if I'd let a kid younger than that play it. It'll be interesting to see if Berkeley's efforts to snag a whole new market with this "junior Jack" succeed, but it'll be a shame if it were to fall through the cracks — it's a fun, engaging trivia game that any teenager would enjoy.

— *Lisa H. Renninger*



I aced all the old geezer questions because they focused on 1970s and 1980s topics such as *Grease* and Milli Vanilli.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

82%

HIGHS: Fun, engaging trivia delivered with flare; lots of teenage humor.

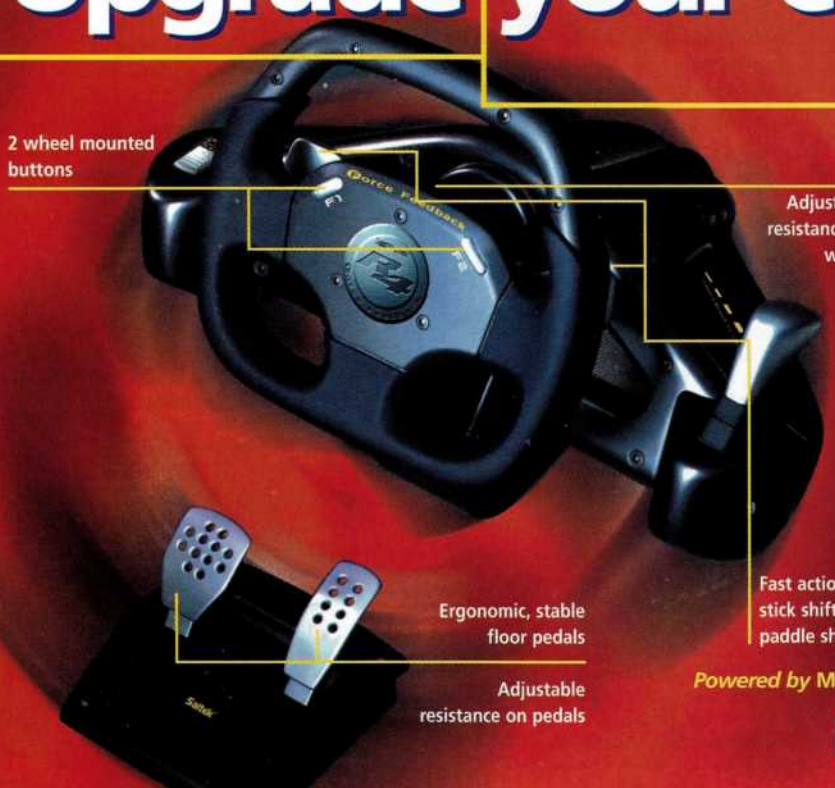
LOWS: Some borderline questions; animations aren't up to usual Jack quality.

BOTTOM LINE: Despite the fart and sex jokes, this is a great trivia game for teenagers.

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House of the Dead

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Category:	Arcade
Developer:	Sega AM3
Publisher:	Sega, (888) 734-2872 *www.sega.com*

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 90; 16MB RAM	Eight-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 166 w/MMX; Supported sound card; Gamepad

Multi-player: Two players on the same computer

How do you kill that which is already dead? Remove the head with a slug of hot lead, that's how!

When the arcade version of Sega's zombie-filled shooter *The House of the Dead* popped up in the local arcade, my friends and I found ourselves painfully addicted to this marvelous light-gun game — it was even more fun than Sega's own *Virtua Cop* series. But when Sega announced a PC conversion, I cringed — after all, most of its PC work so far has been pretty bad, lacking the features and the polish found in the arcade versions. Thankfully Sega has finally seen fit to give this first-class game the treatment it so deserves, and as a result, *House of the Dead* is a winner.

You play Agent Rogan, a secret operative sent to investigate a covert government research lab after he receives a frantic call from his fiance. As he arrives, he discovers a mansion overrun with the undead. It looks like the lab proprietor, Dr. Curien, has been doing some naughty experiments with cadavers, creating an army of zombies with the probable intention of ruling the world. Grabbing your trusty gat, you head into the house, ready to find Curien and dish out the hurt to any flesh-munchers who get in the way.



Before you fight a boss, this handy screen will pop up, showing off the critter's weak point.

Right from the first opening shot, *House of the Dead*'s pace is nothing short of manic — and that's what makes it so much fun. As the computer-controlled camera plods through the house, you use the cursor to target zombies, mutant monkeys, and other terrors that leap out at you without warning. While it's a similar theme to every light-gun game ever released, the difference is in how you need to shoot your target. If you've seen George Romero's *Dawn of the Dead*, you're aware that you can pop a whole clip's worth of bullets into a zombie's breadbasket before it goes down — but if you aim for the *brain*, that sucker drops faster than the value of the ruble. *House of the Dead* lets you blast off various parts of zombie anatomy, and even gives you the opportunity to blow out their chests — and sometimes they'll *keep coming!*



Who's your daddy? Give these menacing zombies a lesson in pain with your trusty .44. But remember: Don't stop shooting 'til you hit 'em in the brain!



When these bad guys drop from the ceiling, you can juggle them in mid-air, blasting off their arms and legs before they hit the floor.

Not everything that moves is hostile; there are scientists hanging about the mansion, running away from their undead captors. These innocent bystanders add an extra gameplay element to the mix — if you manage to save one of the researchers, they'll thank you and hand over a health package.

The biggest problem with most light-gun shooters is longevity and control — after a while, you start learning enemy placement, and the element of surprise vanishes. But in *House of the Dead*, there are multiple paths through the game, which are triggered by certain events. For example, at the beginning of the game, a zombie threatens to throw an innocent off a bridge — if you kill the monster, you'll head directly into the house, but if the researcher dies, you'll head in through the basement. It's handled in a transparent fashion that you probably won't notice at first — and I *still* haven't found all the different paths through the game.

In the arcade, the relentless gameplay resulted in a sweat-drenched player thanks to the aerobic use of the light-gun. But on the PC, we have to make do with the measly mouse — and while it doesn't have the same feeling of the chunky Sega Stunner, it'll do in a pinch. Visually, there are a few compromises in regards to texture detail and polygon counts, but this looks *extremely* close to the arcade. And if you've got a 3D accelerator, you're in luck — Sega has finally listened to its customers and included decent hardware support! The Direct3D mode is truly outstanding, and my 200MHz Pentium with Voodoo2 was pushing 60fps, just like the arcade version.

Other PC-specific features include a PC Mode, where you can select different characters with special gun attributes, a Boss Mode that's a 'time attack' against the big boys, and an option to change the color of the blood to a more festive yellow or blue.

Shooter fans, take note: aside from the lack of a physical light-gun, *House of the Dead* is as good as the genre gets. Even Sega's graphically luscious *The Lost World* can't match *House of the Dead*'s Lovecraftian style and visceral thrills, and other light-gun games seem stale in comparison. If you enjoyed this one in the arcade, it's worth taking it home.

—Colin Williamson

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

88%

HIGHS: Awesome gameplay, dozens of gameplay branches, and solid Direct3D support.

LOWS: Arcade fans will miss the sweat-inducing Sega Stunner light-gun.

BOTTOM LINE: *House of the Dead* is a horror buff's dream come true and a blast to play.

http://pc.ign.com

3D Ultra Mini-Golf Deluxe

Category:	Sports
Developer:	Sierra Attractions
Publisher:	Sierra, (800) 757-7707 *www.sierra.com*

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium; 16MB RAM	Eight-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 200

Multi-player: Four players on same system; IPX; TCP/IP; Maximum players: 4; Free Internet Service: *www.won.net*

I have many fond memories of my younger days when my mom would take me for a round of mini-golf. While it was fun, being an over-imaginative youngster, I couldn't help wishing that the courses had land-mines, real-life monsters, and other such things to spice up the doldrums in the game. With the second release in the Ultra Mini-Golf Series, *3D Ultra Mini-Golf Deluxe*, Sierra delivers the kind of demented eye-candy and bizarro courses I have always longed for, but unfortunately, the gameplay is just not up to par.

This follow-up to last year's *3D Ultra Mini-Golf* features some great looking courses, 18 of which are repeats from the original (yawn) and nine that are new. The courses cover a wide range of themes, and each course contains some nifty visual effects, as well as various people, bugs, and monsters who will interfere with your putting. It's all true to the feel of mini-golf with some added things that could only be accomplished on computer, yet many problems drag the gameplay into the bowels of mediocrity. The biggest problem is the view of the course. Since all the course art is pre-rendered, you cannot customize your view — you're stuck with the pre-set perspective the game gives you for each shot, and if you can't see the hole from there, well that's your tough luck. As you can imagine, this results in extremely frustrating gameplay, as you struggle to find the hole by taking shots just to see around a corner; at times, you have no idea in which direction you should shoot.

The ball physics are also a problem, as they're very inconsistent whether you're using the traditional three-click method or the optional "True Putt" mouse swing method. Sometimes a simple tap of the ball will result in it barely moving, and other times the ball will zing across the course for no apparent reason. Little hills may be nearly impossible to get over, while larger hills offer minimal challenge.

The disheartening thing is that this would be a barrel of fun if Sierra could work out the physics and allow custom views. Until that time, the real thing is far more entertaining — even if land-mines aren't an option.

—William Harms



This is a good example of the imagination used in the course design. We love dinosaurs!

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

43%

HIGHS: Great-looking graphics, cool animations and effects; True Putt mouse swing.

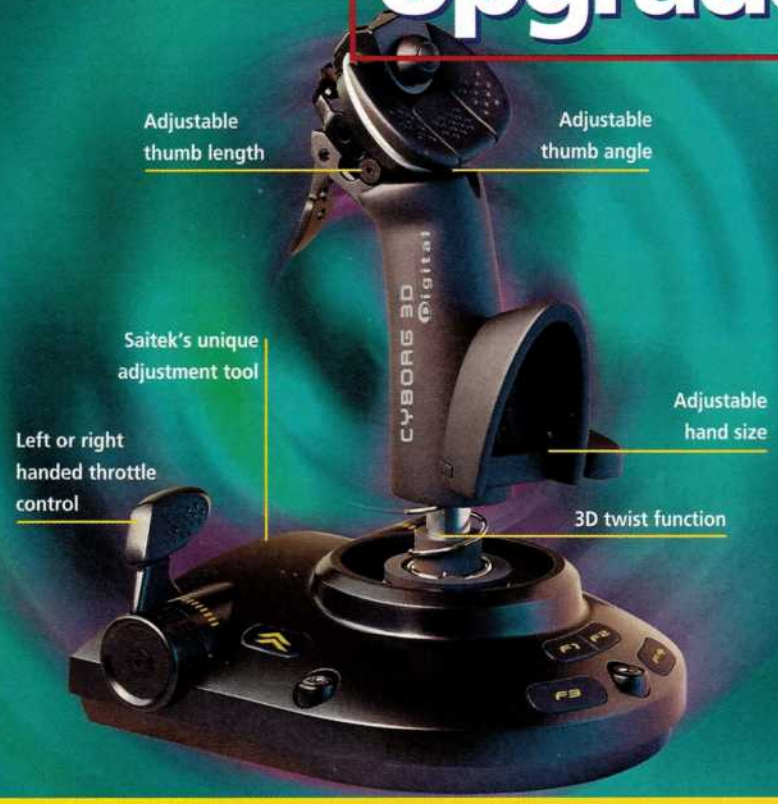
LOWS: Cant change views; once you win, there's no reason to play again.

BOTTOM LINE: Even if you're desperate for some mini-golf, you can find something better.

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Skiing 1999 Edition

Category: Sports

Developer: Dynamix

Publisher: Sierra, (800) 757-7707
www.sierra.com

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95/98; Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 90; 16MB RAM	Pentium 133; 32MB RAM; Voodoo Graphics card

Multi-player: None

Sierra's ski game suits up in a new box for another run, but it's still slippery slopes all the way.

Some sports lend themselves to computer games, others don't. And some, like downhill skiing, straddle the line until somebody does it right. *Skiing 1999 Edition* is the second skiing game Sierra has released this year, suggesting things didn't go so well the first time around — although it's difficult to figure exactly what is different in this version over the previous one. Apart from a change in name and packaging, and the addition of a new freestyle mode that lets you hot-dog it down two new mountains (Mt. Sierra and Mt. Dynamix, not exactly real places), it seems much the same as the original.

At any rate, in addition to the freestyle mode, there are five different play modes: slalom, giant slalom, downhill, the "Super G", and the all-around; all of which are variations of skiing down a hill as fast as you can between red and blue gates. You can play variants of these events by yourself in practice, single race, or a full season — or you can compete against a number of computer-generated skiers. Oddly, these racers never appear on the courses; only on the scoreboards.

U.S. Olympian Picabo Street has returned to dole out advice in the form of full-motion video clips. Sometimes these are helpful; usually they're not. The option to choose your skis and boots is a bit odd. I can see where ski length might matter, but the text accompanying the different kinds of ski boots reads more like a sales brochure than anything else, and apparently has zero effect on gameplay.



The Boot Selection Screen: authentic feature affecting gameplay, or intrusive advertising gimmick?

Graphically, *Skiing 99* doesn't look much different than the last version, though this time around, it supposedly incorporates Voodoo Rush support. On the highest detail settings, the background graphics show off a nice mountain backdrop and the tree-lined borders of the course. But with lowered settings, the pop-in of the surrounding trees is quite noticeable. More serious are the problems of perception, as the terrain graphics don't always provide enough information to let you judge where the bumps and slopes are, and the animation of the skier is among the worst yet seen, reminiscent of one of those spindly water bugs that skim along the tops of ponds.

Though a hardware accelerator does smooth out some of the rough edges, apparently not all 3D cards are created equal when it comes to running *Skiing 99*, as Rendition owners are advised in the Readme file not to use their cards lest they experience random crashes (doesn't Sierra *sell* its own Rendition cards?). Even on a plain-vanilla Voodoo 2 with the latest drivers, there were problems running the game in full-screen mode, as the game would occasionally suffer "brownouts" where the whole screen would turn into a strange world of brown fog. At other times, the timer and mini-map graphics mysteriously vanished, as one of these screenshots shows. That's pretty buggy for what is essentially a patched version of last year's game.

Despite these problems, once you get into a race, the sense of speed and the subtle movements along the mountain do make you feel like you're skiing, and nice simulation elements like weather, temperature, and snow consistency (slushy, powdery, etc.), can affect a run by slowing you down or allowing faster times. And on that note, it's important to point out that *Skiing 99* isn't for everyone — the game's learning curve is simply too steep. Even on the easiest setting, it took a lot of practice to get down the mountain without being flung off a wall like a crash test dummy, let alone avoid being disqualified by missing a gate. The difficulty modes need to be differentiated by more than just wider gates. Even an arcade mode would be welcome, as would an option to actually race against other skiers, not just their best times.

When it comes right down to it, this title is best left to the few fanatics who simply must have a downhill skiing game at any cost. The rest of us should stick with the conventional road racers for now and wait until somebody else does a decent job of simulating this sport.

—Jason Bates



***Skiing 1999* generates a sense of speed and a level of difficulty that can be both exhilarating and frustrating; the learning curve may be too steep for some gamers.**

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

43%

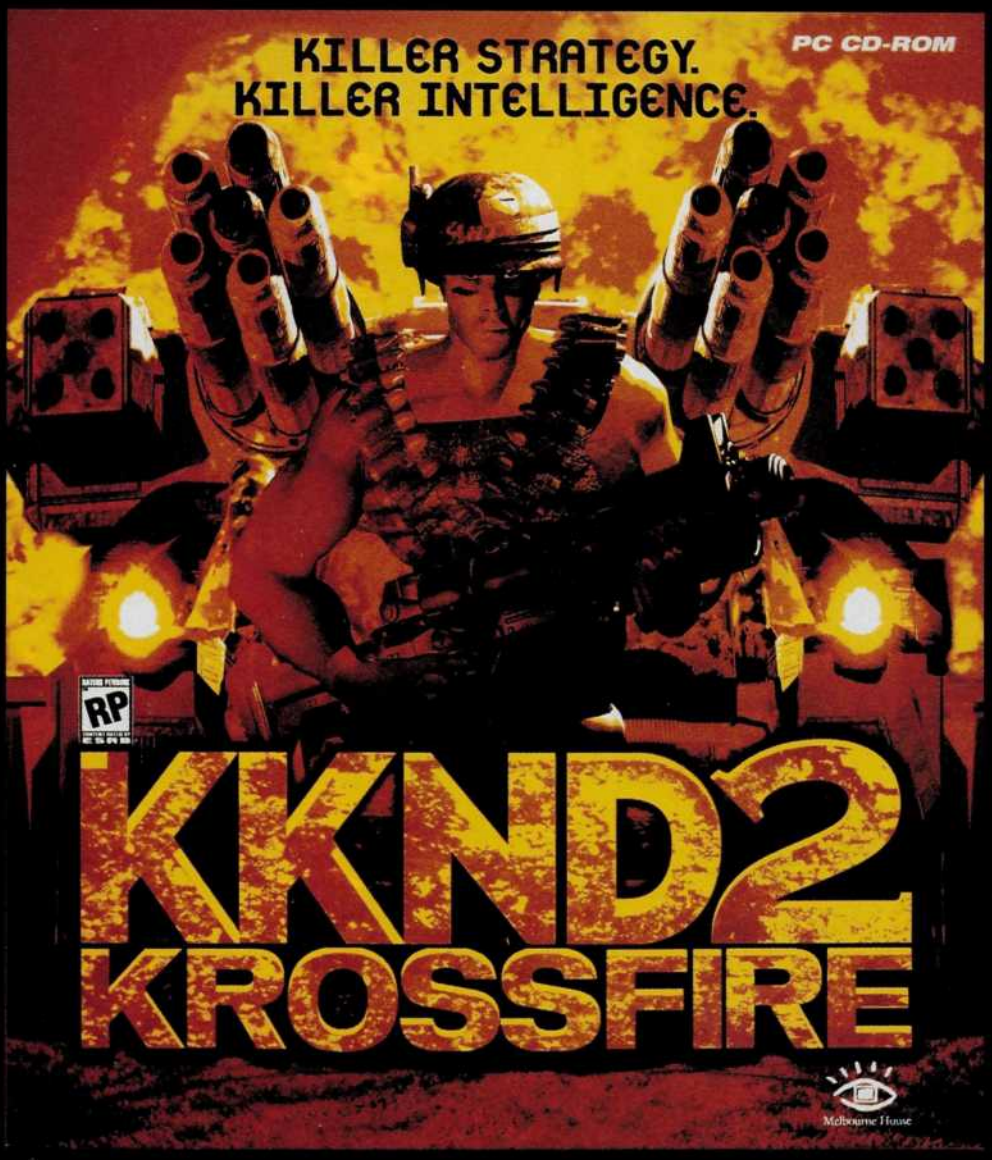
HIGHS: Fairly convincing downhilling sensation.

LOWS: It's a still-buggy-even-though-it's-been-patched follow-up to a recent game!

BOTTOM LINE: If you bought the other one, don't buy this. If you didn't buy the other one, don't buy this either.

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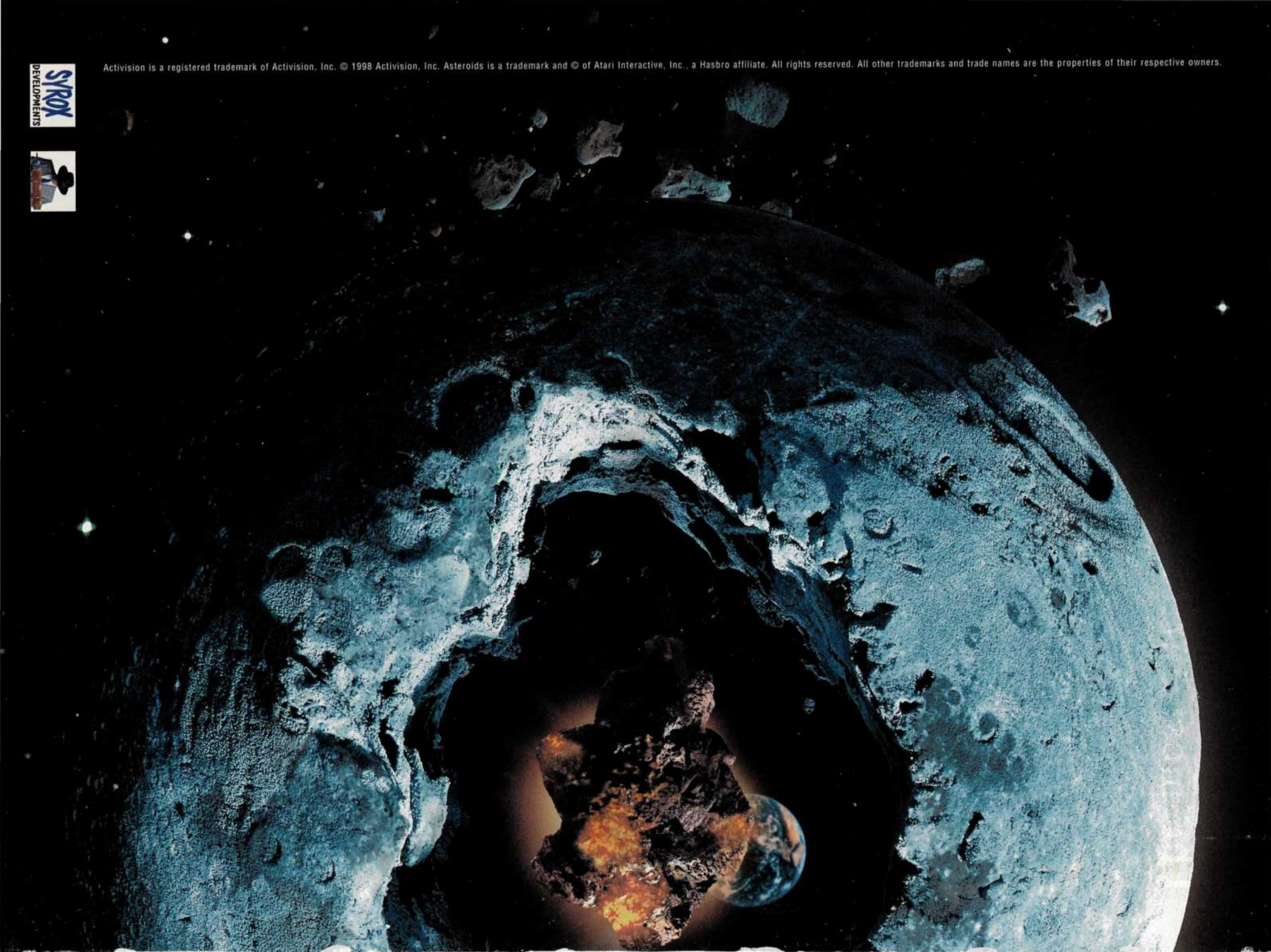
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Evel Knievel 3D Stunt Game

Category:	Action
Developer:	Pantera Entertainment
Publisher:	Valusoft, (612) 442 7701 *www.valu-soft.com*

Required	We Recommend
Single-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 90; 16MB RAM, 30MB hard-drive space	Pentium 166; Direct3D accelerator; Supported sound card

Multi-player: None

This daredevil game based on the 1970s stunt-riding legend is so stinky that it's practically unplayable.

Anyone old enough to remember 1970s pop icon Evel Knievel has probably wondered why there hasn't been a daredevil simulation based on the life of this stunt-riding legend. After all, a game about a lifetime of death-defying stunts, hair-raising speed, and white-knuckle crashes would seem like a natural fit with today's 3D technology. So imagine our surprise when Valusoft's *Evel Knievel 3D Stunt Game* breezed into our offices. This is a game that claims you can "become the legend," moving from Evel's grass-roots start in Butte, Montana, all the way to his LA Coliseum appearance. The game also promises "Progressive harder stunts for fifty events to complete!" making us deduce that the game was *so* good, even the packaging copywriters couldn't think straight.

In *Evel Knievel*, you "become the legend" by guiding Evel through a set series of stunts. In some, you must pop wheelies or stand on the bike seat as you dodge giant boulders that are left on the track. You can also pull off the classic Knievel-style jumps, leaping over dozens of eighteen wheelers at once. In one of the more questionable events, Evel must drive up a ramp and come to a halt before he gets to the top. I don't know about you, but I'm not interested in watching Evel *stop* at the end of a damn ramp.

The most challenging parts of the game are the wheelie portions, where you have to keep perfectly balanced by tapping the accelerator key, while "sliding" back and forth on the track. Presented in a third-person perspective, the problems begin whenever Evel is required to stand on the bike's seat during a stunt — our favorite daredevil carelessly lifts his butt right into the camera. Having a polygon posterior in your face is a bad thing when nasty objects are strewn in your path, though you can switch to a view slightly behind and to the left of Evel and his hawg. The only problem is that playing in this mode is similar to a depth perception test, and is made even more surreal by the road, which moves in the same way it would if you were viewing it head-on. This proves that Evel is such a bad-ass, not only can he deny the laws of gravity, but also the laws of perspective.



Aiiieee!!! Evel takes flight.

While you'd expect the unpredictable nature of Evel's death-defying jumps would be the meat and potatoes of the game, in this regard it manages to fall even shorter than Evel's ill-fated jump across the Snake River. The only challenge lies in figuring out how long the jump is going to be (the game doesn't bother to tell you), and approaching the ramp at the right speed. That's it. Balance and aim are controlled by the computer, so just gun your engine and see if you're going fast enough.

Graphics are a mixed bag. While the frame rate is okay through Direct3D-compliant cards, the fences by the side of the track "float" six inches in the air, Evel looks as rigid as a freeze-dried gerbil, and the crashes send him flying off on illogical trajectories. But what really gets my goat is the fact that Evel isn't wearing his cape. If you're making an Evel Knievel game, you'd better include the durn cape.



Evel gives the thumbs-up to the crowd, indicating that his spine is still intact. Most of the time, Evel is about as animated as a stuffed gerbil.



Hey! Who the hell put rocks on the racetrack? I bet it was Evel's evil twin brother, Stevel Knievel!

The game does manage to provide lots of tension and suspense as you try to land those big jumps, but it's not what you think. You see, during the jump sequences in the LA Coliseum, going too fast results in Evel missing the landing ramp, and he invariably begins sliding until he falls off the map, crashing the game and forcing you to reboot. You also shouldn't attempt to steer left or right on the launch ramps, as Evel will fall *through* the ground, dropping out of the map and crashing the game again. It's nail-biting excitement, to be sure.

There is absolutely no reason why you should even *think* about buying *Evel Knievel*, which is one of the worst actioners since *Island Peril* and *Catfight*. This is a big-time waste of silicon, and even hardcore Knievelers should stay far away. If you're hungry for crazy stunt thrills, just pick up a copy of *Motocross Madness*, and enter your name as "EvalKnvl" — you'll be spared a *lot* of pain.

—Colin "Bone Snapper" Williamson

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

11%

HIGHS: The unintentional "crash and your PC crashes" feature keeps you on your toes.

LOWS: Gameplay, graphics, animation, sound, manual, and box.

BOTTOM LINE: This game is truly...*evel!* (Heh, heh.) Do yourself a favor and don't buy it.

Bass Masters Classic T.E.

Category:	Simulation
Developer:	THQ
Publisher:	THQ, (818) 225-5167 *www.thq.com*

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 133; 16MB RAM; 72MB hard-drive space	32MB RAM; Direct3D compatible accelerator

Multi-player: Modem: 28.8; IPX; TCP/IP; Maximum Players: 6; Free Internet Service: *www.Mplayer.com*

THQ may not have landed a perfect fishing sim with *Bass Masters Classic Tournament Edition*, but it sure isn't one to throw back.

By mere coincidence, the Bass Master Classic was being televised on TNN the weekend I wrote this review. Had you glimpsed a few minutes of it, you would probably have come to the same realization I did: to some folks, fishing is much more than something to do on a Sunday afternoon while you drink your beer. It's a way of life.

That way of life is the focus of THQ's *Bass Masters Classic Tournament Edition*, where your goal is to reel in the big ones according to the rules of the Bass Master Classic competition. The catch (no pun intended) is that you're only allowed to haul in up to five bass of any species, and with only five to choose from, the bigger the better. Fortunately, you'll have the gear to get the job done. Your bass boat comes equipped with seven configurable rods each outfitted with your choice of lure, action, and rig, resulting in combinations that are nearly endless. You can configure them on the fly, but it's better to get it done before you go out on the lake to save valuable time. Once you hit the water, you have exactly eight simulated hours — or eight, 15, or 30 minutes in real time, depending on your preference — in each day of the tournament, and you're penalized if you're late to weigh in.

When you're ready to hit the lake, you can choose to play an arcade, practice, amateur, or professional game in one of three difficulty levels. These are important distinctions since *Bass Masters* is full of realistic detail. Weather and water conditions vary from day to day, and that affects what the bass will bite, and when and where they'll hit it. You have complete control of your boat and can cruise it around with its little trolling motor, and you can cast anywhere via a friendly interface: You simply choose whether to overhead cast, flip, or pitch the line out, set a target spot on the lake, and fire.



The only unrealistic element of *Bass Masters* is the underwater view, which lets you see how the fish react to your bait.

As in real life fishing, the challenge is knowing what to cast and where to cast it — if you're baffled, you can click a hint button to view a short AVI movie of one of three drawling Bass Master champs. There are around forty such AVIs, and they're sensitive to the current time of day, weather, and water conditions when you request them.

Unfortunately, the game's tutorial is also an AVI and isn't interactive at all. It goes by quickly and covers nearly every aspect of gameplay, so pay attention.

Once you've cast your line, you can get an underwater view of the lure and the water around it. This feature falls flat in two ways: it drains the challenge by letting you see if there are any fish where you're casting, and how they're reacting to your bait; and it shows the weakness of *Bass Masters'* clunky 3D engine more than the above water view does. The underwater plants and fish are chunky sprites, and the screen is full of aliasing; your fishing line is so jaggy it's only partially visible at times. Some of these issues could have been solved by support for higher resolution (the maximum is 640x480, no matter how much memory your card has), but for some glitches like weak perspective correction and texture warping, it might only have served to make the problems more noticeable.

However, the graphics aren't as distracting in the boat, and the gameplay is certainly a challenge. The game is at its best when a big ol' fish hits your lure, and you've got to fight to bring it in. As the fish tires out, you have to watch the tension on your line to make sure it doesn't break, and you can do it by angling your rod or adjusting the drag on your reel.



Though you can navigate around the lake in your boat, it's faster just to use the overhead map.



It looks like an ominous light cast by a UFO, but that bright circle is your casting target. Tutorials help you figure out where to cast.

Despite a few weak elements, there's enough here to keep any virtual angler full of stories about the one that got away. If you can overlook some of the graphical deficiencies, *Bass Masters* is a keeper.

—*Joel Durham Jr.*

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

82%

HIGHS: Lots of detail and choices; 3D rendered lakes with total freedom of movement.

LOWS: Shoddy graphics; weak 3D engine; non-interactive tutorial.

BOTTOM LINE: While there's still no perfect fishing sim, this is a leap in the right direction.

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Montezuma's Return

Category: Action/puzzle

Developer: Utopia Technologies

Publisher: GT Interactive, (800) 305-3390
www.gtinteractive.com

Required	We Recommend
Win95; 4x CD-ROM drive; P133; 16MB RAM (hardware acceleration) or 32MB (software only); DirectX compatible sound and video card; 25MB hard-drive space	P166MHz; 3Dfx Voodoo or Voodoo II based accelerator; Gamepad

Multi-player: None

A shooter without weapons or a multi-player mode sounds like the gaming equivalent of the '58 Edsel, but this may surprise you.

Gamers who've been weaned on the run-and-gun carnage of *Quake*, *Unreal*, *Jedi Knight*, and other shoot-'em-ups might scoff at the idea of a first-person action game with no weapons and no multi-player mode. But *Montezuma's Return* proves that you don't need massive doses of gunplay to have a good time, and it's a reminder that multi-player action isn't the end-all and be-all of computer gaming.

Montezuma's Return is the sequel to *Montezuma's Revenge*, a cute little side-scroller that was apparently all the rage back when the Commodore 64 was the ultimate gaming machine. But with its lush 3D graphical environments, beautiful lighting effects, and silky-smooth animations, this game's got about as much in common with its predecessor as an Atari 800 has with a Nintendo 64 system.



Booby traps abound in *Montezuma's Return* — and not all of them are as conspicuous as this one!



The only way to take out bosses is to master hit-and-run attacks; head-on attacks are suicidal.

The hero in both is Max Montezuma, an Indiana Jones-wannabe set on claiming the treasure socked away by his ancestor so the invading Spaniards couldn't get their hands on it. Old Montezuma must've been pretty dead-set on keeping that treasure hidden, too, because it's buried at the bottom of a pyramid that's home to a very dedicated contingent of guardians — everything from vicious tigers and man-eating rats to combative chimps and screeching Aztec warriors.

Without guns, the only weapons at your disposal are your bare fists and steel-toed boots. Luckily, the corridors and rooms of each of the game's ten levels aren't chock-full of enemies; you might face seven or eight foes per level, and if your punching and kicking skills aren't up to snuff you can often simply hightail it to safety. You won't get as high a score doing that, which might keep you from playing the Bonus Round at the end of each level — but I say it's better to finish the main course than to die trying to get to the dessert tray.



You'll really appreciate the job Utopia Technologies did in the graphics department when you get up close to this tiger.



Catapults can propel you over dangerous objects, as well as giving you the altitude you need to reach valuable treasure and keys.

But the enemies aren't the biggest danger: it's the environment itself. At its core, *Montezuma's Return* is a platform game — and usually there's something lethal waiting for you should you slip and fall while making a jump. Lava and spikes are the main concerns, but there's always the danger of taking too much damage just from hitting the rock-solid floor. And believe me when I say you will fall early and often in *Montezuma's Return*. You've got to maneuver along narrow beams, avoid fatal booby traps, hop onto moving platforms that'll dump you if you don't move on in time, climb ropes that ascend to precipitous heights, spring from one trampoline to another with deadly spikes in between — the list goes on and on. Toss in some extended underwater swimming sequences where one wrong turn can spell lights out for Max, and it's easy to see how death can become a very frequent visitor.

Which brings me to the game's biggest problem: there's no in-game save. If you die — and you *will* die a lot — you must start at the beginning of the level unless you made it to the boss' lair first. Frustration always lurks around the corner in a game like this, and without an in-game save it rears its ugly head much too soon. Plenty of similar games have featured in-game saves, and the only reason I can think of for the lack of one here is that either the game would be too short if you could save at will, or the developer was too lazy to change the code for the PC version (*Montezuma's Return* is also available for the Nintendo 64). I had a few other quibbles — I could never swing on a rope as described in the manual, the View Lock key didn't work properly, and the absence of difficulty settings was both mysterious and disconcerting — but covering the same ground over and over is what really kept me from total immersion in the game world.

Even with those annoyances, though, this is an impressive achievement. Now if only the designers would give this game an in-game save feature and fix the other little problems, we'd definitely be looking at the *full* Monte.

—Stephen Poole

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

78%

HIGHS: Sweet graphics and animation in 3Dfx version; great combo of action and puzzle-solving.

LOWS: The lack of an in-game save makes for a high frustration factor.

BOTTOM LINE: If you've got a little patience, this one is definitely worth checking out.

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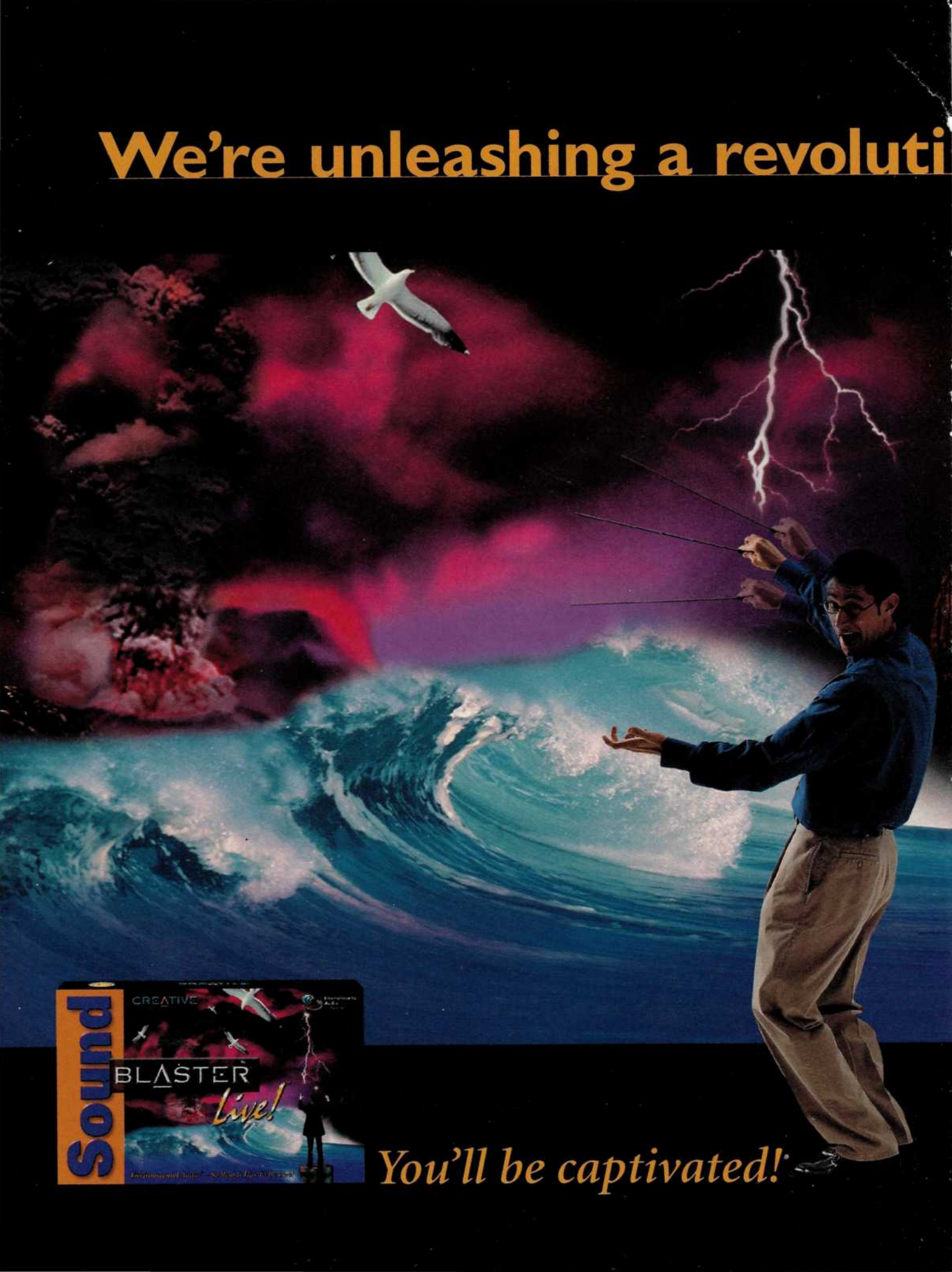
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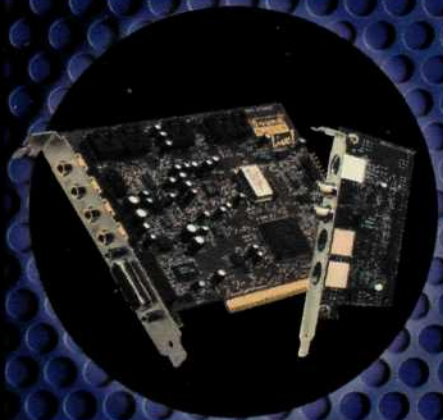
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When it gets hard to breathe and you feel you might be suffocating from lack of hardware news and reviews, it may be time for an injection of...

The Hard Stuff

Well, boys and girls, it's that time of the year again. Jack Frost is no doubt nipping at your nose, and there's much rejoicing in the air. But there's also a great deal of bleak, ugly, dark, bitter, icy-cold weather blanketing this great country of ours — oh, and Canada, too. So what are hard-core gamers to do with themselves during this time of utter loneliness and abject suffering? If you're like us, you'll fire up that gas-powered generator and start playing some kick-ass games on your PC!

Since this is our big December issue, we have more room than ever to bring you the biggest, baddest, newest hardware on the block. For starters, we've got not one, not two, but *three* PC systems reviewed in this issue alone, and one of them is even powered by a K6-2 processor with 3DNOW! instructions — our first. Besides the computer systems, we've got three new video cards powered by three different next-generation chipsets — Diamond's RIVA TNT-powered Viper V550 and 3Dfx Banshee-powered Monster Fusion, plus Hercules' Savage 3D-powered Terminator Beast. As if that weren't enough, we even have two new products from Microsoft — the Sidewinder Force Feedback Wheel and the MDSS80 speaker system — the first true digital audio speakers we've reviewed. Continuing the audio theme, we've got a review of Advent's newest three-piece speaker system, the AV390. And, last but not least, we finally received a rump-shaking Intensor Chair from BSG labs. Look for our review inside.

So what else have we been doing this month (besides playing with all of this cool new stuff)? Well, we've been sleeping a lot, and dreaming of playing with all of this cool new stuff. That's right, we're that lonely. But don't shed a tear for us; no, this is the life we've chosen for ourselves. We do it so you, our happy readers, don't have to subject yourselves to the same sort of back-breaking, labor-intensive gameplaying and video card-benchmarking marathons that we're forced to endure every day of our lives.

So...as you turn the page and start to read The Hard Stuff in earnest, spare a thought for us, and accept our hopes for a long, cold holiday season that keeps you inside where you, too, can play with your new PC peripherals all day long! Happy Holidays, everyone!

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HARD STUFF PHOTOGRAPHY BY AARON LAUER

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* (now called *Maximum PC*). Between our testing and the bootMarks, we'll give you the lowdown on which devices perform and which ones fizzle.

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K6-2 does 3DNOW!

■ **A look at AMD's popular alternative to Pentium II.**

Intel CPUs are damned expensive — always have been. But that's the price we've had to pay for living in an Intel-dominated CPU market; a position Intel has held since the first mainstream PCs began to roll down the assembly lines more than 15 years ago. Of course, smaller companies have always been in there, struggling to compete — but for the most part these companies have succeeded only at nibbling up a few of the crumbs that fell from Intel's giant maw. AMD has arguably come the closest to seizing any significant slice of the market, but time and time again Intel's CPUs have proven to have just enough additional power in key areas to keep AMD at bay. This time around, AMD — which in the past has been little more than a lower-priced copycat to Intel — has actually gone above and beyond any existing CPU technology with the K6-2 and its 3DNOW! instruction set.



On the surface, the K6-2 is very similar to the original K6 — a fast, near-Pentium II-class processor that suffered poor sales in the gaming market due to its inability to perform the quick floating-point math calculations needed in many of today's most popular titles. Just below the surface, however, the K6-2 differs and improves upon the K6's architecture by adding what AMD calls 3DNOW! instructions. These 21 new CPU instructions add several intriguing features, not the least of which is support for SIMD processing (short for Single Instruction Multiple Data). While not exactly an innovation in itself — the MMX portion of most newer CPUs (including the original K6) supports SIMD for integer math calculations — 3DNOW! actually allows for four *floating-point* calculations per clock cycle. Anyone who's ever played a *Quake*-based game with an original K6 should appreciate the boost in frame rate this parallel tasking can potentially offer. Previously, *Quake*-based games — and any 3D games that rely heavily on floating-point math to calculate in-game physics, geometry transforms, lighting, etc. — ran half as fast, or even slower, on K6 processors than on Pentium II using the same clock speeds. With 3DNOW! technology, these same games now run just as fast, if not faster, on K6-2s than on comparable PIIs. And the K6-2 costs a lot less; at press time, we were able to find a 350MHz K6-2 for as low as $250, and 300MHz for $135. With prices so low, and performance levels finally in the green (with games that support 3DNOW!, at least), AMD has the makings of a real contender.

But what of the potential pitfalls to AMD's technology? K6-2s are of the older "Socket 7" variety, and although they will fit in most Socket 7 motherboards (where your old Pentium Classic or MMX CPU likely hung out), they won't function properly unless they're seated in a motherboard that supports their enhanced features. Fortunately, there are more than two dozen motherboard manufacturers currently supporting K6-2; a list of these manufacturers can be found on AMD's web site at *www.amd.com/*. You should be able to grab just about any of these motherboards at your local computer store for no more than $150. As you might imagine, though, these are not Intel-designed motherboards, and while most of them have the advanced features we've come to expect from Intel 440BX chipsets — AGP and 100MHz front-side bus capabilities — there are a few compatibility issues that can arise with some of these boards and video cards based on Intel's own i740 or NVIDIA's RIVA TNT.

Of course, compatibility issues aren't the biggest fear facing AMD. Much more worrisome is whether or not the gaming industry will fully embrace the 3DNOW! instructions. In order for a game to gain any benefit from 3DNOW!, it has to either be written specifically to use the specialized instructions, 3D chip manufacturers have to write drivers that support them, or 3DNOW! instructions have to be implemented at the API level (Application Program Interface — i.e., DirectX, OpenGL, Glide). As it currently stands, DirectX 6.0 is the only API that has implemented support, and games written to take advantage of its advanced features will receive a big boost in performance on a K6-2 over a standard K6. In the near future, we're told OpenGL 1.2 should ship with 3DNOW! support, and 3Dfx has recently announced that it, too, will be jumping on the AMD bandwagon by adding support to its drivers for Voodoo2 and Voodoo Banshee chips. And with 3DNOW! gaining support from industry bigwigs like id Software's John Carmack, it's becoming increasingly difficult to imagine this technology falling by the wayside. But remember that a K6-2 only functions as fast as a regular K6 in the absence of 3DNOW!-optimized software; and for the time being, supported games are few and far between.

CHRISTMAS CANCELED?



December 25, 1998 **North Pole Gazette** Temp. -31°



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*Voted 1998 most played coin-operated game of the year by Amusement Machine Operators Association.

Diamond Viper V550

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Company: Diamond Multimedia
www.diamondmm.com

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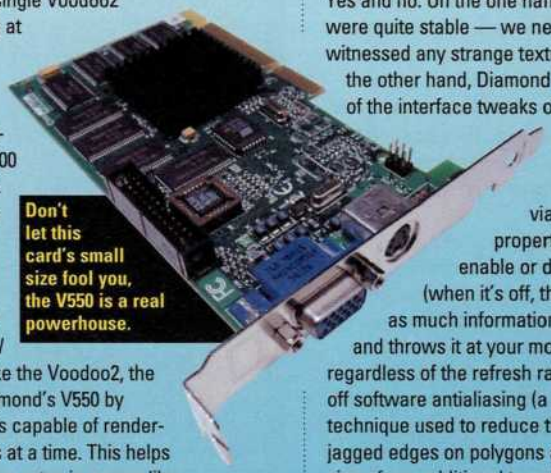
Prices: $199 (M.S.R.P.) (16MB AGP 2X VERSION)

NVIDIA's next-generation RIVA TNT chip is faster than the law should allow.

Since it was first announced, there has been an awful lot of hype and speculation regarding the 3D prowess of NVIDIA's RIVA TNT chip. Most of it has centered on the TNT being the first true successor to the high-end 3D crown, long held by 3Dfx's 800 pound gorilla, Voodoo2. We've been eagerly awaiting its arrival based solely on these projected performance levels — and who wouldn't be excited? Voodoo2-like 3D power with improved visuals and fast 2D to boot — all in one slot — that sounds like a card we'd all be happy to have under our system's hoods. Well, the first retail TNT-based board has finally arrived in our offices in the form of Diamond Multimedia's Viper V550, and we're pleased to report that it is a truly impressive specimen.

Before we get too carried away, we should tell you that all of the current TNT cards shipping, including the V550, aren't quite as fast as they were initially intended to be. When we first heard of this chip, the information NVIDIA was circulating had the TNT running at a core clock speed of 125MHz — pushing eight million triangles per second with a fill rate of 250 million pixels per second. But the folks at NVIDIA say they only recently realized that if they were going to get the TNT out the door within a reasonable time frame and at the expected price point, they would have to use 0.35 micron technology instead of the smaller, cooler-running 0.25 process they had initially intended. At 0.35, the chip simply can't handle the 125MHz clock — so of course its speed has shrunk significantly. The core operating speed is now 90MHz, pushing six million polys per second with a fill rate of 180 million pixels per second. NVIDIA claims these reductions don't alter game performance markedly — we won't know whether or not that's true until some time next year, when NVIDIA says it'll finally begin using the 0.25 micron process to produce new TNT chips.

Even with the lower specs, the V550 still screams. On our 266MHz Pentium II test-bed system, it turned in scores nearly identical to those of any single Voodoo2 when running at 640x480 in Direct3D *or* OpenGL. And at resolutions of 800x600 and 1024x768, the TNT even came close (in a few cases) to matching the power of *dual* Voodoo2s. Like the Voodoo2, the TNT (and Diamond's V550 by association) is capable of rendering two pixels at a time. This helps speed up frame rates in games like *Quake II* — games that require things like texture maps and lighting to be applied to a single surface — by allowing TNT's pixel engine to do both in a single pass. Voodoo2 and TNT are the only chips currently available that sport this feature. The TNT goes above and beyond Voodoo2 architecture not only in its increased color depths — 24- to 32-bit true-color rendering on the TNT, versus 16-bit high-color on the Voodoo2 — but also in its ability to run 3D games at resolutions as high as 1920x1200. Of course, as fast as this chip is, it still couldn't play any games we threw at it at those top resolutions and maintain a playable frame rate — for that, you'll need whatever processor Intel releases tomorrow (or maybe the one it releases next week). Even so, the TNT is capable of keeping the action in most games moving quite smoothly at 1024x768 — something Voodoo2 can only do in SLI mode.



Don't let this card's small size fool you, the V550 is a real powerhouse.

And unlike the poor visual quality we became accustomed to with RIVA chips of the past, the TNT proves to be one of the best-looking 3D solutions around. The 3D portion of the TNT has been rewritten from the ground up, so all of the texture-seaming and ugly dithering effects that were so prevalent in the previous iterations of the RIVA family are now gone.

So has Diamond done right by the TNT? Yes and no. On the one hand, the V550's drivers were quite stable — we never locked up or witnessed any strange texturing artifacts. On the other hand, Diamond hasn't included any of the interface tweaks ordinarily associated with its drivers. In fact, the only things you can do via the V550's display properties menu is to enable or disable vertical sync (when it's off, the TNT cranks out as much information as it can manage and throws it at your monitor's screen regardless of the refresh rate) and turn on and off software antialiasing (a processor-intensive technique used to reduce the appearance of jagged edges on polygons and lines). The omission of any additional tweaks doesn't hamper the V550 in any tangible way, but we're so used to seeing Diamond go all out with its drivers that we we're a bit disappointed that the V550 is lacking in this area.

All in all, though, the V550 is a great card for gamers, regardless of whether or not you intend to pair it up with a Voodoo2 — but like the Voodoo2, the TNT is also very CPU-dependent — faster processor speeds mean almost exponential increases in performance from the TNT chip. And although the requirements on the box say you only need a P90 to use this card, we wouldn't recommend it to anyone without a Pentium II-class CPU.

bootMarks

BOOTMARK	
X (TESTS DIRECT3D PERFORMANCE)	640x480: 83.77fps 800x600: 72.90fps 1024x768: 57.50fps
Forsaken (TESTS DIRECT3D PERFORMANCE)	640x480: 107.61fps 800x600: 92.23fps 1024x768: 67.91fps
Quake II (TESTS *QUAKE II* PERFORMANCE)	320x200: 51.0fps 640x480: 49.5fps 1024x768: 38.9fps
Quake (TESTS OPENGL GAMING PERFORMANCE)	320x200: 66.7fps 640x480: 29.0fps
Duke Nukem 3D (TESTS DOS GAMING PERFORMANCE)	640x480: 61fps 800x600: 47fps
MDK Perftest (TESTS DIRECTX PERFORMANCE)	127

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: The first card that really competes at the same level as Voodoo2; very good image quality.

LOWS: It's not from 3Dfx, so it doesn't work with games that only support the Glide API; specs were lowered at last minute.

BOTTOM LINE: TNT is the fastest 2D/3D chip we will likely see for the next several months, and the V550 is a great card from a reliable company.

JDR FirezEdge Backdraft

Company: JDR Microdevices
www.jdr.com

Phone: (800) 538-5000 (TO ORDER)

Prices: $2,999

JDR Microdevices serves up some heat with its FirezEdge Backdraft gaming system.

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

While you may not have heard of JDR prior to this review, you may be interested in getting to know it better once we're done.

JDR has long been in the business of selling PCs, but its FirezEdge line is the first one aimed directly at gamers. According to JDR, three different configurations have been designed: the Igniter (an entry-level PII 333MHz system), the Wildfire (a mid-range PII 350MHz), and its high-end system, the Backdraft — the model we review here. And unlike some other computer systems that have come through our office doors, the Backdraft is a system that is ready to burn rubber the second you power it up — no add-ons or upgrades required.

At press time, the Backdraft's standard processor was a 400MHz Pentium II, but JDR said the system is also available with a PII 450MHz. The base configuration should be plenty fast, though, given what else is lurking under its hood. Alongside the 400MHz CPU are two Diamond Monster 3D II cards (Voodoo2-based accelerators) linked in SLI mode, which crank out some serious frame-rates at high resolution. If there's any weak link to be found in the Backdraft's graphics subsystem, it would have to be the inclusion of a Diamond Viper V330 (AGP) as the primary display adapter. Sure, the dual Voodoo2 cards mean there's little need to worry about the main card's 3D performance, but the 4MB RIVA 128-based V330 is still a little disappointing when much faster and more feature-rich 2D/3D cards are available (like those based on the TNT, RIVA 128's big brother).

The sound experience the Backdraft offers up is very nice, too; a Turtle Beach Montego A3DXstream handles sound-card duties (both DOS and Windows) with the greatest of ease, while the three-piece Altec Lansing ACS48 Power Cube speaker system pumps out some quality sound to back up the Montego's A3D and DirectSound3D positional audio — and with 80 watts (RMS) of power, the ACS48 system can produce enough volume to drive even your most tolerant neighbors to violence.

What really made the Backdraft stand out to us were several features that suggest there are some honest-to-goodness gamers at JDR. First of all, the system includes a 10/100Mbps Fast Ethernet card for network gaming — the first time we've seen an Ethernet card come standard in a gaming system. Additionally, JDR has gone fan-crazy. The people there obviously understand that the trick to keeping your system stable while running a 400MHz processor and a pair of fiery-hot graphics accelerators like the Monster 3D IIs is to keep the system cool. To that end, JDR has included *eight* (that's right, eight) fans in the Backdraft. There isn't one unused fan bay in the system's case. In fact, one of the fans — a miniature model that mounts in a standard 5 1/4" bay — is even connected to a digital thermometer you can set to switch it on if your case gets hotter than it should. And each of the Voodoo2s has a fan of its own to help keep it cool. All of which would seem to make the Backdraft a system ripe for overclocking — assuming you want to go down that warranty-voiding road.

All in all, JDR's FirezEdge Backdraft system proved itself to be every bit as much a gamer's PC as it was claimed to be — and in an industry so filled with hype and empty promises, it's nice to see a company deliver.

System Specs

SYSTEM
Processor: Pentium II 400MHz
RAM: 128MB PC-100 SDRAM
Cache: 512K

STORAGE
Hard Drive: Seagate 9.1GB EIDE
CD-ROM: Pioneer 32X CD-ROM
Iomega internal Zip Drive

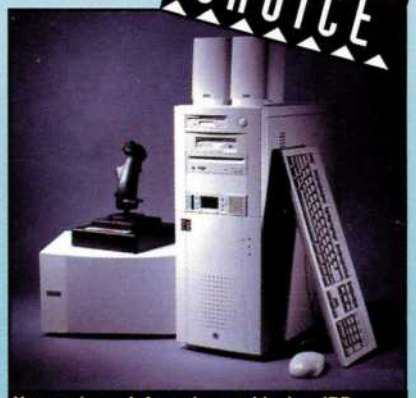
EXPANSION
Internal 3.5" bays: 2 (one used)
Internal 5.25" bays: 4 (three used)
External 3.5" bays: 1 (used)
External 5.25" bays: 4 (three used)
Bus slots: 4 PCI (four used), 2 ISA (one free), 1 shared ISA/PCI (used)
RAM: 3 DIMM sockets (two free)

VIDEO
Base Card: AGP Diamond Viper V330 4MB
3D: 2 Diamond Monster 3D IIs (12MB)
Monitor: none

AUDIO
Sound Card: Turtle Beach Montego A3DXstream (PCI)
Speaker System: Altec Lansing ACS48 Power Cube

INPUT
Keyboard: Windows 95-compatible 104-key keyboard
Mouse: Microsoft IntelliMouse
Joystick: ThrustMaster X-Fighter Joystick

OTHER
Modem: USRobotics external 56Kbps V.90
Ethernet: Intel EtherExpress Pro/100+ 10/100baseT Ethernet Card



You can't see it from the outside, but JDR keeps its Backdraft cool with eight fans.

bootMarks

BOOTMARK	
X (TESTS DIRECT3D PERFORMANCE)	640x480: 109.51fps 800x600: 82.04fps 1024x768: 78.59fps
Quake II (TESTS QUAKE II PERFORMANCE)	640x480: 88.2fps 800x600: 78.5fps 1024x768: 66.1fps
Quake (TESTS OPENGL GAMING PERFORMANCE)	320x200: 95.0fps 640x480: 20.8fps
Duke Nukem 3D (TESTS DOS GAMING PERFORMANCE)	640x480: 75fps 800x600: 50fps
Norton SI (TESTS CPU & SYSTEM BOARD PERFORMANCE)	190
MDK Perftest (TESTS DIRECTX PERFORMANCE)	163

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Has just about everything the hard-core gamer could want — and little you wouldn't; Ethernet card included; very good cooling/air circulation.

LOWS: Only 4MB on the primary video card.

BOTTOM LINE: The Backdraft is a PC gamer's dream; if you can afford the asking price, you'll be done with upgrades for a good while to come.



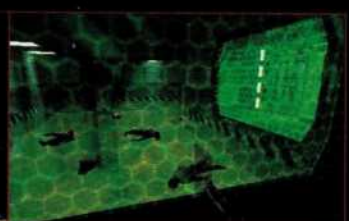
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Phone:	(800) 520-0498 (TO ORDER)
Prices:	$2028 (WITH MONITOR) $1699 (WITHOUT MONITOR)

HyperSonic brings a fast K6-2 system to the market, and we put its 3DNOW! technology through the paces.

Ah, the fabled K6-2 processor chip. There's been an awful lot of conjecture and speculation regarding AMD's newest processor — most of it focusing on the processor's longevity. There's been little debate over the power of the chip — its use of the 3DNOW! instruction set boosts the performance of the K6-2 into the realm of high-end Pentium IIs with software designed to support it (read the piece on page 241 for details on the K6-2 and 3DNOW!). But without such support, a K6-2 performs only slightly faster than AMD's original K6 — and then only because of its slightly faster clock speed.

Of the three routes to 3DNOW! support (in-game optimization, API optimization, and video card driver optimization), direct in-game optimization is currently required for optimal benefit. API optimization, as with the 3DNOW!-optimized DirectX 6.0, will only improve game performance (i.e., increase frame rates) if a specific game uses that API to do the things 3DNOW! excels at, like geometry transforms, lighting effects, and triangle setup.

Unfortunately, transforms and lighting effects are rarely carried out in DirectX (until very recently, anyway — DirectX 6.0 has made some improvements in these areas), so in most current games, API optimization alone will yield very little performance increase. As for video card driver optimization, the only area where the current generation of video cards can gain much of a boost from 3DNOW! optimization is in triangle setup, since most next-generation 3D cards are now responsible for this area of the graphics pipeline. According to representatives of AMD, both API and display driver optimizations are more likely to bring benefits to the games (and video cards) of the future.

That leaves in-game optimization as our main route to frame rate increases with the K6-2. And how is industry support for the K6-2 right now? Potentially very good, actually. More and more game developers have announced plans to add 3DNOW! support to upcoming titles — including most of the big boys. Even John Carmack of id Software has voiced his support *and* his intention to build 3DNOW! optimization in *Quake III* — and he's one fella who still makes a lot of other developers stand up and take notice.

So how did the 333MHz K6-2 function in Hypersonic's Sonic Six? In the one game in our benchmark suite that can take advantage of 3DNOW!, it turned in some very impressive numbers. Without AMD's 3DNOW! patch installed, *Quake II* (v3.17) turned in a low, but acceptable, frame rate with its single 3dfx Voodoo2-based board: 40.5 frames per second at 640x480 resolution.

But once we installed the patch that adds 3DNOW! support, the frame rate jumped to a silky smooth 72.0fps — almost fifteen frames per second higher than our Pentium II 266MHz benchmark system produces with the same



The 17" MAG monitor HyperSonic sent along has a very nice image quality.

bootMarks

BOOTMARK	
X (TESTS DIRECT3D PERFORMANCE)	640x480: 107.03fps 800x600: 72.55fps
Quake II (TESTS *QUAKE II* PERFORMANCE)	640x480: 40.5fps 800x600: 37.3fps
Quake II (WITH 3DNOW!)	640x480: 72.0fps 800x600: 56.7fps
Quake (TESTS OPENGL GAMING PERFORMANCE)	320x200: 57.7fps 640x480: 11.0fps
Duke Nukem 3D (TESTS DOS GAMING PERFORMANCE)	640x480: 50fps 800x600: 35fps
Norton SI (TESTS CPU & SYSTEM BOARD PERFORMANCE)	131
MDK Perftest (TESTS DIRECTX PERFORMANCE)	88

System Specs

SYSTEM
Processor: 333MHz AMD K6-2 with 3DNOW! instructions
Ram: 128MB SDRAM
Cache: 512K Pipeline Burst Cache

STORAGE
Hard Drive: Western Digital 8.4GB Ultra DMA
CD-ROM: Toshiba 32X

EXPANSION
Internal 3.5" bays: 3 (1 free)
Internal 5.25" bays: 3 (2 free)
External 3.5" bays: 2 (1 free)
External 5.25 bays: 3 (2 free)
Bus slots: 3 PCI (1 free), 2 ISA (both free), 1 shared ISA/PCI (full)
RAM: 3 DIMM sockets (2 free)

VIDEO
Base Card: Matrox Productive G100 8MB AGP (systems now ship with G200)
3D: Diamond Monster 3D II
Monitor: Optional

AUDIO
Sound Card: Diamond Monster Sound M80 PCI
Speaker system: Altec Lansing ACS48

INPUT
Keyboard: Windows 95-compatible 104-key
Mouse: Microsoft IntelliMouse
Joystick: Microsoft SideWinder Precision Pro Joystick

OTHER
Modem: Diamond Supra PCI 56K V.90



These 80 watt RMS speakers form Altec Lansing are quite nice. Backed by the M80, the Sonic Six sound system really rocks!



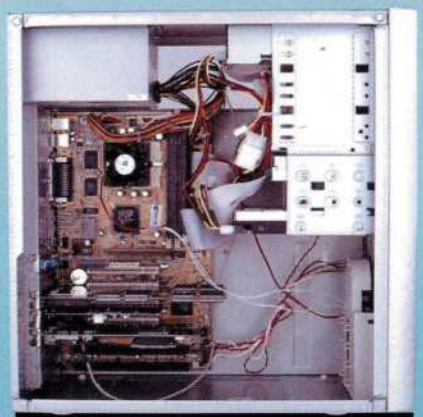
The Hypersonic Super Six is a fast machine that proves the potential of AMD's 3DNOW! instruction set. Hypersonic also builds Pentium II-based systems, of course.

Voodoo2 card, and only a few frames per second slower than most machines based on the 400MHz Pentium II. Not too shabby.

On the other hand, at press time only versions 3.14 and 3.17 of *Quake II* worked with 3DNOW! — and since v3.19 had been out for a few weeks, it was a little difficult to find an Internet server compatible with our 3DNOW!-enhanced *Quake II*. No doubt AMD will release a patch for v3.19 soon — but since 3DNOW! support wasn't built into *Quake II*, it'll always be up to AMD to provide its own support as new versions (or new games based on the *Quake II* engine) are released.

Unfortunately, Sysmark98, one of the benchmarks we use to determine overall system performance, wouldn't run on the Sonic Six. This may not have been because of any deficiency with the system — we've had problems running it on some Intel machines, too. Based on other K6-2s we've seen, benchmark scores usually have the K6-2 333MHz racking up performance scores comparable to a 233MHz Pentium II system. That's not stunningly fast, but it's not that bad either — especially since the K6-2 is really







Look, up in the sky! It's your old Pentium 166MHz! No, actually, the K6-2 sits in the same socket 7 slot that Pentiums once did.

only intended as a gaming/multimedia processor. How fast the Sonic Six can render a PhotoShop image or compile a Excel spreadsheet probably isn't of primary concern to most of the people who will consider this system.

So what's the verdict? We're ready to go on the record as saying that the K6-2 is a viable solution for gamers on a budget. The performance in 3DNOW!-optimized titles puts it ahead of Pentium II chips that would set you back by a lot more dinero. In time, the K6-2 may even become an alternative to high-end Pentium IIs, assuming many new games start arriving with support for 3DNOW! — and we *do* think this will happen.

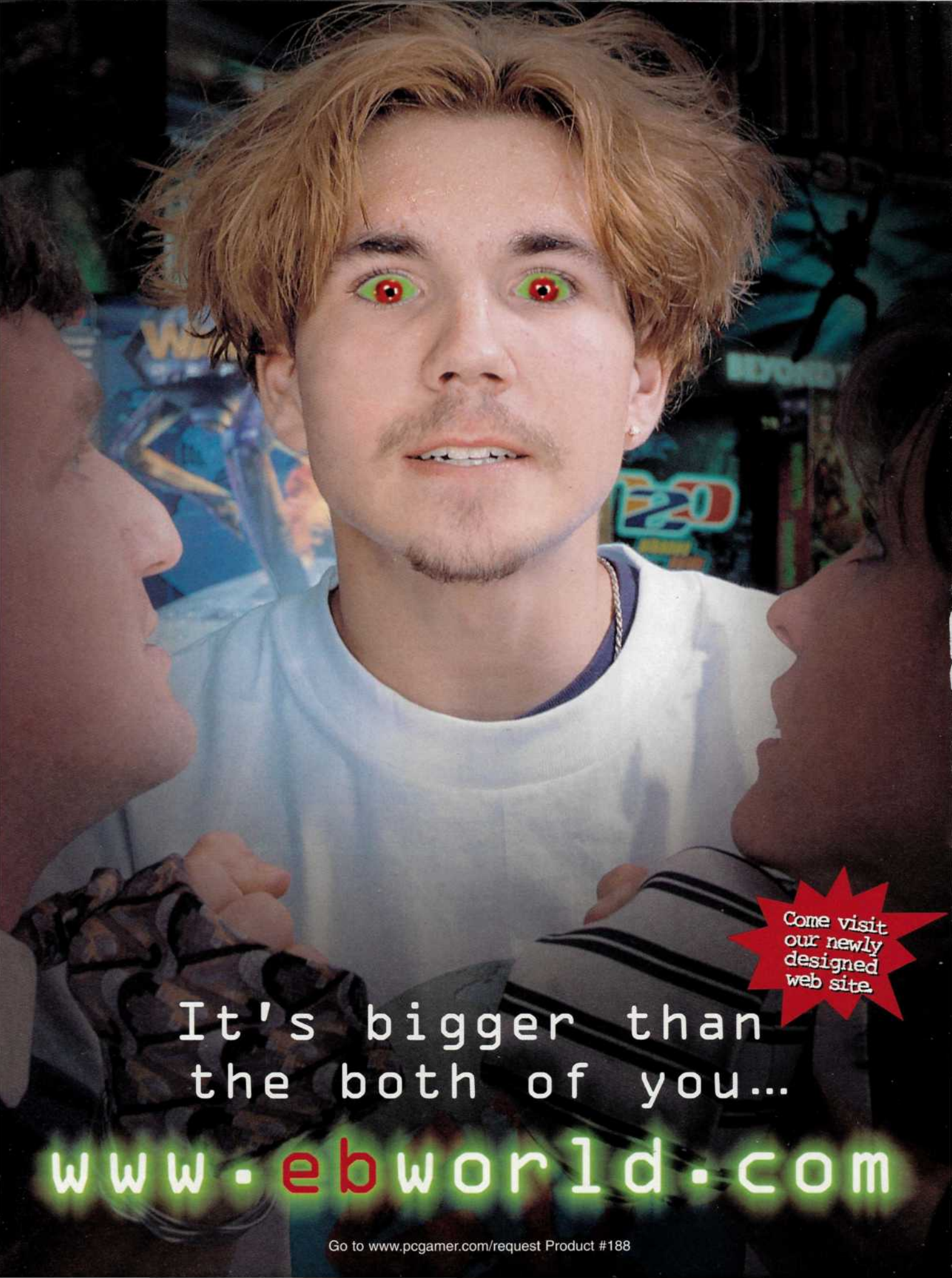
Until then, HyperSonic has put together a very nice system. If you ran into some of the compatibility problems that dogged earlier non-Intel processors, you may be understandably wary of the K6-2 — and recent decreases in the price of Intel's Celeron make it worth considering as an affordable alternative to the Pentium II. But at $1699, it's hard to get a better deal for a system with so much (potential) power, and as you can see from our Direct3D benchmarks, even without 3DNOW! optimization the K6-2 should still pack enough punch for most gamers.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Fast with games that support 3DNOW!; relatively inexpensive for a gaming system.

LOWS: Few titles currently support 3DNOW!; K6-2 can be quite slow running unoptimized titles.

BOTTOM LINE: The Sonic Six is a good system for the gamer on a budget, as long as you don't mind waiting a bit longer for 3DNOW! optimized games to start coming to market.



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Hercules Terminator Beast

Company: Hercules
www.hercules.com

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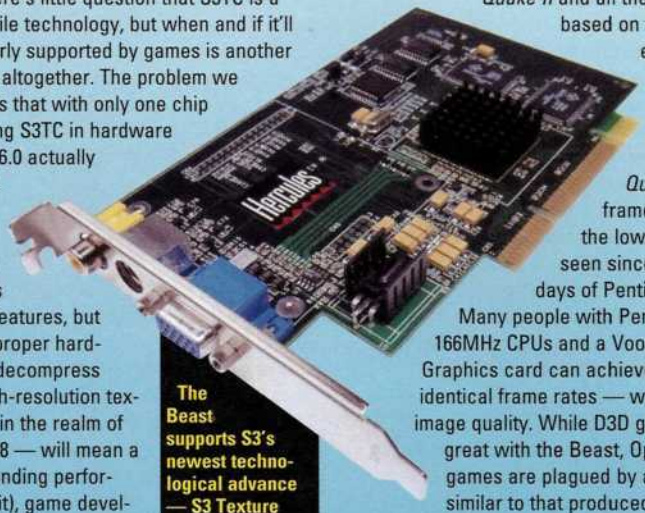
Hercules breaks loose with the first video card using S3's new Savage 3D chip — and it is a bit of a mixed offering.

Anyone who's been paying attention to the 3D graphics market for the past couple of years is undoubtedly familiar with S3. It was responsible for one of the first consumer-level 3D accelerator chips, the ViRGE — which eventually became known as the first 3D *de*celerator when S3 continued to produce it while faster chips like 3Dfx's Voodoo Graphics and Rendition's Verite left it in the dust.

S3 and its longtime manufacturing partners, such as Diamond Multimedia, ended up selling tons of cards based on several generations of the chip, but the ViRGE ended up costing S3 the confidence of many a PC gamer. S3 stayed out of the picture for a while, examining 3D hardware trends perhaps waiting for the ViRGE's reputation to fade. Once the company was confident it could make a big comeback with a powerful new 2D/3D solution, development began on the Savage 3D chip. Now Hercules, one of the first manufacturers to pick the chip up, has released a new card based on the Savage 3D.

So what does this new board, the Terminator Beast have to offer that gamers haven't seen in other next-generation 2D/3D accelerators? Primarily, S3TC — short for S3 Texture Compression. With this feature enabled, texture maps can be compressed to as little as 1/4 or 1/6 their original size, which means larger texture maps can be stored in the same amount of video memory. Where most new 3D solutions can only render textures with a resolution of 512x512 pixels, the Beast can handle up to 2048x2048 pixels, and in 24-bit color, no less. This means the texture maps that overlay polygons and give them their detail in 3D games can be much *more* detailed — even photorealistic. And because these compressed textures are decompressed directly by the Beast's own hardware, there should be very little slowdown associated with the process.

There's little question that S3TC is a worthwhile technology, but when and if it'll be properly supported by games is another question altogether. The problem we foresee is that with only one chip supporting S3TC in hardware (DirectX 6.0 actually supports S3TC in software as one of its newest features, but without proper hardware to decompress data, high-resolution textures — in the realm of 2048x2048 — will mean a corresponding performance hit), game developers might not see the benefit of supporting texture compression until and unless more 3D chip manufacturers design similar technology into their next-generation cards. S3 says it has a six-month lead on other 3D chip manufacturers since its Savage3D is the first to feature this texture compression technology — but how much is that lead worth if a small user base keeps developers from supporting it?



The Beast supports S3's newest technological advance — S3 Texture Compression.

Until the first game ships with S3TC support, the Beast (and other Savage 3D-based boards) will have to compete on the basis of performance alone. So what can the Beast do for us while we wait for S3TC-enhanced games? For starters, it runs Direct3D games quite well. As shown in our benchmark results, D3D performance is somewhere right above Matrox G200 levels — not that bad at all, considering the Beast can render in true 24-bit color; manage single-cycle trilinear filtering without a noticeable performance hit over bilinear (trilinear filtering offers increased reduction of the "sparkling" effect caused as texture-mapped images move across a screen); has double the RAM of the G200; and costs less to boot. Unfortunately, in OpenGL games (like *Quake II* and all the games based on that 3D engine), the Beast takes a huge nosedive. In *Quake II*, frame rates were the lowest we've seen since before the days of Pentium IIs. Many people with Pentium-class 166MHz CPUs and a Voodoo Graphics card can achieve nearly identical frame rates — with *better* image quality. While D3D games look great with the Beast, OpenGL games are plagued by a graininess similar to that produced by RIVA 128 and 128ZX chips. We expect that both image quality and frame rates will improve in future driver releases, but for the time being, the Beast is so much slower in OpenGL than the rest of its competition that it would come as a surprise to us if it ever manages to close the gap completely.

As we go to press, we can only recommend Hercules' Terminator Beast to gamers that are uninterested in first-person shooters — the sort of game most likely to run under OpenGL. In the meantime, with improved OpenGL performance and S3TC support still in the promise stages, this board definitely falls into the wait-and-see category.

bootMarks

BOOTMARK	
X (TESTS DIRECT3D PERFORMANCE)	640x480: 81.82fps 800x600: 72.66fps 1024x768: 67.55fps
Forsaken (TESTS DIRECT3D PERFORMANCE)	640x480: 84.40fps 800x600: 73.60fps 1024x768: 61.35fps
Quake II (TESTS *QUAKE II* PERFORMANCE)	320x200: 29.9fps 640x480: 27.2fps 1024x768: 23.1fps
Quake (TESTS OPENGL GAMING PERFORMANCE)	320x200: 66.6fps 640x480: 23.9fps
Duke Nukem 3D (TESTS DOS GAMING PERFORMANCE)	640x480: 62fps 800x600: 32fps
MDK Perftest (TESTS DIRECTX PERFORMANCE)	132

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Good D3D performance; low price; S3TC can yield photorealistic 3D graphics.

LOWS: Poor OpenGL performance; support for S3TC has yet to materialize.

BOTTOM LINE: If Hercules can greatly improve OpenGL performance, and if S3 can get more game developers to buy into S3TC, the Beast may yet prove to be a great solution. Wait until then.

Diamond Monster Fusion

Company: Diamond Multimedia
www.diamondmm.com

Phone: (541) 967-2450 (TO ORDER)

Prices: $129 (M.S.R.P.) (16MB AGP 1X VERSION)

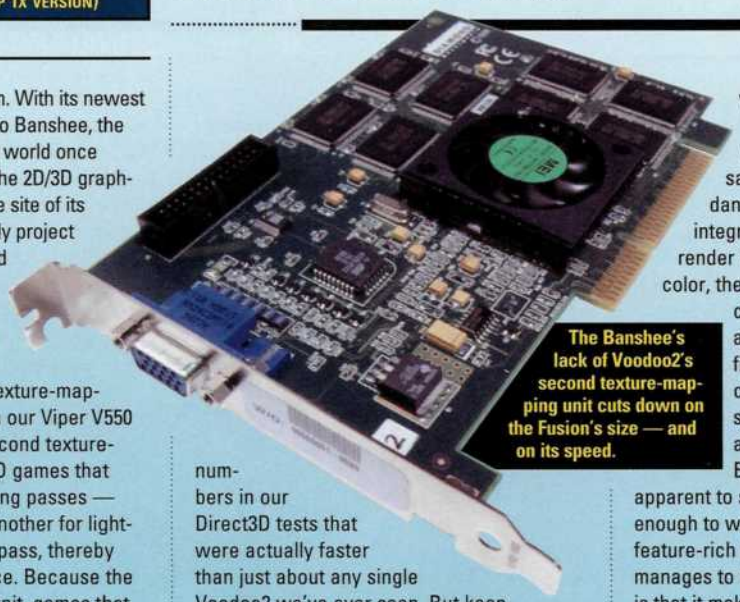
3Dfx goes after the coveted 2D/3D market once again — but is it just a Voodoo Rush in a Monster's clothing?

3Dfx is back at it again. With its newest chip, the 3Dfx Voodoo Banshee, the king-daddy of the 3D world once again ventures into the 2D/3D graphics card arena — the site of its only failure (or its only project that ever approached failure, at least).

A far cry from the lackluster Voodoo Rush, the Banshee is really just a Voodoo2 without a second texture-mapping unit. As we explained in our Viper V550 review (previous page), a second texture-mapping unit lets complex 3D games that normally require two rendering passes — one for a texture map, and another for lighting — to do both in a single pass, thereby increasing game performance. Because the Banshee lacks this second unit, games that use this kind of multi-texturing run more slowly under its power than they would in the hands of a full-fledged Voodoo2.

But just how big a deal is this feature, really? Well, if Diamond's Monster Fusion board is any indication, there's a noticeable performance difference between the Banshee and the Voodoo2. It's not drastic, but it's there.

In addition to the Banshee's lack of a second texture-mapping unit, there's also no way to combine two of them in SLI mode for higher resolutions, the way you can with the Voodoo2. To compensate a little for these two deficiencies, the Banshee's clock speed has been raised from the Voodoo2's default 90MHz to a zippier 100MHz. This difference, in conjunction with good drivers, had the Monster Fusion turning in numbers in our Direct3D tests that were actually faster than just about any single Voodoo2 we've ever seen. But keep in mind that Microsoft's new DirectX 6.0 now allows for multi-texturing under D3D, and none of the current crop of games we use for benchmarking currently supports this feature — so expect the Voodoo2 to catch back up once games start using DirectX 6.0's newer features.



The Banshee's lack of Voodoo2's second texture-mapping unit cuts down on the Fusion's size — and on its speed.

So far, we've made it sound like there's nothing much wrong with the Monster Fusion, and while that's generally true, it does lack a couple of key features that might keep this card from being the success it could otherwise be. One of its main marketing strengths is actually one of its biggest weaknesses: because the Banshee is built on Voodoo2 technology — older technology, at least in comparison to the feature sets provided by the latest 3D chips from other manufacturers — it lacks many of the things that make its competition so cool. We're not keen on adding new features to graphics accelerators solely for the purpose of filling in those irrelevant checklists that marketing people seem to live for. But some of the next-generation 2D/3D cards have features that are (or soon will be) quite useful — and the Banshee lacks a number of them.

The feature limitation that will be most readily noticeable to gamers is Banshee's 16-bit color palette. In its day, thousands of colors were fine and dandy, but now that the majority of integrated 2D/3D accelerators can render images at either 24- or 32-bit color, the differences are becoming clearer. In games like *Incoming* and *Motorhead*, a couple of the first that support these higher color depths, most anyone can see the difference between 16- and 24-bit graphics. Other Banshee shortcomings will be apparent to savvy gamers, and may be enough to warrant the purchase of a more feature-rich board. The reason Voodoo2 manages to have its deficiencies overlooked is that it makes up for them in other ways, i.e., its second texture-mapping unit and SLI capability. Banshee is a mighty fast card, but it doesn't have these features to fall back on.

So who will the Monster Fusion appeal to? We'd say anyone who wants to play Glide-based games (like all of the 3Dfx-only games that are still coming out today) and who doesn't have the green to lay out for a couple of Voodoo2s — or for casual gamers that are content with the Voodoo's rendering quality and want one of the fastest single-slot solutions out there. For the rest of us though, the true hard-core, do we want a Fusion? Probably not. There are other cards out there that pair comparable 2D performance with support for newer 3D features like 24- and 32-bit color. If you've already invested in a Voodoo2, those Glide games are covered, and you'll probably be better off going with a card like Matrox's G200 or Diamond's new TNT-powered V550.

bootMarks

BOOTMARK	
X (TESTS DIRECT3D PERFORMANCE)	640x480: 103.97fps 800x600: 86.29fps 1024x768: 64.98fps
Forsaken (TESTS DIRECT3D PERFORMANCE)	640x480: 112.65fps 800x600: 90.06fps 1024x768: 59.67fps
Quake II (TESTS *QUAKE II* PERFORMANCE)	320x200: 50.8fps 640x480: 41.0fps 1024x768: 28.6fps
Quake (TESTS OPENGL GAMING PERFORMANCE)	320x200: 66.7fps 640x480: 29.2fps
Duke Nukem 3D (TESTS DOS GAMING PERFORMANCE)	640x480: 59fps 800x600: 29.2fps
MDK Perftest (TESTS DIRECTX PERFORMANCE)	129

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Fast single-card solution with Glide support; no compatibility problems that we could find; low price.

LOWS: Lacks a few of the more beneficial features of next-generation 2D/3D cards.

BOTTOM LINE: The Monster Fusion is a fantastic card for the average gamer who wants very good performance at a reasonable price.

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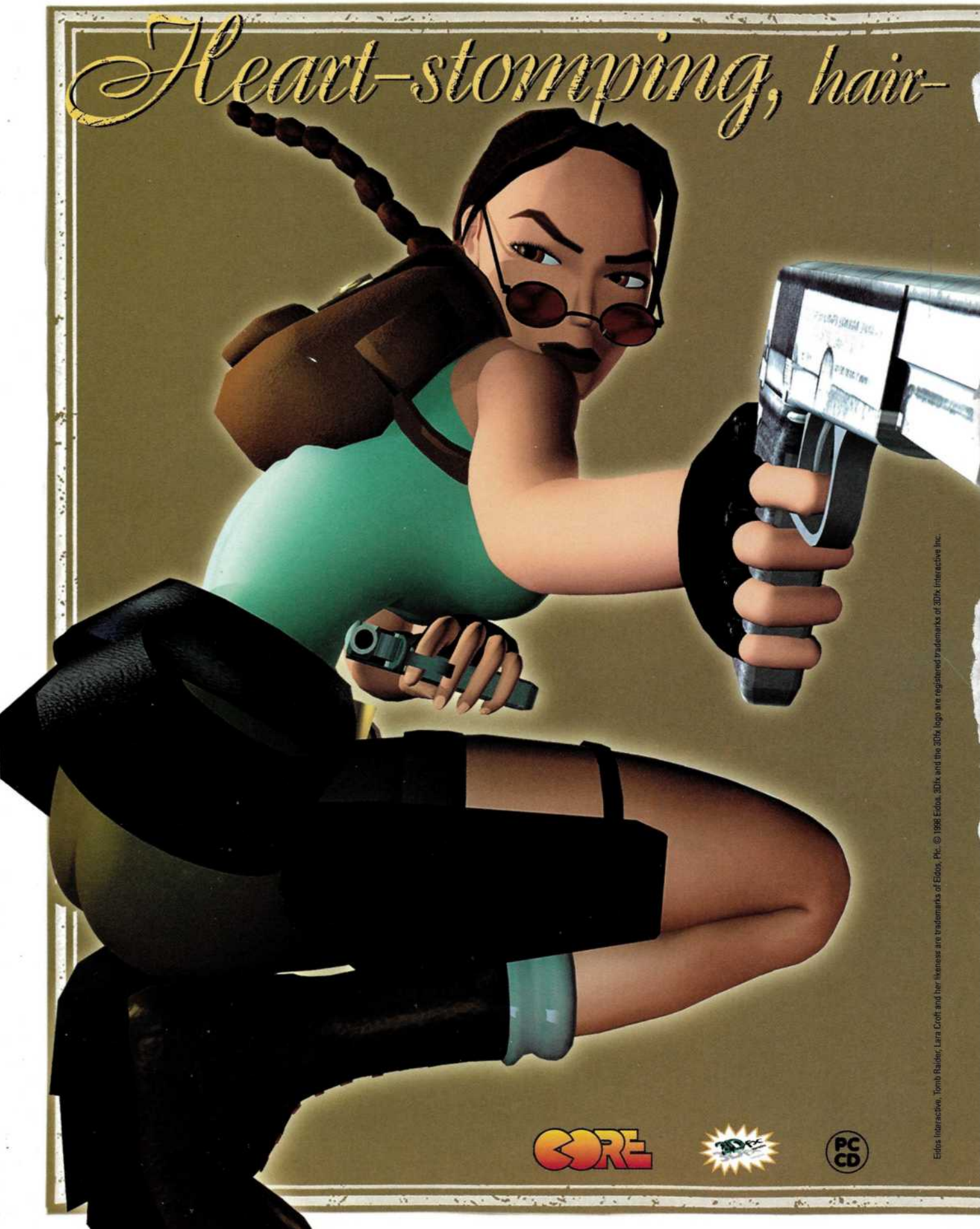
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SideWinder FF Wheel

Company: Microsoft
www.microsoft.com

Phone: (800) 426-9400 (TO ORDER)

Prices: $209 (M.S.R.P.)

The Monster from Redmond is back with its newest force feedback controller, and it's time to shake rattle and roll.

Microsoft has been releasing PC peripherals left and right these past few months. Recently, we took a look at its newest SideWinder gamepad, the FreeStyle Pro; and now we've gotten our hands on the MDSS80 digital speaker system (reviewed in this issue) and the SideWinder line's first racing controller, the long-awaited SideWinder Force Feedback Wheel.

The wheel is based on the same technology that powers the Force Feedback Pro joystick. It has six buttons on its face, plus two more on either side of the back of the wheel, in fingertip reach, that can act as standard buttons or serve as brake and accelerator if you're not using the included pedals. Another button in the middle of the wheel lets you turn the force-feedback effects on and off, even during a game. Unfortunately, the Force Feedback Wheel (like its joystick predecessor) has no springs to center it when Force Feedback is disengaged, so it feels very loose and imprecise. The wheel's motors provide an auto-centering effect even in games that don't support force feedback, but it's not quite the same as having real springs to snap the controller back into place.

Setting up the SideWinder Wheel and software is hassle-free. The wheel itself has one large, adjustable clamp that holds it firmly to your desk. The pedals plug into the main wheel unit, which in turn connects to the computer via the standard joystick port. Once the hardware is set up, all that's left to do is install the included software, which includes a utility that lets you test the force effects and adjust their intensity. It's a handy tool, and one that all force feedback controllers should have.

Like the rest of the SideWinder family of game controllers, the SideWinder Wheel is easily programmed using Microsoft's handy "Profile Activator." Anyone who owns a SideWinder joystick or gamepad is familiar with this utility, which lets you program the controller's buttons to assign a keystroke or macro to each button. It's not nearly as versatile as the software that ships some other programmable controllers — like Saitek's, for instance — but it's very easy to use.

Assessing the actual performance of this wheel is a tricky affair. On the one hand, the SideWinder Force Feedback wheel is infinitely better than SC&T's Ultimate Per4mer, the first force feedback wheel we reviewed. On the other hand, the Microsoft wheel still seems flawed in a few of the same ways. Oversteering, for example, is a big problem; even though the Microsoft wheel doesn't have nearly as much overpowering torque, we still had a hard time keeping the wheel centered in every game we played. This happens because the center tension of the wheel remains tight while driving a car in a controlled fashion, but loosens dramatically to simulate a skid. Once that happens, it's all over; we almost always had to stop completely to get out of spins — spins that probably wouldn't have happened at all with a standard wheel. This may be a flaw of the Microsoft wheel, or it may be a problem with the whole idea of a force feedback steering wheel; either way, it's troublesome.

The force effects the SideWinder produces are very cool, and in the proper situations really do add to the driving experience. Unfortunately, multiple force effects that appear simultaneously or follow each other in rapid succession don't seem to register on the wheel. A good example is when you spin out of control into a wall, but only feel the initial impact and none of the secondary bumps. This occurred in several games, so it's unlikely the problem is software related. But to give the Sidewinder its due, this sort of thing didn't occur very often and didn't detract too greatly from the overall experience.

All told, the Microsoft Wheel performed admirably in most situations. It was reasonably responsive, with no center dead zone to speak of, and with practice, the oversteering problem can be dealt with. Our only real complaint is that force feedback should make driving more fun — not sharpen the learning curve. But if you're a hardcore racing fan who doesn't mind spending some time learning how to drive with the new controller, Microsoft's SideWinder Force Feedback Wheel will reward you with some nice force effects.



As nifty as this wheel looks, a picture alone can't convey how comfortable it feels in your hands. But the SideWinder FF Wheel still has some faults.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Best force Feedback wheel we've seen to date; most effects are smooth and add depth to the racing experience.

LOWS: Oversteering is a problem; wheel seems to have some problems reproducing multiple, simultaneous effects.

BOTTOM LINE: A wheel that patient, hardcore racing fans should enjoy.

http://pc.ign.com

BSG Intensor Chair

Company: BSG Laboratories Inc.
www.intensor.com

Phone: (800) BSG-LABS (TO ORDER)

Prices: $599 (M.S.R.P. FOR FULL SYSTEM AS REVIEWED)
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$299 (INTENSOR CHAIR)
$129 (OFFICE CHAIR BASE)
$199 (SUBWOOFER UNIT)



At $600, you'd better be the gamer who has everything before you buy the Intensor Chair.

Ever since we got back from the Electronic Entertainment Expo last May, we've been waiting eagerly for an Intensor Chair to test. Intensor Chairs graced half the booths at the show, and we thought the idea sounded pretty cool: a chair that plugs into the speaker jack of your sound card, television, VCR, stereo system, or any other product with an audio output, and plays back music and sound effects all while shaking your brains out of your ears with tactile feedback. Now that we've actually got one, however, our hopes have been dashed by a harsh reality: The Intensor Chair ain't all that great.

Problems arose almost immediately upon opening the box. The Intensor chair can be configured in two ways: either with a standard office chair swivel base or with the chair itself sitting directly on the floor. Since we work in an office, we proceeded to assemble the Intensor in the former configuration. But we actually had to file and cut away a sizable portion of plastic to get one of the armrests screwed in securely — even then, we couldn't use all the screws because one of the holes was drilled improperly.

Once we finished assembling the Intensor, we plugged it into the optional 40 watt RMS subwoofer, fired up *Quake II* and proceeded to shake, rattle, and roll. The tactile feedback was actually pretty impressive; unfortunately, the sound and music floating up from the Intensor's speakers left a lot to be desired. The sound effects passed as adequate in most games, though they brought out some rattles in the chair's structure when we turned the volume up a bit. But for music, even the least expensive PC speakers on the market rival the high and midrange frequencies produced by the Intensor. At a minimum cost of $430 for the chair and base (sans subwoofer), such paltry sound simply isn't acceptable. And after an hour or two of testing the chair, we also noticed that one of its speakers began to cut in and out — eventually flat-lining altogether.

The Intensor had some other problems, too — it's not very comfortable to sit in for extended gaming sessions, for example — but we'll spare you the rest. It's enough to say that, for this kind of money, you'd be better off buying a top-of-the-line office chair and some new kick-butt speakers.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Tactile feedback does immerse the gamer further into games.

LOWS: High price; low sound quality; questionable construction.

BOTTOM LINE: If the Intensor Chair was a mere $500 cheaper, it would absolutely be worth the experience. But as it stands, this is one thing most gamers could do without.

Advent AV390 Speaker System

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Company: Advent
www.poweredpartners.com

Phone: (800) 732-6866 (TO ORDER)

Prices: $179 (M.S.R.P.)

Advent is a name that has long been synonymous with great sounding speakers, and its new AV390 three-piece speaker system builds on that already strong foundation. Weighing in at a hefty 70 watts (RMS), these speakers come ready to play. The two satellites, which each house a 1" tweeter along with a 3" midrange driver, receive 15 watts each, while the subwoofer gets the remaining 40 watts all to itself. Additionally, the AV390s come equipped with a certified Dolby Pro Logic decoder that allows games encoded in Dolby Surround to really stand out. Since this is a standard, two-channel system, the center and rear speakers used in full-fledged Dolby Pro Logic systems are generated "virtually," and as such, the surround sound effect isn't nearly as impressive as it would be on a true five-speaker setup — although it is much better than most generic 3D surround sound techniques utilized by many other PC speaker manufacturers.



The AV390 is one of the few speaker systems we've seen recently that include a headphone jack — a great feature for the considerate gamer.

In addition to "virtual" Dolby sound, there are other, equally nifty features, like an enhanced stereo mode that broadens the perceived range of sound around a listener, as well as a headphone jack — a feature that *should* come standard on all PC speakers but rarely does. In most of our tests, we found that the enhanced stereo effect wasn't particularly appealing, so we generally kept the speakers in either true stereo mode or used the simulated Dolby surround. The headphone jack, on the other hand, proved quite useful — we used it many times while playing games during meetings.

Whether in Dolby Surround mode or just plain stereo, these speakers sound full and crisp. The satellites produce very clean sound; there's very little hiss at any volume, and while the subwoofer does tend to hum a bit when idle, it's unnoticeable when the unit is placed under a desk or while music or games are being played.

In fact, the subwoofer is where the AV390 system shines brightest. Try as we might, we couldn't get the sub's 6.5" woofer to distort or rattle at high volumes — and this is quite a feat; even the best subs out there usually have a "breaking" point. The AV390s can't quite compete with a system like Cambridge Soundworks' mighty three-piece Microworks system, but the Advent system is a much less expensive alternative that has enough clarity and oomph to satisfy almost any gamer.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Great-sounding speakers, especially for the price; plenty of power; simulated Dolby Surround; headphone jack.

LOWS: "Enhanced Stereo" mode isn't too impressive; Dolby Surround is nice, but few games support it.

BOTTOM LINE: A great set of speakers with some very nice features that is well within most gamers' budgets.

Digital Sound System 80

Company: Microsoft
www.microsoft.com

Phone: (800) 426-9400 (TO ORDER)

Prices: $259 (M.S.R.P.)

Microsoft harnesses the power of USB in its first — and only — PC speaker system, but the price is a little steep.

If you've been reading The Hard Stuff over the past few months, you've noticed that we've written quite a bit about digital audio. In a nutshell, digital audio takes the sound processing chores away from the PC's sound card, relocating vital parts like digital-to-analog converters and digital signal processors in an external environment less prone to interference (usually in the subwoofer unit of a three-piece digital speaker system). The key benefit to digital audio is that sound isn't distorted by electromagnetic fields from "noisy" components inside the PC's case (like video cards, fan motors, and the processor itself); instead, it's kept in its digital form until it's outside the case, where specialized speakers convert it into an analog signal they can use.

Microsoft's MDSS80 is a true digital speaker system in every sense of the term. Unfortunately, that gives the system one pesky flaw: the current PC sound paradigm relies on the sound card to send the redbook signal (standard CD audio) from a CD- or DVD-ROM drive to a standard speaker system. An internal cable connects the drive's analog audio output to the sound card. But like all digital audio speakers, the MDSS80 system bypasses the sound card completely by plugging directly into a USB port.

There are a few advantages to the USB connection; not only does USB allow for digital audio signals to travel directly out to the MDSS80 for sound processing and conversion to analog, it also lets the speakers send information back to the computer. That lets the system synchronize itself and the sound settings in Windows; any change made to the volume or EQ levels on the speakers also changes those same levels in the Windows Volume Control applet — and vice versa. The age-old annoyance of having to set multiple volume and sound levels on both the speakers and in Windows has been alleviated. But the MDSS80 system's all-digital nature means it can't use the analog signal from the CD-ROM drive; which in turn means you can't use 'em to listen to your music CDs or games that use redbook audio musical scores.

Microsoft says a handful of CD- and DVD-ROM drives on the market can send redbook audio data as a digital signal along the IDE interface, but not even Microsoft seems to know which drives do it. The software that ships with the speaker system performs a test to see if your drive sports this feature; on our test system, we heard no redbook audio. We told the system so, and a message popped up to tell us our CD-ROM drive wasn't digital audio-compliant and that we'd have to keep using our sound card if we wanted to hear redbook audio. Kind of defeated the purpose of these digital speakers.



What you see is all you need — almost: the amazing-sounding MSS80 system may take some market share away from sound card manufacturers.

Although this isn't mentioned anywhere in the included literature, we found we were able to bypass our sound card simply by plugging the speakers' analog input into the headphone jack of our CD-ROM drive. Either way, all sound information *except* redbook audio was processed and adjusted via the MDSS80 system's onboard DSPs.

So what do these speakers actually have to offer us gamers in the way of sound? A lot, actually. Driven by a hefty 80 watts RMS, these speakers really pump out quality music and sound effects. Aside from a bit of rattling from the subwoofer at very high volumes, the MDSS80s sound even better than Advent's AV390 speakers (reviewed in this issue). Highs and midrange frequencies sound sharp and clean, and there's more than enough low-end for even the most ravenous bass lover. And even though these speakers sound great right out of the box, Microsoft has gone the extra mile and included a software-driven ten-band graphic equalizer to let you tweak their output to suit your tastes — different users can even save their own EQ settings for convenience.

When all is said and done, the MDSS80 is a truly amazing-sounding speaker system. We wish we could recommend them to the price-conscious gamer, but at $259 you could just as easily go out and get a Montego A3DXtreme or Sound Blaster Live Value card for $99 bucks and spend the rest on a nice set of standard PC speakers (Cambridge SoundWorks has a great-sounding four-speaker surround system for $99). If the price of these speakers drops a bit, they'll definitely be worth a look. For now, though, even digital audio isn't enough to make these speakers worth all that green.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: True digital audio speakers; great sound; ten-band graphic equalizer.

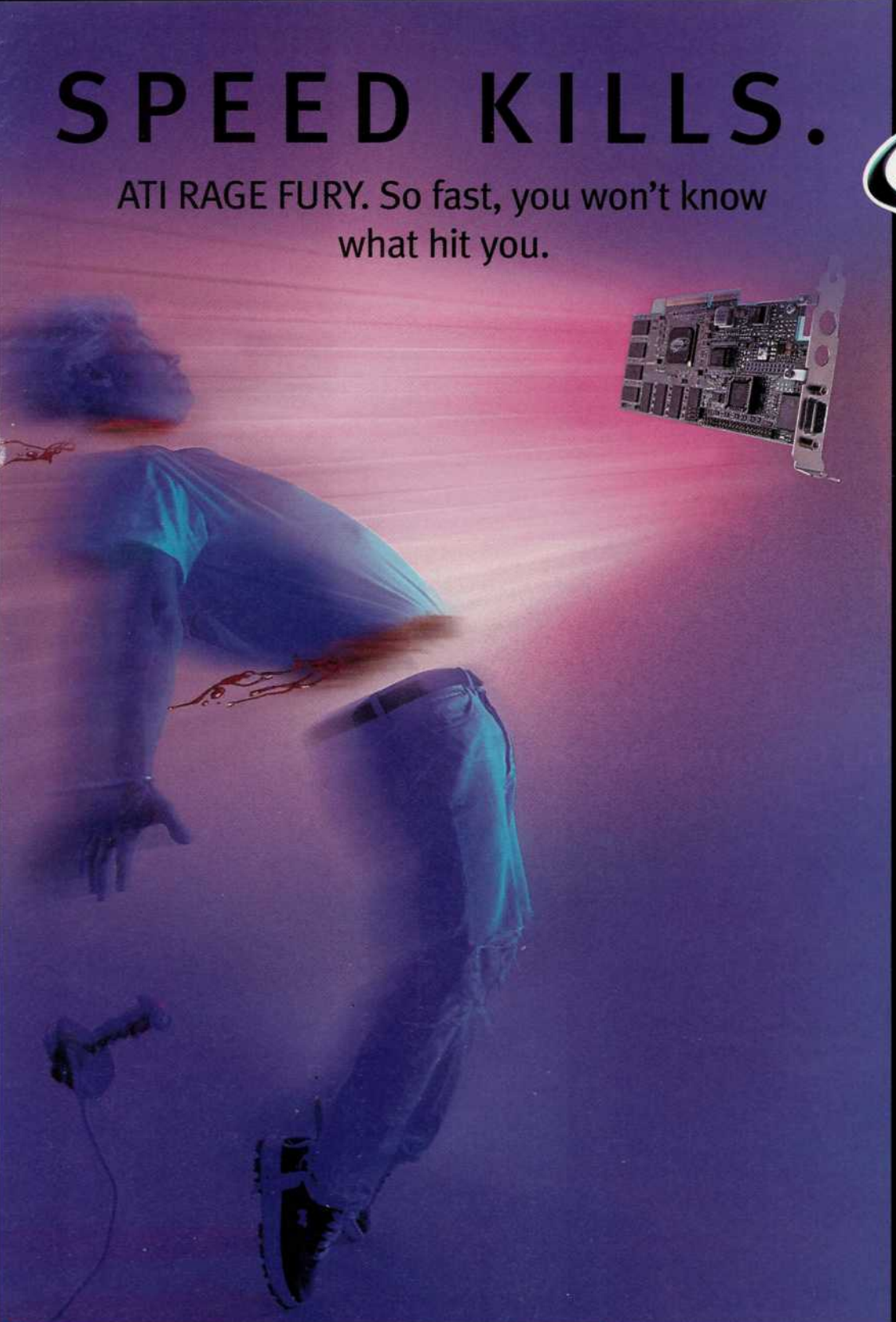
LOWS: Digital audio compliant CD- or DVD-ROM drive required for redbook audio playback via USB port; subwoofer rattles at high volumes; high price.

BOTTOM LINE: The MDSS80 proves that digital audio really works and sounds good — now we just need Microsoft to lower the price!

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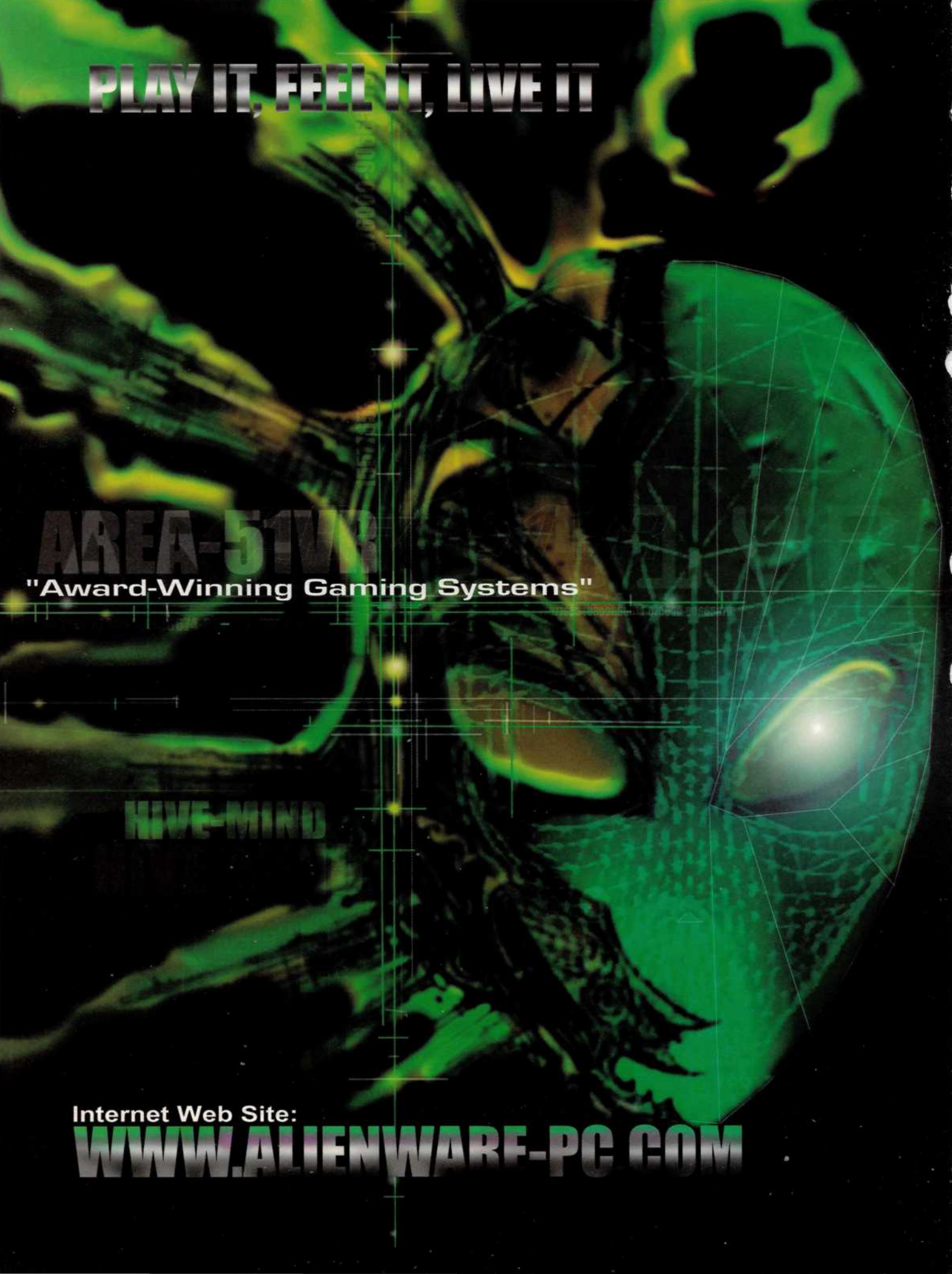
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Tech Q&A

Yes, you *can* link two Voodoo2 cards from different manufacturers in SLI mode — you just need the right drivers.

Q **I just upgraded my Microsoft SideWinder software to Version 3.0 and would like to prevent it from loading into my system tray every time I reboot the computer. I was able to do this with v2.0 — Microsoft had a tech bulletin on how to do it, but I haven't been able to find one for this newer version. According to Microsoft, I'm no longer eligible for support from them with regard to my gamepad or joystick. Could you guys possibly help me out?**

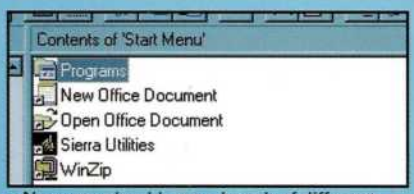
—Art Prince, via the Internet

A Sure thing. The reason the SideWinder software is loading every time you reboot your system is because it is in the "StartUp" folder located deep within your Windows folder. The best way to get at it — and remove it — is to do the following:

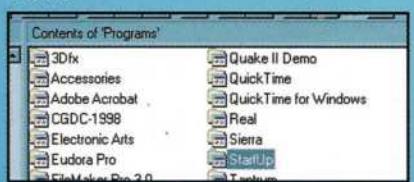
• Right-click on your "Start" button, located in the bottom left-hand corner of your screen, and select "Explore."



• The "Exploring - Start Menu" window will pop up. Look in the right-hand pane, and you'll see a folder called "Programs." Double-click that folder.



• Now you should see a bunch of different folders on the right-hand side of the window. Find the folder called "StartUp" and double-click it.



• From there, you should see a program called "SWTray." This is the software you want to remove from the "StartUp" folder. Don't delete the file, just move out of the "StartUp" folder and put it somewhere like



the Windows desktop, so you'll be able to get at it when you want it. As long as it's no longer in your "StartUp" folder, it shouldn't load automatically every time you boot.

Q **Can I run two Voodoo2 cards in SLI mode even though they're two different brands with differing amounts of RAM? I currently have a Monster 3D II 8MB, but have access to a 12MB Creative Labs Voodoo2, and I was wondering if there was any way to pair them up.**

— Ryan, via the Internet



This is what Intel would have us all believe is the end result of overclocking their CPUs. The truth is, that unless you are very careless, it is nearly impossible to fry a Pentium II.

A As a matter of fact, Ryan, you should be able to. You'll need to replace your current 3Dfx drivers with 3Dfx's newest reference drivers first, though. Cruise on over to *http://www.3dfx.com/* to pick them up. Make sure they're version 1.03.01 or later, or your linked boards won't work together. And you should be aware that allowing SLI to function regardless of dissimilar brands or memory configurations is an unsupported feature of these drivers. If you end up having any problems, neither card's manufacturer is likely to feel obligated to help you. Tread carefully, my son.

Q **I currently have a Pentium II 300MHz machine with 64MB of SDRAM. I also have a 2MB 2D/3D ATI Rage Pro AGP card linked up with a Diamond Monster 3D II. My system runs every game I play just fine, but I was wondering — since my motherboard can support up to a 333MHz PII, could I overclock my existing chip to this speed? And if so, would it perform *exactly* like a standard 333? And will Intel eventually release an Intel Overdrive Processor that would enable me to get my 300 up to perhaps a 400MHz with a 100MHz bus?**

— Chris Pascal, via the Internet

A While your CPU would likely operate just fine at 333MHz — and yes, it should be just as fast as a real 333 — many 300MHz PIIs are locked, and will allow clock multipliers no higher than 4.5, which is what you're already using (66MHz bus speed x 4.5 multiplier = 297, which is what we call 300MHz). You might get lucky and not have a chip that's locked, but it's doubtful. Somewhere on your motherboard are jumper settings for bus speed and multiplier adjustments. There will be an option to set your multiplier to 5. Once that change is made, you should be able to reboot and have your system report a PII 333MHz CPU (66MHz x 5 = 330, or what we call 333MHz). If it reports something less, or simply refuses to boot up, you'll know that you're stuck at 300MHz and should reset the jumper to 4.5.

Another option — which may not be an option at all, depending on the brand of your motherboard — would be to set your bus speed to 75 or 83MHz. With a multiplier of 4.5, the 75MHz bus speed would yield a 337.5MHz CPU, and 83MHz with a multiplier of 4 would yield 332MHz. All of these overclocking options will void your manufacturer's warranty, of course, so don't do anything at all unless you're willing to take full responsibility for what might happen to your machine.

As far as Intel ever making an Overdrive Processor for your system, we'd tend to doubt it — and even if they did, your current motherboard doesn't support the 100MHz bus speed you desire. For the faster bus, you'd have to upgrade the motherboard itself to one based on Intel's 440BX chipset.

Q **I have a question for which I cannot find an answer, at least without paying money to Microsoft (as an aside, I find it absolutely absurd that I'd have to pay a fee just to ask them if Windows 98 supports dual processors). I figured I would turn to my partners in crime over at *PC Gamer* for the answer, instead. So, does Windows 98 support dual processors? If it does, do you feel that buying a second processor would be a worth-**

while investment for gaming?

— Jason "Crusader" Hoffman, via the Internet

A Nope, Jason, Win 98 still doesn't support dual processors. You'd need either UNIX or Windows NT to use this feature, and neither of these operating systems is a good choice for gaming. Also, the fact that these operating systems support multiple processors doesn't mean that any old program can use all of them. Only multi-threaded software will take advantage of multiple processors.

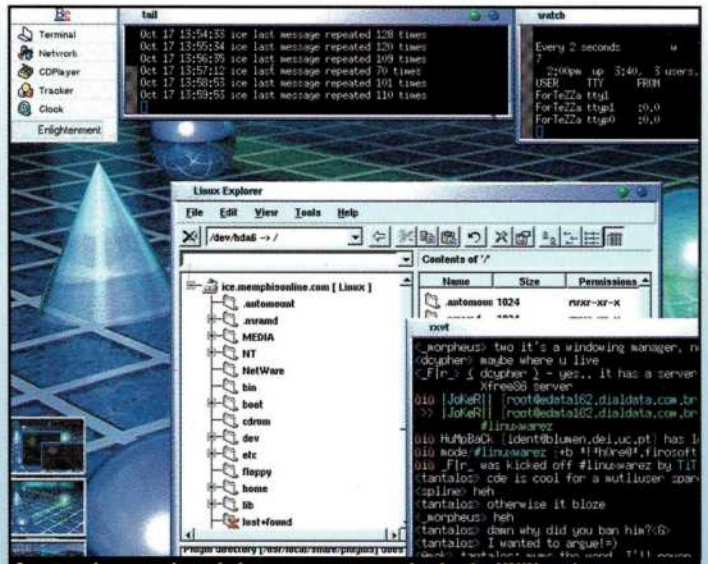
Q Your answer to the last question in the October Tech Q&A section of *PC Gamer* was, I believe, incorrect. The way the question was printed, it seemed that the reader was only asking if an Intense 3D Voodoo [Rush] would work with a Voodoo2 card. While the two cards wont function in SLI mode, and although the 2D portion of the Intense 3D is not the greatest, a Voodoo2 will certainly work with a Voodoo Rush — and I speak from personal experience; I have an Intense 3D Voodoo/Creative Labs 3D Blaster II combo, and they work together flawlessly. So from what I read, unless the letter was poorly edited, whether or not the two cards can function is SLI mode was not the question asked.

—T. Palmer, via the Internet



Don't bother upgrading to a dual-PII motherboard if you are running Win95/98.

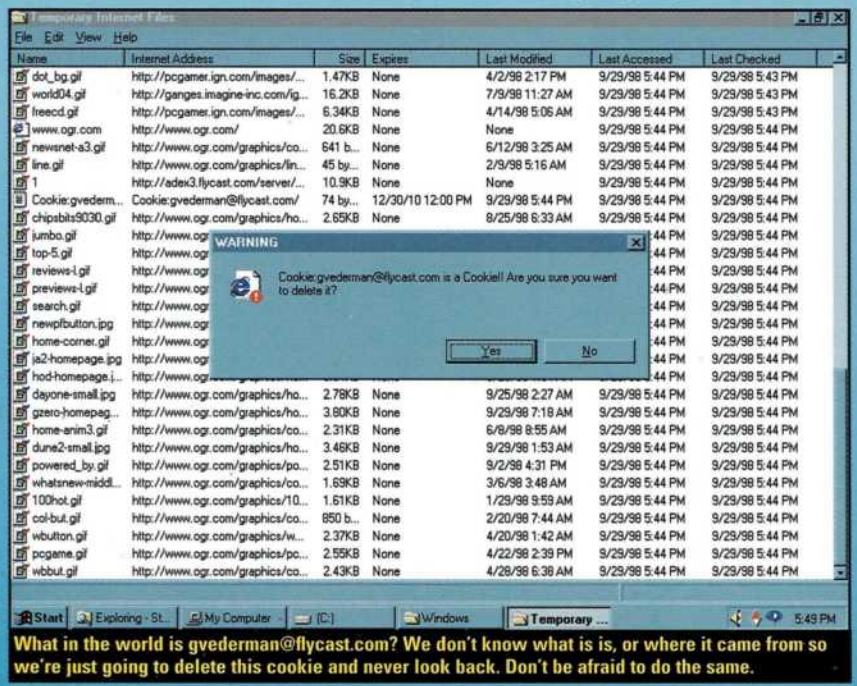
A You are correct, sir! The original question we received was whether or not the two cards would function in SLI mode — it's certainly a question we get a lot — and as we pointed out in the spiffy diagram we put together, they won't. Unfortunately, the way the question was written, as you've already pointed out, made it seem to be asking if a Rush and a Voodoo2 can be installed in the same system. They can, of course. But because Glide-based games don't always know which 3Dfx card to use (a problem than can arise when using a Voodoo Banshee with a Voodoo2, as well) 3Dfx will soon release a little utility that should let you select the Voodoo card you want to use for a given game. Our apologies for any confusion the our initial answer may have caused.



As attractive as a nice window manager can make the UNIX environment appear for users, it's no place for a gamer to play, even with its multi-processor support — there just aren't any games for it.

Q I was recently clearing out my temporary Internet files from my Windows directory, in an effort to clear out some space on my hard drive, when notices started popping up, one after the other, telling me that the file I was trying to delete was a "cookie," and was I sure I wanted to delete it. What's going on here? What are "cookies," and can I delete them without doing harm to my system?

—Name withheld, via the Internet



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A Cookies are text or hypertext files that Internet web servers send to your web browser when you visit sites that have the cookie feature enabled (although your browser will only accept them if it's set to do so). In turn, the information is sent back to the web site's server every time you return to that page/web address, so any details or information about yourself you might have given previously are remembered upon your return. The idea is to save you the trouble of filling out a form every time you return. If you think you'll never be back to a site that has sent you a cookie — *www.snailjello.com* for example — deleting the file won't affect you in the least. And even if you delete the wrong cookie by mistake, the worst thing that could happen would be that you'd have to re-enter your information at a given web site.

Need Help?

If you have a hardware question or comment, write to us at:

Greg Vederman, The Hard Stuff, *PC Gamer*, 150 North Hill Drive, Brisbane, CA 94005

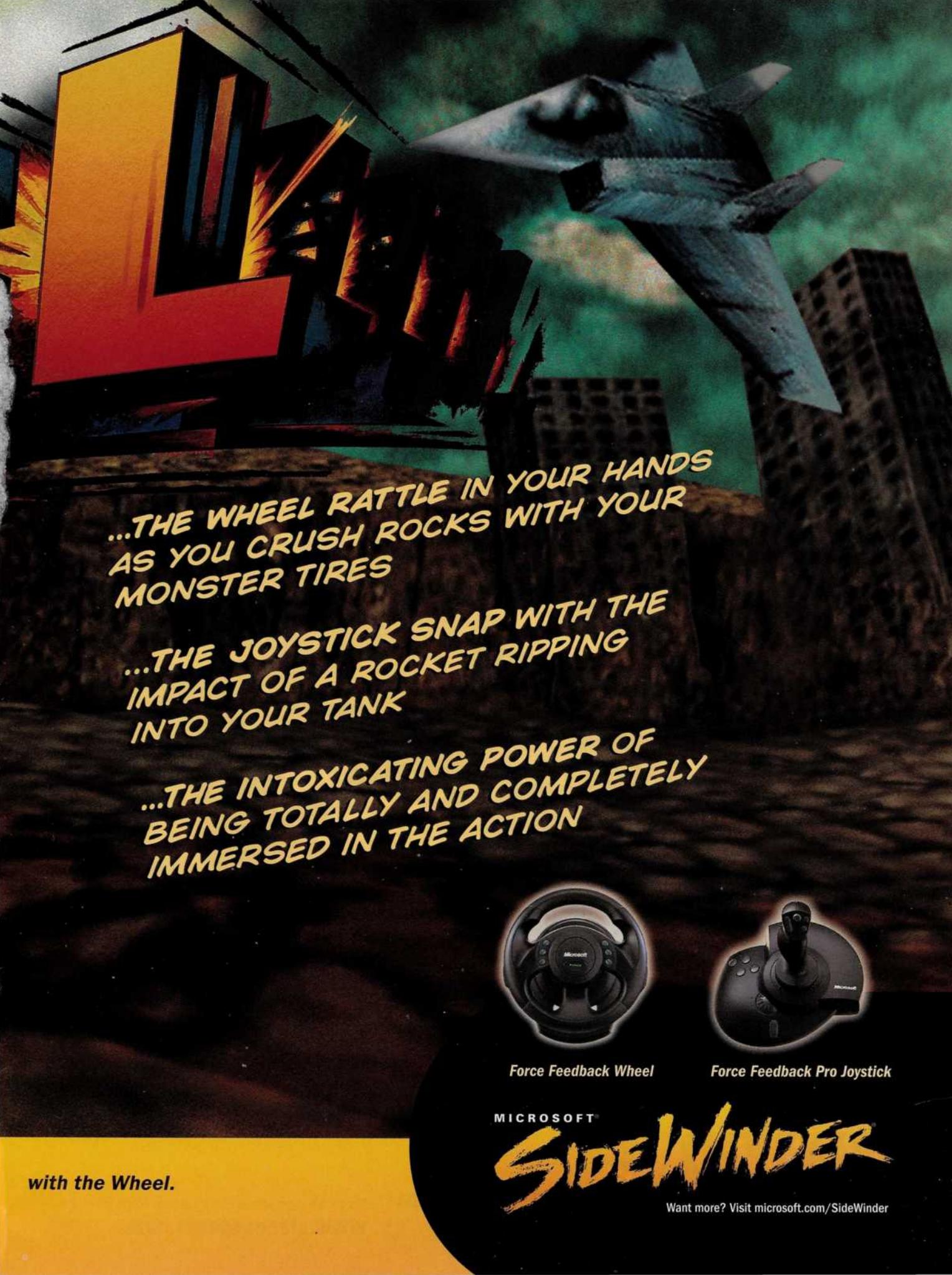
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Totally Unreal

In preparing last month's epic feature on games from major publishers using the *Unreal* engine, I compiled reams of info on the add-on levels and total conversions being created by ambitious gamers and teams of gamers. Few of these have surfaced so far, leaving *Unreal* lagging oddly behind *Quake II* and other games in the quantity of user-created levels out there. The reason, it seems, is that *Unreal*'s technology is inspiring people to outrageous heights as they attempt to create elaborate new games using UnrealEd. Some of these ambitious projects may never come to completion, but many already show tantalizing potential for user-created *Unreal* add-ons.

The most elaborate so far appears to be Force Recon, which looks like *Unreal* meets *Rainbow Six* (that's enough to get the *PC Gamer* staff excited). The team, lead by Chris Morosco, is working to turn *Unreal* into a true first-person combat simulation.

"This game will have the realism and attention to detail that *Longbow 2* had," Morosco says, "but will focus on ground combat instead. We want to make the player feel as though he's in combat. We'll immerse the player in an extremely realistic combat environment, where all the things the player would have to face in real life would be incorporated in the game."

Towards this end, they're using UnrealEd's scripting features to create a squad-level command system that gives you control over a group of elite commandos. They're putting a great deal of effort into creating weapons that behave realistically in terms of reload rate, rate of fire, damage, accuracy, kickback, and so on. Damage modeling is being made more complex, right down to accurate blood loss for flesh wounds. Units gain experience in combat, resulting in more accurate shooting and less hesitation. A look at the proposed set of commands gives you an idea of the depth they're trying to achieve: Posture (stand, kneel, crawl); Formation (line, wedge, diamond, split); Orders (fire at will, hold your fire, move up, hold your position, follow me, fall back); and HQ (request air support, request artillery support, request go on target of opportunity, request emergency extraction). This could be a real winner.

Crest of Dharim (*http://epiphanic.com/*), under development by Epiphanic Designs, is another eye-opening total conversion. This fantasy-adventure revolves around the quest of Girald Danrahk to retrieve the four Crests of Ela'. There are six realms in *Crest*, with three to four levels per realm. Each realm has its own visual style as well as unique races and life forms, ranging from the forests and plains of Dharim to the aquatic realm of Wadir. Visually, it is the most ambitious of the total conversions, and if the early screen shots are any indication, it's shaping up to be one of the most interesting.

Manhunt (*www.planetunreal.com/manhunt/*) is a multi-player mod styled after the classic Richard Connell story "The Most Dangerous Game," in which rich people hunt clever human beings. Players all start out in the same room, and "the hunted" is given about a minute's head start. He's expected to use this time to plan the best approach possible to taking out all the hunters. The difference is that the hunted has a wide selection of weapons, while the hunters only have one. The goal of the designers to is to enable the hunted to create traps and separate the hunters in order to outwit them, while the hunters work together to outwit *him*. The weapons are all largely real-world, and include mines and explosives to give the quarry that extra edge.

Another multi-player mod is Minions of Evil, which is somewhat similar to Manhunt. Minions (*www.planetunreal.com/minions/*) casts one players as a survivor in a castle surrounded by warlocks, orcs, trolls, and other nasties. The survivor has to escape before the Black Wizard can cast his Spell of Finding, thus placing a time limit on each game. There

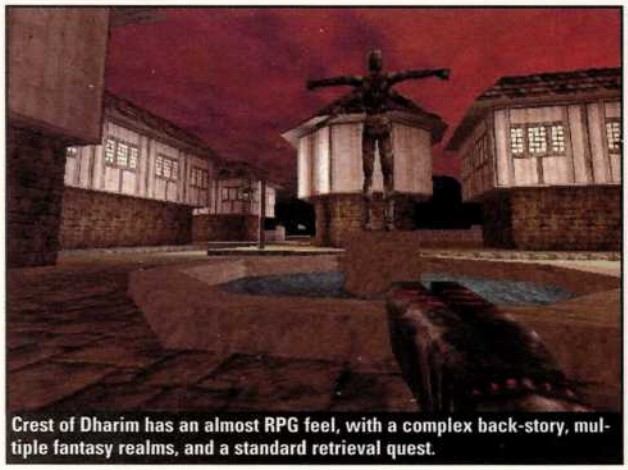


Minions of Evil combines a strong visual style with fantasy creatures and a strategy element to create a whole new multi-player experience for *Unreal*.

T. Liam McDonald



The powerful and versatile *Unreal* engine is inspiring a handful of gamers to create some truly ambitious add-ons and total conversions.



Crest of Dharim has an almost RPG feel, with a complex back-story, multiple fantasy realms, and a standard retrieval quest.



NaliForts is an *Unreal* multi-player mod in which players build bases and use Nalis to harvest resources. Look for it on *www.planetunreal.com*.

will be several sequential maps, different classes of survivor and minions, and new weapons.

One multi-player mod with a strategy twist is Naliforts (*www.planetunreal.com/naliforts/*), in which as many as four clans, each led by a Skaarj King, build bases using Nalis to harvest resources. You need to claim a base, recruit Nalis from a nearby village, and have the Nalis harvest in order to fill your coffers. Nalis can be enhanced along the way, and your prime units become a target for the other team. With enough income, your Skaarj King can become the ultimate Skaarj Warrior and go on a butt-kicking rampage. Victory is decided by scores, but there's still plenty of killing.

Meanwhile, the Fear team (*www.planetunreal.com/fear/*) is crafting its own mod for *Unreal* to enhance the multi-player experience. The background sets up two opposing nations, Virtuous and Caliginous, who are fighting for a precious mineral on planet Centurium 5. Players can choose to play as Space Marine, Special Ops, Soldier, Pyro, Sorcerer, or Reaper in Capture the Flag-type games that involve protecting the precious mineral from enemy units while you capture theirs. The different classes each have some interesting strengths and skills, which could make for some unique deathmatch levels. The high-scoring player becomes "Team Master," which gives him additional items such as Alarms, Turrets, Century Guns, Laser Defenses, and so on.

Omega (*web.ionsys.com/~arteris/*), on the other hand, is striving to create a more elaborate single-player experience for *Unreal*. As team leader Daniel Blair-Johns explained, he was inspired by *System Shock*, "which, in my opinion, is perhaps the best single-player experience I've ever had. The main focus behind The Omega Project will not only be to add that missing element of purpose behind a lot of recent first-person perspective games, but atmosphere, too. My goal is to make the player get drawn into the game, where they don't want to leave, and all they can say when they finish Episode 1 is: 'Now where can I get Episode 2?'" While the details, design, and team are still forming, The Omega Project looks to tell a narrative that unfolds over several episodes, starting in 2001 with "Ascension," followed by Episode 2, "Omega Legacy," and Episode 3, "Omega."

Most of these mods are at an advanced stage of development and being created by more than one person, which gives me hope that they will appear eventually. All have elaborate web sites charting their progress, and all are looking for additional help from modelers, level designers, and other team members — so if you have a talent, go check em out.

PCG

BUG PATCHES*

***Golden Tee Golf* v. 1.0102** (Incredible Technologies): Most notably, this patch will take care of a sound loop caused by a compatibility issue with the newest version of DirectX 6.0. This file must be saved and executed in the <ROOT> directory of your *Golden Tee Golf* folder in order to work correctly. *GTG10102.ZIP*

***Jazz Jackrabbit 2* v. 1.23** (Epic MegaGames): Patch includes Internet server kicking/banning, Clan support, bad language filter, and JCS level passwording for added level security. *J2P123R.ZIP*

***Longbow 2* Display Driver Update** (Jane's Combat Simulations): This is a display driver update to allow *Longbow 2* to run 3D accelerated on 3D accelerator cards using the following chipsets: Riva 128, Rendition Verite V2100 and V2200, TI/3D Labs Permedia 2, Intel i740, Matrox G200. The Display Driver upgrade may support other chipsets; however, only the above five have been thoroughly tested. Please see the section titled "Card Specific Information" below for additional information on both supported and non-supported chipsets. If you have a 3DFx graphics card, use the Glide version of the game. *LB2_DDU.ZIP*



NFL GAMEDAY 99

***NFL Gameday 99* v. 1.1** (989 Studios): Updates *NFL Gameday '99* to the latest version. Just unzip the contents to your *Gameday* directory (default C:/Program Files/989 Studios/GameDay '99), verifying any file overwrites. *GD00PATCH0901.ZIP*

***Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six* v. 1.02A** (Red Storm Entertainment): This patch for *Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six* will properly update Rainbow Six versions 1.00, 1.01, and 1.02. This patch file does not replace the VOXWARE.ZIP release. If you are planning on using voice communications in multi-player, and have not already done so, you will need to install that file from the CD separately (see below). 1.02 and 1.02A are not multi-player compatible with 1.01 and 1.00. You will get an error message if you try to connect to a version that is incompatible with your version. If you have installed any third-party mods that update your data files, this patch may fail to install. Re-install your game from the CD, then reapply this patch. *R6V102AFULL.EXE*

***Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six* Voice Transmission Fix** (Red Storm Entertainment): Enables voice transmission during gameplay. Extract the included files into your Windows\System directory. *VOXWARE.ZIP*



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Alpha Centauri Goes Online

Only change is constant, and that's as true of games as anything else. Over the past several years, PC gamers have seen breathtaking innovations achieved at a breakneck pace — CD-ROMs (and now DVDs) as a vast new storage medium; 3D acceleration piping in knock-out visuals; hell, we even have a GUI-based operating system robust enough to run cutting-edge games straight out of the box. Most of the time.

But one change looms even larger. It's more profound than ten thousand more polygons, even as spectacular as 3D acceleration has been, and more significant than hot new genres like first-person shooters or real-time strategy games, despite the overwhelming impact those games have had. No, what we're seeing now is what Sid Meier calls a paradigm shift — having multiple players within the same game profoundly changes the play dynamics of a game. In fact, it changes the game's very design.

Not every genre of games has gone multi-player, of course. Adventure games have no multi-player mode, and the way I see it, they have no real compelling reason to go that route. Action and sports games, on the other hand, are a natural fit for online play and are mainly faced with technical issues: the twin dragons of bandwidth and latency. Roleplaying games, being derived from a social context to begin with, have embraced online gaming since the earliest MUDs, though only recently are commercial game publishers paying attention.

But it's strategy games — my genre of choice — that are still straddling the line. Yes, real-time strategy games have certainly succeeded in the multi-player market, but I always consider real-time strategy (RTS) as not quite the same thing as pure, turn-based strategy games. RTS is great; RTS is fun; and the best games in the genre have a fair share of strategy to them, but they're a different beast from your *Master of Orion*, your *X-COM*, your *Civilization*. I'm not saying one is better than the other; what interests me is trying to find out whether or not turn-based strategy games can work as multi-player experiences.



Alpha Centauri will be one of the first turn-based strategy games with a multi-player mode designed for the Internet from the beginning.

Jason Bates



Can Sid Meier, Brian Reynolds, and the Firaxis crew bring their classic brand of strategy into the online age?



A classic "record locking" system will be used in *Alpha Centauri*, which means that when you go to move a unit, it "locks" that part of the map.

Rather than speculate, I figured I'd ask some top turn-based strategy designers in the midst of developing this new type of game. Brian Reynolds and Jeff Briggs of Firaxis have just recently got multi-player up and running in *Alpha Centauri*; here's what they had to say:

PCG: How does the multi-player work in *Alpha Centauri*? Are there simultaneous moves, or does each player need to wait for the others to move before taking his turn?

BRIAN REYNOLDS: Simultaneous movement, by all means. It's a classic "record locking" system, so when you go to move a unit, it "locks" that local area of the map (about 25 squares worth) temporarily. Players can select different time controls to speed up or slow down the game, depending on whether they want an intense "speed chess" experience or a more thoughtful, slow-paced game.

Also, there are a lot of "automate unit" and "automate base" features in *Alpha Centauri*, ranging from broad commands like "take control of this unit" to narrower ones like "have this terraformer improve squares around this base," and even narrower ones like "patrol from here to here" or "move to these waypoints." You're rewarded for automating your units by not being charged time for their moves.

PCG: Was anyone at Firaxis involved at all with *CivNet* [an earlier multi-player version of *Civilization*]? Were there mistakes made there you may have learned to avoid?

JEFF BRIGGS: Nobody on the Firaxis team was directly involved in that project. It was done in what became the North Carolina studio of MicroProse. The product had some problems, but it's important to remember that it was one of the first truly multi-player (more than two players) games out there. It may have been one of the first multi-player games to be Internet-capable.

The mistake was that original *Civilization* was not meant to be a multi-player game, and there was no built-in support for this concept. These are issues that didn't concern us, since both *Gettysburg!* and *Alpha Centauri* were designed for multi-play from the ground up.

PCG: What lessons did you learn from *Sid Meier's*

http://pc.ign.com

Gettysburg! in designing multi-player games?

BRIGGS: One thing is that players love cooperative play. *Gettysburg!* has the cool power of allowing several people, commanding different units of the same army, to play against the computer AI or against several other players commanding the other army. This proved really useful in allowing players to get comfortable in the online environment before throwing them into competitive battles.

In *Alpha Centauri*, the cooperative play has been expanded with a new, full range of diplomatic options. You can work with other humans to defeat the AI, exchange tech to help in the race for Transcendence, and even exchange bases and energy credits.

Gettysburg! also had the distinct advantage of being scenario-based. The scenarios are essentially little self-contained missions playable in 20-30 minutes each, so players aren't committing to a lifetime each time they sit down to play. We've addressed these issues in *Alpha Centauri* as well, by allowing the player to set different time controls.

Lastly, playing multi-player *Gettysburg!* is like an elaborate virtual game of paintball, except with artillery and cavalry. The interaction of the terrain, the hiding and ambushing, prove to be a really exciting experience. And the game has such tactical depth that the player that thinks the fastest (not who clicks the fastest) wins.



This shot from a multi-player game of *Alpha Centauri* shows the recently implemented borders between empires as well as the turn clock for players. Many other new features will be incorporated into the game.


The Firaxis designers for *Alpha Centauri* incorporated lessons learned from *Gettysburg!*.

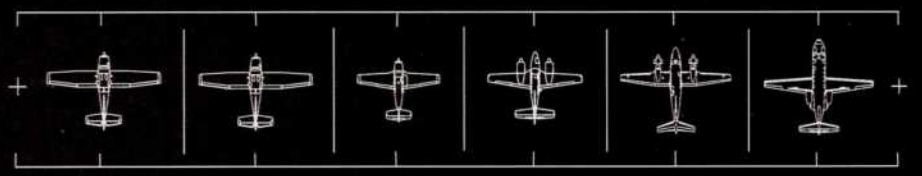
PCG: In February, Sid Meier said to us, "With the Internet and multi-player, there's something fundamentally different about the game itself: There's other people playing." Do you ever see Firaxis doing a massively multi-player, persistent-world online game, maybe not strictly like *Ultima Online* in terms of genre, but something along the same lines, as a strategy game?

BRIGGS: Yes. We'd really like to do that. Being old guys, Sid and I come from multi-player boardgames as a background. Sid, of course, quickly moved into computer programming and design, but I designed and developed quite a few "paper" games before entering the computer field. Brian is a long-time fan of multi-player games as well, so we all have an intense interest in human interaction as a factor in game design.

We have several massively multi-player ideas percolating, some of which have been under thought-design for many years. One of the problems, of course, is the technology is not quite there yet. We'd like to see the medium mature a bit farther before we jump in. I think products like *Ultima Online* are doing great work in paving the road for some truly great online games to follow. **PCG**

> **"Being old guys, Sid and I come from multi-player boardgames as a background. We all have an intense interest in human interaction as a factor in game design." — *Jeff Briggs, Firaxis***


We'd like to dedicate this picture to the memory of Jerry Clower, America's Country Comedian. Mr. Clower passed away August 24, 1998. He will be missed — and sadly, will never get to play *Alpha Centauri*.



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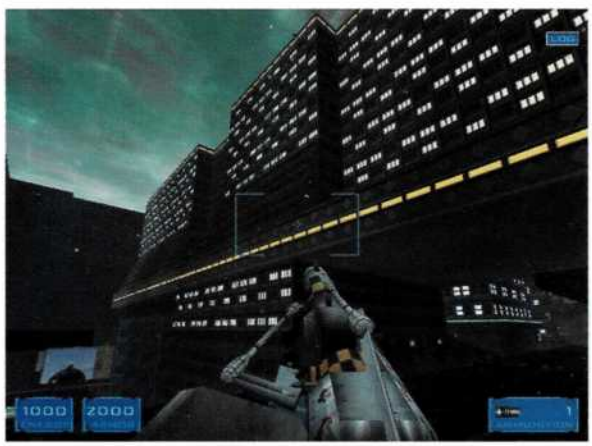
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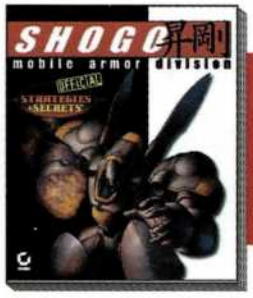


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Can't We All Just Get Along?

Two years ago, when *Quakeworld* was released, a shockwave was sent throughout the gaming world — one so large that it split the online *Quake* community in two. John Carmack's intentions were honorable — *Quakeworld* was supposed to significantly improve Internet play (which it most certainly did), especially for those people with modem connections. In the process of creating a better game for Internet play, id also decided to "fix" and "adjust" many of the settings and physics that were part of the original game, also known as *NetQuake*. As more things were tweaked and changed, the more different the games became, until finally they really were two completely separate entities. Some people preferred the new *Quakeworld*, while others preferred *NetQuake*. You can guess what happened next: half of the players moved on to *Quakeworld*, the other half stuck with the original: And thus, the rift was formed.

You'd think that game companies and the online community in general would be wary enough not to let this phenomenon happen again. Given that id Software recently realized its mistake, and is making a serious effort to try to bridge the gap between *Quakeworld* and *NetQuake*, it's inconceivable that such a snafu could happen all over again, right?. But believe it or not, it just might. In the most recent patch release of *Quake II* (v3.18), id Software succumbed to pressure from *Quake* players to add air manipulation into *Quake II* (or, more accurately, to increase the degree of air manipulation allowed).

For the uninitiated, "air manipulation" is the ability to change direction in mid-air. In the original *Quake*, you could almost boomerang 180 degrees around if you had the proper height and distance. While it was not necessarily realistic, it definitely made the game more enjoyable and exciting. People would often rocket-jump just because they'd have a tactical advantage being at a higher elevation, and also because the enemy would have a hard time figuring out where they were going to land. On levels like "The Bad Place" (DM4), where lava covered a good portion of the ground beneath you, being able to manipulate yourself in mid-air to land on a tiny platform and save yourself from taking a hot lava bath became an invaluable part of an advanced player's skill set.

In *Quake II*, air manipulation was all but removed from the game — at least until now. In actuality, it was present in an earlier patch release, but was quickly taken out after id Software realized it would interfere with the single player game. That's all fine and dandy, but by giving server administrators the option to choose whether they want it or not, id is potentially opening the door for yet another rift in the gaming community. While air manipulation is not quite as severe a change as *Quakeworld* was to *Quake*, it still has a very substantial impact on gameplay. Whereas it would normally take five seconds to walk and drop carefully onto an armor vest, for example, with the help of air manipulation you can jump, change direction in mid-air, and grab the armor in less than a second. Air manipulation makes possible all kinds of jumps and rocket-jumps that would otherwise be unavailable to players.

The real issue here is not air manipulation, however — the issue is, should server operators have the option to switch it on or off? If you let people choose, there will always be varying opinions on which type of play is better. Things would be a whole lot easier if id Software simply *forced* everyone to use air manipulation when playing multi-player, and go without it in single-player. There are already too many multi-player settings players have to agree on nowadays — which mode of teamplay, do weapons stay, are power-ups on or off, etc. — and these are merely simple game settings. When you get into adjusting the actual physics of a player's movement, it becomes a different, and more significant, issue.

To use a real-world example, imagine if you could adjust the physical laws governing how a tennis ball travels through the air. In the real world, any given object's rate of acceleration due to gravity is a constant — 9.8 meters per second per second. But what if one player could alter those physics, so the ball behaved in a way that better suited their style of play? Wouldn't that be a massive disadvantage to the other player? Of course in the real world people can't bend or break the laws of physics — but in the virtual world of *Quake* they can.

These issues become far more important when higher stakes are involved, such as when playing in a professional gaming league. Leagues such as the PGL offer cash and prizes that go into the tens of thousands of dollars. Players are highly unlikely to place themselves in a compromising position by agreeing to his or her opponent's preferences, in which case the officials would have to make a judgment call. But based on what? There still aren't any hard and fast rules governing this kind of dispute.

The bottom line is that we need hard and fast, unalterable rules for games like *Quake* in order to ensure that the playing field remains level. And these rules need to be decided upon and bolted down by the game developers themselves before the game is finished. The alternative is that gaming communities will continue to bicker and diverge because they simply can't agree on how the game is supposed to be played. Such disparity can only hinder the growth on online gaming, both at the amateur and professional levels, and we need to put a stop to it. Now. PCG

You can read more from Dennis at his regularly updated web site, located at www.gamers.com.

Dennis Fong, a.k.a. "Thresh"



If competitive fragfests are to be played fairly, and for the results to actually mean something, shouldn't they all conform to a common set of rules and regulations?

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A Dream Come True

I've got a problem — a big one. Two games have managed to capture my gaming desires at the same time, and I'm having a tough time trying to figure out which one to play at any given moment. Not that I'm complaining, but the two games are worlds apart, literally.

The first game in question is 989 Studios' new online roleplaying game, *EverQuest*. It only supports 3D accelerated graphics, so if you don't have a 3D card, you're out of luck — but if you do, you get some very impressive visuals. You can choose from several different camera angles, both first-person and third, and you can customize your actions in a small panel that is available at any time. The world is populated with hundreds of monsters, and the elemental effects (such as a thunder, lightning, and rain) are simply fantastic. I wrote a column for the October 1998 issue entitled "The Dream RPG," in which I described the perfect roleplaying game. It would use an engine comparable to the *Unreal* engine, or even *Quake II*. The mouse could control the first-person perspective, and the graphics would give even *Unreal* a run for its money. Well, so far, that game is *EverQuest*.

That's not to say the game doesn't have its faults. So far, most everyone I've encountered is much more interested in killing monsters to earn money than actually "roleplaying" their characters in this new world. That's probably because money is extremely difficult to come by. My dream is to earn a little more than seven platinum pieces to purchase a short bow for my Wood Elf Ranger. So far, I've been able to get no more than four silver pieces for killing any given creature (you take pieces of the monster, such as a bat's wing or a fire beetle's eye, and sell them to shopkeepers). So my work is cut out for me — earning money is a slow, painful process. However, it definitely makes you look twice at a Paladin who wanders by with chain-mail armor and a large broadsword. Obviously, someone like that either has far too much time on his or her hands, or you're looking at a dedicated player.

The game is still in its beta-test stage as I write this, however, and the creators are modifying it every day. New areas are coming online, and values are tweaked all the time. But even the beta of the game is incredibly addictive. The highest compliment I can pay the game is to say that this is what *Ultima Online* should have been. Of all online RPGs I've encountered, this is the only one that I've truly lusted after, even after playing it for several hours. Now, if only the other players in the game would do some actual roleplaying, it would be perfect....

Which leads me to the other game I've been playing. In most online RPGs I've played, there's one thing truly lacking: the roleplaying element. The part where all the players are the *characters*, not some 13-year-old kid playing a big strong warrior and talking about how the Oakland Raiders are the best football team in the world. Well, I've found a game where everyone I've encountered really *plays* his or her role, and no one mentions the Starr Report during the game. It's called *The Eternal City*, and it's a text-based MUD from a tiny company called Worlds Apart.

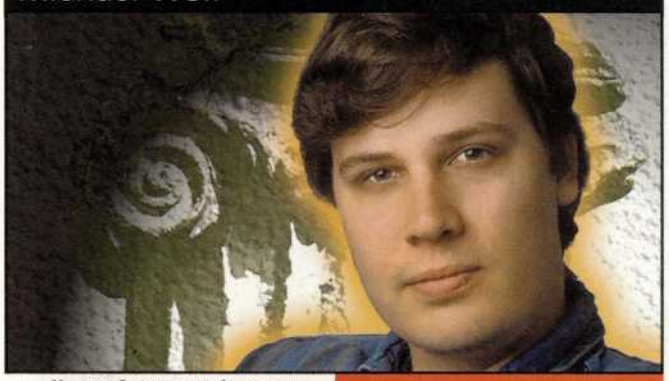
Yes, you heard me. A text-based MUD. For those of you who don't know, MUD stands for Multi-User Dungeon. Think of it like an old Infocom text adventure game, but with lots of people adventuring at the same time. *The Eternal City* is a game about a fictional city called Iridine, a city within the world of Midlight. It's a world rich in mythology, with various gods vying for power and their servants numbering among the players. Wars are fought, alliances are formed, and even council members gather to form laws governing players' actions. And it's all run by the players. I have never encountered a game with as much depth of history as *The Eternal City*. That's not to say they don't exist — I can't honestly say I'm an expert on the world of MUDs. But if you're looking for a game that you can really sink your teeth into, with a world in which you can become a true character, this is it. You can find *The Eternal City* at *www.bignetwork.com/hc/ec*. You don't need to download client software to play the game — it works through a java-based interface on the web site.

You might think me crazy for having trouble choosing between a beautiful, graphically stunning game like *EverQuest* and a text-based world like *The Eternal City*. But the differences lie in the players. *EverQuest* is a fun game, but it's not yet *alive*. No one hangs out in taverns and sips a glass of wine while discussing their latest venture into the Gnoll stronghold. If you meet someone in the game world, they're more likely to ask you what level you are than inquire about where you came from. Perhaps when the game becomes available to the public at the end of January, that will change and it'll become more than a bug-hunt. However, in *The Eternal City*, I don't even worry about combat. I have my fun by talking to the inhabitants, swapping stories, and catching up on the local gossip. But if you want to go hunting rats in the sewers to gain better fighting abilities — well, that's an option, too.

In any case, I'm hooked on both of them. If you happen to encounter a Wood Elf Ranger in *EverQuest* by the name of Phoenix, be sure to say hello. But if you encounter a character in Iridine by the same name, don't bother trying to talk about Real Life, because he'll be too busy sipping ale and chatting up the ladies. He's a bit of a rogue, that Phoenix.

PCG

Michael Wolf



The world of online RPGs has a lot of growing to do, but *EverQuest* and an old-style MUD prove there's a lot of hope for would-be adventurers.

"Send In My Aide-de-Camp!"

Back in the heyday of board gaming, a lot of wargamers found that the most frustrating thing about their hobby was finding a live opponent. Solitaire games could be loads of fun, but in the final analysis, they were a little bit like kissing your sister — things just weren't the same as when a real, live, thinking opponent was on the other side.

The solution was to locate some kindred soul in East Bumbershoot, New Jersey and engage him in play-by-mail combat. Of course, in those days, there was no "E" for E-mail in "PBM," so the process was more time-consuming than it is today. Each player set up his favorite boardgame, then you decided who went first. You then recorded, quite laboriously, the coordinates of each hex you moved into and the actions taken by your little cardboard units once they got there, then you put a stamp on the envelope and sent it to your opponent via snail mail. A week or so later, you got his responding moves in the mail and, just as laboriously, adjusted your map to reflect the changes. It worked, in a slow, primitive way, but it meant that a typical game of, say, Avalon Hill's *Stalingrad*, might take 35-40 *weeks* to play to a conclusion.

Not to mention the practical necessity of totally sealing off the room where the game was set up. Nothing could match the stroke-inducing rage of discovering you'd accidentally left the door unlocked and your cat had decided to take a nap on Army Group Center, or that your three-year old was cheerfully masticating (and conceivably choking) on a handful of unit markers.

I know dozens of older gamers who have stacks and stacks of Avalon Hill and SPI games gathering dust in their attics. You can't, of course, *throw them out*, and yet you now "have a life," and both the time and space required to dust off and replay one of those classics has vanished along with the joys of bachelor-hood and been replaced by the need to earn a living.

Yet a great game remains a great game. And the redoubtable Scott Hamilton (HPS games, creator of such cult classics as *Tigers on the Prowl*) has issued a new and most impressive version of his *Aide-de-Camp* program.

Understand: *Aide-de-Camp 2* is *not* a game in itself. It's a powerful and lovingly crafted utility that lets you convert almost any hex-based wargame into a computer format that allows for smooth, flexible E-mail play. (Hell, it also works with card games, chess, and *Chutes and Ladders*, if you want to bring in the whole family).

William R. Trotter



The Colonel takes a long-overdue look at the most potent boardgame conversion utility on the market and finds it most impressive.

It is a complete product, however; once you acquire the basic program, you can convert *any* favorite wargame into a computer-playable format. The new version even allows those with scanners to feed real military maps into the engine, superimpose hexes on them, then custom-design whatever campaigns or engagements interest you.

ADC2 basically consists of three interwoven but separate modules: the Symbol Editor, the Map Editor, and the Game Play Module. First, you create a symbol set, generating all the symbols you'll need for map features and unit characteristics. Once you've done this, you go on to the Map Editor, select the size and zoom level, and deploy your units.

Then you scan all the Combat Results, Terrain Effect Charts, Attrition Tables and whatever else came with the original board game and insert them into the program, where they become available as pull-down menus.

How professional and fancy the resulting game set looks depends on your patience and your skill with graphics tools. There's a decent set of the latter included in the program, but if you're more comfortable with, say, *Paint Shop Pro*, you can use that and import the art as .BMP files.

I experimented with a modest-sized old SPI game called *Paratroop*, and after a couple of days of blundering about, managed to create a reasonably decent-looking conversion of the German attack on Fort Eben Emael. It's certainly not good enough to post on the 'net as a for-sale game set, but I'm happy with it, and I learned enough by doing it to recommend *ADC2* as an essential purchase for anyone who aspires to learn the nuts and bolts of good wargame design.

Aide-de-Camp 2 is not cheap (it retails for $69.95), for but serious wargamers, it's a bargain. Visit the HPS website, and you'll find a mouth-watering array of game-sets. Some fairly basic games are available for free, but most of the more tantalizing titles will cost you $12-$15 dollars, ordered direct from their designers. Considering the amount of time, labor, and sheer love that goes into these products, the asking prices are more than reasonable.

Where else are you going to find games devoted to the Siege of Madrid, Tannenburg, Avalon Hill's long out of print *Conquistador*, or the battle for Khe Sanh? New battle-sets are coming online every week, covering every period of warfare, in graphic styles than range from the barely utilitarian to the stunningly beautiful.

Aide-de-Camp 2 is a unique and brilliantly conceived product. And Hamilton's readiness to stand behind his products and to make himself accessible to those who need help is legendary (and puts most big game companies to shame).

If you think you're grognard enough to handle it, and you have closets full of beloved board games you haven't played in years, *ADC2* is definitely worthy of your consideration. Log on to *http://hpssims.com* and check it out.

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Them Was the Days

Dan Bennett



A devoted sim nut looks back on a misspent decade that produced some great memories.

I just recently realized that it's been almost exactly a decade since I was first drawn into the wonderful world of simulations. Time doesn't just fly; it's on full afterburner.

It all started in the summer of 1987, when I attended a six-week writer's workshop in Seattle. I returned home with three realizations: 1) I was a pretty good writer; 2) Lots of people are pretty good writers; and 3) If I was going to spend much time writing, I needed a computer. I'd spent those six weeks writing short stories long-hand in spiral notebooks, then typing the final drafts on an electric Smith-Corona, making corrections with Liquid Paper and a lot of patience. Meanwhile, several of my classmates were tapping away on computers they'd brought with them, happily revising as they went along, and printing out letter-perfect manuscripts when they were finished.

I was home less than a month when I finally convinced my parents to let me take out a loan and buy a PC. It was an IBM XT clone with a 4.77MHz 8088 processor, 256K of RAM, a CGA graphics card, and one real luxury: a 10MB hard drive. Not much of a game machine; then again, IBM compatibles weren't really thought of as game machines back then. They were serious computers for serious tasks. I thought I might buy one or two of those Infocom text adventures, but when I wanted to play a game, I'd fire up my Colecovision console. My PC was all about word processing.

All that changed about a year later, when I walked out of the local Software Etc. with a copy of MicroProse's *Gunship*. I slept very little that weekend; I was too busy buzzing around pyramid-shaped mountains on a four-color landscape in an AH-64 Apache attack helicopter. I'd put Pink Floyd's *Momentary Lapse of Reason* in the CD player; it'd play "Learning to Fly" as I spun up the rotors and lifted off, and by the time I popped off the first Hellfire missile at a target, "The Dogs of War" was usually playing (it may be the all-time best song to accompany a combat sim). I was instantly hooked. Were there other games like this, that simulated real-world military hardware and weapon systems?

There were, of course, and I bought just about every one of them. I remember calling Babbage's every week until they could tell me when MicroProse's *F-19 Stealth Fighter* would be available; on the day it was released, I was in the store to pick up my reserved copy. I ended up postponing a trip home for Thanksgiving so I could spend just one more day playing that incredible sim. Over the years, others followed: the original *Falcon, F-15 Strike Eagle II, M-1 Tank Platoon, 688 Attack Sub, LHX Attack Chopper, Chuck Yeager's Air Combat, Knights of the Sky, Red Baron, Their Finest Hour, Aces of the Pacific, Flight of the Intruder, Silent Hunter II, Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe* — and some lesser known gems, like Three-Sixty's *Megafortress*, Spectrum HoloByte's *Tornado*; and EA's *PHM Pegasus, Su-25 Stormovik*, and the wonderful, unsung *Strike Fleet*.

Soon, every penny I made at the college newspaper went toward upgrading my PC to make it a better sim machine. While other students at the University of Oklahoma were spending their money on the things that really mattered to a serious college student — beer and CDs — I was buying hardware. First came a two-button Suncom joystick; then a memory card that took me up to a whopping 1MB of RAM; then an NEC V20 chip (which must have been the first non-Intel PC processor — it was 5-10 percent faster than the 8088); a "turbo" XT motherboard (it ran at a blinding 8MHz — *Gunship* was as smooth as silk); a 16-color EGA card; an AdLib sound card; a 12MHz 286 motherboard; a VGA card and monitor; a CH Flightstick; a Sound Blaster Pro... the list is endless — literally endless, because I'm still upgrading, and I guess I always will.

And — most of the time — I don't regret it. My borderline-psychotic devotion to computer games landed me the job I have now, and it's given me a lot of great fun, too. And I know who to thank: Andy Hollis (formerly of MicroProse, now of Jane's Combat Simulations); Paul Grace of Electronic Arts (and now EA's Jane's division); Damon Slye and Jeff Tunnell of Dynamix; Jeff Briggs (another MicroProse alum, now with Firaxis); Larry Holland (formerly of LucasArts, now of Totally Games); Scott Spanburg (still with MicroProse) — and a whole host of others who shouldn't be offended just because I couldn't think of their names before noon on a Friday. Basically, the giants of the field — the people who produced or designed or programmed or otherwise contributed to the games that set the standards simulations still have to meet today. Fortunately for us, most of them are still working on sims and setting higher standards than ever.

Best of all, while I'll always have fond memories of those early days when I first discovered my love for sims, the great moments keep coming. Learning the complex avionics of *Longbow 2* and *Jane's F-15*; making a tense carrier landing in *F/A-18 Korea*; shooting down actual human beings in *WarBirds*; stalking a stealthy enemy submarine in *688(I) Hunter/Killer*...it's still a great, great time to be a sim fan.

And how about you? I'm sure you've got some fond memories of your own. When were you bitten by the sim bug? And what game did it to you? Drop me a line at *dbennett@pcgamer.com* and tell me your story — and maybe you'll see it here the next time I wax nostalgic.

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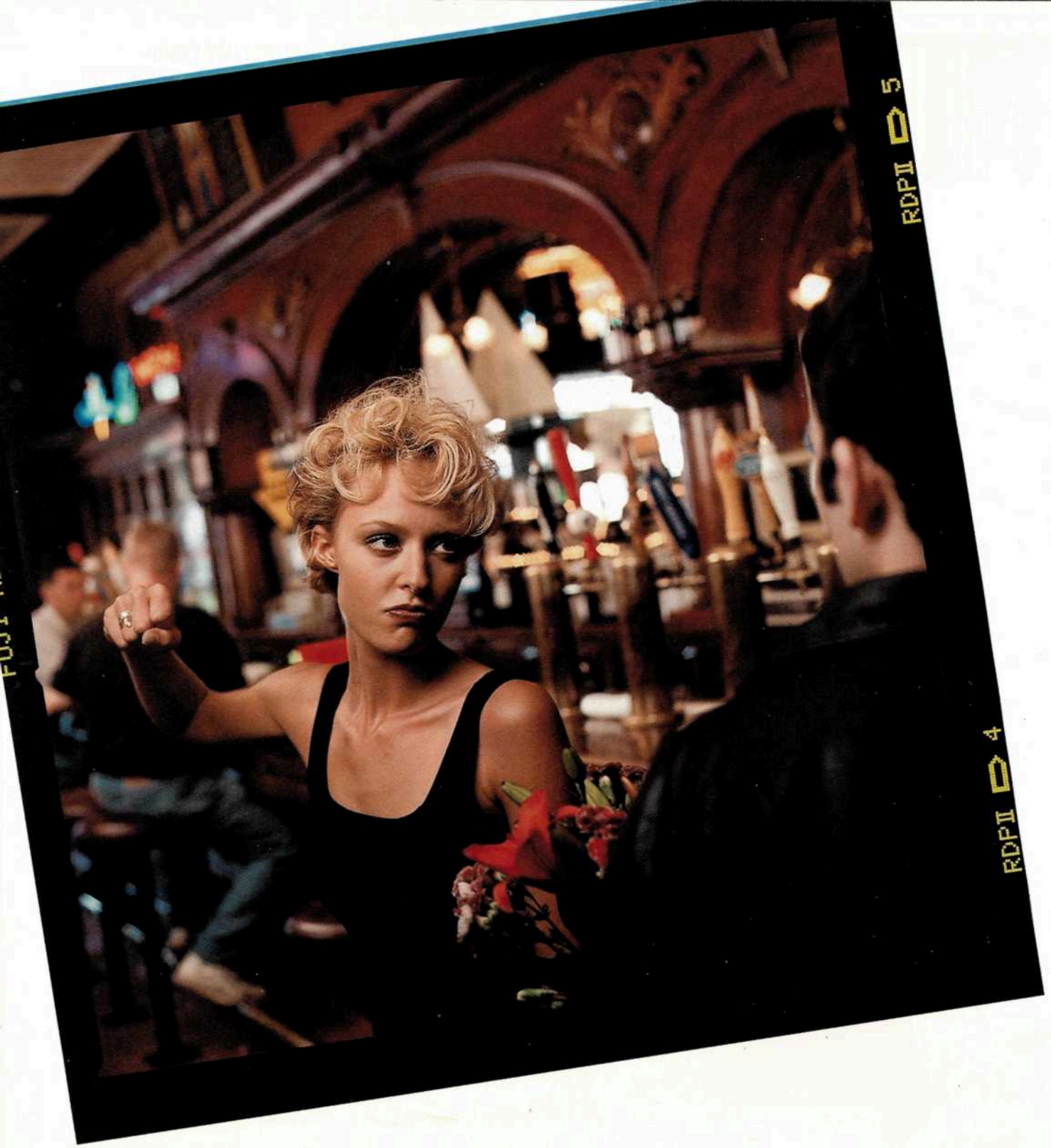
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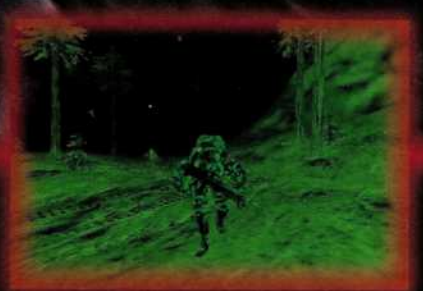
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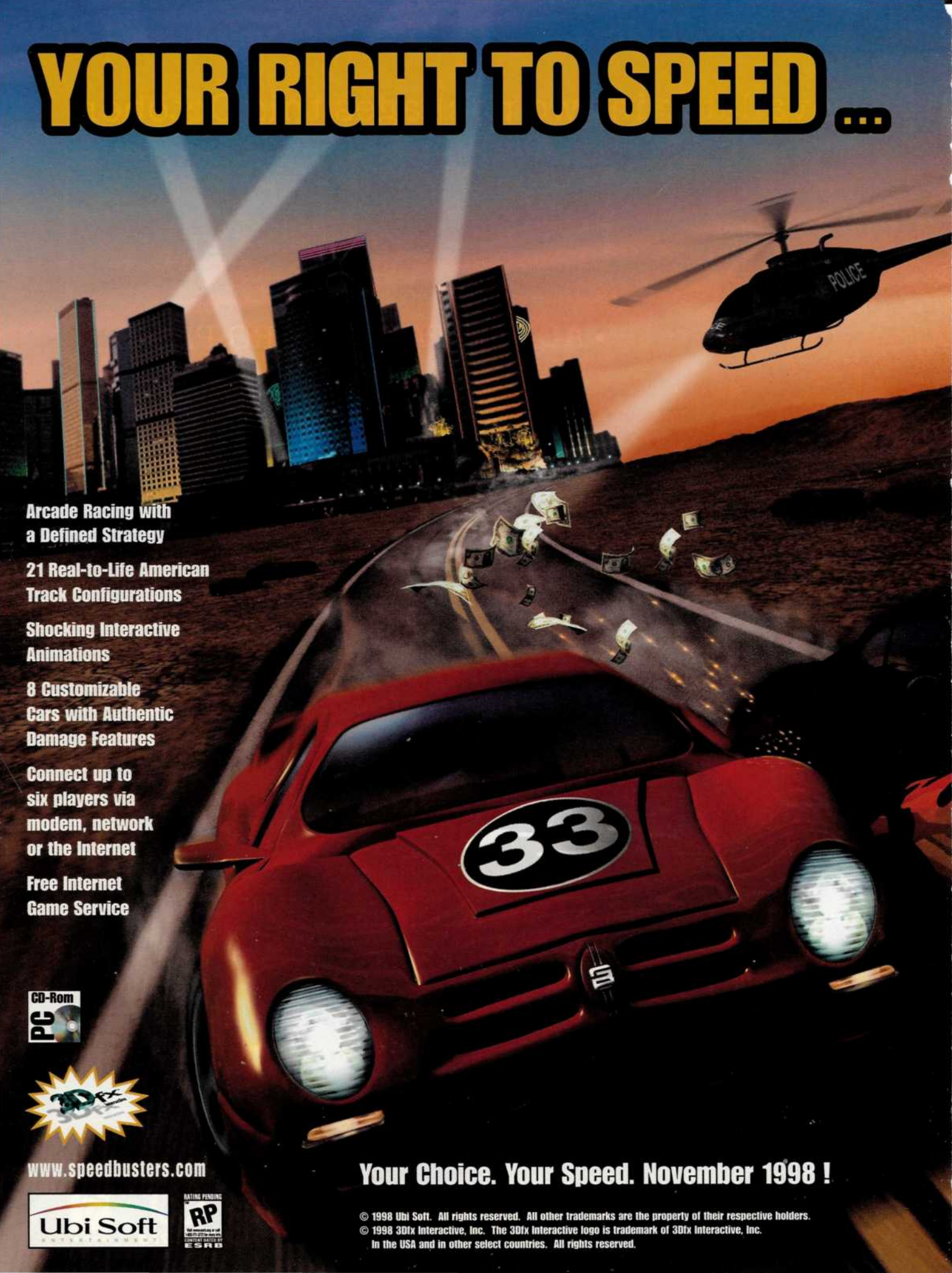
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Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six, Part 2

Single-player strategies that will guide you to victory!

Last month, our friends at RedStorm Entertainment gave you all you need to know to best your opponents in *Rainbow Six*'s adversarial multi-player game. Now, the game's design team is back to give you basic and advanced training for the single-player campaign. You won't find better tips than these *anywhere*, so read on!

A NOTE ON PLANS: To help you with the strategic planning phase of the single-player missions, the game's designers have also provided us with ready-made plan files for each and every scenario. These are not necessarily the "perfect" plans (as you'll read below, there's no such thing) but they are workable, complete plans that will certainly give you a leg-up on each mission. If you have the CD-ROM edition of *PC Gamer*, you'll find all these plan files on this month's disc. Alternately, you can download the plans from our web site — point your web browser at *http://pcgamer.ign.com/static/features/r6plans.shtml* to go straight to 'em. And good luck, soldier!



Using the ready-made plan files available on this month's *PC Gamer* CD or from our web site will definitely give you a tactical leg-up on those pesky environmentalists.

The myth of "the perfect plan"

In *Rainbow Six* there are so many random factors that it's unreasonable to expect a single plan to work every time, no matter how airtight it seems. Terrorist patrol paths change from game to game, and if a "tango" is not killed outright, they will run away and take up another position that you probably didn't account for. Sometimes your teammates might accidentally make some noise at an inopportune time, which will trigger terrorists to come and investigate the disturbance (usually followed by a hail of incoming lead). And these are just *some* of the things that can derail a "perfect" plan.

So, when making a plan, try to make it in stages. Play through the action portion several times up to the point where your plan stops. Tweak as necessary, and build from there. Sometimes a plan will "suddenly seem bad," but don't throw it all away because of some random craziness. Isolate where the problems happen and either change what happens in that space or avoid it altogether.



Experiment with the different soldiers in your roster to see how they compare. Key players like Ding Chavez must be kept alive through the early missions so they can be used in the much tougher scenarios later on.

What goes into making a good plan?

The first step to planning any victory is to be knowledgeable of both the tools of the trade and those who wield them. If



Proper uniform selection is vital in the single-player campaign. For each mission, you need to make the appropriate trade-offs between stealth and protection. Try out different characters in the practice missions.

you have not yet done so...be sure to go through both the training missions and roster to become acquainted with your operatives and the skills they employ. Different combinations of team members can produce differing levels of success (or failure). Each character available to your teams has a set of ten ratings. They range from how effective a character is at disarming a bomb to whether or not they make a good leader. Study their scores carefully! The true key to this game is knowing whom to use for which job and when. It would behoove you to experiment earlier on with team assignments till you find the combinations that best suit your strategies.

Uniform Selection

All missions begin with proper uniform selection. Your uniform determines two things: the amount of protection you have from enemy fire and the amount of noise you make when moving. Light offers less protection but effectively ups the stealth ability of those wearing it, Heavy offers the most protection but can be heard a long way off, and Medium is a compromise.

To really see (and hear) the difference first hand, go to Open Training and load up the City Street. Add three operatives to the active roster: a reserve recon, a reserve assaulter, and a reserve demolitions operative. They'll automatically start in light, medium, and heavy uniforms respectively. Place each on a separate team and place one waypoint for each in the insertion zone. Select the demolitions operative and start the mission.

First, move around the space as the demolitions operative. Listen carefully and you'll notice equipment jangling sounds. While these are generated randomly, they are more likely to occur when running and when wearing heavy gear. Start and stop frequently. Move backwards. Sidestep. Get a feel for how 'noisy' this uniform is. Now switch to the recon operative and do the same thing. Notice the difference? The recon operative in light gear rarely makes noise. And the assaulter in medium gear is somewhere between the two.

While these equipment sounds may seem minuscule compared to gunfire, terrorists can hear them if you're close enough. Next time you enter a room only to find yourself looking down the barrel of a terrorist's weapon, chances are that they heard you moving and turned to face the disturbance.

Next, play around with different operatives and note how the stealth ability interacts with the uniform. Maldini (stealth 100) in a recon outfit is silent as the wind. Jorg (stealth 67) in a heavy uniform, on the other hand, stomps around like an old refrigerator, especially when running.

But what about protection from those pesky bullets? First off, even heavy body armor is only effective against pistol and submachine gun rounds. If you're up against anyone with an AK-47, a CAR-15, or an M-16, armor won't do you a bit of good. If this is the case, you might as well wear light armor so at least you'll be quiet. Luckily, many terrorists in the game are armed with Uzis or pistols. Against these weapons, body armor is extremely effective. RAINBOW's body armor can absorb numerous pistol caliber rounds without letting any through.

Light and Medium body armor covers the chest and torso, while heavy covers the chest, torso, abdomen and, in the case of urban uniforms, offers additional head protection in the form of a Lexan face shield. To see this effect, go ahead and let some rounds from a pistol or MP5 fly at a team member's chest. They won't flinch at all, though a puff of debris will appear where the bullet struck. If you do the same thing with a CAR-15 or M-16, they'll be wounded or possibly dead (look for the blood stain on the vest). Body armor also protects against grenades, if you're lucky and not standing too close.

Deciding on how many fire-teams in a plan

This is a tricky question. The number mostly depends on what the mission requires. Some missions that require pure stealth are best served by a plan with only one team (containing one person). Some missions may contain objectives that are spread out from each other that are best served with four teams. The main thing is to assess whether or not one team can successfully secure an area or perform an action.

How many people per fire-team?

Here's the basic trade-off: the more people in a team, the greater their functionality at performing multiple tasks (if one specialist is killed, you'll have another in reserve). The problem with having big teams is that they generate a lot more noise (which is more likely to alert terrorists). Even worse: if your team crosses an alerted terrorist with really good aim, there is a greater likelihood that your whole team will get wasted.

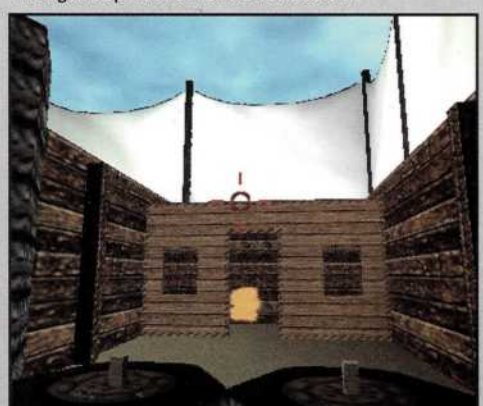
Designating equipment

You should be concerned with executing the mission as efficiently and as economically as possible. Don't outfit a team member with anything he or she will not use. Extra gear = extra noise = terrorists alerted = team members killed = game over.

You might want to dress different fire-teams in differing combinations of camouflage (you're allowed to chose between two different styles of camouflage per mission). An example of this: Red team = all black, Blue team = all tan, Green team = leader in black with the rest in tan, and Gold team = leader in tan with the rest in black. It can be very helpful in visually checking where your teams are.

How best to use go-codes

Go-codes serve two important functions: allowing your teams to ready themselves for dynamic entries, and allowing teams to guard spots until they are needed to move to another location. A helpful tip when planning your go-codes is to divide your codes into two groups. An example of this is to only use Alpha and Beta for coordinating assaults, while Charlie and Delta are used to make guard spots at various points in the mission. Another way to do things is to use only Alpha for Red team, Beta for Blue team and so on. This is good for staggered assaults, but sometimes it's just good to press one button and go. When making your plans, you should try to place your go-codes in the map at the same time for the different teams. As an example: after you've marched Red team to door #1 and give them go-code Alpha to breach, you should then go over to Gold team and walk them up to door #2 of the same room and also give them go-code Alpha. It makes synchronizing troop movement a lot easier.



Use the training scenarios to practice moving around with the various uniform and specialist types and get an idea of their various strengths and weaknesses.

Combat, Hollywood Style

Contrary to proper belief, a bullet striking a body does not cause it to jerk around like a marionette. If you take a 180 lb. punching bag, slap a bulletproof vest on it, and fire pistol round into it, it won't move at all. Nada. Not an inch.

In fact, Hollywood's unrealistic portrayal of gunshot wounds can cause no end of problems for law enforcement officers who expect to see perpetrators gout huge quantities of blood and reel from the shock of bullet impacts. This can happen, but more than likely, they'll just fall over from the psychological effect of getting shot (another Hollywood induced response) rather than any physics-based or real physiological effect. There are numerous accounts of police officers emptying round after round into the chest of a perp while thinking that their gun is jammed or they're missing because the target does not respond — which a target won't if they're determined enough and they aren't shot in the brain or upper spine.

As Tom Clancy is fond of pointing out — you can shoot a guy in the heart as often as you like, but if he is pumped up, it can be minutes before he drops from blood loss.

Operation Steel Wind

MISSION 1

NOTE: These guides assume that you have the game difficulty level set to "Veteran". Be prepared for a little extra heat if you play on "Elite."

This one is pretty simple. The Ambassador is up on the second floor and the staff member is right below him on the first. The trick is that all of the entrances are locked, and right behind the doors are a load of terrorists with itchy trigger fingers. The complications to the story are that the Staff Member is guarded by one terrorist and the Ambassador has a terrorist searching for him (he starts on the third floor). If you allow too much time to pass without removing either the Ambassador from the building or eliminating the terrorist looking for him, it's game over.

To ensure this doesn't happen, a good strategy is to send a team or two to the third floor via the fire escapes on the left of the building. The objective here is to contain the floor. Guard against any tangos making it to the stairwells — there should be no more than three bad guys up there. Once you have secured that floor, have your team(s) move down to where the Ambassador is (taking the spiraling staircase on the right hand side of the building) and change your ROE to "Escort". With the Ambassador in tow, have your team(s) return to the now secured third floor and take him to the extraction area using the fire escape once more.

Freeing the Staff Member is a little trickier. Not only is she well guarded, but the entire first floor is as well. This is a good time to employ at least two fire-teams; one to get the hostage, one to keep the other terrorists from interfering. The team that secures the Staff Member should run to the first floor entrance (on the right hand side of the building) and wait at the door. At the same time, the second fire team should make its way either to the left or the rear entrance and wait for your go-code. Once in place, make sure to look at your map. Try and send in your team when the patrolling enemy has his back to the door. There may not be any honor in shooting someone in the back, but hey...it makes your job easier. Have Team 2 clear out the back and left side of the embassy first, then move to rid any enemies under the grand staircase in the foyer.



The fire escape is a good way for your fire-teams to effectively enter the upper levels of the Belgian Embassy.

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Operation Cold Thunder

MISSION 2

Silence is the key to this mission. Forget the flashbangs and frag grenades, and be certain that everyone has the suppressed MP5-SD5s and a Heartbeat Sensor.

As you enter the back yard from the jungle path, be sure to take out the guard on top of the balcony, and the one along the fence close to the tents (sometimes this one is in the path, so watch for that). Be careful of the guard in front — he can shoot you over the brick wall while you cover the team that moves into the basement.

Sometimes the Hutu rebels are in good defensive positions on the ground floor, and you will have to take them out yourself; bear in mind that their positions may well be randomized.

Once the ground floor is secure, have a team sweep the upstairs rooms, while you make a dash for the hostage location in the basement — and be sure to use the HBS to scan for the bad-guy positions before you make your big entrance.



Night-vision goggles and the suppressed MP5SD5 are a deadly combination when it comes to assaulting this Congo mansion. Secure the ground floor before proceeding upstairs.

Operation Angel Wire

MISSION 3

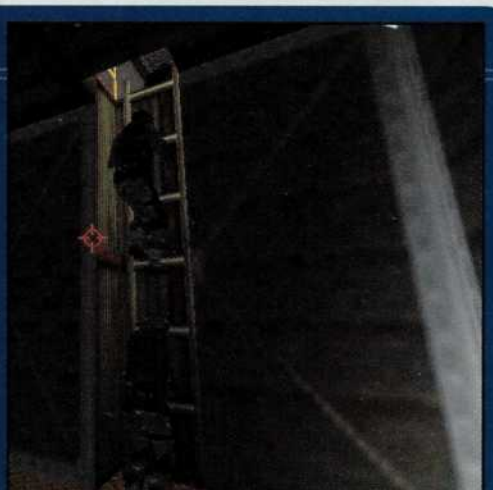
This is your first mission in a large space. Study the map carefully and use the recon tab and 3D view to familiarize yourself with the area before moving in. The basic idea is to use three teams: Blue is the assault team and clears the way for the demolitions team, Red is the demolitions squad and takes care of all the bombs, and Green takes care of the hostages. Your best bet here is to use the plan file included on this month's *PC Gamer* disc, or on the web site (see page 300). If you stick with Blue team, you should do pretty well.

Follow Red and Green up the stairs. Once you climb up the ladder and just before you go back in the door, look up — you'll see the feet of a tango. Take him out; that will save some trouble later on.

Once you enter the rig again, you will see Green team waiting ahead — you can tell them to go (with the Charlie go-code), or take out the tango in the hall yourself. They will wait for Charlie again just before the hostages — once given, they will rescue the hostages and bring them up to the roof.

Follow the Blue path to the first bomb room. Use your heartbeat sensor — there are two tangos on your floor and one on the grid above. Once there, use the Bravo go-code to bring in the demolition team. When they're done, head up to the next floor.

Just outside the door into the next bomb room, use the Heartbeat Sensor to find all the tangos, then sneak in, around, and ambush them. Hit Bravo to bring in demolitions again, and head up to the roof for extraction.



Take special care when moving around the tight confines of this oil rig's lower levels. Things become even more perilous as you move higher.

Operation Sun Devil

MISSION 4

There are two key points to every successful plan for this mission:

1) Once your teams cross through the hacienda gates, check both sides of the house to eliminate the patrolling guards and the one on the balcony. Then, watch the left side of the house for a short while. Some guards will come outside to check out the noise and you can pick them off.

2) After the outside has been cleared, move a couple of recon people with Heartbeat Sensors in Advance mode up to the house. They will provide you with valuable reconnaissance while you clear the house.

Except for these two points, this is a straightforward assault. Send one team up to take out Ramon Calderon, and another team down into the basement to get the hostages.



Take up flanking positions on either side of the Hacienda gates and pick off the guards on both sides of the building before moving forward.



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Operation Ghost Dance

MISSION 5



This theme park assault is particularly tricky when you are playing on Elite level because you must move fast to prevent a hostage from being killed right away.

The trick to this mission is to apply overwhelming coordinated force. There are two rooms guarding the approaches to the room where the hostages are being held. All of these rooms have catwalks up high. Terrorists are on the ground floor *and* in the catwalks, so to be successful, you must hit each room low and high simultaneously.

Go-codes are critical to this operation. If you send your teams in piecemeal, they'll be massacred. Break it down into three stages: clear the outer two rooms, clear the inner room, then escort the hostages out. Get each team into position for each stage, then use a go-code to release them. Cover your "six" on the way out; the terrorists in the tunnels and control room will often hear the assault and catch you from behind just as you are about to win the mission. You could clear the tunnels first, but you risk alerting the terrorists and causing them to kill the hostages.

NOTE: If you're playing on Elite level, don't forget the boy that's hiding near the front. You'll need a slightly different approach — get a team to him as fast as possible! Either make sure that team has a lockpick kit, or have them start in the front insertion zone. If you don't, a terrorist will get to the kid first. Once he has been rescued, you can continue with the rest of the assault.

Operation Blue Sky

MISSION 6



Clear the top level of the dam and check all the towers for bad guys before proceeding downstairs and inside the main structure.

This is a dam big level (sorry, it had to be said).

You should take at least three teams with silenced weapons and some demolitions kits to take care of the bombs. Try to eliminate all of the hostiles on the outside of the dam before moving inside the structure (you really *don't* want any heart-breaking surprises at the end of this long mission).

When planning for this level, remember that you don't have to kill all of the terrorists to win. The best solution is to move your teams to the outer staircases when you make your descent into the dam. Take one team and have them go to the set of stairs furthest from the insertion zone. Move them down the stairs to the first landing and have them work their way towards the hostage. After they have secured the hostage, have them lead him out of the dam back to the extraction point. That part's easy.

It's the other teams that have to do the real hard work as they slowly make their way downwards, through the dam interior. Move teams onto the catwalks above the generators and snipe out the terrorists on the next level down. Keep doing this (and defuse the first bomb after the generator rooms have been cleared) until you get to the maintenance tunnels. Once in the tunnels, you'll need to set up a few coordinated assaults to get to bomb #2. Don't risk team members on any threat not between them and the last bomb — the tunnels are narrow and make it very easy for a terrorist to take out the lot of your brave boys.

When planning you assault on the turbine shaft room containing the final bomb, make sure that you bring your teams in from at least two different entrances with a go-code. The bad guys are dug in like ticks on an old dog, waiting for some new blood. This is a prime candidate for flashbangs aplenty. Once the area is secured, disarm the bomb and get the hell out.

Operation Fire Walk

MISSION 7



It's imperative that you take out the fleeing leaders before they make it to the safety of their Humvee and escape. Have a team line up on the garage so they're ready to go.

This is a really tough mission, best attempted using four two-man teams. Equip your teams with M-16s or CAR-15s since all the enemies are wearing body armor. And bear in mind that any team member whose biosuit has been compromised as they enter the human testing area will contract the lethal virus and show up *dead* on the roster screen for the next mission — and you can only use the survivors from this mission in the next.

Your first priority is to stop the Leaders from reaching the Humvee, so be sure that you have a team line up on the garage to keep anyone from escaping.

Run your other teams behind the left trailer and snipe from the corner closest to the door. In order to ensure that your teammates survive clearing the trailers, you'll have to help out by sniping the baddies through the windows of the far trailer, and throwing grenades into the windows of the trailer closest to you. (try to blow the front door off with a grenade before sending in the clearing team).

You must wait for the trailers to be cleared before moving to the front door of the main lab, but you need to keep it covered — once all the commotion starts, bad guys will be coming out to investigate. Use Heartbeat Sensors at all times.

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Operation Winter Hawk

MISSION 8



As in the last mission, your priority early on should be to take out the bad guys who are trying to escape. Cap the scientists before they can make it to their private jet!

At all costs, you must prevent the scientists from getting to their planes. The most efficient way to do this is to park two two-man teams by the planes on the tarmac. The trouble comes in the fact that there are a lot of terrorists ready to spill out of the buildings (not to mention the ones patrolling the grounds) to make sure that the scientists escape.

The key to is to secure the control tower with three teams, while a fourth guards the prop plane. The tower has a greatest density of terrorists than either of the hangars. Problem is, as soon as you get within a certain distance of the control tower, the scientists will panic and make a dash for the jet — followed by several terrorists.

You need to move at least two of your teams up toward the control tower (one on either side of the hangar closest to the insertion zone) and have the team on the front side of the tower wait nearer to the fence between the two buildings at an angle that's out of line of site with the front door, facing toward the light arrays. This way they can put shots on anyone that steps around the corner, and anyone heading toward the plane will have their backs turned to them (which makes them easy pickings).

At the same time, move the other team to the back corner of the hangar with a line of site on both the back door of the control tower and the hangar. Their job is to keep any terrorists from sneaking up behind the team in front. To make this work, you'll need a third team to wait by the front door of the hangar to keep any terrorists from spilling out and wasting the first team from behind as well.

As soon as the first wave of terrorists is down, give a go-code to the two teams parked by the doors of the first hangar. They should quickly enter the hangar in a diagonal path between the two doors, removing all of the inhabitants. As that's being done, send in the first team to sweep out any remaining terrorists from the control tower. The only thing left to do is move all of your teams into positions at both doors to the last hangar. On a go-code have your teams enter as they did the previous hangar, shooting anything that moves. Score one for the good guys.

Operation Red Wolf

MISSION 9

There is a path of least resistance for this mission. Go in through the garage in back and you can snipe the guards in the printing room from below. Take it slow and easy, and make sure you get the one guarding the upper entrance to the gate room (you can line him up from near the staircase in the printing room).

Don't neglect the front, however. If you do, the terrorists there will hear the fighting out back and hit you from behind. Be sure to have one team clearing the front while you clear out the printing room. Use a go-code to keep them out front until you've cleared the back; the guard watching the gates will mow them down if you don't get him first.

Have your teams regroup outside the vault where the hostages are. This room is a tough nut to crack because there's one terrorist way in the back, right next to the hostages. Toss a flashbang into the room, then release your other team to clear it. They should be able to get both terrorists, then grab the hostages.



Entering this terrorist-controlled mint through the front entrance can be a tricky proposition because of the guards posted there.

Operation Razor Ice

MISSION 10

The overall concept is to move, move, move — with the occasional slow-down at corners. The terrorists on this level move around a lot and are especially responsive to sound, so getting the job done quick is imperative. Also, quick movement keeps your backup in play, and their deadly accuracy is a big plus. Blitz quickly down the stairs and go right, into the break room. Proceed to the back of the boat and down the ladder. Take out the terrorist there quickly. Retrieve the hostage and retrace your route back to the extraction zone.

The ready-made plan for this mission (again, check the *PC Gamer* disc or web site) includes three go-codes that indicate particular areas of concern. Alpha is where a terrorist is at the end of the hallway and a potential terrorist is off to the right. Take out the one down the hallway quickly and take a quick look to the right before proceeding. At Bravo, you can blitz around the corner and take out the terrorists, or pause to let loose a flashbang and take 'em down while they're dazed. Charlie is possibly the most critical. Don't climb down the ladder — *fall* down. A terrorist will be across the room or near the stairs below. Take her down quickly, or she'll cap the hostage.



The tight confines and echoing hallways of the ship can make for some sticky situations. Suppressed weaponry, deadly accuracy, and frequent use of the Heartbeat Sensor is critical.

Operation Yellow Knife

MISSION 11

This is quite a change from previous missions — it requires stealth and patience. It's best to take two people, each on a separate team, both equipped with a Heartbeat Sensor and an Electronics Kit. The latter is essential as it dramatically reduces the amount of time needed to plant bugs. Safety both of your weapons; you cannot kill anybody on this mission, and inadvertent gunfire can alert guards.

One team member stays near the insertion point with the HBS running to provide intelligence, while the other actually does the dirty work. Do not take additional team members — they'll just get in the way and make it harder to sneak around unseen. And be sure to take a recon expert — this is one place where a high stealth characteristic can make all the difference.

Take your time and use the HBS a lot. Observe the pattern of each guard you encounter from a hidden position. Learn their patterns, then use it against them.

Wait for the outside guard to go around the corner, then go through the garage door (be sure to close it behind you). Get to that security system and deactivate it. Watch for the opening in the path of the ground floor guard, then plant that bug. The tricky part is planting the upstairs bug. Go up the middle stairs far enough to see the second floor plan and crouch so the guard can't see you. When the guard reaches the far bedroom, run for the phone and plant that bug.

Getting out can be tough. Essentially, retrace your path and don't hesitate to use your other team member for additional info. Get everyone back to the extraction zone and you're outta there.



Encountering a guard or even firing a shot can spell the the unsuccessful end to this mission. Light armor and a recon specialist are what you'll need to stand the best chance of success.

Operation Deep Magic

MISSION 12

This stealth mission is tougher than the last couple of missions and requires using two teams, each with Heartbeat Sensors and Electronics Kits. Once again, recon is the specialty of choice.

Move Red team down the stairwell (not the elevator shaft) and get them in position on the upper floor. They'll come in handy later. Be sure to leave them in Advance mode so they'll use their Heartbeat Sensors. Take Blue team to the lower floor via the elevator shaft. Use the HBS, find an opening, and get across to the security room. After deactivating it, move Blue through the back hallways to join up with Red team in the upper stairwell. Use your Heart Beat Sensor and wait for an opening to take the back hallways to Brightling's office. Get those computer files!

Okay, it hasn't been too hard so far, but now comes the tricky part. Move Blue safely down the short hallway near Brightling's office, then use Red's HBS to highlight the patrolling guard near the stairwell. If you time it right, you'll just be able to make it. Get back to the extraction point and you're through. Oh, and be sure to close those doors or those guards are sure to see you.

NOTE: While playing on the Elite level, you should use an extra team to access the computer instead of the security team. This is recommended because after about six minutes into the mission, a guard opens the double doors outside of Brightling's office. This obviously makes it harder to get in and out of the office.



A simple entry through the main stairwell is the most effective way to get into John Brightling's office skyscraper undetected.

Operation Lone Fox

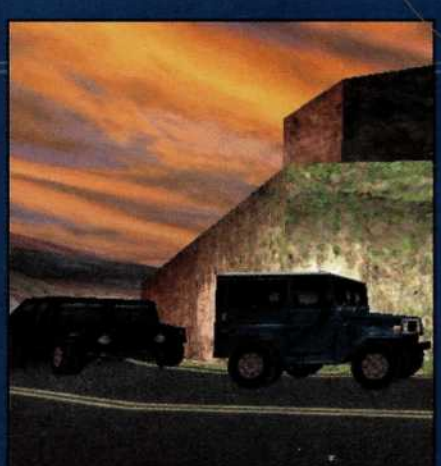
MISSION 13

The initial engagement is the worst. The mission starts you in a river under a bridge where you have already blocked off the escape route of a suspect you must secure for interrogation. As soon as the convoy transporting him arrives and finds its route blocked, heavily armed guards (who are all expert shots) will pile out of the vehicles to protect him. You need to pick them off at long range, so make sure that all of your team members are packing M-16A2s during outfitting.

Your best hope is to place one team on the bluff just above the bridge, and the others in the river on both sides of the bridge. Make sure when you're placing points for their plans that you have them facing towards the bridge. After you've chopped down the first wave of bad guys, switch your ROE to "Escort" and pick up your target. Next, advance your men further up the road to the clearing and stop.

When advancing the team previously on the bluff, make sure that they walk down the slope instead of climbing down the steep incline. This will put them into a good spot for shooting the next wave of guards at the clearing.

While that team is moving into place, you should move along the slope on the road until you get close to the traffic sign. At that point (or just before it) you should swing left towards the back of the clearing, ready to shoot. Zoom in and step sideways until you can see the hunkered down guards behind the concrete highway dividers. After that threat has been removed, move ahead of the rest of your teams (leaving the captured terrorist with them) and snipe the two terrorists on the bridge. Once they are dead, make a mad dash for the extraction zone.



Keep at a safe distance and let the convoy pass by you before sniping the occupants at long range as they exit the vehicles.

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Operation Black Star

MISSION 14

This mission is straightforward as long as you use silenced weapons and advance in a controlled fashion when assaulting each primary area from two directions at once.

Start by taking out the exterior trailer guards from long range. Next, move carefully into position for a two-team entry into the hostage room. Use a go-code to synchronize the assault. Be sure to prep the room with a flashbang. It usually works best if you are the thrower — just give that go-code right after the flash. The timing on the entry is very important.

Once you've secured the hostages, leave one team inside to guard them while you take another team outside to clean up the reinforcements. These guys can show up in the damnedest places, so be prepared. Once the outside is clear, get those hostages to the extraction zone and call it a day.



Check your position before moving off at the outset of this mission...or this will be the bloody result. Poor little Billy.

Operation Wild Arrow

MISSION 15

Time is your key enemy in this mission. You must disarm the virus bombs within 30 seconds of disabling the security system. Take one team for the security computer and one team for each virus bomb. Electronics specialists are best for the objectives, but you may want some assaulters along to help with any pesky guards.

Take silenced weapons and get each team to its objective with a minimum of fuss. If you go in guns blazing at everyone in sight, someone may set off the bombs early. Take out only the security people required to reach your objectives. Watch out for innocent bystanders.

Use go-codes to coordinate the objectives. Once everyone is in place, disable the security system. Then immediately release the bomb teams. As soon as a team completes its objective, have it head for the extraction zone.

Keep an eye on the two patrolling guards in the sewers. They are the ones most likely to disrupt your plans.



Work your way through the underground tunnels (being watchful for guards) then proceed into the main complex and find those bombs!

Operation Mystic Tiger

MISSION 16

This is a dirty job, but somebody's gotta do it.

The only thing that matters is capturing Brightling — he is dug in behind several security checkpoints manned by crack terrorists. Whoever you have left on the personnel roster should be placed to start in the Bio Dome on the north side of the main dome (color-coded green). You should have at least three teams for this mission, all carrying CAR-15s. Advance these teams carefully though the long corridors and pod areas until they reach a point just outside the first security area at the bottom of the hill.

First, position all of the teams so that they can set up a crossfire when blitzing the room. After giving the go-code, make sure that you position yourself to take out the guard on the balcony and enter hastily. Now that you have penetrated the first ring of defenses, move at least one team (it's better to use two) up the stairs from the security areas to the catwalks in the main dome. Snipe anyone on the catwalks and be prepared for anymore to enter from the tower in the middle of the dome (otherwise known as "the core").

While you're busy keeping the top of the dome covered, move the remaining teams on the first floor to the bottom door of the core. Send them spiraling upwards until they reach the lower passage into the mountain. Once in the mountain, have those teams hold up at the entrance to the next security room until the remaining teams can join them.

Now that the teams are assembled, have them enter just as fast and furiously as the first one. The main difference is that there are more guards on the balcony hiding in blind spots from the door. You must account for them as soon as the door opens, or you will be cut to pieces. Whoever is left from this assault needs to make their way to the last line of Brightling's defense.

There are three shooters on the catwalks in the lobby at the entrance to Brightling's lab. You can either try to shoot them as soon as the door opens, or move back through the core to the top passage (which traverses a guarded living area) and shoot them, or try a combination of both. Whatever you decide, you must kill the guards and make your way to the final door outside of Brightling's lab. If you can reach that point with one trooper...you can sit back, crack open a cold one, and watch the victory cinematic. Jolly well done, soldier!



This final scenario has some deadly choke points in the form of expertly manned security checkpoints. Advance your three teams carefully through the long corridors.

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Unreal, Part 3

We now return to our regular programming...

Here it is! The third and final part of our exhaustive *Unreal* walkthrough. Sorry about the delay, but we think you'll find it was worth it.

Demon Crater

LEVEL 30

Hit the button and go up the elevator. Break the barrels for a shield power-up and a flashlight. Head into the warehouse and waste all the monsters lurking within. Turn on the flashlight and head down the dark stairs. Hit both control panels inside. Go back upstairs and kill all the remaining Skaarj. Head up the ramps to the upper level, kill the lurking Skaarj, smack the button and ride the triangular lift. Inside the control room, use the panel, and walk into the transporter. Kill the Skaarj, then walk into the blue-lit red doorway.



Once you've teleported into the center of the mothership, exit through the blue door.



The Skaarj mothership is your final destination in the world of *Unreal*.

Mothership Basement

LEVEL 31

Open the door and walk down the hallway. Kill any nasties that pop out at you. At the "T" intersection, you can hang a right if you're feeling adventurous, and attempt to maneuver around some spinning lasers. For the rest of you, run to the left, go through the door, and hop onto the platform.



This Skaarj thought he'd surprise you by popping out of this long hallway. He was wrong, wasn't he?



Just hop onto the purple X in the center of this room, and you're good to go.

Mothership Lab

LEVEL 32

Spin around and kill the nasty at the computer. Do *not* step into the glowing green cylinders! Follow the tunnel until you find a Skaarj at a terminal. Waste him. Keep going forward. In the next room, kill the Skaarj, and hit the red button to the right. Get on the elevator that lowers. Work your way forward, killing any mecha-Skaarj that pop out. At the four-way intersection, keep going forward — to your right and left are Skaarj jail cells, and going in there is a bad idea. Head up the ramp, hang a right, then take another right into the pulsating green hallway. Hit the red button, then head back the way you came. Go through the teleporter in front of you. Take a left, and enter the research facility. *Make sure you are well-armed.* Keep going and you'll find two ramps leading to a red button. Hit the button and go through the door. Gasp in horror at the specular-highlighted boss, then kill 'em dead with a series of four or five head shots from the rifle. Head back the way you came. When you pop out of the teleporter, hang a right, then take another right into the door with the adjacent pulsating green bars. Step onto the platform and go down. Pull a Super Mario, and jump across to the door *without* the lettering on it. Keep going forward, kill the two guards, and snatch up the minigun. Keep walking forward and you'll return to one of the first rooms you were in. Step on the black panel, then climb the stairs that will raise. Kill the Skaarj lurking inside. Hit the red button on the right and take the super health pack. Go back down the black stairs, hang a left into the hallway where you first got the minigun, and keep walking until you get to the platform. Go through the door that is now accessible.



Hit the red button in this room, and you'll be in business — head back to the teleporter afterwards.



Oh no, it's a liquid-metal T1000 Skaarj! Kill it dead!

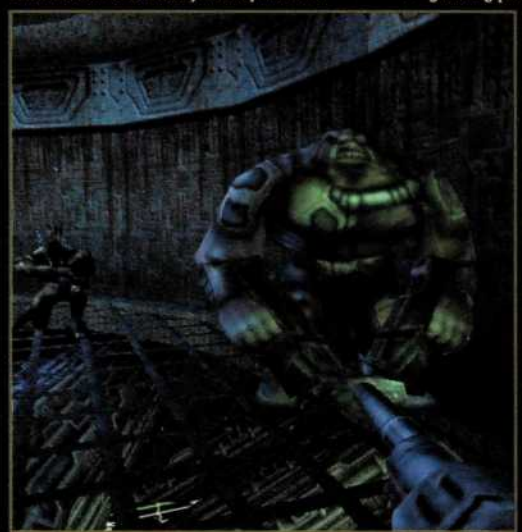
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Mothership Core

LEVEL 33

Go up the stairs. Waste the Skaarj who comes down the elevator. Go up. Hang a left down the corridor. Go through the double doors, and kill the monsters in the next room. Head through the door to the right, and go down the hallway. Once inside the core room, follow the catwalk to the left. You'll find a door with a message on it, which states that a large number of Skaarj are being rerouted to the present location to kill you. Get the drop on 'em, and blast all the Skaarj as they move in — eventually, the door will pop open and you can continue. Head through, then kill the Skaarj at the bottom of the ramp. Keep following the pathway until you find an elevator. Ride it. Once upstairs, hang a right and hit the red button. Read the message on the opening panel. D'oh, more Skaarj! Head back up the lift, and hang a right through the doorway. Walk across the glowing platform and hit the panel at the end of the hall. Take those wacky jump boots to the left of the console. Head back the way you came, and stop at the center of the X-shaped platform. Take a left into the dark hallway. The door will shut, and to the right, a Skaarj will emerge from a new doorway. Secret message: *Gravy Trader* will be released in Christmas of 1999, pre-order now! Go through the doorway, stock up on goodies, then take the elevator up. Go to the left and hit the button. Do an about-face. If you've got decent timing, take the shield belt at the other end of the tunnel. Now head back to the ambush point where the door shut in front of you — it will be open again. Take the health pack, then walk across the bridge that raises. Go through either of the hallways, and kill all the Skaarj. Hit the red button. Ah, the core access is open! Go back to the X-shaped bridge. Facing the glowing platform, go through the door to your *right*. Why, it's a brute! Show him how much you care with a few Razorjack bursts. Stock up on all the goodies in the next few rooms. Kill the Skaarj. Continue on through the door.

Hmm, this couldn't be a trap...could it?



The Brute makes his re-appearance in this level. A couple rifle shots to his breadbasket, and he's history!



This X-shaped room is the level's hub. Keep your bearings about you, and memorize the level's layout — you'll have to poke through it using only a flashlight.

Skaarj Generator

LEVEL 34

Go through the door. Revel in the coolness of the *Unreal* engine as you check out the Skaarj core generator. Do *not* walk into the glowing core. Do the DeathMatch thing with the numerous Skaarj who keep popping out, then kill the Demonlord boss (the rifle is best for the task). After you kill him, an elevator leading to the core will be accessible in the middle of the room. Take it, and shoot all three electricity beams. Time for some destruction!



Mmm...big generator thing. You'll have to do the one-on-one DeathMatch thing with a series of Skaarj who pop out at the most inopportune times.

Illumination

LEVEL 35

Run. Go through the door. Er, that's it.



Ka-boooom! Trust us, there's nothing cooler than the large-scale destruction of alien architecture. Well... that, *and* those rockin' cheese curls we used to eat in the high school cafeteria.

The Darkening

LEVEL 36

Walk through the door, and kill the spiders. Grab the searchlight, which will prove to be *very* useful. Take the elevator down. Follow the hallway, and you'll find a glowing blue Skaarj. *Don't* shoot him yet — he'll start running down the hallway. Follow him. He'll eventually stop – *this* is where you kill him.

Keep walking forward and go through the broken door. This should look familiar! Go up the lift. Kill all the critters, then hang a left. You'll come to a familiar clearing. Go through the door on the right. Drop down into the center of the room. Go through the open door, then kill the funky green Skaarj. There's a ton of useful toys in this area. Once you're all stocked up, head up either ramp. Take a left.

In the yellow room with the dangling wire, go up the small ramp to the right. Follow the path until you get to a room with some control panels, tended by a Skaarj. Hit them, then go back to the yellow wire room and hang a right down the steep ramp. Walk across the bridges and kill the monsters. Step on the anti-grav pad. Take a left and go through the blue-ringed door. Go through the hallway to the right to the control panel. Head back to the room and walk in front of the odd contraption, which will activate. Do a quick about-face, then go through the door on the right. Now it's on to the next mission!



Lookit-dat! It's a color-chrome-mapped and transparent Skaarj warrior. Show him how impressed you are with his 3D accelerated sheen by capping him with the Eightball launcher.

The Source Antechamber

LEVEL 37

Let's get it on! Go through the door to the right, kill the Skaarj, then hit the red button. Go back to the first room, and the bars will open. Go up. Grab goodies in the storage lockers to the left and the right, then walk across the glowing platform. Jump down the hole. Here we go!



See that large X in the floor? Just drop through the hole in the top platform...

The Source

LEVEL 38

Drop down. Go through either of the doors. Stock up on goodies as you walk around the platform. It's pretty obvious where you have to go — walk across the platform to the large enclosure (don't waste your ammo on the spiders around the opening). Go through both doors. It's go-time, baby! Hit the boss with all you've got, but be careful — she teleports around the arena at the most inopportune times. After you kill her, go through the flashing yellow doors. Follow the path and walk down the jetway into the escape rocket. Blastoff!

In the words of Nintendo *Pro Wrestling*, "A winner is you!" Now, turn off the damn computer, and go tell your wife (or boyfriend, or girlfriend) that you love her, and apologize for spending more time with *Unreal* than with her/him. Just imagine how much time it would have taken if it weren't for this walkthrough! Thank you *PC Gamer*!



Attention: SkaarjAir flight 3165 is now boarding for Dallas/Ft. Worth. Dash through the jetway and get outta there, before the whole place goes sky-high!



Congrats, you've managed to escape from the deadly world of *Unreal*. But will you get back home in time to compete in CliffyB's next *Cat Scan* contest?

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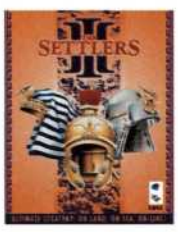


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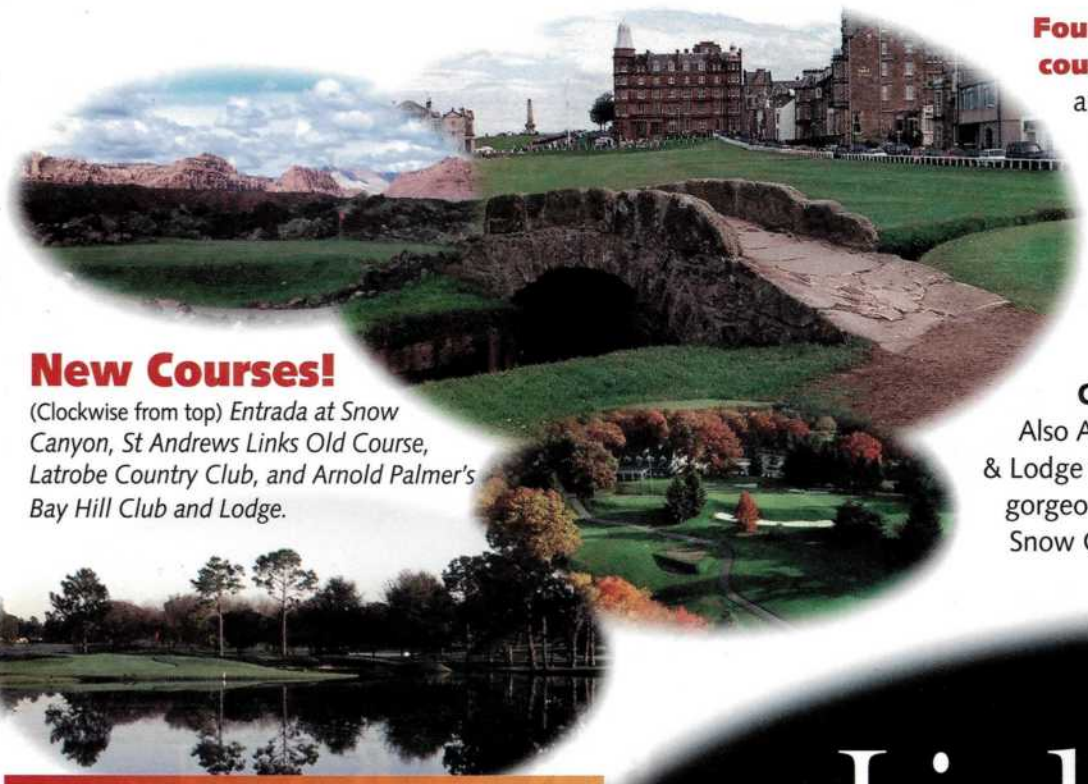






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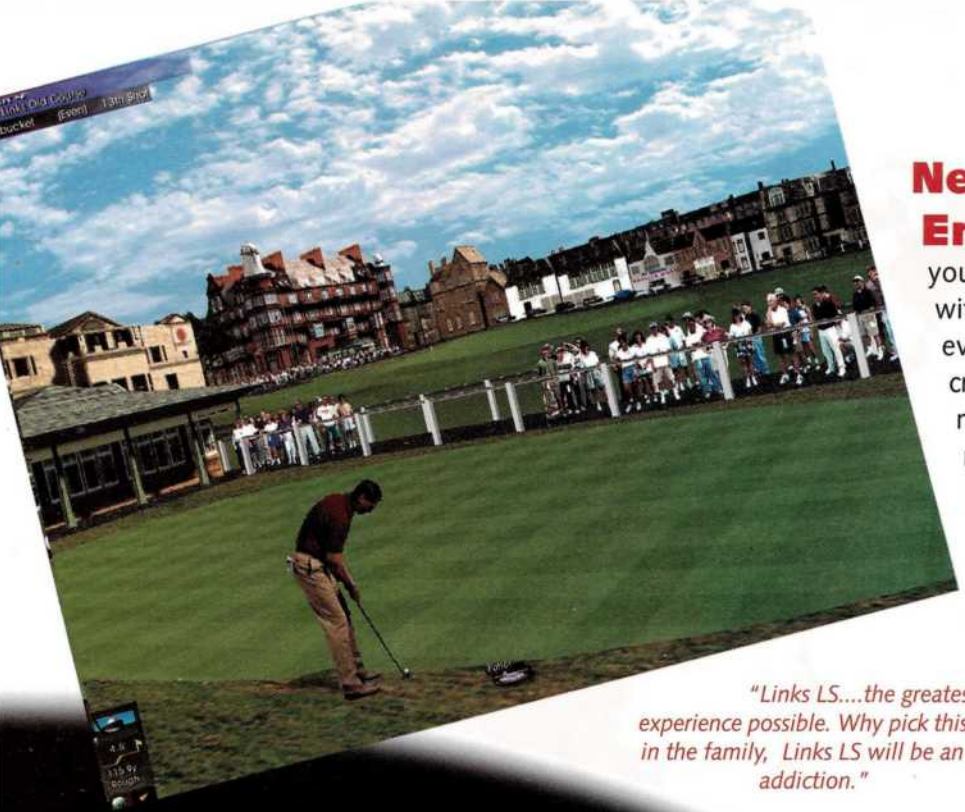
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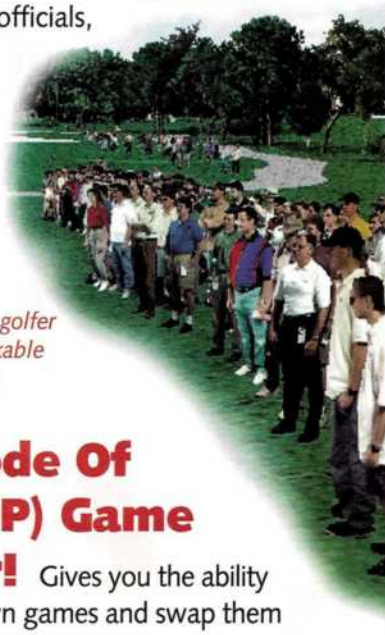
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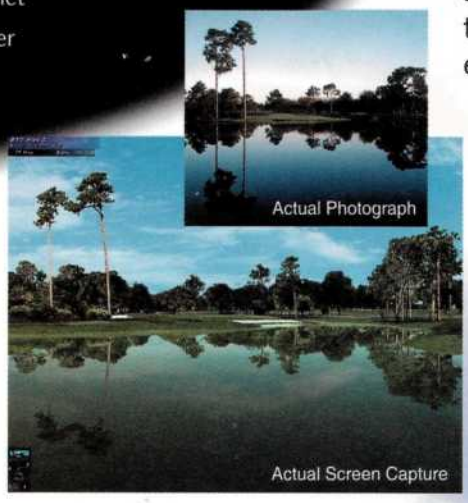
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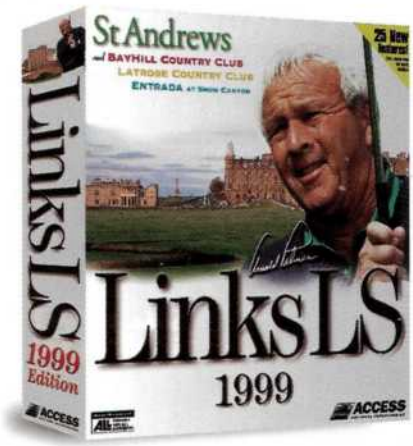
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Menace of the Leopold

MISSION 6

LOCATION: Norway **OBJECTIVE:** Destroy German Super Gun **TEAM:** Tiny McHale (Green Beret), Duke Woolridge (Sniper), Inferno Hancock (Sapper)

You will start behind a rock formation. Immediately jump the nearby patrolling guard and hide his body. Be careful not to be spotted by the guards in the mansion ruins (point 1). Climb the ladder into the mansion ruins. You will need to use Tiny and Inferno to outwit the guards in the ruin — crawling and using the trap would help (point 1). If you are discovered, move to the back yard (point 2). In this area, you can ambush the patrols that come looking for you. When you have a chance, move the team to the rocks across the way (point 3). Take out the patrolling guards near the tents. Crawl to the bombed-out building when the half-track moves out (point 4). Set a bomb trap and when the half-track comes near, crawl to the other side and take cover — explode the bomb (point 4). Wait to ambush the investigating guards. Afterwards, use Duke to remove the guard on the castle walls (near point 5). When the coast is clear, run, then crawl to the tents (point 5). Have Inferno crawl to the train and plant the explosives near the shells (point 6). Do not blow the train until later. First, clear the small building (point 7), then use Tiny and Duke to clear out the train yard (points 8 and 9). Once all of the guards are waxed, move the team near the machine gunner and kill him (point 10). Blow the train and jump on the rescue truck.

ADVANCED TACTICS: There are several garrisons on this map and triggering an alert near the train is a bad idea. All guards in section 8 and 9 must be killed or they will detect you near the exit point. At the end of the mission, stay close to the tree and quickly load the men. It is likely that you will take fire from the alerted garrison.



Chase of the Wolves

MISSION 7

LOCATION: Norway **OBJECTIVE:** Destroy docked German U-boats **TEAM:** Tiny McHale (Green Beret), Fins Blackwood (Diver), Inferno Hancock (Sapper), Spooky Duchamp (Spy), and Tread Perkins (Driver)

Group One (Spooky, Tread, and Inferno) needs to get the nearby explosives (point 1). You will need to outwit the patrol or take them out. Return this group to the starting location, and have Tread and Inferno crawl behind the building. Move Spooky to the entrance of the dock area (point 2). Once the German guarding the clothesline turns away, run and grab the uniform. In this private dock area, you will see many guards, two heavy guns, and an abandoned half track (which you will use later). You will see your objectives at the berths (point 3). Group Two (Tiny and Fins) is hiding behind a rocky outcrop (point 4). You will need to use the decoy and the harpoon gun to clear your way to the public dock (point 5). The nearby patrol should not be engaged until they move away from the rowboat (point 6). Quickly row the team due south and avoid the patrols. Go to the map edge and proceed due west.

Avoid the patrol near the lighthouse (point 7). Do not go near the extraction point (point 8) until the private dock area is cleared (point 9). The hardest part of the mission is getting the first group to the pier for extraction (point 8). The best method is to use Spooky to take out the guard at point 2, then use him to distract the patrol near point 9. Have Inferno plant explosives to destroy the barracks within this area. Afterwards, plant the bear trap at the entrance to secure it and hide behind the building where Tread is located. Use Spooky to lethal inject several guards and shoot or inject the artillery men. Sneak Tread into the half-track, destroy the remaining guards, and drive the track into the entrance to block it. Move the team to the loading ramp. Have Fins row to this location and pick up the boys. Row to the pier at point 9, unload Inferno, and then set explosives on each sub near the torpedoes (point 8). Quickly get Inferno to the boat and leave the pier. Head east to the buoy to escape.



Pyrotechnics

MISSION 8

LOCATION: Norway **OBJECTIVE:** Destroy German Super Gun **TEAM:** Tiny McHale (Green Beret), Duke Woolridge (Sniper), Inferno Hancock (Sapper)



The top area must be cleared to allow access. The easiest way to clear the patrol guards is to group your men behind a wall and trigger the alarm (point 1). What follows will be frenzied ambushing. Before you leave point 1, make sure no further patrols are coming to the location from the fortified barracks in the camp. Remove the perimeter guards at the road and then quickly silence the guard at point 2 with your sniper. Use Tiny to take out the ruin guards and move east to point 3. Use a fuel barrel to take the gun. Climb Tiny down to point 4 and eliminate the guard and the heavy machine gun. Now the escape jeep can arrive on the bridge. At point 6, Duke must kill the guard on the roof. You can then use Tiny to enter the vehicle at point 5, but then quickly exit.

The guards will be tricked into firing on the vehicle, exploding it, the barracks, and nearby Germans. The decoy can distract the tent guards nearby, and Tiny can then sneak around the other side to waste them. Move Duke and Tiny to the housing area at point 7. You will need to play hide-n-seek with the patrolling guards by entering the houses and then exiting when the guards turn away...Tiny's knife can do the rest. Use Duke to snipe the guards on top of the fuel tanks. Hustle Tiny into this area and grab the fuel barrel. Arrange the barrels so that they are near each target, but can be simultaneously exploded by one shot. Run Duke and Tiny to the road near point 4. Shoot a barrel to start the chain reaction. Run to the bridge and catch your ride to freedom (point 8).

ADVANCED TACTICS:

The Green Beret does most of the work while the Sniper takes out a few key targets. Hiding bodies is important, especially when you get to the bottom part of the map. Use the decoy liberally. You can kill a number of guards by running straight at them; just use the point of view feature and attack when they're looking away. Use multiple windows to keep track of guards.

A Courtesy Call

MISSION 9

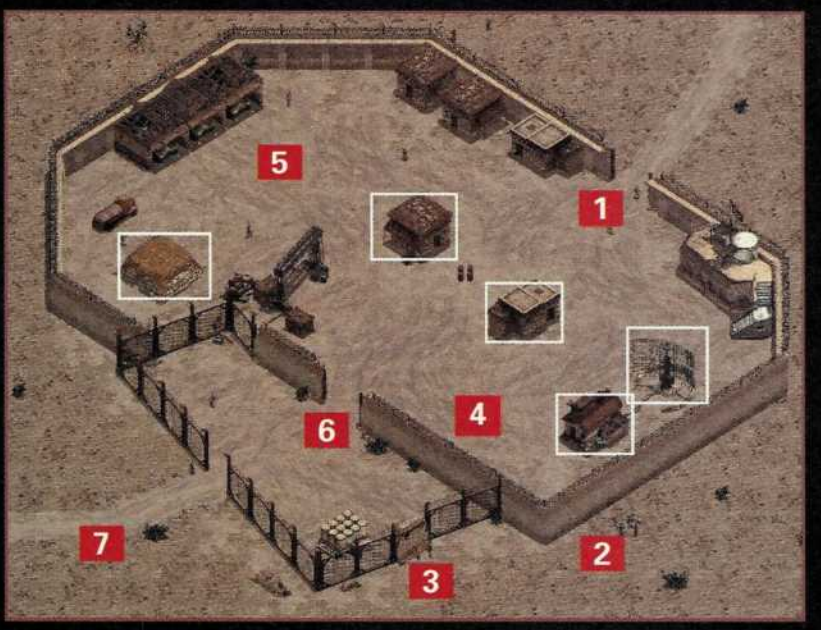
LOCATION: North Africa **OBJECTIVE:** Destroy German Desert Camp **TEAM:** Tiny McHale (Green Beret), Duke Woolridge (Sniper), Inferno Hancock (Sapper), Spooky Duchamp (Spy), and Tread Perkins (Driver)

Start at the main gate by using Spooky to lethal inject the guards there and then hide their corpses (point 1). Wait until the sergeant-led patrol is near point 4, then distract them so they face southeast (looking at point 2) and hold them. Do not bother with the perimeter patrols (point 2), since they will only cause you headaches. Use Duke to snipe the guards in the supply yard (point 6). Move Tiny behind the bunker near the red fuel truck. The guards in this area (point 5) can be removed by using the Spy to distract them and Tiny to kill and hide the bodies.

Use the Spy to again distract the patrol at point 4. Use Inferno to set explosives on the bunker and the radar tower. For the rest of the targets, Tiny can set petrol barrels nearby for easy ignition. Move the team to location 7 for the escape truck. Run the Sniper to point 6, and have him shoot the barrels. Have Inferno trigger the explosives. For the escape, quickly load the team into the truck before the remaining Panzers can attack.

ADVANCED TACTICS:

Watch the hole in the wall as the Green Beret climbs over since you can be spotted there. If the Spy can distract the three-man patrol and face them away from the targets, life will be easy. Ignore the other guards patrolling outside the walls. If you are quick, you can rack up a nice score. If you tip the alarm, the Panzer will move southwest and take out your escape vehicle.



http://pcgamer.ign.com

Operation Icarus

MISSION 10

LOCATION: North Africa **OBJECTIVE:** Rescue RAF pilot
TEAM: Tiny McHale (Green Beret), Duke Woolridge (Sniper), Inferno Hancock (Sapper), Tread Perkins (Driver), and George McRae (pilot)



From your starting location, quickly make your way from the ruins to the southern gate by using Sid and his trusty submachine gun. However, if the alarm is sounded, move the team en masse south (point 1). Wait for the tank and don't mess with the machine guns lining the road. At the gate, take out the guards near McRae using Tiny's decoy and Duke's sniping. Free McRae and move him outside to the southern wall (near point 3). Wait to destroy the building (point 3), until the tank is secured. Hide Duke and Inferno where McRae is waiting. Use Tiny to clear the tank yard (point 4). The best way is to time your guard attacks to when the patrol is away. Always keep the LOS of the patrol on. Hide the bodies. Once the yard is clear, run Sid to the empty tank and move Tiny to safety (point 5).

The Germans will sound the alarm when you take the tank. You will be invincible, except against Panzers. To defeat the tanks, you need to get the first shot off. You will need to use the lower wall as a shield and watch the tanks as they search. Hit them from behind for a sure kill. Run over or shoot the guards who hamper you.

Move the tank to the northern gate (point 2). Have Inferno plant his explosives near the building at point 2 and then run the team into the tank. Move north on the road and sweep away the resistance (point 6). At point 6, unload the team and run to the plane (location 9). Use Tread's submachine gun to destroy the Stukas and fuel bins. By now, patrols from the barracks at point 8 will be rushing toward the team. Load everyone except McRae in the Junkers, then load the pilot and fly to freedom.

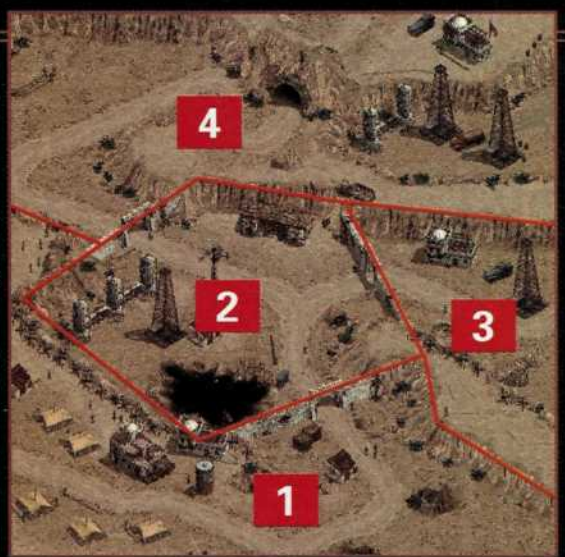
ADVANCED TACTICS:

Once you take control of the tank, be sure to kill the enemy tanks first. Wait until the turret is turned away and then attack. Afterwards, pile everyone in to get the team safely to the plane. Use the decoy liberally, but remember to hide bodies in the open. The star of this mission is Sid. His submachine gun is a blessing. You can kill a number of guards by running straight at them if you time their sideways glances. Use multiple windows (three is ideal) to keep track of guards who can spot you as you make your kills.

In the Soup

MISSION 11

LOCATION: North Africa **OBJECTIVE:** Destroy Oil Wells **TEAM:** Tiny McHale (Green Beret), Duke Woolridge (Sniper), Inferno Hancock (Sapper), Sid Perkins (Driver) and Spooky Duchamp (Spy)



You want to start this mission by grouping all of your commandos together in the southern part of the area where you started. Have the spy go down to a point just north of the shack nearest to your starting position. Have your grouped commandos fire a shot to set off the alarm. This will bring most of the guards in this area and in the central area (area 2) to investigate the shots. As they round the rocks where your commandos are hiding, ambush them. Move the spy to the area between the two northern tents. Having him fire a shot will bring the remaining guards in the area. The spy can easily ambush all of guards. Move your other commandos down to this point. Get Tiny to bring one of the nearby fuel barrels to the guardhouse. Explode the barrel. Any guard remaining in section 1 and 2 will look into all of the noise. Once the guards are nearby, draw them into an ambush. The spy should run around injecting all of the single guards. Once all of the single guards are out of the way, have the spy distract the patrol of five guards in section 3. Make sure the patrol is facing south. The driver can now steal the half-track. The driver can now drive around eliminating all of the other guards, but stay south of the tunnel. The sapper should now place a bomb at the southern end of the tunnel. Drive the half-track to the southern ridge just below the northern oil wells. When the fuel truck is between the wells, shoot it with the half-track. The explosion of the truck will destroy the wells and alert the guards in the northern guardhouse. The other half-track will head for the tunnel. When the half-track emerges from the tunnel, detonate the bomb. You now have total access to the oil depot. The sapper can set his bombs at the bases of the remaining oil wells and then detonate them. Get everybody into the half-track, drive off to the west, and the mission is complete.

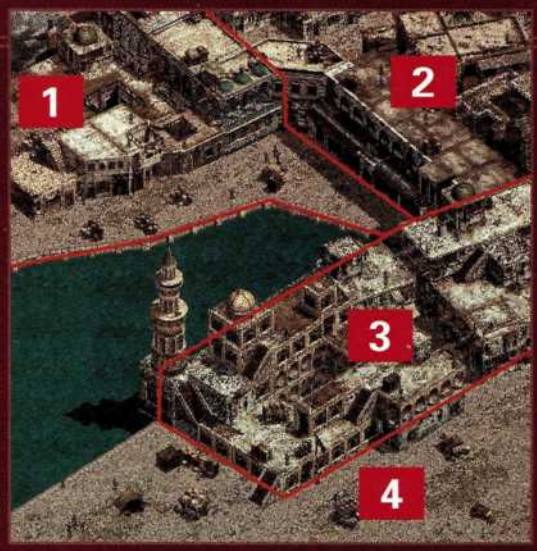
ADVANCED TACTICS:

There are plenty of places for the Green Beret to use his climbing ability in this mission — make sure you take advantage of it. Beware of soldiers on roofs and ridges, since they can see everything that happens beneath them. Duke can help here. There are plenty of sandy areas where Tiny can hide, so be as stealthy as possible. Concentrate on getting the SDKFZ 231 and then machine gun your way out. Don't forget to blow the tunnel to cut off the enemy, and wait until their half-track is in the tunnel to eliminate this threat.

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Up on the Roof

MISSION 12



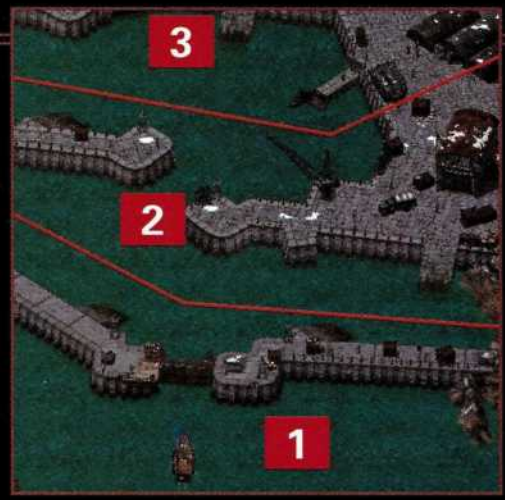
LOCATION: North Africa **OBJECTIVE:** Free Prisoner, Escape from Town
TEAM: Tiny McHale (Green Beret), Duke Woolridge (Sniper), Spooky Duchamp (Spy), and the Informer

Start by having your spy run over to where the single guard is patrolling. Inject the guard, then hide his body around the corner of the west-end of the building. Tiny can then come out of his hiding place and join the spy around the corner. With both Tiny and the spy hiding around the corner, fire a shot to set off the alarm. The patrol of three guards will come to check out the noise. Ambush them and the patrol that will follow. The spy can then climb up on the roof by means of the ladder on the west end of the building. By firing a shot, all other guards on that level can be brought into the spy's ambush. Move the spy up to the next level. Here he'll shoot the guard patrolling near the sniper's hideout. Some of the nearby guards will come to his aid and they can be ambushed. Move over to the building connecting the north building with the eastern building. Inject both of these guards. Climb down the ladder on the eastern building to the balcony. The two guards here are your next targets. The two remaining guards on the roof of the eastern building can be shot in the back while the spy hides out of view behind some of the crates on the roof. At this point, the spy can go back down to ground level to release the informer. You can now also bring the sniper out of his hiding place. Group all of your commandos on the roof of the northern end of the eastern building.

Have the spy make his way down to the eastern lower level of the southern building. Inject the patrolling guard when he's at the most northwestern part of his route. The guards one level up will see his body and come down. As they pass the spy, inject them. Let the first one go by and inject the second one first. The spy's next job is to clear off the highest roof of the southern building. After completing this, he should clear off the middle level rooftops. Time to put the sniper to work. Have the sniper crawl his way to the middle level roof of the southern building and set up a post where the northern-most guard was stationed. His first target will be the guard one level down facing southwest. The guard near the stairs leading down to the ground level will see his friend catch a bullet. The guard will yell out 'Hey" and go running to the now dead comrade. As the guard gets to the dead body, shoot him before he can yell out "Alarm!" All of the other single guards in the area will come to his aid. They should be treated the same way. The only remaining threat should be a patrol of three guards. The spy can distract them while all of the other commandos run to the escape vehicle. Make sure the patrol is on an easterly route and can not see the commandos pile into the car. After the commandos are in the car, the spy can release the patrol and join his friends in the get-away car.

David and Goliath

MISSION 13



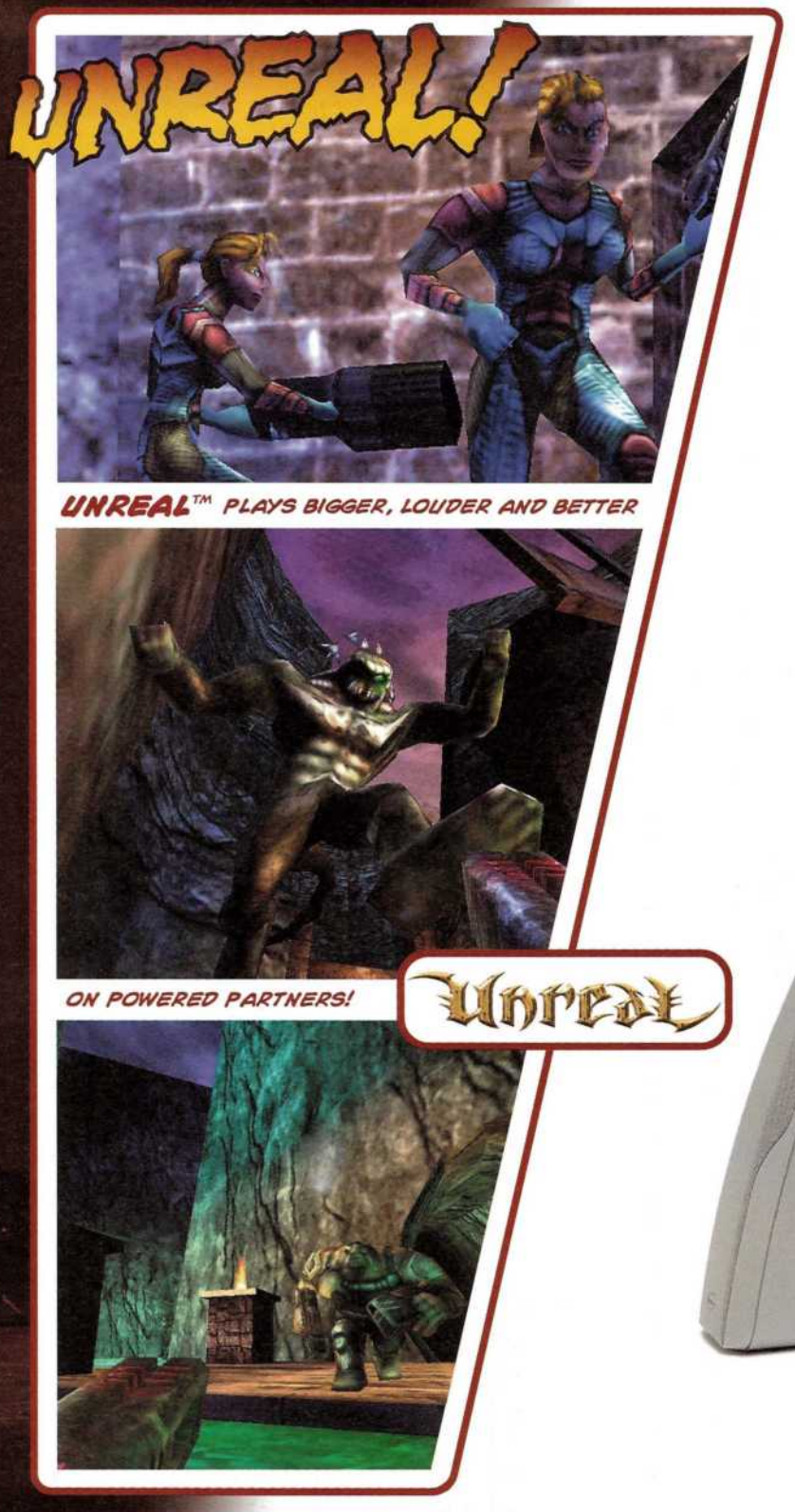
LOCATION: France **OBJECTIVE:** Sink the Bismarck II **TEAM:** Tiny McHale (Green Beret), Duke Woolridge (Sniper), Inferno Hancock (Sapper), Fins Blackwood (Marine), and Sid Perkins (Driver)

As soon as this mission begins, get Fins into the water and start swimming for the gate to the harbor. A fishing boat will show up and sound its horn. The guard by the gatehouse will open the gate for the boat. Fins can now swim into the harbor. He should work his way over to the ramp on the west dock. In the meantime, have Tiny scale the wall just north of your starting position. His job is to clear the eastern dock of guards. After Tiny has done his duty, Fins can exit the water and eliminate the guard by the gate-house, enter, and open the gate the harbor. Before Fins can retrieve his fellow commandos, he has one more important job. Fins must swim over to the ramp just south of the garage. The two guards patrolling by the truck must be eliminated without sounding the alarm. His spear gun comes in handy here. After the guards have been taken out, swim back and get the other commandos.

In this mission, you'll be able to get all of the commandos in the raft. As the raft is rowed through the harbor entrance, the sniper should take out the guard at the western end of the center dock. Wait until the guard starts to head east on his patrol. Shoot him as he passes the barrels and is out of view of the guards on the western dock. Unload the commandos at the ramp just south of the garage. The commandos should crawl over to the western end of the east dock and wait there. Send Fins over to the west dock's ramp. From the commandos' hiding place, the sniper can target the furthest guard on the east dock. Fins can make easy work of the other guard. Once Fins is done here, he can join the other commandos.

Now, the driver must move the truck that is parked near the garage. Back the truck up so that it blocks the garage door. Get Sid out of the truck and back to the rest of the commandos. Hide the sapper behind the bales west of the garage. He can set up an ambush for the patrolling guards. His actions will cause the alarm to go off and the garage door will open, but the truck blocking the door will keep the tank in the garage. Crawl the commandos to a point just south of the barracks. Have them fire some shots. This will bring all of the patrolling guards to investigate. Keep ambushing all the guards who come out of the barracks. Once they are out of the way, the stationary guards should be killed. The sniper can take out the guards by the northern gatehouse. The sapper should now set his bombs by the fuel tanks. One of the commandos can open the northern gate. Fins can now get into the mini-sub. Maneuver the sub so its bow is pointed at the Bismarck II's bow. Fire one torpedo — bye, bye Bismarck II. Back by the southern harbor gate, a patrol boat has shown up. There's one torpedo left. Do the math and go hunting. Fins can now return to his buddies on the dock. The sapper can set off his charge anytime now. Get everyone into the raft and row out to the buoy southwest of the harbor gate.


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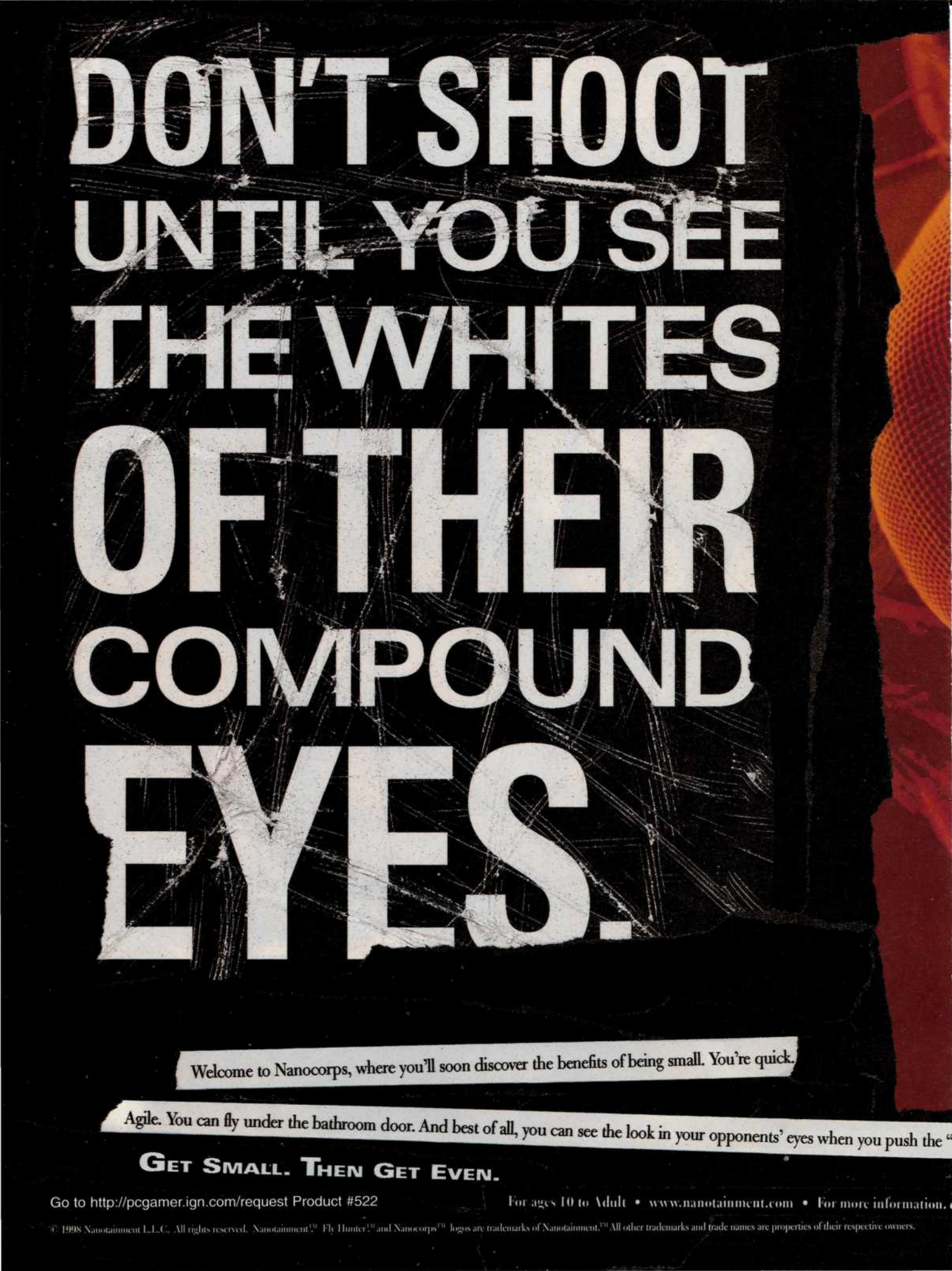
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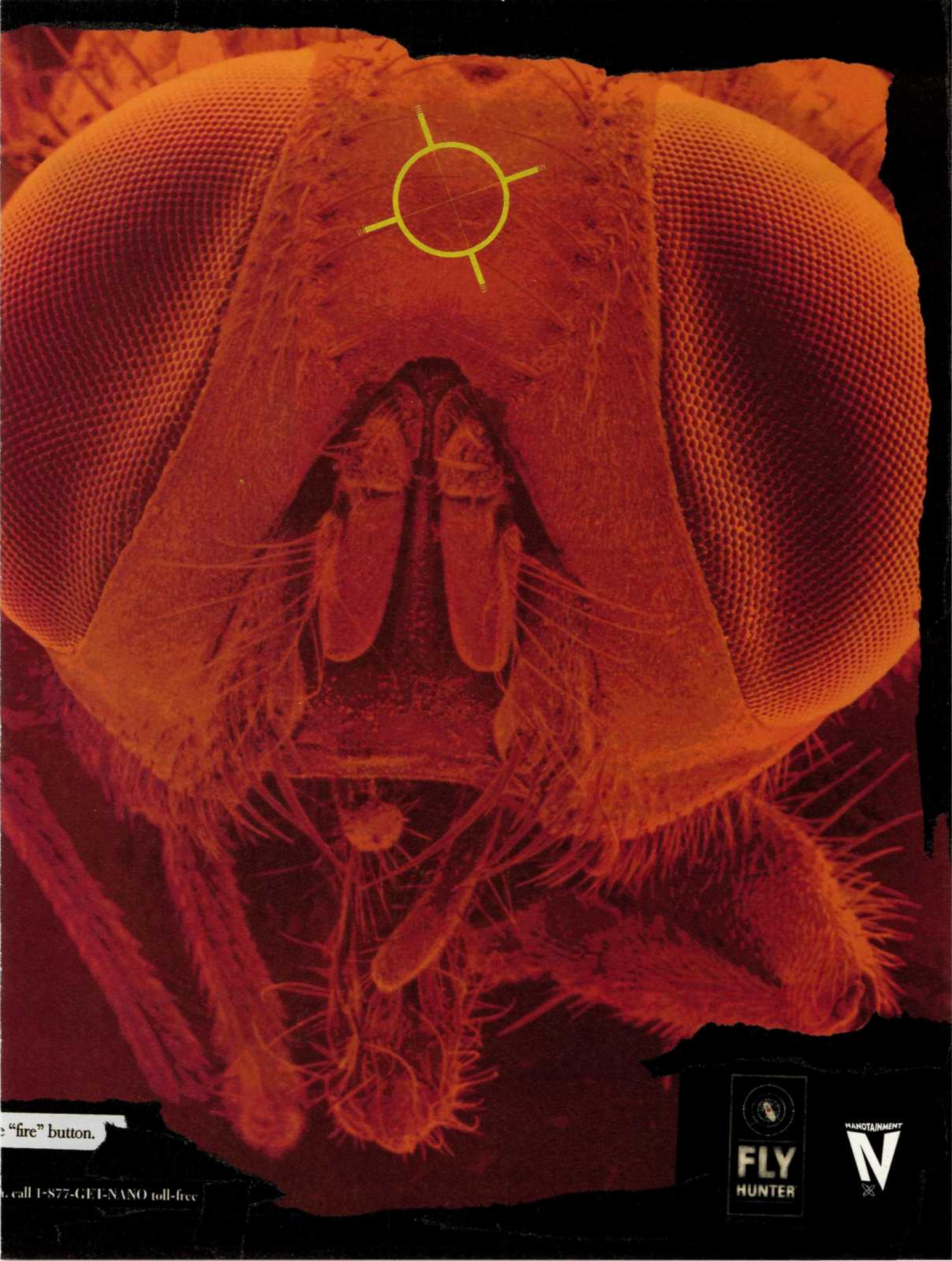
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Cheats Galore!

We know what you want, what you really, really, want

The word "cheat" has such a negative connotation. We here at Strategy Central prefer to use the term "value enhancer" when referring to those wonderful codes that give added life to the games we love. We know you'd never use these codes to weasel your way out of finishing a scenario, or to traipse your way through a game with impunity because you turned on invincibility. We're convinced that our readers only *ever* use cheat codes after beating a game fairly, at the highest difficulty level, and are looking to squeeze every ounce of enjoyment from the defeated title. If we were to find out that these codes were actually being used for illicit purposes, to gain access to areas of games that haven't been legitimately earned, it would be a sad day at Strategy Central, so please dear readers, don't let us down....

NEED FOR SPEED III: HOT PURSUIT

The cars in *Need for Speed III* are smokin', but there's plenty more where they came from. Use these codes to get more cars, a new track, and a few neat tricks.

Type these at any menu to activate:

RUSHHOUR	Increases the traffic
EMPIRE	Enables the Empire City track
ELNINOR	Enables the El Nino car
MERC	Enables the Mercedes CLK GTR
GOFAST	Increased speed in single race mode
ALLCARS	Enables all cars, including pursuit vehicles

Type these codes right before clicking RACE to use the non-player vehicles:

GO01	Mazda Miata
GO02	Toyota Landcruiser
GO03	Cargo Truck
GO04	BMW 5 Series
GO05	1971 Plymouth Barracuda
GO06	Ford Pickup with Camper Shell
GO07	Jeep Cherokee
GO08	Ford Van
GO09	1965 Mustang
GO10	1966 Chevy Pickup
GO11	Range Rover
GO12	School Bus
GO13	Caprice Classic Taxi
GO14	Chevy Van
GO15	Volvo Station Wagon
GO16	Sedan
GO17	Crown Victoria Police Car
GO18	Mitsubishi Eclipse Police Car
GO19	Grand Am Police Car
GO20	Range Rover Police Car



The Diablo Pursuit vehicle on the Empire City track...it doesn't get much better than this in *Need for Speed III: Hot Pursuit.*

JAZZ JACKRABBIT 2

Jazz may be fuzzy and cute, but he can also be deadly. With these cheat codes, you'll be able to hop your way through the game with ease.

Type these codes anytime during the game:

JJGOD	Gives Jazz invincibility, plus all weapons and power-ups
JJINV	Invincibility only
JJSHIELD	Gives various shields
JJCOINS	Gives free coins
JJMORPH	Change into spaz, a bird, a frog, and back to Jazz
JJGEMS	Gives free gems
JJAMMO	Gain extra ammunition
JJFLY	Gives you the ability to fly like in the original game
JJPOWER	Gives weapon power-ups



Help Jazz avoid those pesky falls with the "jjfly" cheat in *Jazz Jackrabbit 2.*

ARE YOU A GAMING GENIUS?

Do you know the secrets to every PC game ever made? Want to share your love of gaming with the world? Then Strategy Central wants you for The Tip of the Month Club.

Every month we'll select a letter that gives the best advice or puzzle solution to a current game, and the lucky winner will receive a slew of prizes, including a *PC Gamer* T-shirt, a free strategy guide to inspire you, and a PC game pulled randomly from our mysterious and sinister Box O' Prizes. Send letters to:

PC Gamer Tip of the Month, Imagine Media
150 North Hill Drive, Brisbane, CA 94005
OR editor@pcgamer.com

http://pc.ign.com

COMMANDOS

If our strategy guide isn't enough, here's some cheat codes to help get you through this WWII thriller from Eidos Interactive.

To activate the cheat mode, type 1982GONZO during the game and enter the following codes:

CTRL+I	Makes your men invincible
SHIFT+V	Trace line-of-sight of objects
SHIFT+X	Teleport
CTRL+SHIFT+N	Finish the mission
CTRL+SHIFT+X	Destroys everything in mission

Note: Once activated, a cheat cannot be turned off

In the Password section, type JONXX (where XX is the mission number) and you will jump to that mission.

DEATHTRAP DUNGEON

Lara Croft's not the only well-endowed female adventurer in Eidos' stable. Red Lotus, the star of *Deathtrap Dungeon*, has a few "assets" of her own, and these cheats should help you lead her to the promised land.

During the game, type the following:

ELVIS	Invulnerability
TOOLS	Puts all items in your inventory



The lovely Red Lotus, in her barely there outfit, could benefit greatly from the "Elvis" cheat.

OUTWARS

If you're having a tough time with Microsoft's first-person shooter, these codes should help you out.

Type these in during gameplay:

SHOWALL	Shows the map
MACLEOD	God mode
DIRTYHARRY	Unlimited ammo
BUZZ	Enable glider wings
FRAMERATE	Gives you average frames per second
PHANTOM	Spy on creatures with the F11 and F12 keys
GOHOME	Takes you back to the start point
THRASHER	Shows enemy on radar
TIMEWARP	Removes the time limit
WEAPONCAM	Follows the fire of your weapon
KEYMASTER	Gives armor, health, and ammunition
JUMPOASIS	Takes you to the Oasis level
JUMPANUBIS	Takes you to the Anubis level
JUMPRAGNAROK	Takes you to the Ragnarok level
JUMPJUGGERNAUT	Takes you to the Juggernaut level
JUMPDEAD	Takes you to the last level

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THE INTENSOR™ SURVIVAL GUIDE

(Because we're not always going to be there to hold your trembling, sweaty little hand.)

PART ONE

Be warned: this is technology with a real "punch-you-in-the-gut-while-you're-not-looking" brand of sensitivity.

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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
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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 loud. So for the neighbors' sake, you may want to use the headphone jack — which you can do without losing any tactile feedback. But keep in mind — if your ears start bleeding, you should probably turn the thing down.

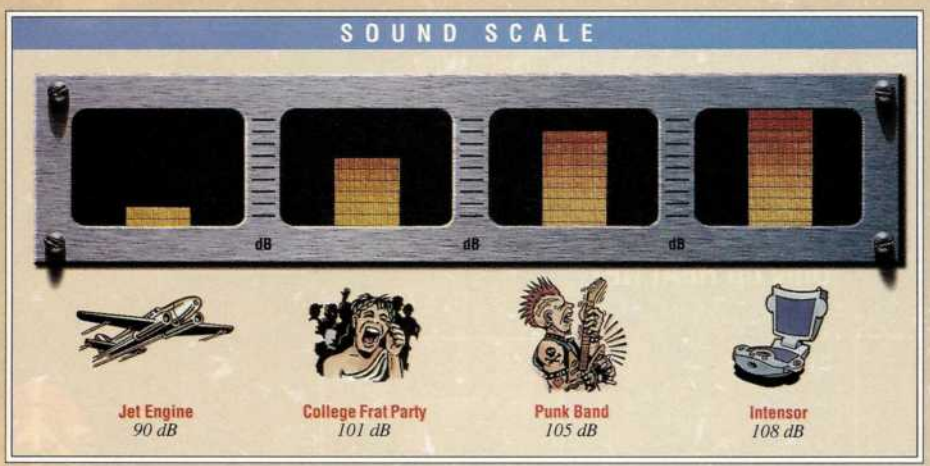




Fig. 2. *At 19 pounds, Intensor is designed for quick evacuation in the event things get ugly. (Shaky hands will appreciate the built-in molded carrying handle.)*

PART THREE

Ducking, dodging, whimpering and other useful gaming skills you might want to perfect.

Be advised. With Intensor, you'll not only hear your games like never before, you'll also feel them. In your back. In your legs. You'll feel sensations in places you never even knew you had. Which means every engine rev, every explosion, every kick will seem more real than you may want it to. So it's important to note that under this type of extreme duress, screaming in high-pitched tones for one's mommy is quite common.

DEFENSIVE PROCEDURES



Fig. 3a.
The Dodge



Fig. 3b.
The Weave



Fig. 3c.
The Duck

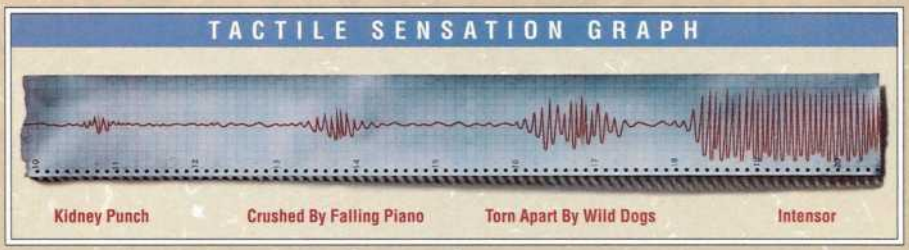




Fig. 4. *Artist's conception of Sensory Gaming's effect on the human heart. Those with heart conditions should proceed at their own risk.*



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

Any game. Any system. Any medium. After this, nothing will ever be the same.

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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.)*



In the event of nervous breakdown, seek help at

www.intensor.com

Assuming you've read this carefully, proceed to your favorite gaming retailer.

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NEWSWEEK

"...IF YOU HAVE A PC AND A PULSE, YOU SIMPLY MUST GET THIS GAME."
THE ADRENALINE VAULT

ADRENALINE VAULT REVIEWER'S CHOICE

"IF YOU COULD HIRE INDUSTRIAL LIGHT AND MAGIC TO RENDER YOUR PERCEPTIONS, [THIS] IS HOW YOU WOULD SEE THE WORLD."
NEW YORK TIMES

"... IF YOU BUY ONLY ONE SHOOTER THIS YEAR, IT MUST BE UNREAL."
NEXT GENERATION ONLINE

NEXT GENERATION ONLINE EDITOR'S CHOICE

"LET'S JUST SAY THAT EVERYTHING THAT YOU HEARD ABOUT THE ENGINE IS TRUE. UNREAL ROCKS" ★★★★
COMPUTER GAMING WORLD



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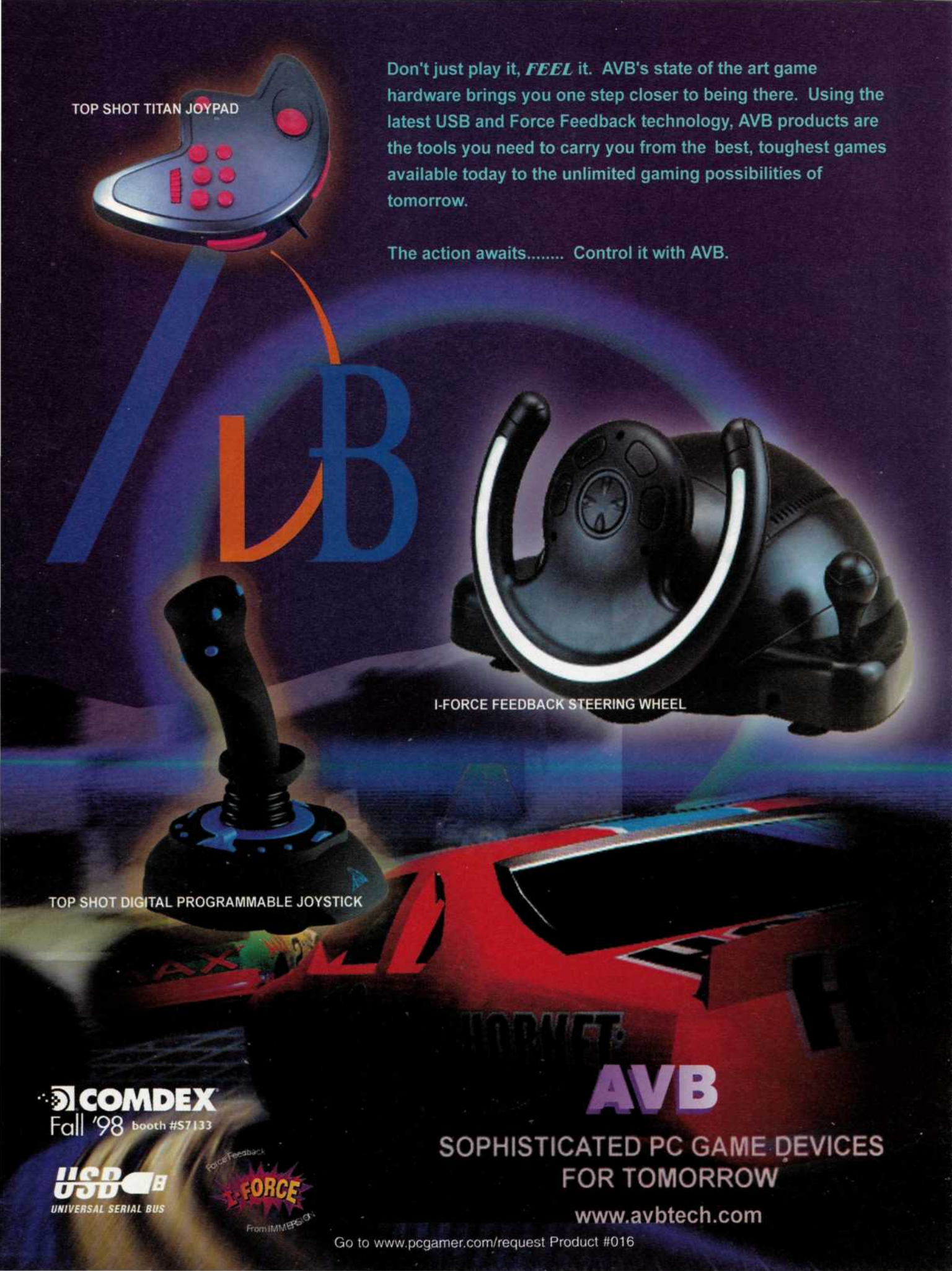
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The Holidays are upon us once again, and we have yet to see one card or tin of multi-colored popcorn from you folks! Of course, that may have something to do with the fact that it's still October as we go to press, but...don't you love us anymore? We're a needy bunch, you know. If a day goes by that we don't hear from our readers, we feel downright bad. Won't you write today? Please?

Let's Hear From You!

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or E-mail to:
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editor@pcgamer.com

It's Comin' Right At Us!

I have a theory regarding the strange success of games like *Deer Hunter*; maybe it's variety that people are after. There's so many *Doom* clones on the market; *WarCraft* clones are plentiful. And everyone knows that there's nothing less satisfying than pulling your hair out over puzzles in some strategy game. Seeing as people are sheep, they aren't really paying much attention, so they just look for something that doesn't say "3D shooter" on the box. Games like *WarCraft* and *Wolfenstein 3D* were successful because they were originals in their fields. Maybe gamers are just trying to find another classic (but I think they're looking in all the wrong places).

— Merlin Brittenham, *Renton, WA*



The bizarre, huge success of *Deer Hunter*: is it a result of some gamers' desperate search for something new? Or just an unexplained phenomenon that we can blame on the coming millennium?

I am likely going to get slammed by your columnist T. Liam McDonald for writing this letter, but I felt I had to comment on a common thread in the last few issues of your magazine.

First of all, let me say that I do not own the hunting games that you have been so lavishly slamming of late. I prefer to play things on the computer that I cannot experience in real life. I am, however, a hunter (in real life) and therefore take some exception to remarks made by Mr. McDonald in your latest issue (Extended Play, October 1998). Statements like "...paunchy white men swilling beer and shooting anything that moves..." have been said before, and that stereotype only represents the dark underbelly of the hunting community. We are not proud of those people, either. However, that is not really what I wrote to comment on, but rather the games themselves.

Although I am not an avid player of these games, I have played them and think that they "simulate" parts of the hunting experience adequately (at least the tracking/shooting part, anyway). A comment was made in another issue of your magazine that expressed your disturbance with the fact that the game was mostly spent searching the simulated woods for the very infrequent appearance of a deer. Although I agree this may not make for an exciting gaming experience, it is an accurate description of hunting. In real life, hunting is many hours of trudging or sitting in the wilderness, potentially punctuated by moments of excitement when the prey of choice enters your view. My point is, if you haven't gone hunting large game — and some of your writers have stated they have not — then perhaps you should be a bit more selective with your negative comments concerning the gameplay. I have always appreciated your ability to assess all game genres on an equal footing. However, with comments and reviews such as these, it causes me to question that ability.

One final comment I will make is a matter of perspective: In the current issue of your magazine, Mr. McDonald again alludes to his disdain for hunting by making inferences to the poor treatment of animals. I would not disagree that there is suffering; it would be foolish to say otherwise. However I find it interesting that we would bemoan this fact but so frequently gloss over the graphic violence presented in many of the other popular games recently released. Don't get me wrong, first-person shooters are one of my favorite genres, and I think they are fun escapes for those of us that are old enough to be playing them. But I think it is an interesting commentary on our society's desensitization to human-oriented violence. Something to think about, perhaps.

I hope that in the future you will maintain the well-researched review and commentary I know and love.

— Carvell Fenton,
Waterloo, Ont., Canada

Thanks for your comments, Carvell. The obvious answer to that last question: most of those games that depict violence against humans at least attempt to offer some justification for the carnage — in Rainbow Six, *you're shooting terrorists who've taken hostages or are threatening to detonate a bomb; in* Half Life, *you're defending yourself against heavily armed troops who've been instructed to shoot first and ask questions later. In a game like* Deer Hunter, *on*

the other hand, you're pitting your skills against an unarmed, unsuspecting animal who's done nothing to hurt you and who probably isn't scheming to overthrow the government. Regardless of your stand on hunting (and no matter what your opinion is, there's probably someone in our offices who agrees with you), it just doesn't sound exciting. Now, show us a hunting game that lets you go after a grizzly with nothing but a four-inch Buck knife to save your skin, and we're there.

Sticker Shock

I just got *Cyberstorm 2* from Sierra, and I noticed that stuck right on the front of the box is a sticker proclaiming a 4 1/2-star rating from *Interaction* magazine. Wait a minute — isn't *Interaction* Sierra's own publication? Does it even have a star ratings system?

Do you think the company who makes the game should feature an endorsement from its own magazine on the game box? Personally, I think it's misleading to gamers, and it borders on false advertising.

— A concerned gamer, *via snail mail*

Quaking Private Ryan

I just finished viewing the best war movie of all time, *Saving Private Ryan*. I was both horrified and delighted to see a movie so realistically portray D-Day. Horrified to view such carnage and mayhem (truly, war is Hell); delighted to know that Hollywood got it right. As an avid fan of wargames (homemade pen and paper included), I bemoan the lack of war simulations that put the player "on the beach." Most wargames are played from a top-down perspective, with the player "interacting" with his troops like some stodgy general in a war room miles from the front. *Close Combat 2: A Bridge Too Far* brings the player closer to the fighting, as he watches his men get mercilessly beaten to death in house-to-house fighting — but, again, the player views the battlefield from a detached perspective. The veritable plethora of *Quake* clones on the market discourages me as well. Nearly all of these first-person shooters involve futuristic characters battling in quasi-medieval-futuristic venues against cybernetic-sludge-monsters (from Hell, of course). I long for the day that a developer will mesh realistic scenarios with the highest technology. *Spec Ops* and *Rainbow Six* appear to be steps in the right direction. What I am hoping for, though, is a fine blend of the accuracy and attentiveness to detail found in sims like *Longbow 2*, along with the first-person shooter perspective. Is there much chance that we'll see a combination of the sim/wargame genres (other than in the multitude of technology-based sims — jets/tanks)?

— Matt Meacham, *via the Internet*

Matt, you just described a game that we think would go over like an engine that runs on tap water — but for some reason, it doesn't exist yet. EA's classic SEAL Team *probably comes closest; it depicted squad-level special operations in Vietnam, and it used a first-person perspective and a lot of simulation-style elements. We've been whining for an update of* SEAL Team *for a few years now, but as far as we know it's still not on EA's radar.*



Interactive Magic's new F-18 sim, *iF/A-18 CSF*, lets you play as a female pilot, acknowledging the fact that women are entering the ranks of fighter jocks — but as in many other games, minority choices are absent.

A Plea for Diversity

I recently bought Interactive Magic's *iF/A-18 Carrier Strike Fighter*. As a flight sim enthusiast, I was really looking forward to flying that sim especially, since it is carrier-based. However, after installing the game, I was extremely disappointed to find that the pilot roster offered only choices of white pilots. That killed my interest in the game, and I have not played it since.

I hope the above is merely a reflection of oversight on the part of Interactive Magic and nothing more. But Interactive Magic is not the only organization guilty of this. I can remember playing id's *Doom* and thinking to myself, "I wish there was a _____ face rather than a white one at the bottom of the main window." Thankfully, some companies present the gamer with choices of characters of different races. But these companies are few.

The gaming industry has to reckon with the fact that owning computers is no longer limited to a certain class and a certain race, but is rapidly becoming as common as owning refrigerators or TVs. Further, they have to realize that people of other classes and races are becoming more and more attracted to the world of computer games.

As an organization that is visibly in the forefront, putting the spotlight on the gaming industry, I hope that *PC Gamer* will take up this issue for me and many others whose voice cannot be heard.

—Ric Couchman, *via the Internet*

Good point. It's unlikely that the lack of minority faces in games that let you choose an on-screen persona is an intentional slight — but it does seem to be a common oversight. Since our particular branch of the entertainment industry is on the cutting edge of technology, it'd be nice to see us ahead of the game in terms of equal representation, too. There's nothing excessively PC about making sure minorities are represented in your game — in fact, it makes a sim less realistic to suggest all hotshot fighter pilots are white guys.



Imagine a game with the historical accuracy of *Close Combat 2*, played from the visceral first-person perspective of *Quake*. That's on at least one *PC Gamer* reader's wish list — and it sounds good to us.

Hardware Gets the Beta Bug

I've noticed that in your hardware reviews section, the editors are encountering the same problem software reviewers have been complaining about. That is, developers and distributors of hardware seem to be selling unfinished products, requiring owners to download numerous patches from the Internet to correct supposedly unforeseen incompatibilities. At the top of this list of offenders are video card manufacturers, who today are printing ads and boxes for their products that tantalize gamers with promises of support for APIs such as Direct3D and OpenGL — then including defective drivers with the product or leaving them out completely. I want to thank *PC Gamer* for adding a hardware reviews section, in that it helps me be very choosy as to what to buy. Companies seem to be unresponsive when I write to them about problems I've encountered, so all I can do is keep reading your reviews and only buy the items you recommend.

— Jason Johnston, *Rogers City, MI*

Unfortunately, the ship-now-patch-later concept does seem to have made its way into the hardware business. It's become so common for a 3D accelerator review to say "OpenGL drivers weren't available at press time" that our Hard Stuff reviewers are considering storing that phrase as a Microsoft Word macro to cut down on their typing. Our advice is the same for hardware as it is for software: don't buy a product the day it hits the shelves; instead, wait a while and check out the reviews and the online buzz before you open your wallet.

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GAMES

THE PC GAMER REVIEWS INDEX

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
3D Ultra Pinball: The Lost Continent 	February '98 p. 178	Arcade	Sierra Online *www.sierra.com*	Beautiful graphics; nice prehistoric setting.	Too goal-oriented; not fun; lame shareware-style games; story line doesn't work.	Sierra Online tried to expand the pinball genre, but instead it took the fun out of it.	45%	
7th Legion 	January '98 p. 301	Strategy	MicroProse *www.microprose.com*	Fast-paced action; nice graphics and music; a few innovative concepts.	Poor AI; limited units; no alliances in multi-player; even innovative concepts aren't good.	There are much better real-time strategy games to spend your money on.	66%	
Addiction Pinball 	September '98 p. 164	Arcade	MicroProse *www.microprose.com*	Bright 'n sparkly graphics; great ball physics; nice music.	The tables are a little slow; lack of gameplay options; only two tables.	A solid offering, but it won't replace *Timeshock* as the king of pinball games.	65%	
AHX1 	February '98 p. 177	Action	GT Interactive *www.gtinteractive.com*	May help chopper pilot wannabes ease into more righteous sims.	Choppy graphics; no 3D card support; no multiplayer; unsatisfying gameplay.	Like that old song always said, "Sim and action DNA just don't splice."	38%	
Air Warrior III 	May '98 p. 92	Simulation	Interactive Magic *www.imagicgames.com*	Improved graphics; 3D acceleration; tons of missions; force-feedback support; refined AI.	Solo games feel lifeless compared to multiplayer games; $9.95 a month to play online.	One of the best historically accurate air combat sims on the market.	86%	
Andretti Racing 	March '98 p. 112	Sports	Electronic Arts *www.ea.com*	Indy and stock cars; nice track selection; customizable, fun multi-player game.	Lots of draw-in; control suffers when too much is happening on the screen.	Arcade racing fans and even die-hard sim fans can have a lot of fun with this.	84%	
Ares Rising 	November '98 p. 260	Action	Imagine Studios *www.imaginestudios.com*	The E-mail system; interesting story line; cool radar.	The control system is irksome. Graphics are behind the times. Nondescript atmosphere.	There's a lot of gameplay content, but the bad simply outweighs the good.	59%	
Armed and Delirious 	May '98 p. 133	Adventure	Sir-Tech *www.sir-tech.com*	The five CDs worth of graphics are top of the line.	The interface needs work. The puzzles are crap. There is such a thing as too much weirdness.	Dadaists need only apply.	31%	

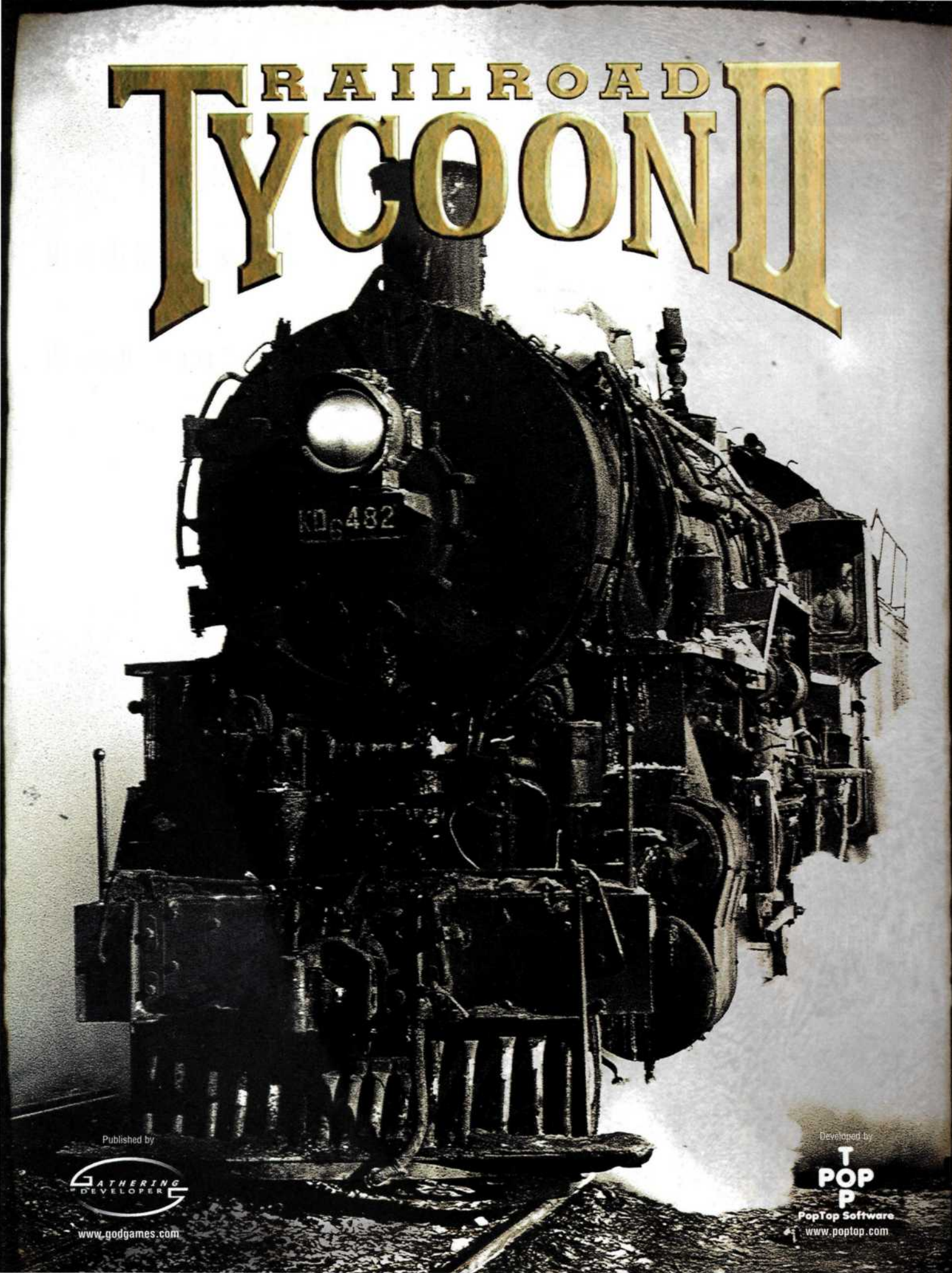
TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
Armor Command 	June '98 p. 86	Strategy	Ripcord Games *www.ripcordgames.com*	Emphasis on tactics over brute force; plenty of freedom; cool 3D view of the action.	The graphics are so-so; missions become too difficult; interface is cumbersome.	A good, solid real-time strategy game that fans of the genre should enjoy.	78%	
Armored Fist 2 	January '98 p. 309	Action	Nova Logic *www.novalogic.com*	Good tutorial voice-over. Fun as an action game for a little while.	Small, repetitve battles. Annoying controls. No realism. Chunky terrain and frame-rates to match.	Not fun as either sim or action game, *AF2* shows little attention to detail.	34%	
Armored Moon 	July '98 p. 154	Strategy	Microforum *www.microforum.com*	There's a rebate slip packed in the box.	Weak graphics, tired sound effects, terrible artificial intelligence, and no real resource management.	This is the worst real-time strategy game ever.	12%	
Army Men 	August '98 p. 111	Action	3DO Company *www.3do.com*	Fast-paced, often tricky, and quite addictive.	Dodgy controls. Some missions are too puzzle-like and require repeated attempts.	If you take it for what it is (an arcade game) then this is a blast. Just don't expect a real strategy game.	77%	
Avery Cardoza's 100 Slots 	May '98 p. 129	Simulation	Cardoza Entertainment	Excellent variety; great layout of a PC slot machine.	A slots-only sim is too narrowly focused; none of the machines are actually used in casinos.	A fine sim of slot machines that is an excellent addition to any casino collection.	75%	
Balls of Steel 	June '98 p. 103	Arcade	GT Interactive *www.gtinteractive.com*	Lots of tables; good ball physics; cool extras like an Internet ranking system.	Tricky installation with some video cards; nudging effect is a bit exaggerated.	*Balls of Steel* is a solid, well-rounded pinball game.	87%	
Battle Arena Toshinden 2 	June '98 p. 114	Action	Fujitsu Interactive *www.fujitsuinteractive.com*	Lots of characters to choose from.	The control is really, really bad. Even through 3Dfx, the graphics and animation leave a lot to be desired.	If you're in the market for PlayStation ports, make sure you look for good games.	31%	
Battlespire 	April '98 p. 154	Roleplaying	Bethesda Softworks *www.bethsoft.com*	Character design system; level design; multiplayer.	Slow, choppy, buggy; ugly up-close; no 3D support; difficult levels.	Wait until *Battlespire* is in the bargain bin. Until then, it ain't worth it.	58%	
Battlezone 	June '98 p. 94	Strategy	Activision *www.activision.com*	Sharp graphics; slick interface; excellent single-player and multiplayer missions.	Some fuzzy AI; fussy keyboard remapping.	A fine-tuned mix of action/strategy that's destined to change the way we look at this new genre.	93%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Beast Wars: Transformers 	September '98 p. 142	Action	Hasbro Interactive *www.hasbro.com*	You can play as your favorite Transformers. The explosions are neat.	Pointless gameplay; annoying and unnecessary resource management.	Action fans will find it all a bore; Transformers fans will be outraged.	28%	
Beat the House 2 	April '98 p. 153	Simulation	Interplay Productions *www.interplay.com*	Great tutorial and online coach; Sklansky's Poker Challenge is fun.	The Craps game is so bad it's no longer worth playing.	*BTH2* has excellent tutorials, and most of the games are well done, but Craps lovers will be disappointed.	70%	

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
Bio Freaks 	October '98 p. 209a	Arcade	Midway *www.midway.com*	Bloody good graphics and animation, innovative gameplay.	The camera can get confused during spirited fights and the over-the-top amounts of gore may offend.	*Bio Freaks* isn't the best fighter in town, but it's good for a few morbid laughs.	79%	
Black Dahlia 	July '98 p. 150	Adventure	Take 2 Interactive *www.take2games.com*	The compelling story and great graphics will keep adventure fans hooked for hours...	...until they reach a dreary mid-game sequence with confusing mazes and puzzles.	The gripping plot and believable characters make up for the game's shortcomings.	87%	
Blade Runner 	February '98 p. 110	Adventure	Westwood Studios *www.westwood.com*	Incredible atmosphere; faithful to the movie; lavish production; original gameplay elements.	Branching story means you can miss major scenes; some hokey characterization.	One of the best graphic adventures recently, and certainly the most innovative.	90%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Boggle 	March '98 p. 138	Puzzle	Hasbro Interactive *www.hasbro.com*	If you're desperate for a game of *Boggle* and don't have friends, this will probably fill the gap.	Waiting for a game to reload. And waiting. And waiting.	Get yourself a few buddies and play the real thing — you'll have a lot more fun.	34%	
Broken Sword: The Smoking Mirror 	February '98 p. 142	Adventure	Virgin Interactive *www.vie.com*	Improvements to the interface, graphics, and voice acting over the original.	Some of the puzzles aren't always sensible. The story isn't as thrilling as the first game.	More of the same solid adventure fare found in *Circle of Blood.*	82%	
Burnout 	June '98 p. 96	Simulation	Bethesda Softworks *www.bethsoft.com*	Efficient interface; sharp graphics; good sound effects.	Needs more classic cars. Mplayer support not up when it shipped.	If you're a speed freak that gets your kicks a few seconds at a time, look no further than Burnout.	88%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
C&C: Sole Survivor 	April '98 p. 104	Action	Westwood Studios *www.westwood.com*	No hourly or monthly charges.	Monotonous, poorly conceived game that is dependent on randomly clicking everywhere.	Feels like an online-only quickie that cashes in on the C&C name.	35%	
Caesar's Palace 	February '98 p. 185	Simulation	Interplay Productions *www.interplay.com*	The graphics are as good as could be expected.	There's an irritating flaw in every single phase of the program.	If you're serious about getting a quality casino simulation, look elsewhere.	38%	
CART Precision Racing 	May '98 p. 137	Simulation	Microsoft *www.microsoft.com*	Realistic driving model; nice graphics; gearheads will love the garage.	Alpine-steep learning curve; presentation lacks pizzazz.	*CART* is the game of choice for all-out realism freaks, but it can be hard for regular gamers.	79%	
Castrol Honda Superbike World Champions 	August '98 p. 145a	Racing	Intense Entertainment *www.intensegames.com*	Nice handling on the RC45; learning features are helpful for newbies.	Graphics and sound are so-so; crashes and collision need work; we need more bikes, dammit!	A valiant effort, but there's plenty of room left for a definitve PC bike sim.	63%	
Chasm 	January '98 p. 217	Action	GT Interactive *www.gtinteractive.com*	Nice looking polygonal monsters; some impressive graphic effects.	Bad mouse control; levels are throwback to *Doom*; no Internet support.	With better games on the market, you're better off staying away from this one.	56%	

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
Chessmaster 5500 	February '98 p. 167	Strategy	Mindscape *www.mindscape.com*	Every area is outstanding; best graphics, instructional aids, and sound of any chess game.	Er...there's no feature that will automatically order pizza for you.	With the new features, the latest *Chessmaster* is the best PC chess game you can buy.	94%	Yes
Civil War Generals II 	February '98 p. 140	Wargame	Sierra Online *www.sierra.com*	Campaigns cover entire war. Lots of historical detail. Excellent victory system.	Victory system encourages suicidal stands. Underestimates effects of cannon.	Don't compare it to any other games; *CWGII* stands quite well on its own.	86%	
Close Combat: A Bridge Too Far 	January '98 p. 225	Wargame	Microsoft *www.microsoft.com*	Great new Battlemaker; as personal as you can get to WWII on your PC.	The real-time might turn off wargamers, while the realism will confuse C&C fans.	Ready for something new? *A Bridge Too Far* should fit the bill.	88%	Yes
Commandos: Behind Enemy Lines 	November '98 p. 240	Strategy	Eidos Interactive *www.eidosinteractive.com*	The tactical action and mission-based puzzling can be fun...	...although much of the time the linear campaign and very difficult missions are frustrating.	*Commandos* has a lot to offer, but less patient gamers should look elsewhere.	80%	
Croc: Legend of the Gobbos 	June '98 p. 122	Action	Fox Interactive *www.foxinteractive.com*	Colorful graphics, nice character designs and animation.	The camera angles don't assist you in the jumping puzzles, which are around 90 percent of the game.	If you're waiting for a PC equivalent of *Mario 64*, keep waiting.	68%	
Curse of Monkey Island, The 	February '98 p. 108	Adventure	LucasArts *www.lucasarts.com*	Sharp writing; glorious graphics; madcap humor; voice-acting puts most games to shame.	The "insult-duel" section outstays its welcome by several hours.	If this isn't destined to be a classic, I'll swallow a cutlass.	95%	Yes
Cyberstorm 2: Corporate Wars 	October '98 p. 232	Strategy	Sierra Online *www.sierra.com*	Tons of design elements; great mission variety; interesting tactical possibilities.	Real-time straitjacket all but ruins the good stuff; the manual is literally unreadable.	This had the potential for greatness, but the real-time brings it to its knees.	62%	
Dark Earth 	February '98 p. 121	Adventure	MicroProse *www.microprose.com*	Nice animation, environments; logical puzzles; intriguing, well-integrated action.	Fuzzy narrative. Difficulty level and storyline make this game for patient players only.	If you're looking for a classy adventure with a bit of everything, *Dark Earth* is it.	82%	
Daytona USA Deluxe 	February '98 p. 188	Racing	SegaSoft *www.segasoft.com*	Touched-up graphics and control; three new tracks; inexplicably cool music.	*Daytona* is showing its age; there's no 3D support; clipping and texture problems.	*Daytona* is still a solid racer, but these improvements aren't enough.	68%	
Deadlock II: The Shrine Wars 	May '98 p. 90	Strategy	Accolade *www.accolade.com*	It's big and deep and turn-based.	Micro-management requirements may overwhelm some players; the interface is baroque.	If you liked the original, you'll find more to like; if you hated the original, you'll find more to hate.	77%	
Deathtrap Dungeon 	October '98 p. 238	Action	Eidos Interactive *www.eidosinteractive.com*	Inspiring visuals, level design; good atmosphere; many enemies.	Crap save game feature; auto-camera interferes with game play; "clipping" problems; no 'net play.	This is challenging and enjoyable, but it falls short of greatness.	79%	

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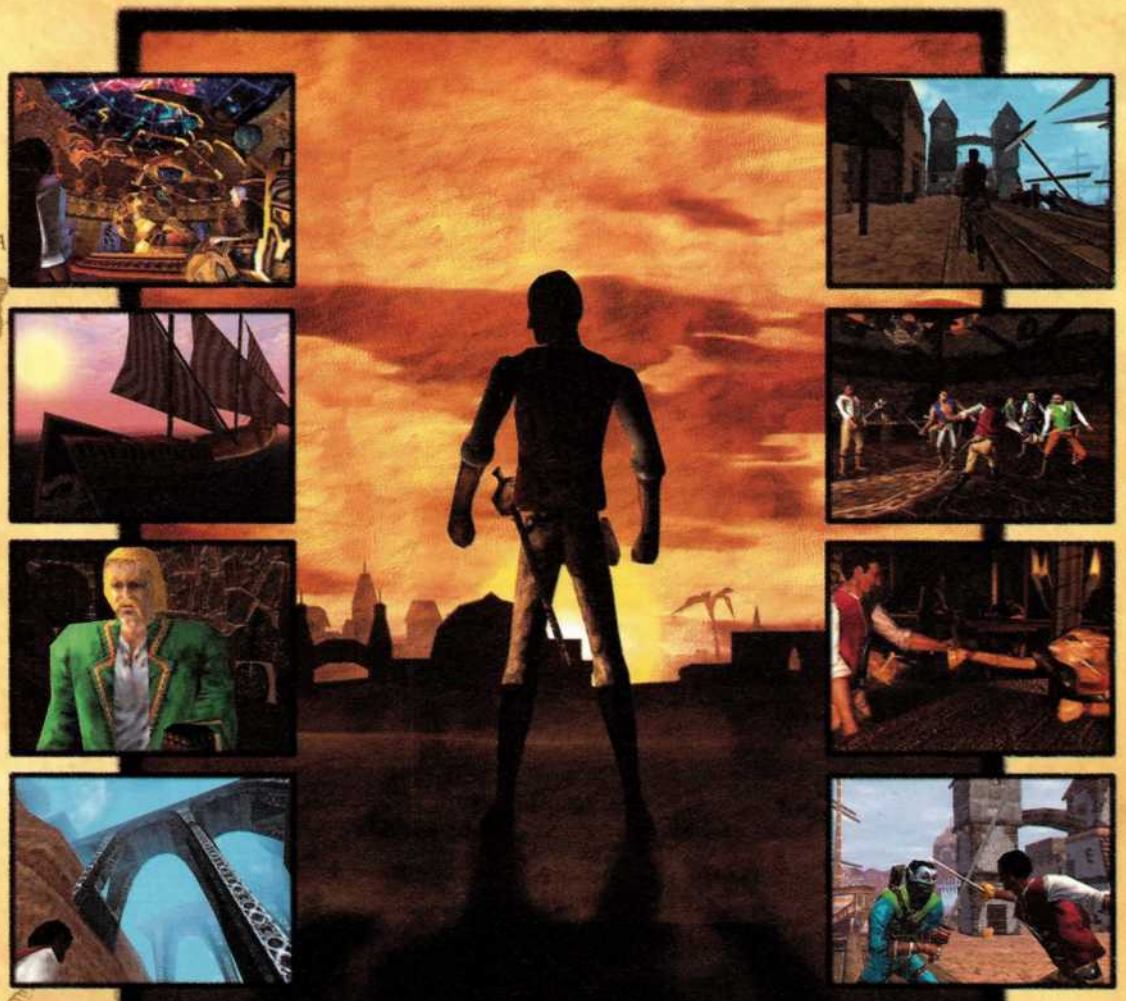
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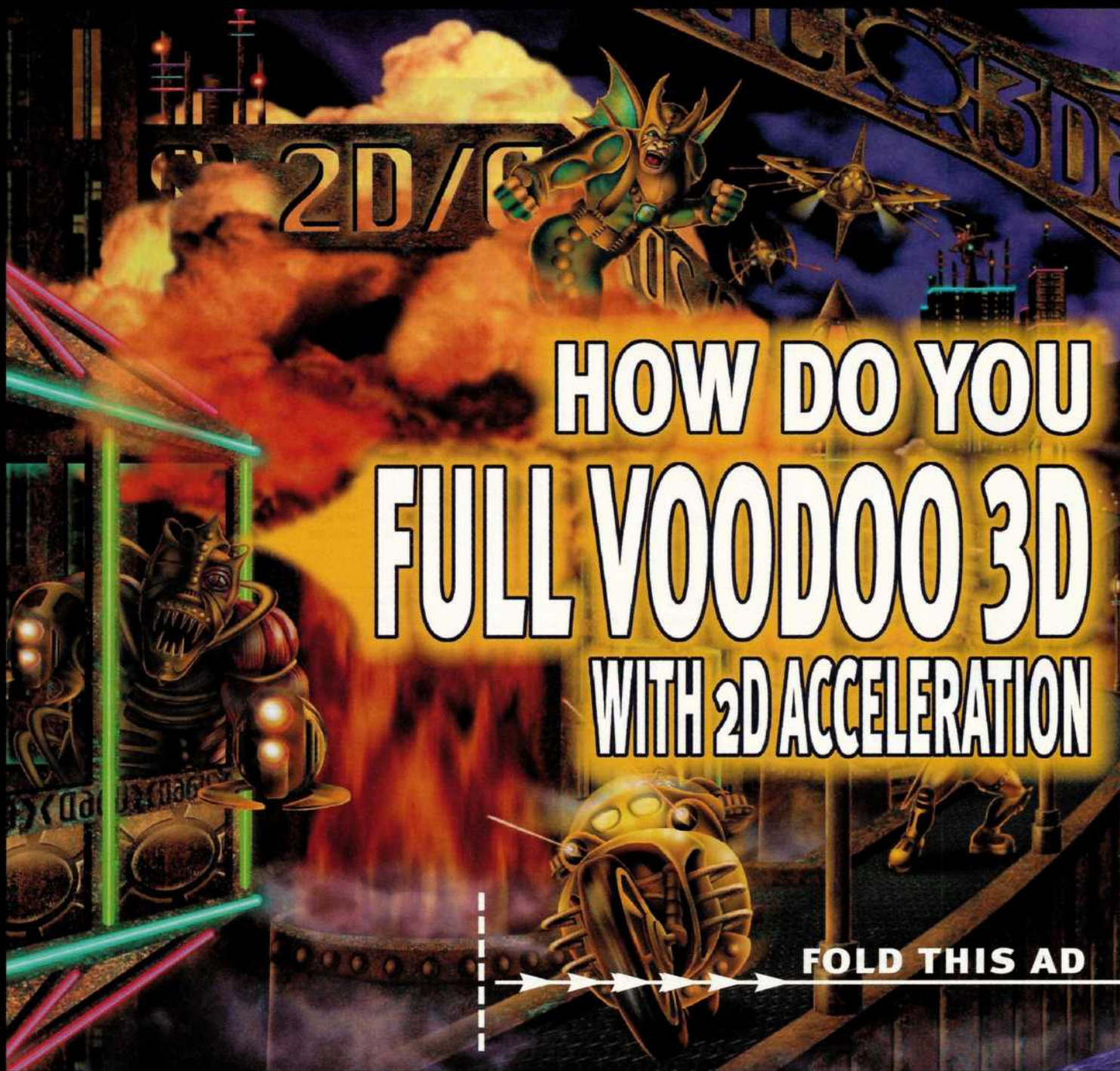
TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
Demonstar 	May '98 p. 122	Arcade	Ionos Software *www.ionos.com*	Delivers the button-mashing adrenaline rush found in classic arcade games.	The motherships at the end of each mission are too easy to beat. Lack of level variety.	*Demonstar* is an intense, blood-pumping shooter with an arcade flavor.	79%	
Descent to Undermountain 	April '98 p. 125	Roleplaying	Interplay Productions *www.interplay.com*	Excellent incorporation of the *AD&D Forgotten Realms* campaign setting and rules.	Poor graphics; poor engine; poor story; long load times.	It's a good idea gone horribly wrong, then apparently rushed out the door too soon.	40%	
Descent: Freespace — The Great War 	September '98 p. 152	Action	Interplay Productions *www.interplay.com*	Great graphics and smooth control. Robust mission editor and multi-player options.	Short single-player campaign; thin story line. Some fussy Internet play.	*Freespace* sets a new standard for sci-fi shoot 'em ups with its first-rate production.	91%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Die by the Sword 	June '98 p. 84	Action	Interplay Productions *www.interplay.com*	Solid graphics and fun gameplay; innovative control.	The control is difficult to master (especially with a mouse). The roaming camera can make you dizzy.	Set aside some time to learn the ropes of this game; you won't be disappointed.	89%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Dominion: Storm Over GIFT 3 	September '98 p. 174	Strategy	Eidos Interactive *www.eidosinteractive.com*	Most units are well designed and look sharp; good waypoint system.	Resource management is a pain; environment graphics are subpar; AI will drive you crazy.	We've seen this all before, but if you're desperate, *Dominion* delivers on a basic level.	55%	
Earth 2140 	May '98 p. 106	Strategy	Interplay Productions *www.interplay.com*	Cool opening. Accurate clone of *C&C*.	Keeping track of your units in dark-terrain; dim-witted pathfinding abilities of units.	It clones *C&C* with lock-step precision, but lacks the fun, intensity, and personality of its inspiration.	77%	
East Front 	February '98 p. 148	Wargame	TalonSoft *www.talonsoft.com*	Gritty, down-in-the-mud atmosphere; tons of interesting battles.	Plenty of rough edges and a worthless manual.	It's a shaky start for TalonSoft's new line, but a must-have game for any *Russian Front* fan.	78%	
Emergency: Fighters for Life 	November '98 p. 272	Strategy	WizardWorks *www.wizworks.com*	Lots of opportunities for life-saving goodness in a variety of missions.	Confusing gameplay, idiotic artificial intelligence.	Even though the concept is solid, *Emergency* is another half-baked RTS game.	45%	
Entrepreneur 	March '98 p. 126	Strategy	Stardock Systems *www.stardock.com*	Simple interface; good multi-player support; sense of humor.	Often hard to tell why performance of products is up or down; more on-screen advice would be nice.	This is an economics-based game that's easy to get into and fun.	73%	
Evolution 	May '98 p. 75	Strategy	Discovery Multimedia *www.multimedia.discovery.com*	A refreshingly different kind of game; good graphics; a high level of challenge.	It's extremely complicated to learn and requires a lot of patience.	If the concept appeals to you (and you're not a Creationist!), you might just love it.	75%	
Excalibur 2555 AD 	February '98 p. 128	Action	Sir-Tech *www.sir-tech.com*	A handful of good adventure elements.	Dreadful combat sequences; claustrophobic levels; protagonist's butt is visible at all times.	Another second-rate console port bites big time on the PC. Sigh.	52%	

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TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
Extreme Tactics 	October '98 p. 236	Strategy	Piranha Interactive Publishing *www.piranha interactive.com*	Designing units is sort of fun; no convoluted unit trees.	Once the novelty wears off, this game is very simplistic and repetitive.	With so many RTS games out there, this does little to distinguish itself.	47%	
F-15 	July '98 p. 130	Simulation	Origin *www.ea.com/ origin.html*	Strong feature set, flight models, avionics; almost everything you could want in a flight sim.	Average multi-player features; steep learning curve; high system requirements.	An awesome achievement in flight simulation.	93%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
F-22 Air Dominance Fighter 	April '98 p. 94	Simulation	Ocean of America *www.did.com*	Detailed, state-of-the-art weapons and defense systems, niftly AWACs mode; gorgeous graphics.	Linear campaigns can be frustrating; occasional graphic glitches in Direct 3D mode.	A great simulation of a fascinating jet; as much fun to fly as it is to look at.	90%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
F/A-18 Korea 	April '98 p. 139	Simulation	Graphic Simulations *www.graphsim. com*	Good flight modeling; sharp graphics; detailed manual and training videos.	Weak features (interface, campaign structure, mission control) carried on from *Hornet 3.0*.	A solid sim with a rich game world and awesome avionics.	86%	
F1 Racing Simulation 	May '98 p. 118	Sports	Ubi Soft *www.ubisoft.com*	Full-featured sim with both realistic and simple modes. Great graphics, frame rates.	Inability to re map the keyboard, all-or-nothing realism modes.	Appeals to both the super-hard-core and the arcade audience at once.	90%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Faery Tale Adventure II: Halls of the Dead 	April '98 p. 140	Roleplaying	Encore Software	Beautiful graphics; large game world; variety of items, creatures, landscapes.	Annoying and difficult interface, character movement, combat.	If you're a die-hard RPG fan, you might enjoy it. Otherwise, wait for better ones that are in the works.	55%	
Fallout 	January '98 p. 221	Roleplaying	Interplay Productions *www.interplay. com*	Excellent introduction; engaging story line; eerie music and visuals; slick interface.	Movement interface can be a bit creaky. Steep system requirements and occasional bugs.	This sequel to an all-time classic is one of the standouttt RPGs for the 1990s.	90%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
FIFA: Road to World Cup 98 	April '98 p. 144	Sports	EA Sports *www.ea.com*	Fantastic graphics; addictive multi-player action; a blast to play.	Something of a steep learning curve; AI falters every now and then.	Quite simply, this is the best soccer simulation on PC.	90%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Final Fantasy VII 	September '98 p. 136	Roleplaying	Eidos Interactive *www.eidosinter active.com*	Beautiful graphics; huge, compelling story; unique gameplay.	Large hard-drive requirements; console save locations.	The giant PlayStation hit isn't destined to change the face of PC roleplaying, but it's still a blast.	90%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Final Liberation: Warhammer Epic 40,000 	February '98 p. 172	Strategy	SSI *www.ssionline. com*	Excellent gameplay with the feel of the classic table-top system.	Unit graphics are often cheesy. Needs more races.	Quality where it counts — in the gameplay. The campaign game and quick battles are terrific.	86%	
Flesh Feast 	October '98 p. 210	Action	SegaSoft *www.segasoft. com*	It's got zombies in it!	Poor graphics; no gamepad support; gets tedious; not scary; crappy interface.	Once you get over the zombies, this is just another boring "find the key" action game.	32%	

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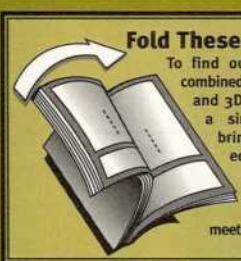
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TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
Flight Unlimited II 	May '98 p. 102	Simulation	Eidos Interactive *www.eidosinteractive.com*	Incredible graphics; realistic flight models; wonderful recreation of air-traffic control.	Emphasis on realistic procedures might bore some players; fairly small flying area.	As close as you can get to flying a civilian plane without a pilot's license.	92%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Forsaken 	August '98 p. 106	Action	Acclaim Entertainment *www.acclaim.net*	Awesome graphics and gameplay to match.	Cramped levels; some unfair enemy tactics; weapons don't carry over in levels.	This addictive and pretty blast-fest is sure to breathe new life into the tunnel-shooter genre.	89%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Fox Sports Golf '99 	September '98 p. 161	Sports	Fox Sports *www.foxsportsgames.com*	Options galore; tournaments are well done; strangely appealing graphics.	Fussy control methods; putting is too easy; some ball physics problems.	A few gameplay adjustments short of being a really good game.	68%	
FPS: Ski Racing 	May '98 p. 128	Sports	Sierra Online *www.sierra.com*	Nice selection of ski equipment; good sound effects.	Difficult for beginners; bland graphics; not much event variety.	Even after you get past the steep learning curve, there's not enough excitement to keep you playing.	52%	
FPS: Football Pro '98 	March '98 p. 112a	Sports	Sierra Online *www.sierra.com*	Improved interface; incredible depth as a simulation; fast sim mode.	Action play is horrendous; presentation is from a bygone era.	If you shun arcade action and want a deep sim, this is a worthy purchase. Otherwise, forget it.	74%	
Frogger 	April '98 p. 132	Arcade	Hasbro Interactive *www.hasbro.com*	Nice graphics; bouncy soundtrack.	Control is terrible. You can't see enough of the levels to make head or tails of your surroundings.	A definite case against the whole retro-gaming craze.	32%	
G-Police 	February '98 p. 160	Action	Psygnosis *www.psygnosis.com*	Magnificent visual effects! Among the prettiest games available.	Limiting flight model; frustrating missions; no multi-player options.	All looks and no brains may be appealing, but consider yourself warned.	63%	
Galapagos 	February '98 p. 158	Action	Anark	Revolutionary AI; beautiful graphic design.	Very short; serious gameplay drawbacks.	*Galapagos* is a revolutionary piece of software. Unfortunately, it's not a very good game.	61%	
Game, Net & Match 	September '98 p. 170	Sports	Blue Byte Software *www.bluebyte.com*	Excellent online play; good shot control; Blue Byte's leaderboard.	No bells or whistles; some ugly graphics; you'll yearn for more intelligent AI.	There's fun to be had, but only those with multi-player in mind need apply.	65%	
Get Medieval 	October '98 p. 215	Arcade	Monolith Productions *www.lith.com*	Simple gameplay; an option to turn off the gore makes this nice for young kids.	It's *Gauntlet* with better graphics and wisecracks; but that's not enough to save it.	Okay for the kiddie set, but serious gamers will tire of the repetition.	65%	
Golden Tee Golf 	November '98 p. 274	Sports	Interplay Productions *www.interplay.com*	Simple but effective swing method; good physics model; quality 'net play.	No replay or computer opponents; only three courses and two play modes.	Golf fans and gamers of all types will have a good time with this one.	83%	

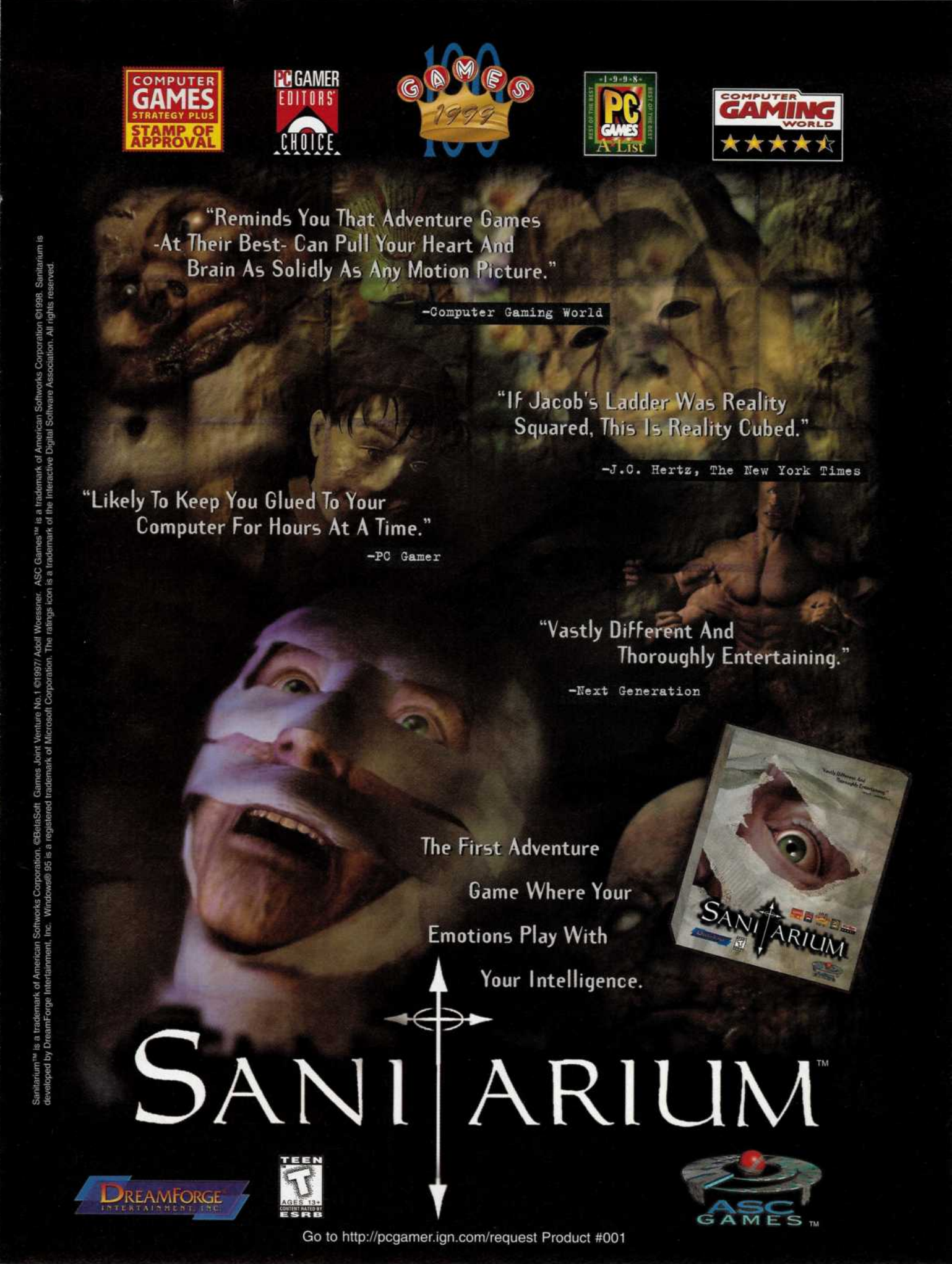
TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
Golf Pro, The 	June '98 p. 102	Sports	Empire Interactive *www.empire-us.com*	Great feel-based gameplay; stunning course graphics.	Only two courses; some mice can be difficult to calibrate.	Despite the meager course selection, real and virtual golfers will appreciate the good gameplay.	81%	
Grand Theft Auto 	May '98 p. 136	Arcade	ASC Games *www.ascgames.com*	Killer music, nonstop action, and bucketloads of violent fun.	No save game feature; no 3Dfx support in Windows 95; missions can be rather difficult.	*Grand Theft Auto* is a fun, antisocial game with a few annoying faults.	84%	
Great Battles of Hannibal 	February '98 p. 129	Wargame	Interactive Magic *www.imagicgames.com*	Nice graphics; a new and fascinating strategic layer of play.	Some scenes are still very slow to develop; Hannibal is a more specialized taste than Alexander.	Nicely captures the epic, ultimately tragic, curve of Hannibal's career.	85%	
HardBall 6 	July '98 p. 135	Sports	Accolade *www.accolade.com*	Good arcade play over the Internet. Good customization options; decent AI.	Sub-par graphics and sound. Poor camera angles, missing stadiums, and skewed statistics.	If you've been looking for a dugout management game, check this out.	67%	
Heart of Darkness 	November '98 p. 224	Adventure	Interplay Productions *www.interplay.com*	Good animation, audio; neat level design; back-to-basics gameplay.	The motion gets choppy; the game is mind-numingly difficult.	If you're a fan of classic side-scrolling adventures, *Heart of Darkness* is freaking hardcore.	78%	
Heavy Gear 	March '98 p. 120	Action	Activision *www.activision.com*	Custom features; good replay value and online support; interesting world.	The bugs and uneven coding aren't critical, but they are a nuisance. Some weak graphics.	Niggling bugs hurt good gameplay, but overall, this is a strong mech game.	82%	
Hexplore 	November '98 p. 226	Roleplaying	Infogrames Ent.	New voxel technology is interesting. Lots of gameplay, monsters, items, secrets, puzzles.	Poor graphics; interface is frustrating; story line is nothing special.	*Hexplore* does try something new, but comes up short in too many other areas.	47%	
High Heat Baseball 	July '98 p. 122	Sports	3DO Company *www.3do.com*	Top-notch arcade play; the best baseball game AI; pretty stadiums; solid animations.	Hideous batter graphics; some bugs; lack of some options will disappoint stat freaks.	Even though it's a "no frills" game, the action alone will satisfy most gamers.	86%	
Icarus: Sanctuary of the Gods 	September '98 p. 133	Roleplaying	JC Research *www.game-club.com*	Turn-based combat is a breath of fresh air; characters look nice; easy interface.	Some combat encounters are too long; no spoken dialog; minimal sound effects; bad soundtrack.	It won't win awards for originality, but it's fun if you're into turn-based gaming.	79%	
iF-16 	March '98 p. 129	Simulation	Interactive Magic *www.imagicgames.com*	Good flight modeling and gameplay.	Poor frame rates and medicore graphics. No Internet play.	An interesting, mostly realistic sim that doesn't quite measure up to the current state of the art.	70%	
Incoming 	September '98 p. 169	Action	Rage Software *www.rage.co.uk*	These are some of the best visual effects ever seen in a game.	The action gets repetitive fast; the top-down strategy game is an afterthought.	It's initially fun, but players looking for more substance will quickly tire of it.	75%	

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TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
Incubation 	January '98 p. 281	Strategy	Blue Byte Software *www.bluebyte.com*	Good multi-player support; challenging gameplay; good use of the 3D graphics.	Infrequent cut-scenes are pretty cheesy; multi-player games could use more variety.	A refreshing, addictive strategy game with charm — on the surface and underneath.	89%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Independence War 	November '98 p. 214	Action	Infogrames Ent.	Great graphics, excellent flight model, terrific missions, and nice story line.	No keyboard remapping. Curious method of playing opening cinematic.	If you're looking for a good, challenging space epic, *I-War* will float your boat.	90%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Industry Giant 	November '98 p. 271	Strategy	Interactive Magic *www.imagicgames.com*	It's fun watching this world of yours grow as you nurture it.	Not very original. Keeping tabs on your transportation networks becomes a chore.	It's an interesting idea, but it ends up too basic and sterile to remain compelling.	58%	
iPanzer '44 	August '98 p. 146	Simulation	Interactive Magic *www.imagicgames.com*	Tank interiors are realistic.	Ugly maps, dated graphics, laughable infantry, and the complex interface .	What were the designers smoking when they worked on this?	44%	
Jack Nicklaus 5 	March '98 p. 150	Sports	Accolade *www.accolade.com*	Improved views and gameplay; course designer is better than ever.	Lack of difficulty levels; slow play by computer golfers.	*Jack Nicklaus 5* is a worthy upgrade to *Jack Nicklaus 4*. Take another look at this series.	90%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Jazz Jackrabbit 2 	September '98 p. 128	Arcade	Gathering of Developers *www.godgames.com*	Nice animations; good control; even-handed difficulty; oodles of replay value.	Side-scrolling formula means repetitive play.	*Jazz Jackrabbit 2* proves that side-scrolling can still be fun when it's done right.	84%	
Jet Moto 	April '98 p. 126	Arcade	Sony Interactive *www.sonyinteractive.com*	Great sense of speed; lots of well-designed tracks.	Control is a little floaty; tracks are difficult to unlock; lots of annoying ads.	*Jet Moto* delivers unique and solid racing action.	80%	
JetFighter: Full Burn 	October '98 p. 220	Simulation	Interplay Productions *www.interplay.com*	Extremely accessible; playable; downright addictive.	Virtually everything about this game feels old; non-intuitive controls.	*JetFighter* is still a good pick for the casual sim fans out there, but it's past time for a new game engine.	74%	
Journeyman Project 3: Legacy of Time, The 	April '98 p. 114	Adventure	Red Orb *www.redorb.com*	Graphics; puzzles well integrated with story line; great story and historical information.	Poorly written dialogue; unchallenging, easy puzzles.	*Legacy of Time* is a good game that could have been much more.	75%	
JSF: Joint Strike Fighter 	April '98 p. 111	Simulation	Eidos Interactive *www.eidosinteractive.com*	Pretty graphics with or without 3D hardware; good head-to-head options.	A shortage of data makes the campaign feel vague; touchy controls; no tutorial missions.	*JSF* is a lightweight sim with some heavyweight problems.	59%	
Kingdoms II: Shadoan 	February '98 p. 134	Adventure	TIG Publishing	The box has a neat moving label that will scare your cat. Great music score.	Stiff animation; gameplay isn't there.	After this pointlesss effort, it's time to flush any influences from *Dragon's Lair* out of the system.	35%	

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TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
Kuba 	October '98 p. 208	Strategy	Patch Products *www.patch products.com*	This little game is faithful to the board game version and will please its fans.	It lacks the magic ingredient to make it a classic; drags when only a few marbles left.	*Kuba* is exactly what it appears to be; fans of this type of game will enjoy it.	78%	
Lands of Lore: Guardians of Destiny 	January '98 p. 245	Roleplaying	Virgin Interactive *www.vie.com*	Huge, detailed world. Excellent story line. Good balance.	Dated 3D engine. Certain scene transitions can be jarring. Some performances are less than stellar.	*Lands of Lore* is a very good game, it is just a little behind the times.	87%	
Last Bronx 	June '98 p. 100	Arcade	SegaSoft *www.segasoft.com*	Great Virtua-style gameplay. Stunning graphics on fast machines like a Pentium II.	Agonizingly slow performance on any lower-end machine; no D3D support.	This is a good fighter, but the performance issues make it hard to recommend.	67%	
Liberation Day 	September '98 p. 140	Strategy	Interactive Magic *www.imagic games.com*	Good turn-based gaming that blends combat, city building, and unit improvements.	Missions feel puzzle-like; adequate graphics; screwy save game feature; no alien campaign.	It's not the sharpest turn-based wargame, but it's decent enough if the price is right.	70%	
Longbow 2 	February '98 p. 152	Simulation	Jane's Combat Simulatuions *www.jane's.ea.com*	Dynamic campaign, new choppers, multi-player action, great graphics.	Needs support for more players in multi-player; wingmen could be more independent.	*Longbow 2* is a masterpiece created by sim experts at the top of their form.	95%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Lords of Magic 	March '98 p. 134	Strategy	Sierra Online *www.sierra.com*	Great strategic depth; well-designed units; strong AI; epic scope.	Combat system is awkward; the interface has a few problems; initial release buggy.	*Lords of Magic* is a deep, fun game; it just needs some tweaking to be really great.	82%	
M.A.X. 2 	November '98 p. 236	Strategy	Interplay Productions *www.interplay.com*	Varied missions, lots of interesting units.	No tutorial; countless bugs; this game simply was not finished when shipped.	This could have been a great game. But as it stands, Interplay's credibility has taken another head shot.	40%	
M1 Tank Platoon 	June '98 p. 106	Simulation	MicroProse *www.microprose.com*	A great blend of tactics and action, with graphics that bring it alive.	Crucial features are missing. There are some klutzy interface issues. Documentation is littered with errors.	If there are patches, this will be one of the great games of the year. But until then...	82%	
Madden NFL 98 	January '98 p. 278	Sports	Electronic Arts *www.ea.com*	Good AI; large team selection; easy to learn.	Fuzzy graphics; boring presentation and play-by-play; can't customize game.	If you can live with the sub-par graphics and enjoy arcade gameplay, this will give you a good fight.	77%	
Manx TT Superbike 	February '98 p. 130	Arcade	SegaSoft *www.segasoft.com*	Pretty graphics; fun for the first few plays.	Lame control; there's not too much to the game for what you're gonna pay.	Not even close to the high water mark set by *Moto Racer GP*.	53%	
Mass Destruction 	May '98 p. 114	Action	ASC Games *www.ascgames.com*	With moutains of objects to destroy, *Mass Destruction* equals addictive action.	No Internet play or 3D acceleration; can look pretty chunky.	If you can find this one on the cheap, go for it.	76%	

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TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
MechCommander 	September '98 p. 156	Strategy	MicroProse *www.microprose.com*	Mech configurations and options immerse you in the BattleTech world; good graphics.	Tough battle management; linear compaign; no speed or difficulty settings; no in-game saves.	It definitely has its flaws, but there's still a lot of fun here.	79%	
Medieval 	September '98 p. 163	Wargame	Incredible Simulations *www.incredible simulations.com*	Solid production values; exciting scenarios; lots of smash-mouth action.	The editor sometimes deploys made-up archer units but forgets to give them arrows.	A colorful simulation of a neglected but fascinating period of history.	90%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Men in Black 	March '98 p. 111	Action	SouthPeak Interactive *www.southpeak.com*	The backgrounds look cool.	Really bad puzzles; nonsensical control; long load times; it's all combat, combat, and more combat.	Go rent the movie. This sucks.	34%	
Microsoft Baseball 3D 	August '98 p. 120	Sports	Microsoft *www.microsoft.com*	Nice ballpark atmosphere and graphics; good texture maps and animation.	Nearly impossible fielding; some realism lapses; takes too long to complete a game.	Multi-play is fun, but solo gamers are advised to look elsewhere.	62%	
Microsoft Flight Simulator 98 	January '98 p. 256	Simulation	Microsoft *www.microsoft.com*	Spectacular graphics, depth of subject material, best helicopter simulaton available.	Lacks documentation. Some buggy lessons.	Both beginners and experts will find challenges, but you'll want a hint book.	85%	
Microsoft Golf 1998 	August '98 p. 113a	Sports	Microsoft *www.microsoft.com*	Pretty graphics; good sound; nice selection of gameplay options.	Unrealistic physics; poor game interface.	This can't compete with the big boys. You can find better golf games elsewhere.	43%	
Might and Magic VI: The Mandate of Heaven 	August '98 p. 128	Roleplaying	3DO Company *www.3do.com*	Tons of depth; vital interesting world. Good old-school party-based exploration.	Some chunky graphics, some hokey monsters. Peasants often hamper movement in towns.	The best pure FRPG since *Ultima VII*.	90%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Monopoly: Star Wars CD-ROM Edition 	February '98 p. 187	Strategy	Hasbro Interactive *www.hasbro.com*	Tried-n-true gameplay combined with Star Wars multimedia flash.	The multimedia flash gets really old. It's just Monopoly in sci-fi garb.	Just like an aging Jedi, *Star Wars Monopoly* slowly but surely loses its fizz.	68%	
Monster Truck Madness 2 	August '98 p. 138	Action	Microsoft *www.microsoft.com*	Graphically superior to any other monster truck game.	No career mode. Weak keyboard options and competition modes. Adequate AI drivers.	A fun romp through the mulch that should have had a few more features.	85%	
Mortal Kombat 4 	October '98 p. 224	Arcade	Midway *www.midway.com*	Lightning fast gameplay; amusing fatalities.	Board-stiff animation, cheesy special effects, and questionable depth.	*MK 4* is a competent addition to a mediocre series, but there are better PC fighting games out there.	66%	
Mortal Kombat Trilogy 	March '98 p. 117	Arcade	GT Interactive *www.gtinteractive.com*	Solid gameplay; plenty of of wild special moves; inclusion of every MK character.	Steep requirements to get full-screen action; no saved game feature for the tournament mode.	Though nothing new was added, *Mortal Kombat Trilogy* is timeless and addictive.	76%	

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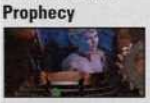
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TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
Motocross Madness 	November '98 p. 222	Action	Microsoft *www.microsoft.com*	Feels like the real thing! Awesome graphics, sounds, great control.	There could have been more terrain detail on the stunt and baja tracks; limited track editor.	No time to write bottom line. Must return to *Motocross Madness*. Now.	92%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Motorhead 	October '98 p. 203	Arcade	Fox Interactive *www.foxinteractive.com*	Graphics create a true sensation of speed; you can spawn many multiplayer versions.	Limited tracks and cars until you place high enough; no damage to cars during crashes.	*Motorhead* is satisfyingly hot arcade-style racing action for your PC.	88%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Mysteries of the Sith 	April '98 p. 96	Action	LucasArts *www.lucasarts.com*	New weapons, enemies, levels, and Force powers; solid level design.	Some levels too puzzle heavy; colored lighting overdone at times.	This is a great expansion pack for an awesome game.	87%	
Myth: The Fallen Lords 	February '98 p. 180	Strategy	Bungie Software *www.bungie.com*	Revolutionary engine and gorgeous graphics; true 3D terrain and realisitc physics.	Some troublesome unit AI; "friendly fire" a little too unfriendly; no level editor/map generator.	*Myth* is a melee of a good time.	90%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Nahan: The Ultimate 3D Puzzle Game 	June '98 p. 111	Puzzle	Global Star Software	A large assortment of puzzles, tilesets, and graphics.	Lacks that addictive quality to sustain interest; awful music unless you like that techno crap.	A mahjong-like game that relies more heavily on style than substance.	60%	
Nam 	October '98 p. 225a	Action	GT Interactive *www.gtinteractive.com*	The multi-player game can be pretty fun.	Awful hi-res graphics; the claim of "realistically bringing the war to life" is an out-and-out farce.	You might get your money's worth out of the multi-player game.	53%	
NBA Action 98 	June '98 p. 88	Sports	SegaSoft *www.segasoft.com*	Players perform realistically; great motion capture work; free throws!	High system requirements; a bit behind the technology curve all around.	If you can live without the glitz and glitter, the gameplay will win you over.	87%	
NBA Live 98 	January '98 p. 234	Sports	Electronic Arts *www.ea.com*	Awesome visuals, presentation, and interface; new features that enhance gameplay.	Lack of fouls called against the CPU. There are a few graphical glitches during replays.	For those who enjoy a great-looking, great-playing game, *NBA Live 98* is the best.	92%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
NCAA Football 98 	February '98 p. 168	Sports	Electronic Arts *www.ea.com*	Great running game; smooth animation; lots of teams to choose from.	AI problems with the offense; no career mode.	If the offense problems don't bother you, you'll have a great deal of fun.	86%	
NCAA Football 99 	November '98 p. 254	Sports	Electronic Arts *www.ea.com*	Stunning graphics; perfect atmosphere; astounding game play; Dynasty Mode.	Save game problems seen in the first game still exist; no play editor.	Don't hesitate to add this to your sports collection — it's da bomb.	92%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
NetStorm: Islands at War 	March '98 p. 153	Strategy	Activision *www.activision.com*	Innovative design; good for both beginners and experts; easy set up for Internet play.	Susceptible to cheats and hacks; the usual Internet idiots can detract from the experience.	Activision's "quick and dirty" RTS game for the Internet is a winner.	83%	

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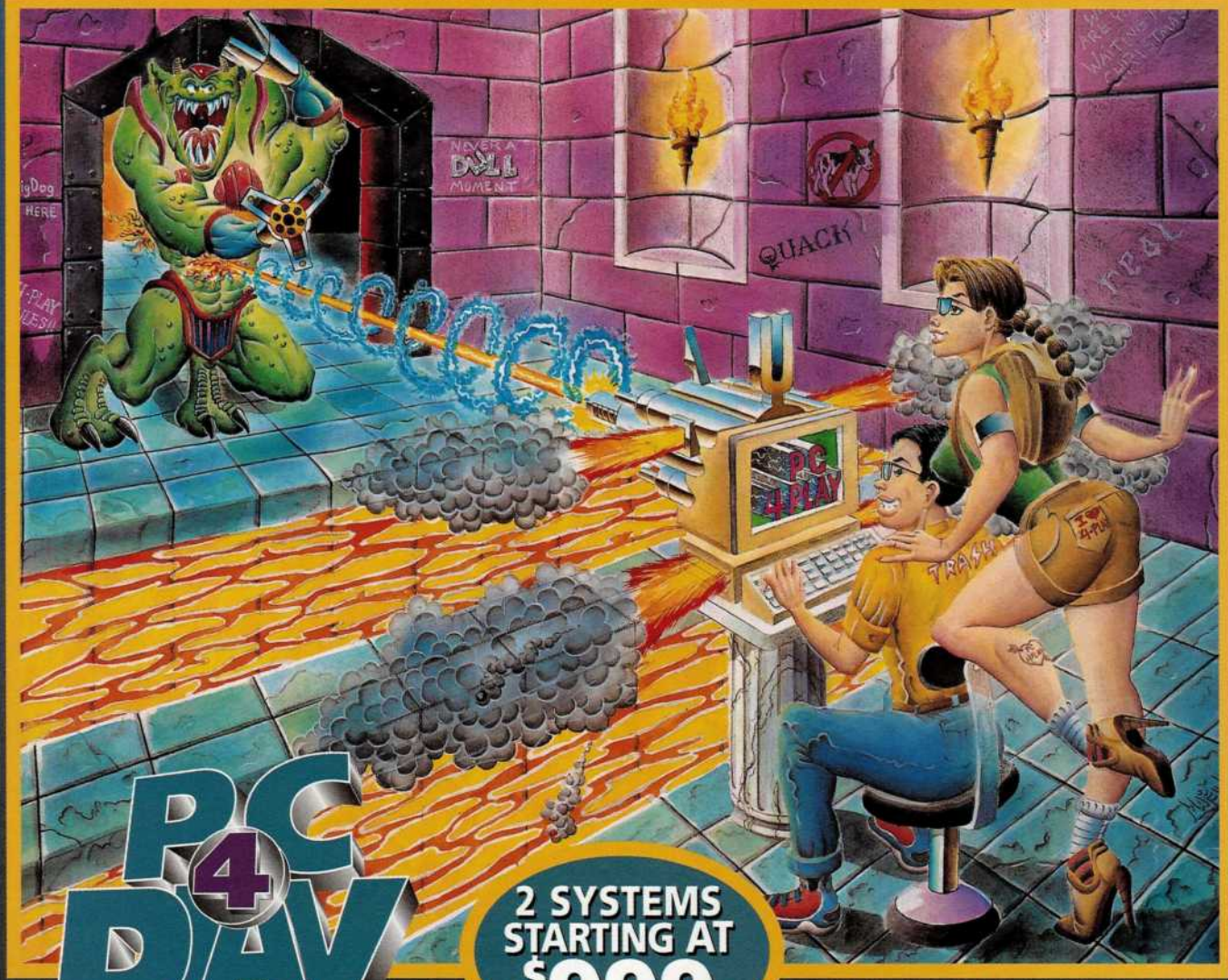
TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
netWar 	July '98 p. 116	Action	Headland Digital Media *www.netwar.com*	Great visuals, balanced team-play, and it's a fun online game.	Control is a bit screwy. The frequent server outages can be extremely annoying.	If you want a quick-and-easy online blastfest, *netWAR* should do the trick.	71%	
NFL Gameday 99 	November '98 p. 242	Sports	989 Studios *www.989studios.com*	Good sound, commentary; solid two-player arcade action; good 'net play as server.	Robotic player movement; poor clock management for AI teams; poor 'net play as client.	A decent action-oriented football game in need of a few major and minor repairs.	68%	
NHL PowerPlay 98 	February '98 p. 250	Sports	Virgin Interactive *www.vie.com*	Decent gamplay; low system requirements.	Poor player animations; slow pace; and skewed results.	*NHL Powerplay 98* has lofty ambitions but simply cannot compete on any level with the far superior *NHL 98*.	62%	
Nightmare Creatures 	April '98 p. 149	Action	Activision *www.activision.com*	Constant action, incredible graphics, and awesome atmosphere.	Poor control in certain situations; has a bad case of consolitis with no save game feature.	Even with a few unforgivable faults, this is a bloody blast to play.	82%	
Nuclear Strike 	January '98 p. 256	Arcade	Electronic Arts *www.ea.com*	Great graphics; intense action; super-slick presentation.	Restricted field of vision can be annoying; difficulty level makes this hard for beginners.	A great arcade blastfest with plenty of longevity and amazing intensity.	88%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee 	April '98 p. 150	Action	GT Interactive *www.gtinteractive.com*	Loaded with personality; great level design; good sense of humor throughout.	Poor save game feature; some repetitive moments just like any side scroller.	For action fans, it's impossible to not be charmed by Abe and his friends.	88%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Of Light and Darkness: The Prophecy 	August '98 p. 140	Adventure	*Interplay Productions* www.interplay.com	Beautiful environments; some replay value.	Repetitive gameplay gets old quick; there's nothing unique about the game.	Although it has an attractive concept, this doesn't contain enough variety or challenge.	67%	
Operational Art of War, Vol. I (1939-1955) 	September '98 p. 126	Wargame	TalonSoft *www.talonsoft.com*	The battles are exciting and often unique; the scenario editor is a thing of beauty and wonder.	The naval model is weak; watch out for that air-forces bug!	*TOAW* is a great wargame!	95%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Outwars 	July '98 p. 138	Action	Microsoft *www.microsoft.com*	Nice strategy elements; good mission variety.	Huge clipping problem; bad AI; multi-player is laggy; poor control configuration.	If you don't mind the problems, you'll have a lot of fun with this game, but wait for it to be fixed.	45%	
Panzer Commander 	August '98 p. 135	Simulation	SSI *www.ssionline.com*	Plenty of tanks, good terrain engine, mission editor, and a wealth of engaging scenarios.	Bad driver AI, poor map and waypointing system, few platoon orders, a few annoying bugs.	*Panzer Commander* has all the elements of a good game, but its faults drag it down.	75%	
Panzer General II 	January '98 p. 258	Wargame	SSI *www.ssionline.com*	Stunning graphics; deeply satisfying gameplay; a spiffy scenario editor.	You can't completely cut off the music. But who cares?	It should be a sensational hit, and it deserves to be.	93%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
Pax Imperia: Eminent Domain 	March '98 p. 116	Strategy	THQ *www.thq.com*	Real-time translation of turn-based space strategy models is handled adequately.	That's about all it does.	Devoid of imagination, *Eminent Domain*, though mildly intriguing, is merely adequate.	60%	
Plane Crazy! 	November '98 p. 225a	Arcade	SegaSoft *www.segasoft.com*	Pretty nice graphics, but only if you have a horse of a machine to run it on.	Numbing gameplay, frustrating maps, and awkward controls.	The perfect gift for the masochist who has everything.	35%	
Play This, Play That 	November '98 p. 233	Puzzle	Patch Products *www.patchproducts.com*	Nice presentation. Air Hockey and Memory Challenge and fun diversions.	Most of the games have been done before and done better. Not much replay value.	Low cost fun for youngsters, but not much value for regular gamers.	37%	
Police Quest: SWAT 2 	November '98 p. 249	Strategy	Sierra Online *www.sierra.com*	Developing succesfl strategies and tactics is rewarding and fairly addictive.	Convoluted interface; tiny graphics; terrorist missions feel like an afterthought.	*SWAT 2* falls for short of realizing the potention of its thrilling subject matter.	52%	
Pro Bass Fishing 	September '98 p. 132	Simulation	Wizard Games of Scotland	You'll be fishing in five minutes of less.	Bereft of options for hooks, line, temperature, and other variables; fictional lakes; bad casting animation.	This one belongs at the bottom of a deep lake.	35%	
Quake II 	March '98 p. 102	Action	Activision *www.activision.com*	Creepy single-player play; top-notch multi-player play; accelerated graphics.	A few bugs affect multi-player; weak AI; some expected features didn't make the final version.	*Quake* is dead. Long live *Quake II*.	92%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Rampage: World Tour 	October '98 p. 216	Arcade	Midway *www.midway.com*	It doesn't screw up the Rampage formula. And the three-player mode is fun, fun, fun!	Graphics and some animation are chunky.	Pretty good fodder for fans of the aging arcade game.	69%	
Red Baron II 	April '98 p. 119	Simulation	Sierra Online *www.sierra.com*	Good sound effects; damage is modeled in great detail.	No 3D support; flaky multi-player; loads of bugs.	You're better off with Empire's *Flying Corps Gold* or the original *Red Baron*.	59%	
Redjack: Revenge of the Brethren 	September '98 p. 144	Adventure	THQ *www.thq.com*	Real adventure-game elements; well-realized locations; nice graphics.	Puzzles are too easy; action sequences are far too hard.	Without the poorly designed arcade bits shoehorned in, *Redjack* would've been a decent adventure.	58%	
Redline Racer 	November '98 p. 252	Arcade	Ubi Soft *www.ubisoft.com*	Attractive graphics, nice controls, decent track selection. Good multi-player options.	Easy tracks and easy opponents.	This is a lot like a donut... it satisfies when the urge hits, but you'll still be hungry for something substantial.	69%	
Redneck Rampage Rides Again 	August '98 p. 118	Action	Interplay Productions *www.interplay.com*	I'll give up my beer and pork rinds if you can show me a shooter as funny as this one.	Lack of hardware support; several levels are too dark; animation stutter on lower-end PCs.	If you like gorefests seasoned with a helpin' of humor, this is your game.	78%	

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TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
Revenge of Arcade 	October '98 p. 208	Arcade	Microsoft *www.microsoft.com*	Ms. PacMan still holds her own as an arcade diva.	The entire collection of games is fairly weak; screen mode is too small to do each game justice.	This modest collection of arcade hits and misses is only for nostalgia buffs.	68%	
Riven 	January '98 p. 289	Puzzle	Red Orb *www.redorb.com*	Gorgeous graphics, good sound.	Puzzles make no sense; virtually no replay value; lots of disc swapping; frustrating gameplay.	Even if you loved *Myst*, you'll have a frustrating time time with this sequel. A strategy guide is necessary.	40%	
Sabre Ace 	February '98 p. 184	Simulation	Virgin Interactive *www.vie.com*	Great subject matter. Some good graphic effects. Interesting missions.	Zero flight model. Sporadic graphical annoyances. Fatal view modes.	An adequate arcade sim, but that's not what Virgin claims it is.	45%	
Safecracker 	November '98 p. 235	Puzzle	PXL Computers *www.daydream.se*	Easy to get into and good pacing.	Contents of safes should be automatically included into inventory.	It's nothing fancy, nor does it try to be. If you're looking for puzzles but hate *Myst*-clones, this is for you.	75%	
Sanitarium 	August '98 p. 125	Adventure	ASC Games *www.ascgames.com*	Wonderful puzzle integration; compelling story line; dozens of characters to interact with.	Lackluster voice acting; clunky movement interface; long load times on slower CD drives.	If you're a fan of traditional graphic adventures, this is a must have.	89%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Scud: Industrial Revolution 	April '98 p. 96a	Action	SegaSoft *www.segasoft.com*	The graphics are nice and the frame rates are fast.	Repetitive gameplay. Dreadful music. Insanely difficult.	If you have the patience and the skills to beat this one, you are The Man. But you won't enjoy it much.	39%	
Sega Touring Car Championship 	August '98 p. 122	Racing	Sega of America *www.sega.com/segapc*	Graphics look good, and the requirements for full details aren't too steep.	It's cookie-cutter arcade racing. There simply aren't enough cars, tracks, or options.	There are better arcade racers; Sega's own *Daytona USA Deluxe* is one of them.	48%	
Semper Fi 	June '98 p. 96	Wargame	Interactive Magic *www.imagicgames.com*	Mouse interface is easy to use; lots of games for one price.	Impenetrable interface, ambigous manual, limited number of scenarios.	Experiences wargamers may love it, but the timid need not apply.	75%	
Seven Kingdoms 	March '98 p. 143	Strategy	Interactive Magic *www.imagicgames.com*	Deep and subtle strategy. Spies. Fresh multi-player gaming.	Cartoony graphics. Unimaginative AI opponents; single-player game lacks energy.	An all around terrific game lacking only a solid single-player mode.	90%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Shadow Master 	July '98 p. 144	Action	Psygnosis *www.psygnosis.com*	Pretty lens flare. Great animation and monster design.	Claustrophobic gameplay, spazzy controls, and dead-end idea.	It's fun to look at, but *Shadow Master* just ain't got it where it counts.	47%	
Shipwreckers! 	March '98 p. 158	Action	Psygnosis *www.psygnosis.com*	Goofy animations; chipper music; fun, console-style action.	Unreasonably high system requirements.	A fun little game, especially for kids, but only if their parents have the horsepower to run it.	80%	

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
Sid Meier's Gettysburg! 	January '98 p. 218	Wargame	Electronic Arts *www.ea.com*	The gameplay, graphics, AI, and engine are meticulous models of strategy gaming.	Terrain popping during scrolling can be annoying. A couple of infrequent bugs.	A cross-over wargame that has depth, beauty, smarts, and replayability.	91%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Sierra Online Pro Pilot 	May '98 p. 113	Simulation	Sierra Online *www.sierra.com*	Beautiful cockpit panels with plenty of functionality; good nav and comm tools.	Very buggy; graphics are pixelated; accuracy of aircraft handling is questionable.	*Pro Pilot* had plenty of potential but is an incomplete, average simulation.	53%	
Smart Games Challenge 2 	February '98 p. 178	Puzzle	Smart Games *www.smartgames.com*	Terrific gameplay; great puzzle variety; nice bells and whistles; good for the whole family.	Minor gameplay glitches; no multiplayer options.	Fans of the puzzle genre are in for a good time with *Smart Games Challenge 2.*	80%	
SODA Off-Road Racing 	February '98 p. 112	Simulation	Sierra Online *www.sierra.com*	Attractive accelerated graphics; track editor; multi-player options.	Rendition-only acceleration; steep system requirements; sluggish gameplay; touchy controls.	*SODA* is good for some off-roading fun, but it's far from perfect.	67%	
Soldiers at War 	August '98 p. 143	Strategy	SSI *www.ssionline.com*	Lots of weapons; plenty of scenarios; engrossing.	Feels very dated; tough-to-learn interface; limited multi-player support.	Though *Soldiers* is a solid game, it could have been much better.	70%	
Spec Ops: Rangers Lead the Way 	July '98 p. 142	Action	Ripcord Games *www.ripcordgames.com*	Great atmosphere; sharp accelerated graphics; challenging missions.	Stupid AI Rangers; ugly, sluggish software mode; no multi-player. Infuriating mouse bug.	Once all the patches are released, this could easily be a classic. Until then...	55%	
Star Trek Pinball 	June '98 p. 101	Arcade	Interplay Productions *www.interplay.com*	The sounds and images from the original Star Trek are cool.	Weak flippers; no options to make adjustments to the table.	All this feeble-flippery makes for a very quiet and lifeless game — and that ain't what pinball's about.	39%	
Star Wars: Rebellion 	June '98 p. 82	Strategy	LucasArts *www.lucasarts.com*	Nice use of Star Wars characters as strategic assets.	The interface is monstrous; it never, ever, becomes intuitive.	Star Wars freaks and micro-management freaks might like it; all others should try before they buy.	60%	
StarCraft 	July '98 p. 114	Strategy	Blizzard Entertainment *www.blizzard.com*	Diverse races, strong, interesting gameworld, and the classic *WarCraft* gameplay.	The few improvements to the fundamental *WarCraft* engine may not be enough for some gamers.	Strong strategy, great graphics, and variety makes this one of the year's best.	92%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Starship Titanic 	July '98 p. 120	Adventure	Simon & Schuster *www.ssinteractive.com*	Infocom fans will like these brain-teasing puzzles.	Story doesn't evolve; not enough characters; the "revolutionary" text parser sucks.	The recipe for great adventuring includes more than just good puzzles, and this game lacks it.	64%	
Steel Panthers III: Brigade Command 	February '98 p. 122	Wargame	SSI *www.ssionline.com*	The same great core gameplay, with an interesting new layer of command.	Graphics, interface and DOS-only coding are showing their age.	An interesting twist for *SP* fans, but it doesn't feel like a whole new game.	79%	

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
Stratosphere 	November '98 p. 263	Strategy	Ripcord Games *www.ripcordgames.com*	Great concept; neat fortress building feature; broad unit library; high replay value.	Steep system requirements; buggy; unrefined multi-player support; weak combat.	A challenging, unique real-time strategy game with some annoying imperfections.	77%	
Streets of Sim City 	March '98 p. 125	Action	Electronic Arts *www.ea.com*	Uninstalls easily. Bluegrass fiddle legend Darol Anger plays on some of the music tracks.	No sense of speed; unacceptable frame-rate; nasty control; high system requirements.	Great concept; atrocious execution. Even *SimCity* fans will be disappointed.	37%	
Sub Culture 	May '98 p. 123	Action	Ubi Soft *www.ubisoft.com*	Noteworthy graphics and incredible atmosphere.	A few bugs might get in the way. More missions would have been nice.	An innovative entry in a once-deserted genre.	87%	
Subspace 	June '98 p. 112	Action	Virgin Interactive *www.vie.com*	Fast paces; low lag; good pricing model.	Gameplay is simplistic; graphics are dated; player population should be higher.	*Subspace* is a simplistic (but stable) Internet twitch game.	70%	
SWIV 3D Assualt 	May '98 p. 138	Action	Interplay Productions *www.interplay.com*	The jewel case can be recycled, and the game CD fits very nicely into a grabage can.	Horrible graphics; no variation in game play; missions become very tedious.	This game blows chunks. Go play *Nuclear Strike* instead.	20%	
Tanarus 	July '98 p. 153	Action	Sony Interactive *www.sonyinteractive.com*	Good graphics; low latency connection; strong gameplay; good replay value.	No in-game music; very limited offline training; steep learning curve.	This has better balance between eye-candy and substance than most online-only games.	87%	
Team Apache 	October '98 p. 228	Simulation	Mindscape *www.mindscape.com*	Unique flight command element; relaxed flight model. High frame rates; strong visuals.	Targeting and sighting is a bit odd. Cockpits take some getting used to.	Lots of fun; emphasizes human dynamics over twitching and hand-eye skill.	80%	
Temujin 	January '98 p. 305	Adventure	SouthPeak Interactive *www.southpeak.com*	Good and messy mystery plot; well acted; beautiful environment.	Tricky navigation; may be too serious for some gamers.	Great game if you like a sober whodunit, but not so great if you like your games frivolous.	75%	
Test Drive 4 	April '98 p. 143	Arcade	Accolade *www.accolade.com*	Great 3Dfx support; cool tracks; cooler cars.	Lousy software-only perfomance; terrible interface; canned AI competition.	*Test Drive 4* is a slap in the face to all of those who aren't on the cutting edge of technology.	63%	
Tex Murphy: Overseer 	June '98 p. 118	Adventure	Access Software *www.accesssoftware.com*	Consumer-friendly, with online hints; film-noir feel and story.	Crashes and lock-ups almost ruin the fun; bloated narrative and world-weary puzzles don't help either.	Series newcomers will like it; old fans will be disappointed. You can't win 'em all.	69%	
Thunder Truck Rally 	January '98 p. 240	Racing	Psygnosis *www.psygnosis.com*	Cool character designs; the trucks are animated nicely.	Circa-1995 graphics; gummy control; annoying sound effects; bouncing trucks just aren't fun.	Keep on truckin' until you find a better game.	55%	

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With the year drawing to a close, we'd like to recall some after-dinner remarks made in June by the President of our Games Division as the Imagine Media family gathered at Yosemite.

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Give of yourself.

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TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
Tiger Woods 99 	November '98 p. 216	Sports	EA Sports *www.ea.com*	Pristine presentation; many options; great graphics; easy gameplay.	Sub-par performance on low-end PCs; inadequate analog swing; Internet play is slow.	A solid all-around golf game, but Tiger can't dethrone the mighty Links series just yet.	84%	
TOCA Championship Racing 	October '98 p. 241	Simulation	3DO Company *www.3do.com*	Realistic car handling; nice car graphics and weather effects.	Restricted access to tracks; some graphics pop-in; damage has no effect on car performance.	If you stick with it and develop your skills, you'll find some great racing.	88%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Tom Clancy's Politika 	May '98 p. 105	Strategy	Mindscape *www.mindscape.com*	Gives you a chance to see what a Java-based game looks like; free paperback.	Inert, tedious gameplay coupled with a yo-heave-ho interface and cruddy graphics.	To experience *Politika* properly, buy the boardgame.	40%	
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 	October '98 p. 198	Action	Red Storm Entertainment *www.redstorm.com*	Great premise and presentation. Sharp graphics, excellent control, thrilling gameplay.	A few bugs need to be worked out.	*Rainbow Six* is undoubtedly one of the most original and best games of the year.	93%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Tomb Raider II 	February '98 p. 132	Action	Eidos Interactive *www.eidosinteractive.com*	Beautiful visuals; better locales; awesome vehicle action!	Clipping problems; poor camera manipulation; too many bad guys; annoying overly complex puzzles.	While this is definitely worth a look, it's not as good as the first game.	86%	
Tone Rebellion, The 	May '98 p. 93	Strategy	Virgin Interactive *www.vie.com*	Interesting visual style. The way the floaters' legs wiggle is cool.	Tedious, confusing, flawed gameplay.	There are some really interesting elements in *Tone Rebellion*, but they never get into a satisfying game.	35%	
Total Annihilation 	January '98 p. 295	Strategy	GT Interactive *www.gtinteractive.com*	Beautiful graphics; 50 single-player missions; smart AI; funky music.	AI could have been better; needs better rotation of music tracks.	A significant improvement in the genre, but it's not quite all it could have been.	85%	
Triple Play 99 	July '98 p. 128	Sports	Electronic Arts *www.ea.com*	Still the best graphics and sound around; tons of options.	Buggy as hell; game speed is totally unbalanced.	The potential for a great game is here, but it's going to take a lot of extra work before it is achieved.	63%	
Turok: Dinosaur Hunter 	March '98 p. 149	Action	Acclaim Entertainment *www.acclaim.net*	Slick enemy designs; weapons kick some major ass.	No multi-player; repetitive textures; pea-soup fogging; lame jumping puzzles.	A straight port of a slightly flawed game that lacks features PC gamers expect.	68%	
Twisted Metal 2 	March '98 p. 154	Action	Sony Interactive *www.sonyinteractive.com*	Good control; impressive level design; destruction galore.	Replay value is limited after blasting through it a few times.	Cranking up the Carnage-O-Meter, *Twisted Metal 2* is a must-have game for combative car freaks.	80%	
Ultim@te Race Pro 	June '98 p. 123	Racing	MicroProse *www.microprose.com*	Fantastic visual effects; multi-player support; excellent arcade physics model.	Buggy; really only four tracks; long load times; cars are only visually different.	It's the best arcade racing game you can get on the PC. *URP II*, anyone?	88%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

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TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
Ultima Online 	January '98 p. 262	Roleplaying	Origin *www.ea.com/origin.html*	Gorgeous graphics; simple interface; huge world to explore; lots of people to meet.	Lag; poor documentation; lag; characters start with low skills; lag; lots of bugs; more lag.	*Ultima* fanatics might stick with it, but most players will give up in frustration.	55%	
Unreal 	August '98 p. 104	Action	GT Interactive *www.gtinteractive.com*	Superlative graphics and sound, lots of things to kill.	Multi-player mode, weapons balance need work; high system requirements; plot drags.	While it's got a few problems, *Unreal* is this year's most vivid first-person shooter.	92%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Uprising 	February '98 p. 144	Strategy	3DO Company *www.3do.com*	Fast-paced, original, and absorbing; great graphics, controls, and sound.	You'll need a fast PC and a 3Dfx card to get the full experience.	*Uprising* combines two crowded genres and is a very refreshing break from both.	90%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Urban Assault 	October '98 p. 192	Strategy	Microsoft *www.microsoft.com*	Well-crafted and interesting world, opponents, and missions. Easy interface.	Some faulty "base rush" tactics; high penalty for not controlling units; average AI.	A good balance between action and strategy elements.	80%	
USCF Chess 	May '98 p. 96	Puzzle	Interplay Productions *www.interplay.com*	It's got good AI, which is the heart and soul of any chess program.	The 3D graphics are useless; no Internet access.	Not worthless, but it pales in comparison to most current chess programs.	56%	
Vangers 	October '98 p. 194	Action	Interactive Magic *www.imagicgames.com*	Superior terrain graphics; complex game world.	Driving over terrain is frustrating, and the too-funny-for-its-own-good manual and interface is confusing.	There's a decent game buried here somewhere, but only a few will want to find it.	64%	
Virtua Squad 2 	May '98 p. 98	Action	SegaSoft *www.segasoft.com*	Gunplay and destruction galore; solid D3D support.	Longevity is questionable, even with new "Random Enemies" feature.	*Virtua Squad 2* is a blast — while it lasts anyway.	80%	
Virtual Pool 2 	January '98 p. 239	Sports	Interplay Productions *www.interplay.com*	Excellent graphics; slick interface; informative tutorials; options galore.	Nothing to speak of.	*Virtual Pool 2* is easily one of the best representations of any sport and a can't-miss for billiards fans.	90%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Virus 	May '98 p. 96a	Strategy	Sir-Tech *www.sir-tech.com*	Comes with *McAfee Anti-Virus*; the concept is great.	Poor graphics, horrendous computer AI; difficult control; frustrating gameplay; long load times.	Despite the clever idea behind it, *Virus* simply doesn't live up to its potential.	30%	
VR Powerboat Racing 	July '98 p. 136	Racing	Interplay Productions *www.interplay.com*	Good track design; cool concept.	Control, audio, interface need some improvements, especially in the four-player split-screen mode.	It's unlikely that this one will float anyone's (power)boat.	41%	
Warbreeds 	July '98 p. 128	Strategy	Red Orb *www.redorb.com*	The zoom mode and gene collecting elements are interesting...	...but not that interesting. The rest of the game is a half-hearted retread of better games.	A competent game with some novel features, but hardly enough to compete.	50%	

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TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
WarGames 	October '98 p. 204	Strategy	MGM Interactive *www.mgm.com*	Effective 3D engine. Large maps with shifting mission goals.	Poor path-finding abilities for the units; not overly interesting; no single missions or editor.	Strategy and visuals, but suffers from a lack of mission options.	81%	
Warhammer: Dark Omen 	July '98 p. 145	Strategy	Electronic Arts *www.ea.com*	Superb graphics, fresh gameplay; a faithful translation of the miniatures game.	Linear compaign; occasionally overwhelming tactical play.	*Dark Omen* is definitely one of the better strategy games on the market.	86%	
WarWind II: Human Onslaught 	April '98 p. 101	Strategy	SSI *www.ssionline.com*	Interesting, challenging missions with a real sense of roleplaying and story.	Visually somewhat dated and cluttered; some annoying interface quirks.	*WarWind II* proves again that real-time strategy is more than slash and burn.	81%	
Waterworld: The Quest for Dry Land 	April '98 p. 131	Strategy	Interplay Productions *www.interplay.com*	If you liked the movie, there are a lot of cut-scenes for your viewing pleasure.	Outdated graphics; poor artificial intelligence; no network support; sucky save game feature.	*Waterworld* falls short in almost every aspect of the RTS game genre.	43%	
Wing Commander Prophecy 	March '98 p. 106	Action	Origin *www.ea.com/origin.html*	Graphics; gameplay; more missions, less story; new weapons and ships.	Bad acting; no multi-player; simplistic flight physics; a few bugs.	*Prophecy* is a welcome step back to what made the series great — gameplay over cinematic grandeur.	89%	
Worms 2 	April '98 p. 102	Strategy	MicroProse *www.microprose.com*	Simple, fun, well-balanced combat; many excellent weapons; great multi-player.	The computer player's erratic shooting will baffle you.	*Worms 2* has a combination of destruction and fun that shouldn't be missed.	90%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
X-COM Interceptor 	September '98 p. 148	Action	MicroProse *www.microprose.com*	Strong strategic element; decent space combat; nice alien ship models.	Not enough mission variety; no way to skip dogfights.	Not as engrossing strategically as the other *X-COM* games; not as cutting edge as current space shooters.	60%	
X-Files, The 	September '98 p. 129a	Adventure	Fox Interactive *www.foxinteractive.com*	Good acting; beautiful packaging and interface; original (but dated) story line.	Non-challenging gameplay; lots of pointless pixel hunting; not enough Scully or Mulder.	Less unpleasant than having an alien probe stuck up your butt — but not by much.	35%	
You Don't Know Jack TV 	February '98 p. 159	Trivia	Sierra Online *www.sierra.com*	In-depth TV trivia; great TV-themed animations, graphics and sound.	Some questions are pretty obscure.	A must-have game for TV trivia buffs.	87%	
You Don't Know Jack Volume 3 	February '98 p. 159	Trivia	Sierra Online *www.sierra.com*	Tons of questions; great humor; plenty of variety in types and difficulty of questions.	More of the same; this isn't significantly different from the original *Jack* or *Volume 2*.	If you don't have any of the previous Jacks, get your hands on *Jack 3*. It's a blast.	80%	
Zork Grand Inquisitor 	May '98 p. 115	Adventure	Activision *www.activision.com*	Visually stunning; lots of Zork humor; challenging puzzles; lots of gameplay.	Not all the puzzles make sense; not a huge technological improvement over *Nemesis*.	It's funny, it's fun, and anyone familiar with the *Zork* world will have a blast.	88%	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

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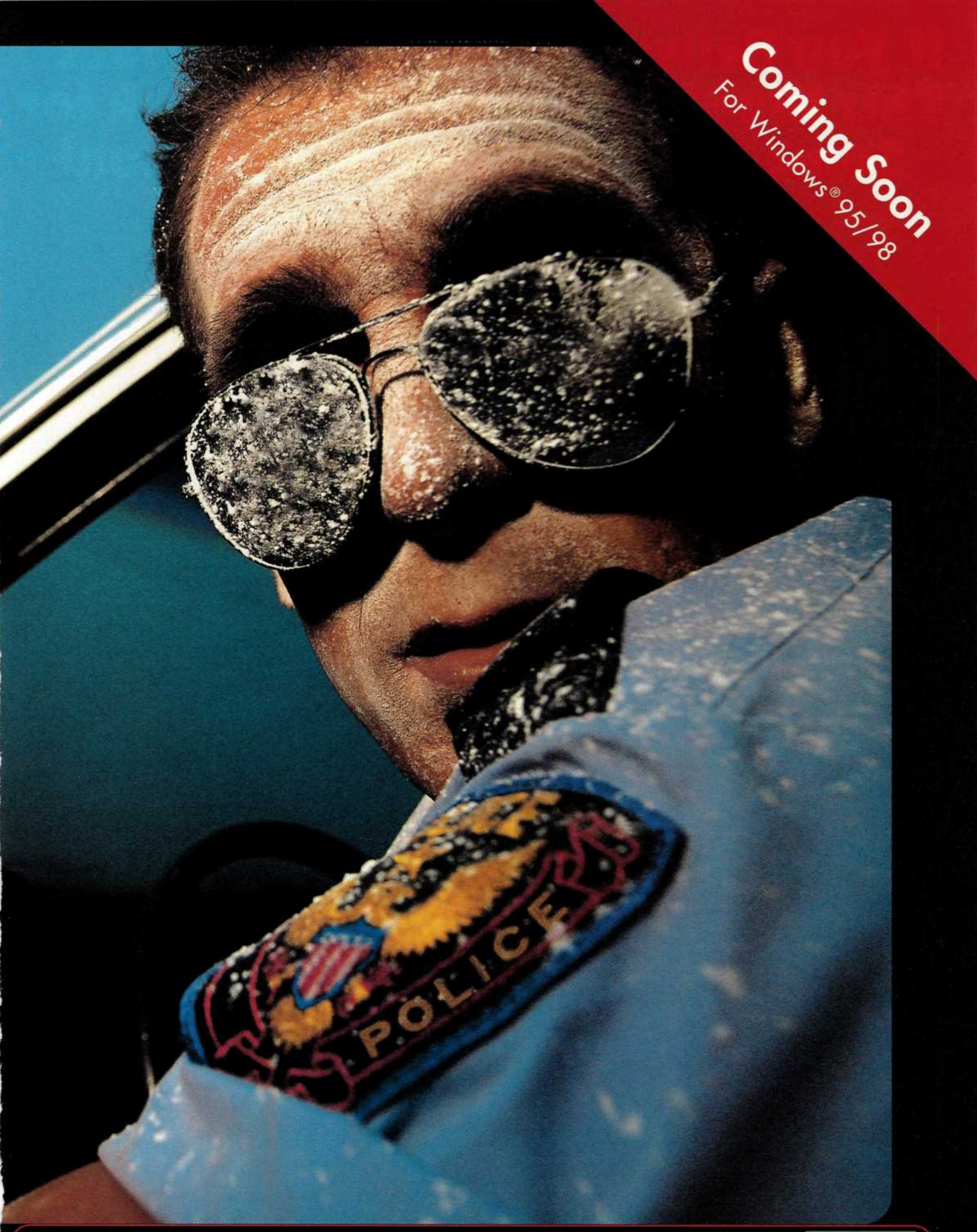
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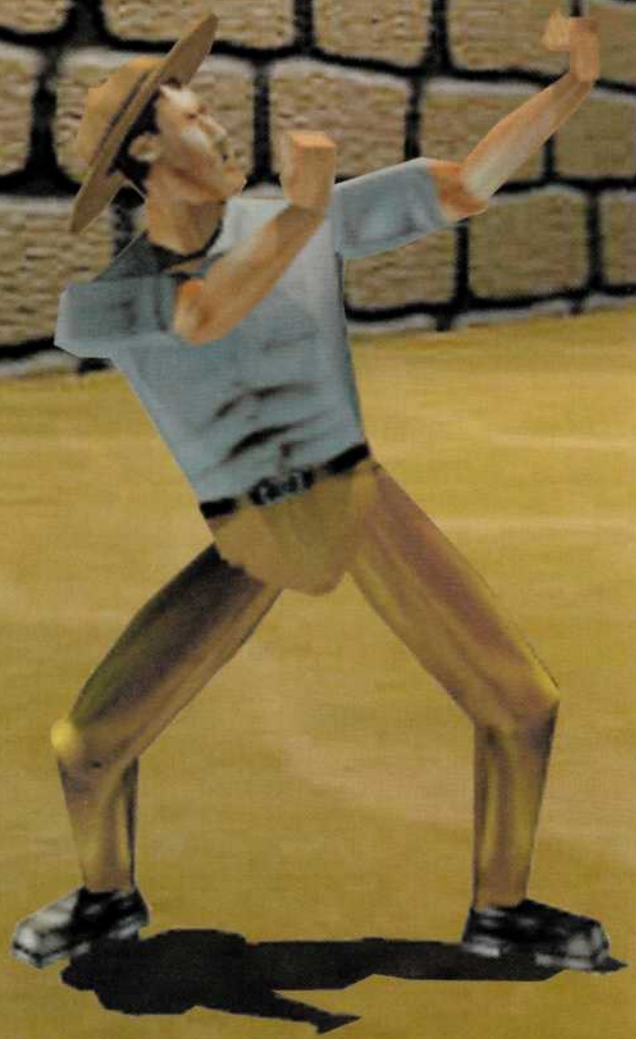
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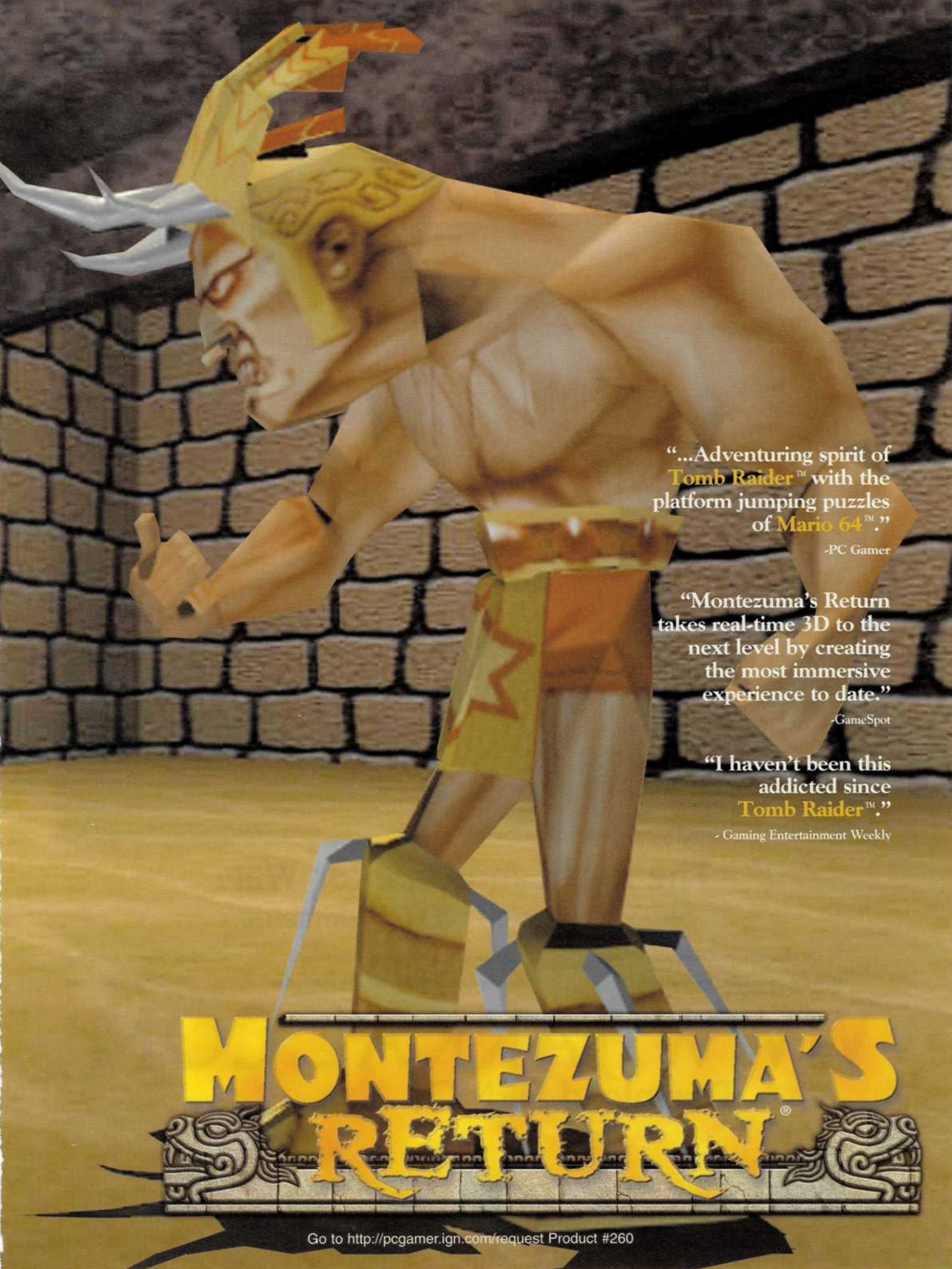
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HARDWARE

THE PC GAMER REVIEWS INDEX

DRIVING WHEELS

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	PRICE	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	EDITORS' CHOICE
ACT Labs RS Racing System 	November '98 p. 303	$69	ACT LABS *www.actlab.com* (800) 980-9997	Extremely comfortable and responsive; affordable; optional cartridges make it compatible with PlayStation and N64.	On some early models, threads on the desk-clamp are too fine and require a lot of turning to lock down.	A versatile wheel that should make just about any PC racing fan happy.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
CDS5000 Driving System 	February '98 p. 204	$1,595	Extreme Competition Controls (612) 824-6733	Incredibly sturdy; eminently adjustable; nice touches like suede and stainless steel.	Just one — the huge sticker price. Is this system really ten times better than other wheels on the market? Not really.	If you've got the scratch and like to spend it on PC peripherals, this is the king-daddy of driving controllers.	
CH Racing Wheel 	December '97 p. 291	$89.98	CH Products *www.chproducts.com* (760) 598-2518	Cool CH logo in the middle of the wheel.	Horribly weak handling; uncomfortable grip; intrusive thumb buttons.	Frankly, we expect a lot more of CH — or any company who markets a driving wheel, for that matter.	
InterAct UltraRacer PC 	August '98 p. 168	$29.99	InterAct Multimedia *www.interact-acc.com* (800) 732-6866	Great steering control; good price; easy setup.	Throttle control could be easier to use; short on frills.	The UltraRacer PC succeeds because it doesn't pretend to be anything more than what it already is — a simple, elegant little racing controller.	
InterAct V3 Racing Wheel 	August '98 p. 168	$59.99	InterAct Multimedia *www.interact-acc.com* (800) 732-6866	Looks cool; you can sit on it.	You have to sit on it; it's flimsy, the "self-calibration" is way off. The pedals were so light that we kept flipping them over by mistake.	Show your disdain for cheap console adaptations and keep your bottom away from the V3.	
SC&T Ultimate Per4mer 	December '97 p. 298	$129	SC&T *www.per4mer.com* (602) 607-6801	Wide turning range; well constructed.	Flimsy feel; not enough tension in wheel or pedals; too many buttons.	This wheel will have a hard time competing against the rest of the pack. Hold off for something better.	

DRIVING WHEELS [CONTINUED]

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	PRICE	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	EDITORS' CHOICE
SC&T Ultimate Per4mer Force Feedback Wheel 	August '98 p. 162	$199.99	SC&T *www.per4mer.com* (602) 607-6801	Unit feels reasonably solid when not turned on; looks like the steering wheel from KITT in "Knight Rider."	Huge dead zone; no test utilities; force feedback effects too strong.	Stay away from this thing; good force feedback wheels may be on the way in the form of Microsoft's and Saitek's systems.	
Thrustmaster NASCAR Pro Racing Wheel 	January '98 p. 336	$179.95	Thrustmaster *www.thrustmaster.com* (503) 615-3200	The best overall feel of any wheels in this price range; pedals can be mapped to different axes; quick-release clamping system.	The pedals are too light and feel cheap.	The NASCAR Pro is an excellent driving wheel worthy of any racing sim enthusiast.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

DVD KITS

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	PRICE	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	EDITORS' CHOICE
Creative Labs PC-DVD Encore DXR 2 	February '98 p. 201	$379.99	Creative Labs *www.soundblaster.com* (800) 998-1000	Simple installation with no need for a bus mastering system board; excellent quality video; fast drive; relatively affordable.	Disappointing bundle, which matters, since DVD-ROMs are still hard to come by.	The best DVD kit to date.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Utobia Hollywood DVD 	December '97 p. 286	$399	Utobia *www.utobiadvd.com* (888) 4-UTOBIA	Nice price for a full featured DVD kit; easy installation; excellent MPEG decoding.	No bundle to speak of; doesn't read CDr discs.	Utobia's DVD-ROM kit is a relatively inexpensive way to join the slowly but steadily growing DVD crowd.	

GAMEPADS

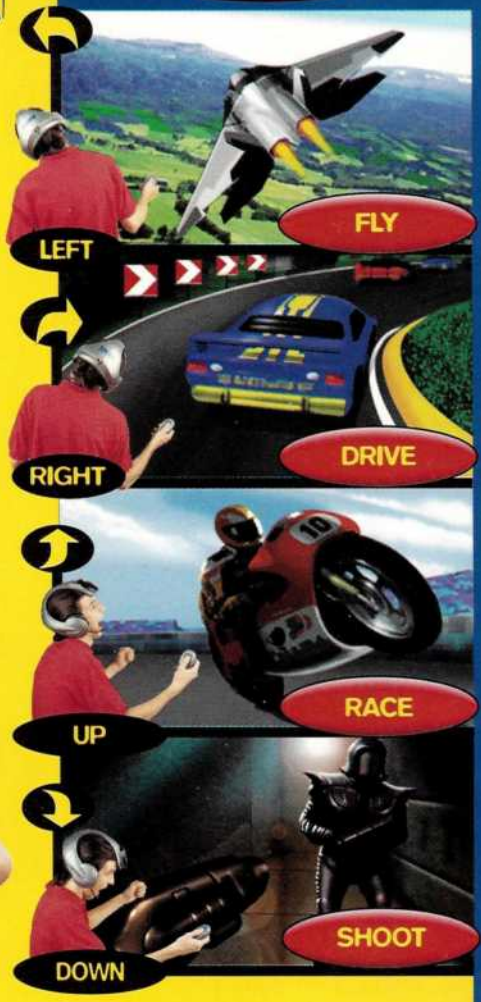
TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	PRICE	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	EDITORS' CHOICE
Gravis Xterminator 	July '98 p. 170	$59.99	Advanced Gravis Computer *www.gravis.com* (800) 535-4242	Tons of buttons and controls; programmable; very comfortable to hold; two can be daisy-chained on one PC.	Lacks a printed manual, which makes the complex programming system even harder to learn.	If you're in the market for a great programmable gamepad (or a first controller that covers all the bases), look no further.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
InterAct Vortex 3D 	June '98 p. 140	$59.99	InterAct Accessories *www.interact-acc.com* (800) 732-6866	Versatile, comfortable, and easy to use; most gamers will get a kick out of the strange shape of the controller and base.	Poor manual; no programming interface; some modes are not as useful as they could be.	The Vortex may not be the ideal controller for a hardcore gamer, but it's fun and useful for lots of different kinds of games.	
Microsoft SideWinder Freestyle Pro 	October '98 p. 265	$74.95	Microsoft *www.microsoft.com* (800) 426-9400	Tilt feature was a blast to use in motorcycle games, where it felt natural.	Tilt feature is not suited to most other games; not nearly as comfortable to hold as the original SideWinder pad.	If you're looking for a new gamepad, and the tilt sensor appeals to you, give the Freestyle a test-drive.	
Suncom SFX Plus 	September '98 p. 200	$49	Suncom *www.suncominc.com* (847) 229-0002	Easy programmability and setup.	The uncomfortable design and awkward button placement are serious drawbacks for regular gaming.	If keyboard emulation and standard gamepad support are your concern, stick to the original SFX — if you can find one, that is.	

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GAMEPADS [CONTINUED]

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	PRICE	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	EDITORS' CHOICE
Thrustmaster Rage 3D 	February '98 p. 201	$49.95	Thrustmaster *www.thrustmaster.com* (503) 615-3200	Easily changes to analog or digital, comfortable design; programmable.	Buttons too close together; digital control doesn't feel right.	A nice product for those wanting both analog and digital control — but a few design flaws keep it from being ideal.	

GRAPHIC ACCELERATORS

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	PRICE	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	EDITORS' CHOICE
3D Blaster Voodoo2 	May '98 p. 160	$299	Creative Labs *www.soundblaster.com* (800) 998-1000	Amazing 3D performance in Direct3D and OpenGL games; SLI option for even better performance; way ahead of current technology.	Processor dependency makes this less than ideal for P166 and slower machines; incompatibilities with older 3Dfx games.	This is an amazingly fast accelerator that grows with your PC.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
ATI Xpert@Play 	February '98 p. 202	$329	ATI Technologies, Inc. *www.atitech.com* (905) 882-2626	Excellent TV output; solid Direct3D performance; very good Windows performance.	Without Win 95 OpenGL mini-drivers, *Quake* players will have to get their 3D fix somewhere else.	A very competent and versatile card that offers a lot of bang for the buck.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Best Data Arcade FXII 	October '98 p. 266	$169	Best Data *www.bestdata.com* (818) 773-9600	Lowest price we've seen on a 12MB Voodoo2 — by a wide margin.	Control utility doesn't allow adjustment of the card's clock speed within Windows.	Did Best Data mean to put these out at $269 instead of $169? Probably not, but you might want to grab one or two fast, just in case!	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Canopus Pure 3D 	January '98 p. 344	$179	Canopus *www.canopus-corp.com* (888) 868-2533	Compatible with all 3Dfx games; good TV out. This card is the pick of Voodoo Graphics cards.	The usual Voodoo Graphics woes: requires a 2D accelerator so it takes up a PCI slot; no acceleration in windows. No bundle.	This is the new king of the Voodoo Graphics crop.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Canopus Pure 3D II 	August '98 p. 161	$329 $279.95 (FOR LX MODEL)	Canopus *www.canopus-corp.com* (888) 868-2533	Unmatched speed of the 3Dfx Voodoo2 chipset; good TV output; built-in cooling fan; several other conveniences.	No fancy software bundle (although it does come with the first *Quake II* add-on).	Another well-thought-out 3D accelerator from Canopus; the best Voodoo2 board we've seen so far.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Canopus Total 3D 128V 	March '98 p. 173	$229	Canopus *www.canopus-corp.com* (408) 954-4502	Fast and powerful 2D and 3D; outstanding TV in and out features.	Texture quality is occasionally sacrificed for the sake of speed.	Canopus is developing a reputation for products that go the extra mile, and this is no exception.	
Canopus WitchDoctor AGP 	November '98 p. 302	$139	Canopus *www.canopus-corp.com* (408) 954-4500	Reverse pass-through feature is cool; being able to play Voodoo2-enhanced games on your TV is a terrific feature.	Only 4MB RAM; internal connection precludes connecting two Voodoo2 cards in SLI mode.	A card with some great features — unfortunately hampered by the older technology under its hood.	
Diamond Monster 3D II 	June '98 p. 136	$229 (8MB VERSION)	Diamond Multimedia *www.diamondmm.com* (800) 468-5846	It's fast, it's powerful; with 3Dfx, Direct-3D, and OpenGL compatibility, it's supported by more games than other accelerators.	May not work with some early games using the Glide API; requires an empty PCI slot.	The Monster II is the fastest 3D accelerator currently available for gaming.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

GRAPHIC ACCELERATORS [CONTINUED]

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	PRICE	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	EDITORS' CHOICE
Diamond Monster 3D II 	September '98 p. 196	$299 (12MB REVIEWED)	Diamond Multimedia *www.diamondmm.com* (800) 468-5846	Voodoo2 goodness backed up by 12MB RAM; driver enhancements increase speed slightly over competition.	Nothing much new here; requires additional 2D graphics board.	Diamond has done well by 3Dfx's Voodoo line, and this card is no exception.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Diamond Stealth II S220 	February '98 p. 205	$119.95	Diamond Multimedia *www.diamondmm.com* (800) 468-5846	Excellent 2D, powerful D3D and upcoming OpenGL/GLQuake mini-drivers make this an affordable, entry level 2D/3D card.	This is the lower end of the V2000 line; 4MB RAM limit.	Really good 2D/3D acceleration is finally in reach of most budgets! This is a dynamic, all around great card.	
Diamond Stealth II G460 	September '98 p. 187	$129	Diamond Multimedia *www.diamondmm.com* (800) 468-5846	Great price; good performance; a good 2D/3D/AGP solution.	It requires AGP slot; lower-than-standard DAC speed (but that might not be a problem for you).	Diamond has done it again with the G460 — it's one of the best 2D/3D solutions currently available.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Guillemot Maxi Gamer 3D 	March '98 p. 169	$179.99	Guillemot *www.guillemot.com* (800) 967-0863	3Dfx Voodoo Graphics; awesome 3D acceleration and software support.	Requires an extra PCI slot; games bundle is none too exciting.	The Maxi Gamer is good, but if you take time to look, you can find better deals on the same technology.	
Hercules Terminator 2X/I 	October '98 p. 266	$99	Hercules *www.hercules.com* (800) 532-0600	Very good single-slot solution for 2D and 3D acceleration; supports AGP 2X; sports a pretty nice price.	It's no longer the fastest 2D/3D card available; games almost unplayable when the resolution was cranked above 1,024x768.	At $99, this is still a great card for the price.	
Hercules Thriller 3D 	May '98 p. 153	$249	Hercules *www.hercules.com* (510) 623-6030	The best V2200 implementation we've seen yet. Powerful 2D and 3D performance; and promising mini-GL future.	Disappointing TV output.	The Thriller 3D is an excellent choice for a powerful 2D/3D graphics accelerator.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Intergraph Intense 3D Voodoo 	December '97 p. 298	$229.99	Intergraph *www.intergraph.com* (800) 763-0242	An excellent 2D/3D video card with an impressive games bundle.	Poor TV out performance; no support for older 3Dfx games designed for early versions of Glide.	The Intense 3D Voodoo has a lot to offer to gamers, and it's a powerful, single slot solution.	
Jaton Blaze 3D Ultimate 	January '98 p. 344	$129	Jaton Corporation *www.jaton.com* (408) 934-9369	Good video out; low price.	Awful 3D acceleration: shimmery textures, perspective warping, and other problems make this an unacceptable product.	This isn't a gamer's card.	
Jazz Outlaw 3D 	April '98 p. 163	$149.99	Jazz Multimedia *www.jazzmm.com* (408) 727-8900	Excellent quality; fast, cost effective 2D/3D acceleration; good software support.	Early driver problems, but most have been ironed out already.	The Jazz Outlaw 3D is a lot of 3D accelerator for a surprisingly low price.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Matrox Mystique G200 	October '98 p. 258	$149	Matrox *www.matrox.com* (800) 361-1408	Zippy 2D performance; very good Direct3D performance; terrific image quality; TV output; good game bundle.	No OpenGL driver as we go to press.	Surpasses every other current 2D/3D combination on the market. The Mystique G200 is a great choice.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

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Above Most GCS owners are adults, but 14 year old Jerome Everall is working on this game called 'Escape!' The icons on the bottom of the screen are inventory items that have been picked up. Here the bottom 1/3 of the screen is used for information display, but going fullscreen 3D is also an option.



Below Here is a screen shot from a GCS-created game. Check out the cool lighting effects around the window, and the light panels around the tunnel exit. Out the window you can see the mountain terrain picture, and some plants growing in the dirt.



Above Our 3D Windows 95/98 engine might not leave ID Software quaking in their boots, but you can create spectacular 3D worlds and terrific gameplay for your customers.

All those HOURS playing 3D games were NOT wasted.

Use what you have learned by creating and selling your OWN 3D GAME!



Use the included paint program to make your own artwork or import .GIF, .PCX, or .BMP images. The GCS comes with over 100 pre-made images for you to use, and even more are available at low cost!

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Pictured above is the layout editor, complete with pulldown menus and icons. Building your levels is accomplished using simple drag-n-drop operations with your mouse.

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- Use included artwork, or create your own
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- 100+ page manual, and demo game levels included
- Make up your own cheat keys and game secrets



Here are some actual screen shots games some GCS owners have in the works. Below to the left is an upcoming game called 'Graliens - The Abduction'. Creator Joe W. says ".. truly operational lighting effects have allowed me to create sensational levels in very little time !!!"



Q: If I sell many copies of my game, and make lots of money, how much will I owe Pie in the Sky?
A: Zero, Zip, Nada, Nothing. After the initial purchase, you owe us no additional royalties or fees.

Q: Will people I sell my game to need the Pie 3D GCS in order to play it?
A: No, the game you create will be a stand-alone program. Your customers will not necessarily know it was created with the Pie 3D Game Creation System.

Q: Can I import my own artwork and sound effects, or do I have to use the included set?
A: You can import sounds and images from almost any source. It's fun to put pictures of yourself and your friends in your 3D games! It is *really* strange to shoot yourself!

Q: Do the games have to be violent?
A: No, like most features in your game, this is entirely up to you.

Q: Will my game support multi-players?
A: No, but expect a multiplayer pack soon.

Q: What is the recommended age?
A: Most users are adults, however many customers are between 12 and 18 also.

Q: What stores can I find the GCS in?
A: You can only get it directly from us. You can order toll-free anytime.

Q: What if I am not satisfied with it when I get it?
A: If you are not happy with the GCS, return within 30 days for a refund. This is not a problem for us, since the number of people who want to return it has always been very low.



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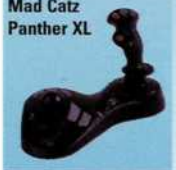
GRAPHIC ACCELERATORS [CONTINUED]

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	PRICE	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	EDITORS' CHOICE
Maxi Gamer 3D2 PCI 	September '98 p. 195	$229	Guillemot International *www.guillemot.com* (800) 967-0863	Voodoo2 power; low price.	Poorly designed interface doesn't allow for overclocking or underclocking and has confusing D3D and OpenGL properties.	If you can find it cheap, this card may be worth your while, but saving up for something better may be your best choice.	
Metabyte Gia 3D Dx 	December '97 p. 290	$145	Metabyte *www.metabyte.com* (510) 494-9700	Relatively low price; good 2D acceleration.	Can't compete with today's 3D graphics accelerators.	Metabyte made a mistake choosing the ViRGE DX chipset on their Gia 3D DX. Don't make the mistake of buying one.	
Metabyte Wicked 3D 	September '98 p. 188	$269	Metabyte *www.metabyte.com* (510) 494-9700	Great price; the upcoming driver additions could help this Voodoo2 card stand out from the crowd.	These additions were still in development as we went to press, so we can't really comment on them yet.	Like virtually every Voodoo2 board, it's a great card for the price.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Orchid Righteous 3D II 	July '98 p. 166	$299	Orchid *www.orchid.com* (800) 577-0977	Good software bundle, easy installation, and very impressive performance.	It doesn't have the extras that could have made it stand out from other Voodoo II-based boards.	The Righteous 3D II has all of the 12MB Voodoo II goodness you'd expect. We'd like two, please.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Quantum Obsidian X-24 	November '98 p. 293	$599	Quantum3D *www.quantum3d.com* (888) 747-1020	Two 12MB Voodoo2s linked in SLI mode, but only one slot; TV output.	The Obsidian X-24 is quite expensive; refresh rates are limited to 85Hz, which makes benchmarking difficult.	A great card to be sure, but only if you can't spare the extra PCI slot in your crowded computer case.	
Real 3D StarFighter 	August '98 p. 162	$149.99	Real3D *www.real3d.com* (800) 393-7730	Great all-around 2D/3D card; performed well in both Windows 95 and DOS; beautiful image quality; fantastic price.	No OpenGL support at press time; the processor gets hot.	If you're looking for one of the best 2D/3D solutions currently on the market, Real3D's StarFighter is a good bet.	
Skywell Magic 3DII 	November '98 p. 297	$199	Skywell *www.aries-marketing.com* (909) 468-5535	Voodoo2 speed and image quality; very good price.	Yet another Voodoo2 without a clock-speed setting in its control panel; as of press time, it's only available via direct-sale orders.	A great Voodoo2 for the price — this card may be difficult to track down, but you'll be happy when you do.	
STB Velocity 128 	December '97 p. 296	$199	STB *www.stb.com* (800) 234-4334	This 2D/3D solution turned out the fastest D3D numbers we've seen.	OpenGL performance unproven; incompatibilities with some computers and components.	STB's Velocity 128 is one of the most powerful 3D solutions this side of 3Dfx.	
STB Velocity 128 (PCI) 	August '98 p. 165	$179	STB *www.stb.com* (800) 234-4334	It's fast; OpenGL performance is improving with every update.	Poor image quality; some newer cards look better and cost less.	The added RAM and new chip doesn't improve enough on the original to keep it from being surpassed by newer technology.	

INPUT DEVICES

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	PRICE	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	EDITORS' CHOICE
Saitek PC Dash 	December '97 p. 287	$69.95	Saitek Industries Ltd. *www.saitek.com* (310) 212-5412	Unique, well designed, easy to program. Handy bar code system means you don't need special software to load new programs.	Loading a program with the bar code slider takes a little practice.	The PC Dash is a great addition to any control setup.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Techmedia 3DZoneMaster 	May '98 p. 153	$99	Techmedia *www.techmedia.net* (714) 379-6677	It's unique in just about every way and looks pretty cool.	It might work on paper, but in real life it's no substitute for a mouse, joystick, or gamepad.	The ZoneMaster might be fun for a few minutes — and it's certainly interesting — but it's not an ideal controller in any way.	
Three Logitech Mice 	April '98 p. 170	$29.99 (FIRST MOUSE+) $59.95 (MOUSEMAN) $59.95 (MOUSEMAN+)	Logitech *www.logitech.com* (590) 795-8500	Extremely comfortable, thanks to sleek shapes. Extra buttons and customizable features.	MouseMan and MouseMan+ are right-handed only.	Once again, Logitech has delivered great mice with those extra loving touches you won't find anywhere else.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Wireless Computing SurfBoard 	December '97 p. 299	$395	Wireless Computing *www.netaxis.com/~jcoughlin/wireless.html* (972) 719-2578	RF communication doesn't require line of sight; joystick port and full stroke keys, rare on a wireless keyboard.	Shoddy construction; mushy feel; iffy joystick support; spongy keys; no numerical pad; poor touchpad; high price.	This keyboard has a few merits, but those merits don't make up for the problems; it's not nearly worth its high price.	

JOYSTICKS

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	PRICE	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	EDITORS' CHOICE
CH Gamestick 	January '98 p. 341	$59.95	CH Products *www.chproducts.com* (760) 598-2518	Simple design; analog operation means it's compatible with DOS mode.	Price too high for such a simple stick; small base makes it unstable.	This joystick is not up to CH's usually high standards. There are better, more affordable no-frills controllers.	
CH Gamestick 14 	April '98 p. 163	$69.95	CH Products *www.chproducts.com* (760) 598-2518	Smooth feel; responsive control; programmable.	Programmability doesn't always work; unstable base; awkward grip; poor throttle placement.	Although its programmable functions make it a much better stick than the original, there are better joysticks for the price.	
Cytech CyberWarrior Digital 	May '98 p. 157	$49	CCS Micro Systems *www.ccsmicro.com* (360) 834-0561	Full featured; programmable; comfortable; affordable.	Odd rudder; sort of squishy action; goofy programming interface.	Budget gamers will not want to buy a stick without giving this one a good, hard look. It's problems are minor and the price is right.	
Mad Catz Panther XL 	August '98 p. 166	$79.95	Mad Catz *www.madcatz.com* (619) 440-1618	Well built; very ergonomic; this is an all-around well-thought-out controller.	Huge footprint; doesn't replace a mouse and keyboard for *Quake*-style games; ball is useless in lots of games.	Congrats to Mad Catz for creating the most useful of the "3D" controllers.	
Microsoft SideWinder Precision Pro 	January '98 p. 336	$74.95	Microsoft *www.microsoft.com/sidewinder* (800) 429-9400	Very comfortable, full featured stick with a great programming interface. Vast improvement over earlier SideWinders.	No pure DOS compatibility; unreliable performance is DOS games under Win 95.	This is a nice, complete digital joystick for Windows 95 gaming.	

JOYSTICKS [CONTINUED]

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	PRICE	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	EDITORS' CHOICE
Quickshot 3D Striker 	February '98 p. 204	$59.99	Quickshot Technology, Inc. *www.quickshot.com* (408) 263-4163	Works somewhat well with single player games; nice ergonomic design.	Configuration options stink; the non-proportional joystick is imprecise for most games.	While the Striker is a good idea on paper, there are better controllers for every type of game.	
Suncom SFS Throttle 	July '98 p. 167	$129	Suncom Technologies *www.suncominc.com* (847) 229-0002	Easy programming, authentic feel; secondary lever works as throttle or rudder.	Rudder pedals are inactive when the secondary lever is used as a throttle; no printed manual; obscure installation process.	If you're serious about flight sims or are looking for a rudder/throttle combo, the SFS Throttle is a good choice.	
Thrustmaster Millennium Inceptor 3D 	January '98 p. 342	$89.98	Thrustmaster *www.thrustmaster.com* (503) 615-3200	Unique design; very sturdy and well crafted.	Too big and unwieldy for quick action; odd grip and motion cause wrist and finger aches.	The Millennium 3D Inceptor may work in orbit, but it has no place next to a PC on terra firma.	

MISCELLANEOUS

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	PRICE	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	EDITORS' CHOICE
ADS TV Superscan 2 	January '98 p. 338	$299	ADS Technologies *www.adstech.com* (800) 888-5244	This excellent scan converter sets up in minutes and works perfectly; clear, flicker free picture; no drivers required.	Pointless game mode may confuse some gamers.	ADS has a winner with the TV Superscan 2; this is a well made, convenient product.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
ADS USB Hub 	October '98 p. 260	$69	ADS Technologies *www.adstech.com* (800) 905-4250	Small and lightweight; hassle-free setup; first USB hub we've received.	Until the current shortage of game-related USB gadgets ends, the two USB ports built into your PC will probably be sufficient.	If you feel the need for additional USB ports, the ADS hub is a good choice; it's compact and works perfectly.	
ADS USB Port (PCI Card) 	November '98 p. 303	$39	ADS Technologies *www.adstech.com* (562) 926-1928	Works just as well as USB ports; inexpensive by any measure.	Requires Windows 98, not just Win 95 with the USB upgrade patch.	If you have a system without USB ports and you've got a free PCI slot, this is a terrific way to prepare for USB peripherals on the horizon.	
Esprit Wipe Out! 	September '98 p. 200	$14.99	Esprit Development Corporation *www.cdrepair.com* (908) 284-0426	Does what it's supposed to; if you've got several scratched discs, it's much cheaper than replacing them.	Doesn't work on all scratches; sometimes requires a lot amount of work, even for beefy guys like us.	A good product worth checking into if you've been mistreating your CDs.	
SyQuest SparQ 	July '98 p. 171	$199	SyQuest *www.syquest.com* (510) 226-4000	Easy to set up and use; simple and inexpensive space upgrades for years to come; internal drive performs plenty fast for gaming.	Performance doesn't compete with SCSI or Ultra-DMA hard drives; not as convenient as fixed disc hard drives.	This is an excellent, long term solution for hard drive space upgrading.	
UR Gear 	June '98 p. 141	$99	Union Reality *www.unionreality.com* (408) 980-7457	The lightweight controller fits snugly on any head; it's responsive and versatile.	Poor audio quality; moving your head like a joystick just isn't natural — you have to turn away from the screen to control games.	There may one day be a place in the controller market for a gadget like the UR Gear, but there isn't one yet.	

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MISCELLANEOUS [CONTINUED]

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	PRICE	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	EDITORS' CHOICE
Wireless PC@TV 	April '98 p. 165	$599	RF Link *www.rflinktech.com* (310) 787-2328	Scan converter provides a crisp display on TV; wireless transmitter/receiver setup works well.	TV output limited to 640x480. Wireless keyboard requires line-of-sight to the receiver, limiting its range.	If you're interested in web-surfing on your TV, the PC@TV is a solid offering, but for big-screen gaming, this setup could be better.	

MONITORS

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	PRICE	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	EDITORS' CHOICE
OptiQuest V95 	June '98 p. 137	$789	OptiQuest *www.optiquest.com* (800) 888-8583	Excellent in nearly every way: Generous viewable area, clear picture, relatively small footprint and price.	A little blurry right in the center of the monitor at 1600x 1200; very minor glare problem, especially in offices with florescent lights.	The OptiQuest V95 is a fabulous, affordable 19" monitor.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Panasonic PanaSync E110 	September '98 p. 199	$1,049	Panasonic *www.panasonic.com*	Very good quality; good price.	$1,049 is good, but it ain't cheap; a big monitor means a big footprint on your desk, so make sure you have tons of desktop room.	The E110 is a fantastic gaming monitor that should help move 21" displays into the realm of the affordable.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

SOUND CARDS

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	PRICE	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	EDITORS' CHOICE
AVM Apex Sound Card 	January '98 p. 345	$349	AVM Technology *www.avmtechnology.com* (801) 571-0967	Good synth chip, very expandable sampling RAM.	Missing sampler software, no bundled games, no cables, high price.	With the exception of those who dream in MIDI, gamers should look elsewhere.	
Creative Labs Sound Blaster Live! 	November '98 p. 292	$199 (SBLIVE! M.S.R.P.) $99 (SBLIVE! VALUE M.S.R.P.)	Creative Labs *www.creativelabs.com* (800) 998-5227	Best-sounding positional audio we've heard (with four speakers); full legacy support for DOS games.	Most games that support EAX are still on the horizon.	This is a powerful, great-sounding PCI card.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Diamond Monster Sound MX200 PCI 	October '98 p. 260	$149	Diamond Multimedia *www.diamondmm.com* (800) 468-5846	Audio acceleration for A3D, DirectSound, and DirectSound3D; outputs for four-speaker surround sound.	Limited DOS support; slightly more expensive than comparable cards.	An excellent sound card with high-end features that is worthy of the Monster Sound name.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Turtle Beach Montego A3DXstream 	September '98 p. 196	$129.95	Turtle Beach *www.tbeach.com* (800) 233-9377	PCI sound card; sounds fantastic; supports DirectSound and A3D; inexpensive; full legacy support for DOS games.	It's so much smaller than your old Sound Blaster that you won't know what to do with all the extra space you'll have in your computer case.	If you are a gamer looking for the next big thing in sound cards, look no further.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
VideoLogic SonicStorm 	April '98 p. 166	$99	VideoLogic *www.videologic.com* (800) 578-5644	An excellent set of features wrapped up in a PCI sound solution; startlingly affordable.	Average quality wavetable; a few incompatibilities.	This card is everything a gamer needs for an awesome audio experience at a very attractive price.	

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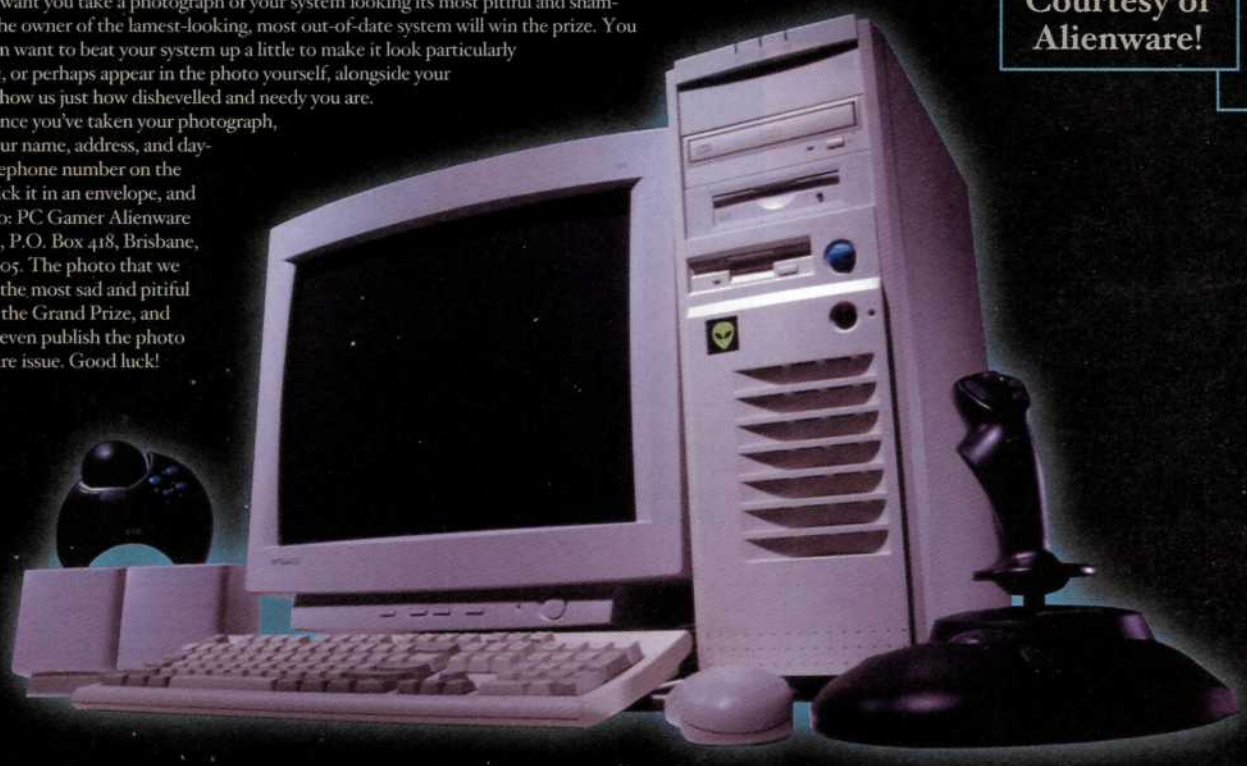
Courtesy of Alienware!

Everybody knows Bob Dylan is a visionary, but who would have thought that he would be able to predict the fast-moving nature of the PC hardware market decades ahead of time? For when Bob wrote the classic "The Times, They Are A'Changin'", he was obviously saying that, in the future, keeping up with the latest games would be tough thanks to system requirements increasing at a dizzying pace.

Or maybe he was referring to broader cultural changes affecting America. But whichever way you interpret it, Bob was right — these days, chances are your PC just isn't powerful enough to play today's cutting-edge games. And that's *why PC Gamer* has teamed up with Alienware to bring you the knockout opportunity to win a STATE OF THE ART GAMING RIG – a 450MHz Alienware Area 51 gaming PC, fully loaded with two 3Dfx Voodoo2s, a Riva TNT board, and 128MB of RAM. The prize also includes a monitor, speakers, a joystick, and even the bottom-thundering Intensor chair. Normally you'd have to pay around SIX THOUSAND DOLLARS to own one!

Thanks to Alienware, you can have one for FREE — but we don't want to give this system away to someone who doesn't really need it, so here's what you're going to do. We want you take a photograph of your system looking its most pitiful and shambolic. The owner of the lamest-looking, most out-of-date system will win the prize. You may even want to beat your system up a little to make it look particularly pathetic, or perhaps appear in the photo yourself, alongside your PC, to show us just how dishevelled and needy you are.

Once you've taken your photograph, write your name, address, and daytime telephone number on the back, stick it in an envelope, and mail it to: PC Gamer Alienware Contest, P.O. Box 418, Brisbane, CA 94005. The photo that we think is the most sad and pitiful will win the Grand Prize, and we may even publish the photo in a future issue. Good luck!



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SPEAKERS

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	PRICE	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	EDITORS' CHOICE
Altec ADA305 USB Speakers 	October '98 p. 268	$199	Altec Lansing *www.altecmm.com* (800) ALTEC-88	Good subwoofer; first speakers we've seen that actually use the USB port for something.	Overpriced for what it is; pretty poor sound reproduction.	Unless you're a sucker for the nifty on-screen interface, you'll find better-sounding speakers at half the price.	
Cambridge PCWorks FourPointSurround Speakers 	October '98 p. 268	$99.99 $149.99 (WITH SOUND BLASTER PCI 128)	Cambridge Soundworks, Inc. *www.hifi.com* (800) 367-4434	Better sound than speakers costing twice as much; true four-speaker surround beats a two-speaker solution every time.	Not quite as powerful and accurate as Cambridge's more expensive models.	A whole lot of high-quality sound squeezed into a small package and an even smaller price.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Cyber Acoustics MMS-6 	April '98 p. 171	$69	Cyber Acoustics *www.xlink4sports.com* (360) 834-0561	Desktop-accessible controls, treble setting, and bass defeat included.	No sub-woofer; sparse docs; no balance control; average sound quality at best.	Worth considering for those on a budget, but hardly an audiophile's dream.	
GNT-5000 Speakers 	January '98 p. 338	$54.95	GNT Electronics, Inc. *www.gntelec.com* (408) 727-3856	An inexpensive upgrade for the inferior speakers that come with most systems.	Mid-range tones lacking; controls on subwoofer.	For the average gamer on a tight budget, it's a decent upgrade, but audiophiles will want to look elsewhere.	
Labtec Universal Subwoofer LCS-2408 	December '97 p. 286	$59.99	Labtec *www.labtec.com* (360) 896-2000	Improves sound quality of poor speakers; adds volume control.	Poorly shielded; weak bass for a subwoofer.	The Labtec Universal Subwoofer is a great idea that could have been implemented much better than it is.	
Laral Unwired Stereo IR 1000 	December '97 p. 290	$39.99	The Laral Group *www.unwired.com* (888) 229-2118	Wireless freedom; clear, responsive sound; good range.	Minor hiss when not in use; too easy to forget to turn them off, resulting in the death of many AAA batteries.	If you're in the market for quality headphones, you can't go wrong.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Logitech SoundMan Extreme 	November '98 p. 297	$129	Logitech *www.logitech.com* (800) 231-7717	Very clean sound; very solid construction means no rattling at high volume; big, big sound out of small speakers.	No headphone jack (will speaker designers ever listen to this simple request?).	These are among the best we've heard for the price, and if you ever run over them with a jeep, they'll still work.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Mediaphile Presentation Audio System 	May '98 p. 157	$249.99	Mediaphile *www.mediaphile.com* (612) 559-1019	Crisp sound and remarkable clarity and response...	...in the right environment. A typical gaming station isn't an ideal place to show off what these speakers can do.	Let's hope Mediaphile releases more traditional set of multimedia speakers that would work for gamers.	
Midiland Forzando Plus 	November '98 p. 302	$99.95	MidiLand Inc. *www.midiland.com* (888) 592-1168	Three-piece system; decent sound out of the box; the $100 M.S.R.P is well within most gamers' price range.	Tone control is limited; 3D sound feature is unimpressive and hurts sound quality.	Not a bad set of speakers, but there are better ones out there for the price.	
Monsoon MM-1000 	November '98 p. 296	$229	Monsoon *www.monsoon-power.com* (877) PC-AUDIO	Planar dipole design makes for the perception of added depth when listening to music and games.	Sound quality is sub-par; no way to adjust treble, bass, or mid-range frequencies.	The MM-1000 seems to serve more as a proof of a technology than a true gamer's sound system.	

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SPEAKERS [CONTINUED]

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	PRICE	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	EDITORS' CHOICE
Quickshot Sound Force 680 	March '98 p. 173	$89.99	Quickshot Technology *www.quickshot.com* (408) 263-4163	Good, clear sound; powerful; cool QSound effects; headphone jack is located on the speaker within reach.	No subwoofer; slightly heavy midrange.	The Sound Force line has something to be proud of with the 680, but you can still find something better for a bit more money.	
S2/MidiLand 4100 	June '98 p. 137	$399	MidiLand Inc. *www.midiland.com* (888) 592-1168	Clear, accurate sound at high and low volumes; loads of power; handy control module mounts anywhere.	Huge subwoofer takes up a lot of space under the desk; no headphone jack.	Although pricey, these are great-sounding, powerful speakers that may blow away your stereo system in more ways than one.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

SYSTEMS

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	PRICE	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	EDITORS' CHOICE
Alienware Area 51 	January '98 p. 330	$3,999	Alienware *www.alienware-pc.com* (800) 494-3382	Incredible power, great peripherals and a tremendous software bundle.	Very high price; swampy keyboard, CD-ROM drive gets a little hot. Merely adequate monitor.	If you've got the money to spend, this is THE gaming system to own. Its graphical, sonic and power performance is unrivaled.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Falcon Mach V 	November '98 p. 306	$5995	Falcon Northwest *www.falcon-nw.com* (888) FALCON1	Fastest PC we've seen so far; amazing sound and graphics systems; excellent construction and support.	Really high price; lacks a legacy sound card for DOS games; speaker system needs to be plugged into a TV to tweak sound levels.	If you're a serious gamer with money to burn, the Mach V is a great system.	
KickAss Gear 	March '98 p. 168	$3,999	KickAss Gear *www.kickass-gear.com* (301) 869-1492	Fast, powerful and ready for gaming right out of the box. This system is a gamer's dream.	High price; monitor could be better.	This KickAss Gear system isn't cheap, but it's an excellent one-stop gaming system. Highly recommended.	PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE
Media-On Expert II 	December '97 p. 282	$2,949	Media-On *www.mediaon.com* (800) 552-7835	Lots of power for the price; good choice of components.	More a general purpose PC that a gaming machine; some gaming needs ignored.	This system is a strong foundation for an awesome gaming computer.	
Micro-X MXP-5060 	February '98 p. 196	$2,549	Micro-X *www.microx.com* (800) 73MICRO	Nice, basic system; plenty of processor muscle; good base video card.	Not an ideal gaming system; needs gaming 3D accelerator; horrible sound system.	A powerful computer, and this system could be the base for a decent gaming machine. But it's not an ideal gaming system.	
North Star Systems 	May '98 p. 152	$3,690	North Star Systems *www.northcomp.com* (503) 434-6848	Loaded with powerful hardware; really fast; high quality, brand name peripherals.	Poorly configured; lots of glitches.	This goes to show that there are more factors to consider when buying a system than its specs.	
Pionex 640029 400MHz 	October '98 p. 257	$2,249	Pionex *www.pionex.com* (800) 313-1995	Big, generous case for expandability; large hard drive.	Not a good gaming machine; the MPACT2 came up short during testing; overall system misses the mark in too many areas.	This Pionex is not really worth it — a little comparison shopping will land you a better system at the same price or less.	

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NEXT TIME...

Well that's our Holiday Special done with, but the celebration's not over yet because our January issue will be out in mid-December with lots more festive fun for the whole family!

Vol. 6 No. 1 Goes On Sale **Dec. 15** Don't Miss It!

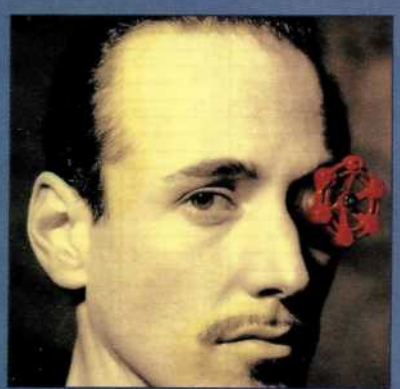
South Park EXCLUSIVE!

YES, EVERYONE'S FAVORITE foul-mouthed construction-paper grade-school kids are coming to the PC, and next month *PC Gamer* has the exclusive first-look at the game. We'll also have an exclusive gaming interview with South Park creators Matt Stone and Trey Parker, and a South Park contest that will knock your socks off!



Inside VALVE

WE'LL HAVE an exclusive interview with the white-hot new development team behind one of 1998's hottest games — the incredible *Half-Life* — to find out the future of the first-person action genre. Not only that, but we'll have an exclusive preview of the amazing multi-player expansion pack *Half-Life: Team Fortress*. Don't miss it.





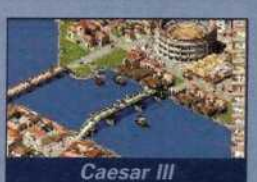
PC GAMER'S role-playing experts will be bringing you the definitive guide to 1999's essential fantasy RPGs. We'll have the low-down on *Revenant, Lands of Lore III, Might & Magic VII, Wizardry VIII, Ultima Ascension, Diablo II, Asheron's Call,* and Westwood Studios' amazing-looking *Nox*.

A Fantasy FEAST

Reviews


Klingon Honor Guard


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...and many more!

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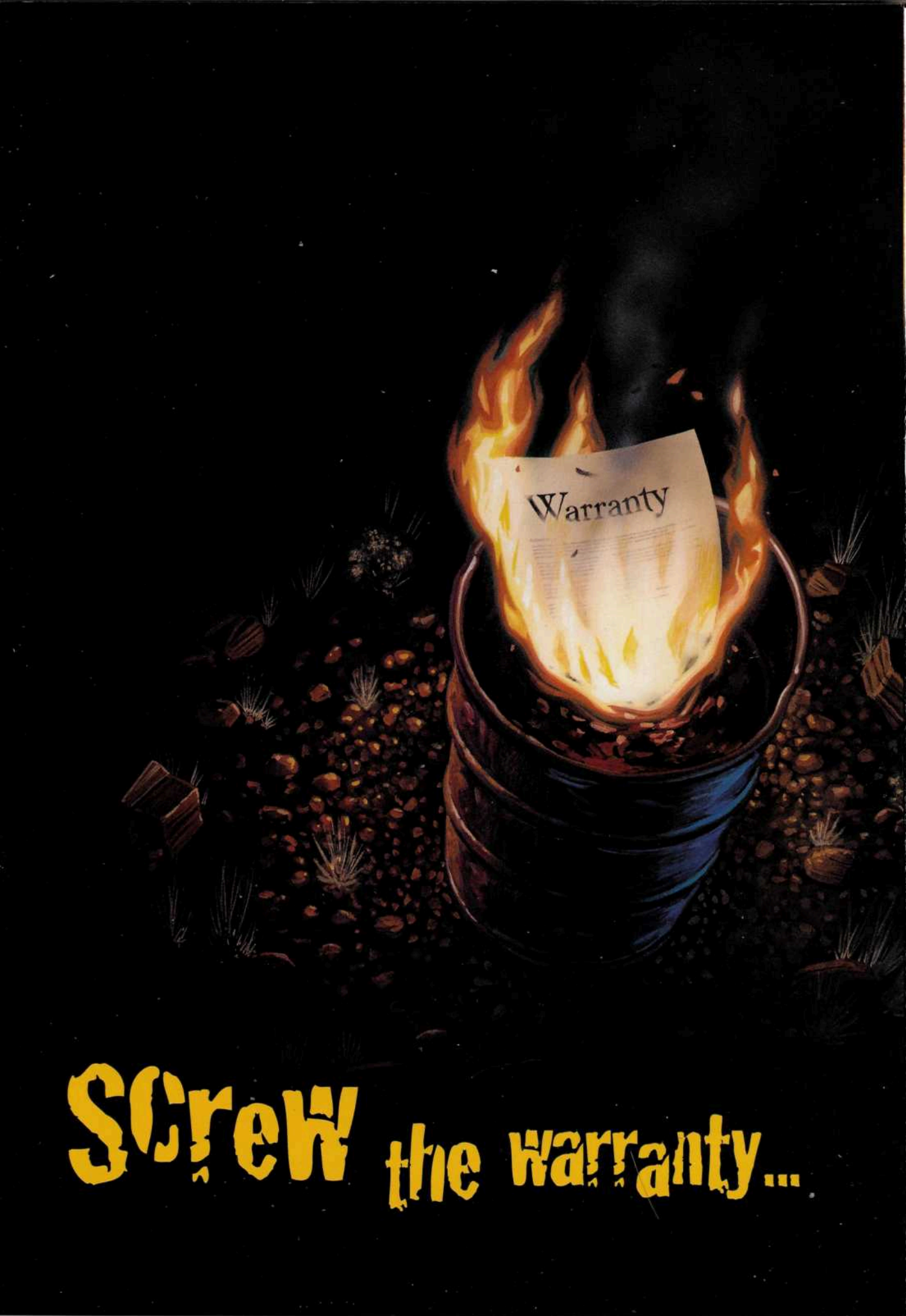
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Luton is half-way across the Bay Bridge when a cargo truck swerves in front of him, rolls over on its side, and bursts into flames. As Luton slams on his brakes, the back of the truck bursts open and hordes of creatures begin to spill out. At first Luton's view is obscured by the smoke and the flames, but as it clears, he realizes they are the fabled blue-assed monkeys. "No," Luton whispers. "This can't be happening."

The monkeys sit for a moment, and then they spot Luton. With one unified grin, they rush his car, intent on his destruction. Luton fumbles with the door handle, but before he can get out they are on the car, smashing the glass, beating to get inside. Hundreds of tiny hands flood through the holes, tearing at his face. Then they have him, dragging him out the broken windshield, carrying him toward the edge of the bridge...

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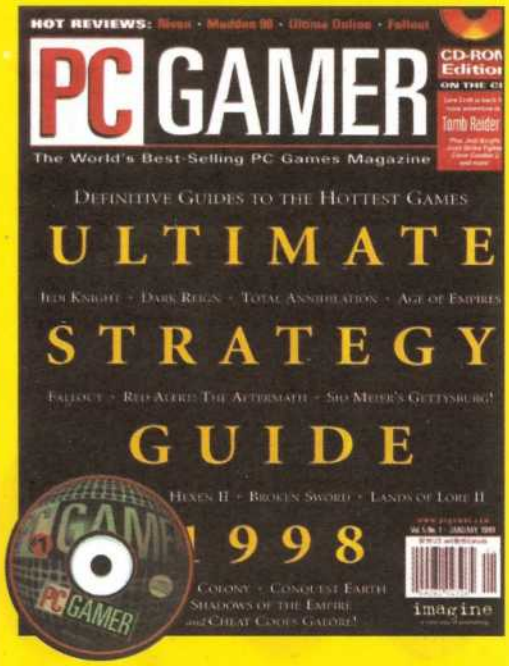


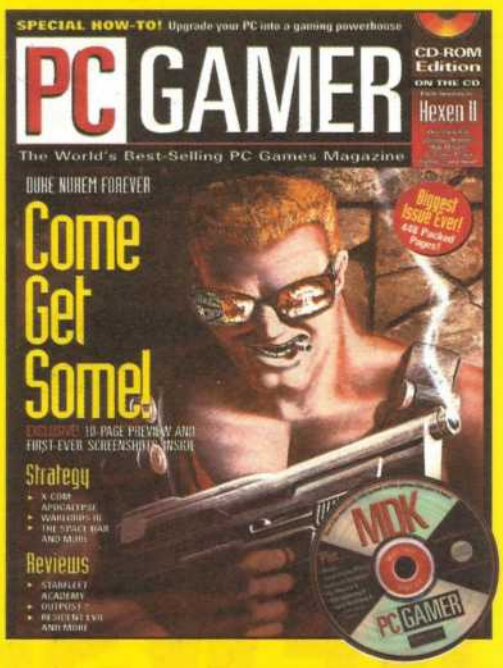


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