

ATI'S LATEST CHIP BRINGS DOOM 3 TO YOUR LAPTOP!

COMPUTER

Earth's Best PC Gaming Magazine

GAMING WORLD

125+
GAMES
REVIEWED
& RATED!

The

SIMS
2

TM

WORLD-EXCLUSIVE FIRST REVIEW!

Previewed Inside:

SID MEIER'S
PIRATES! | NEED FOR SPEED
UNDERGROUND 2 | STRONG-
HOLD 2

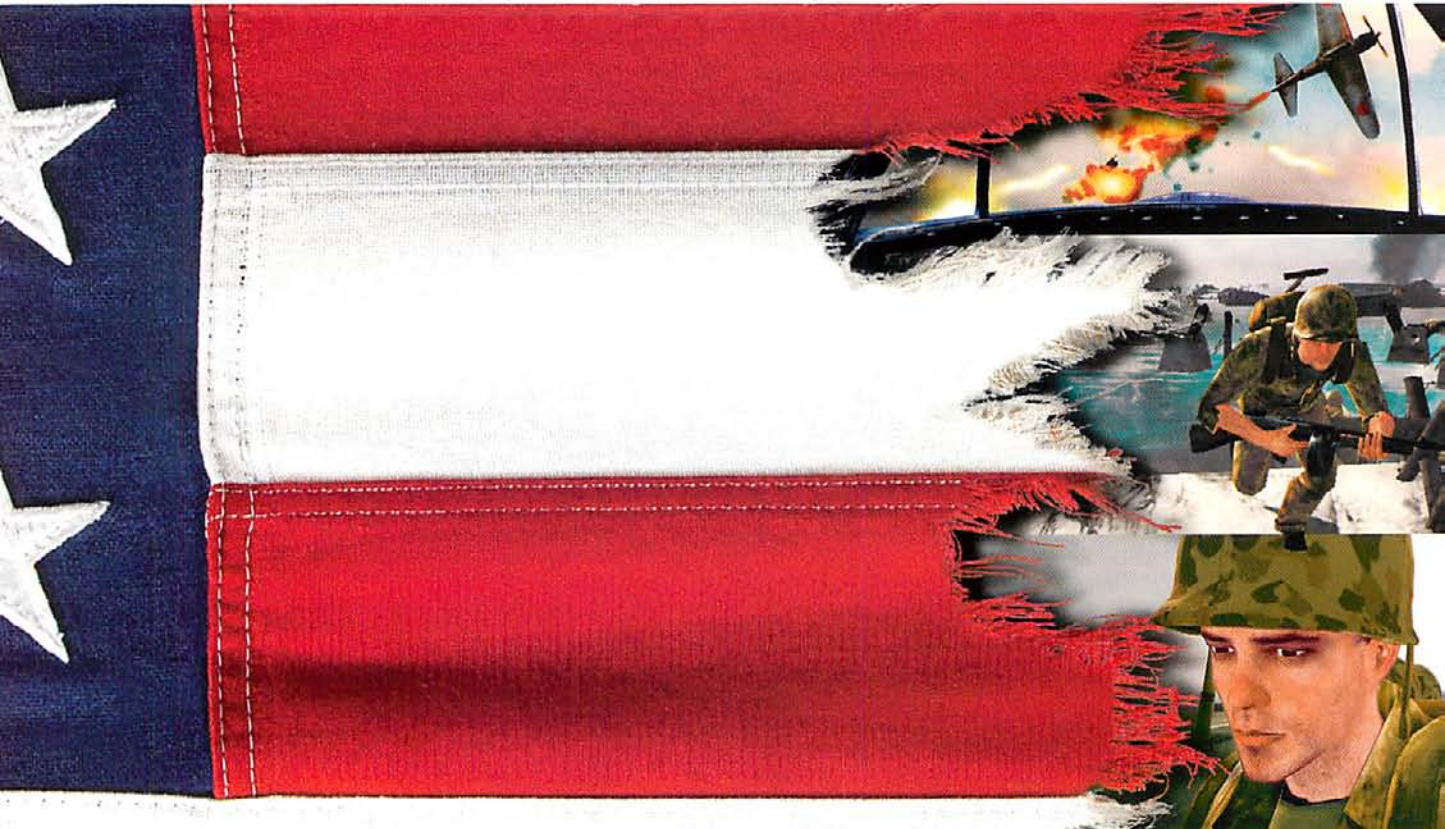
WWW.CGW.1UP.COM

NOVEMBER 2004 ISSUE 244
\$7.99 U.S. \$8.99 Canada

ZIFF DAVIS MEDIA™



Display Until October 19



SOME FIGHT FOR THEIR COUNTRY.
SOME FOR THEIR EMPEROR.
ALL FIGHT FOR HONOR.

The best selling WWII shooter returns to take you deep into the Pacific Theater of Operations. You won't be alone as you fight from the smoldering Battleship Row in Pearl Harbor to the deadly beaches of Tarawa Island; real-time dynamic A.I. means your squad has your back. Benchmark-shattering technology, a brand new game engine, and Havok™ physics bring your hell in the Pacific to life in graphic detail. Join the MOH Army. Enlist at eagames.com



© 2004 Electronic Arts Inc. Electronic Arts, Medal of Honor Pacific Assault, "Challenge Everything," EA, EA GAMES and the EA GAMES logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of Electronic Arts Inc. in the U.S. and/or other countries. Medal of Honor is a trademark or registered trademark of Electronic Arts Inc. in the U.S. and/or other countries for computer and video game products. All Rights Reserved. GameSpy and the "Powered by GameSpy" design are trademarks of GameSpy Industries, Inc. All rights reserved. Pentium and the Intel Inside logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of Intel Corporation or its subsidiaries in the United States and other countries. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. EA GAMES™ is an Electronic Arts™ brand.



MEDAL OF HONOR PACIFIC ASSAULT™

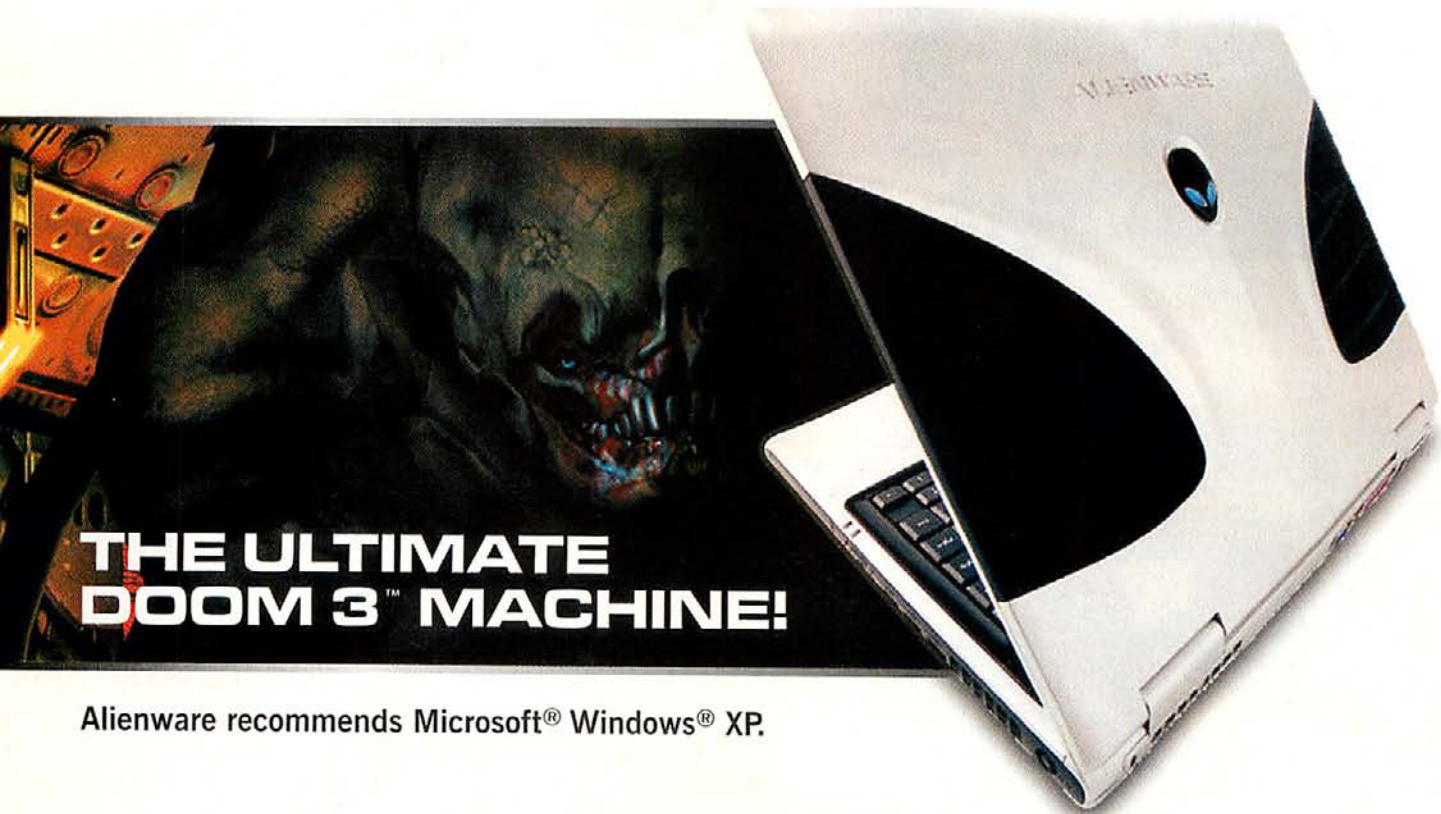
COMING NOVEMBER



Challenge Everything™

ALIENWARE®

THE ORIGINAL ULTIMATE GAMING MACHINE



THE ULTIMATE DOOM 3™ MACHINE!

Alienware recommends Microsoft® Windows® XP.

AREA-51™ GAMING NOTEBOOK

The Area-51™, engineered for DOOM 3 domination with features like an Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor, Microsoft® Windows® XP, blistering fast graphics cards, and complete support for digital 5.1 audio, is the gaming notebook of your dreams.

MAXIMIZE YOUR DOOM 3 EXPERIENCE

The Area-51™, powered by cutting-edge technology including Intel® Pentium® 4 Processors, delivers unrivaled DOOM 3 performance.

SEE EVERY NIGHTMARISH DETAIL

The Area-51™ equipped with the NVIDIA® GeForce™ FX Go5700 provides the jaw-dropping graphics of DOOM 3 in all its hellish glory.

ENJOY FLAWLESS GAMEPLAY ON THE GO

Packing the power of a desktop in a highly mobile platform, the Area-51™ delivers the freedom and flexibility to enjoy DOOM 3 sessions anywhere you go.

HEAR EVERY BLOODCURDLING SCREAM

The full dynamic range of sound provided by the Area-51™ notebook's 5.1 surround sound support allows you to lose yourself in the spine-tingling shrieks and moans of the DOOM 3 universe.

PROTECT YOUR INVESTMENT: SELECT ALIENRESPAWN!

Alienware's exclusive recovery tool returns your system to its original factory settings.

Awards/Quotes: Award(s) and quote(s) listed do not pertain to a specific system or configuration. Pricing: Prices, configurations, and availability may change without notice. Taxes and shipping charges not shown. Alienware can not be held responsible for errors in photography or typography. Actual case may vary in design. Warranty/Support: For complete information on warranty, support, and on-site or depot service, visit www.alienware.com. Drives/Modems: For hard drives, GB means 1 billion bytes and accessible capacity may vary depending on configuration. For CD-ROM, DVD-ROM, CD-RW, and DVD-RW drives, maximum data transfer rates may vary and discs created with these drives may not be compatible with all drives and players. For modems and network cards/hardware, maximum achievable data transfer rates may vary. Gigabit Ethernet: Term indicates compliance with IEEE standard 802.3ab for Gigabit Ethernet. Network and infrastructure required for high-speed transmission connection to Gigabit Ethernet server. Trademarks/Copyright Notices: Alienware, the Alienware logo, Area-51m, Area 51, and Bot are trademarks or

"Dedicated gaming system delivers performance and value."

- Computer Gaming World Editors' Choice Award



AREA-51™

PERFORMANCE OPTION

Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor 540 with HT Technology
(3.20 GHz, 1 MB L2 Cache, 800 MHz FSB)
Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
Exclusive Alienware® Chassis
High-Performance Ultra Quiet 480-Watt PSU
Intel® 925X Express Chipset-Based Motherboard
High-Performance Heatsink-Cooling System
512 MB Dual-Channel PC-4200 DDR2 SDRAM at 533 MHz
NVIDIA® GeForce™ PCX 5750 PCI-Express 128 MB DDR
120 GB 7200 RPM Serial ATA-150 Hard Drive 8 MB Cache
Astral Blue Alienware™ Video Cooling System
Creative Sound Blaster® Audigy 2™ 6.1 Advanced 24-bit Audio
Integrated Intel® PRO/1000 CT Gigabit Ethernet Controller
Black 16X DVD-ROM Drive
Plextor® PX-712A 12X DVD±RW
NEW! Alienware® Respawn Recovery Kit
Optimized & Configured for High Performance
AlienWiring: Exclusive Internal Wire Management (\$99.99 Value) - FREE
AlienInspection: Exclusive Integration and Inspection (\$99.99 Value) - FREE
AlienCare: Advanced Technical Support including:
1-Year Personalized Online Support Portal with Chat and Forums
1-Year Toll-Free 24/7 Phone Support by Alienware Technicians
1-Year On-site Home Service

\$1,799.00¹ or as low as \$54/mo.²
After \$80.00 rebate.

ACCESSID: CGW1104SA1

AREA-51

EXTREME OPTION³

NEW! Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor 560 with HT Technology
(3.60 GHz, 1 MB L2 Cache, 800 MHz FSB)
Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
Intel® 925X Express Chipset-Based Motherboard
1024 MB Dual-Channel PC-4200 DDR2 SDRAM at 533 MHz
NVIDIA® GeForce™ 6800 Ultra PCI-Express 256 MB DDR3
240 GB 7200 RPM Serial ATA-150 RAID 0 Hard Drive Array 16 MB Cache
Creative Sound Blaster® Audigy 2™ ZS 7.1 Advanced 24-bit Audio

\$2,999.00¹ or as low as \$90/mo.²
After \$80.00 rebate.

ACCESSID: CGW1104SA3

To receive an Instant Rebate on an Area-51, enter an AccessID at:

WWW.ALIENWARE.COM/CGW

For the latest pricing and promotions go online or call:

1.800.ALIENWARE (1.800.254.3692)



BOT™

PERFORMANCE OPTION

Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor 520 with HT Technology
(2.80 GHz, 1 MB L2 Cache, 800 MHz FSB)
Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
Exclusive Alienware® Small Form Factor Chassis
Flexible Chassis Design Allows For Vertical or Horizontal Use
Chassis Dimensions (13.58"D X 5.35"W X 13.77"H)
Ultra Quiet 270-Watt PSU
Intel® 915G Express Chipset-Based Motherboard
High-Performance Heatsink-Cooling System
256 MB PC-3200 DDR SDRAM at 400 MHz
Integrated Intel® Graphics Media Accelerator 900
80 GB 7200 RPM Serial ATA-150 Hard Drive 8 MB Cache
Intel® High Definition 5.1 Audio
Integrated Intel® PRO/1000 CT Gigabit Ethernet Controller
Black 16X DVD-ROM Drive
NEW! Alienware® Respawn Recovery Kit
Optimized & Configured for High Performance
AlienWiring: Exclusive Internal Wire Management (\$99.99 Value) - FREE
AlienInspection: Exclusive Integration and Inspection (\$99.99 Value) - FREE
AlienCare: Advanced Technical Support including:
1-Year Personalized Online Support Portal with Chat and Forums
1-Year Toll-Free 24/7 Phone Support by Alienware Technicians
1-Year On-site Home Service

\$899.00¹ or as low as \$27/mo.²

ACCESSID: CGW1104SB1

6 MONTHS SAME AS CASH FINANCING²
AND OTHER GREAT PROMOTIONS. APPLY ONLINE!



registered trademarks of Alienware Corporation. DOOM 3 images (C) 2004 id Software, Inc. All rights reserved. Intel, Intel Inside, Intel Inside logo, Intel Centrino, Intel Centrino logo, and Pentium, are trademarks or registered trademarks of Intel Corporation or its subsidiaries in the United States and other countries. Microsoft and Windows are registered trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the United States and/or other jurisdictions. HyperTransport is a licensed trademark of the HyperTransport Technology Consortium. Other product and company names used in this publication are for identification purposes only and may be trademarks of their respective companies. All other registered trademarks and trademarks are the property of their respective owners. Notes: (1) Price shown does not include keyboard, mouse, and monitor. (2) Subject to credit approval. Terms subject to change without notice. See Alienware credit card terms and conditions for complete information. Annual Percentage Rate: 21.90%. Minimum finance charge: \$1.00. (3) Same configuration as performance option, but with changes listed.

They Fought For Freedom...
They Fought For Each Other.

MEN OF VALOR™



XBOX
LIVE
ONLINE GAMING

PC
CD-ROM
SOFTWARE

VIVENDI
UNIVERSAL
GAMES

2015™

MATURE 17+
M Blood
Drug Reference
Strong Language
Violence
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

© 2004 2015, Inc. All rights reserved. Developed by 2015, Inc. Men of Valor, 2015 and their respective logos are trademarks of 2015, Inc. Vivendi Universal Games and the Vivendi Universal Games logo are trademarks of Vivendi Universal Games, Inc. Unreal and the Unreal logo are registered trademarks of Epic Games, Inc. Microsoft, Xbox, Xbox Live, the Live logo, and the Xbox logos are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the U.S. and/or other countries. © 1998-2004, DCI Entertainment, Inc. and its licensors. All rights reserved. Dolby and the double-D symbol are trademarks of Dolby Laboratories. All other trademarks are property of their respective owners.



SHEPARD
DEAN
ASN 98931357

www.menofvalorgame.com



Experience the Real Vietnam
War—from Jungle-Based Ambushes
to Intense Urban Firefights



Pick Your Tour of Duty—Single-
Player Campaign or Multiplayer
via Xbox Live and System Link



13 Action-Packed Combat
Missions Spanning Four
Authentic Operations

THE FASTEST GROWING MMO GAME IN THE COUNTRY
JUST EXPANDED INTO SPACE.

STAR WARS GALAXIES

JUMP TO LIGHTSPEED



Hundreds of thousands of *Star Wars* fans have immersed themselves in the epic struggle for the Galactic Empire in the highly successful massively multiplayer online game, *Star Wars Galaxies: An Empire Divided*. Now, *An Empire Divided* expands into space with the release of its first expansion, *Star Wars Galaxies: Jump To Lightspeed*. Experience a whole new level of action-oriented gameplay and content that lets you jump into the cockpit of classic *Star Wars* starships and join the fight for the Galactic Empire.

- 10 new and distinct space sectors to explore.
- Over 15 classic starships from the *Star Wars* universe.
- Build and customize your own starships.
- More than 100 new, story-oriented space missions.
- 4 new space professions, including Shipwright and Privateer.
- 2 new playable and completely customizable species.

www.swgjumptolightspeed.com



Star Wars Galaxies: An Empire Divided is required to play *Jump To Lightspeed*.

LucasArts and the LucasArts logo are registered trademarks of Lucasfilm Ltd. *Star Wars Galaxies* is a registered trademark of Lucasfilm Entertainment Company Ltd. SOE and the SOE logo are registered trademarks of Sony Online Entertainment Inc. © 2003, 2004 Lucasfilm Entertainment Company Ltd or Lucas Ltd. & © or TM as indicated. All rights reserved.





THIS SUMMER EXPECT



NEW FRONTIERS: THE CHALLENGING NEW RvR EXPANSION FOR DARK AGE OF CAMELOT.

BATTLE ON REDESIGNED FRONTIERS FEATURING MORE STRATEGIC AND CHALLENGING TERRAIN: LAY SIEGE TO RUINED TOWNS, SWIM ACROSS RIVERS UNDER FIRE, CONTROL MOUNTAIN PASSES, AND PREPARE AMBUSHES IN DEEP FORESTS.

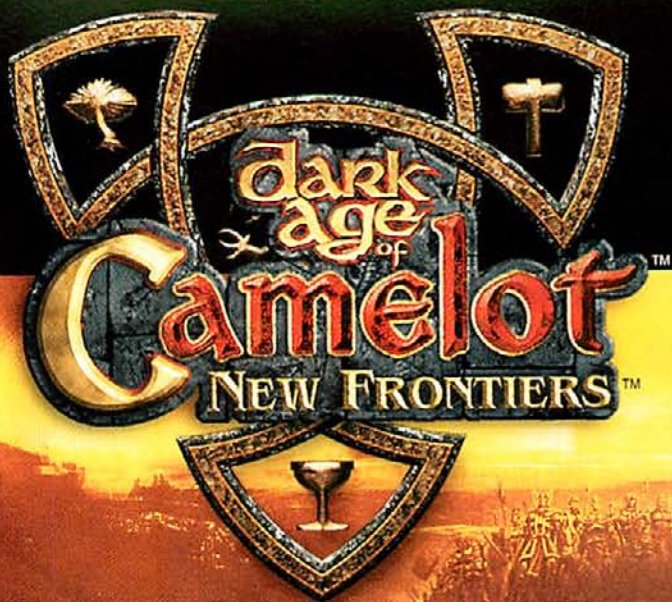
COMMAND AND UPGRADE YOUR FRONTIER OUTPOSTS WITH TALLER TOWERS, TOUGHER WALLS, MORE SIEGE WEAPONS, AND NPC GUARDS. BRING ENEMY KEEPS TO THE BRINK OF DESTRUCTION, ROUTE YOUR ENEMY AND RAISE YOUR BANNERS ABOVE THE RAMPARTS IN VICTORY.

FIND AND QUICKLY TELEPORT INTO THE THICK OF THE BATTLE WITH THE REAL-TIME REALM WAR MAP. RECEIVE YOUR JUST REWARDS FOR VICTORIES IN REALM COMBAT WITH NEW RELIC AND KEEP BONUSES.

RETIRED PLAYERS REACTIVATE YOUR ACCOUNT NOW AND RE-DISCOVER RvR COMBAT. FREE DOWNLOAD TO ACTIVE SUBSCRIBERS OF DARK AGE OF CAMELOT.

SOME UNINVITED GUESTS.

Free to DAOC subscribers and available for
download exclusively from
www.darkageofcamelot.com/cgw



Violence

Never Played?

Download 7 Day Free Trial
www.darkageofcamelot.com/cgw



MYTHIC
ENTERTAINMENT



Copyright © 2004 Mythic Entertainment, Inc. All rights reserved. Mythic Entertainment, the Mythic Entertainment logo, "Dark Age of Camelot", "Trials of Atlantis", "New Frontiers" and their respective logos and the stylized Celtic knot are trademarks of Mythic Entertainment, Inc. All other trademarks property of their respective owners.



Contents

November 2004 Issue #244

16 Editorial

You are not too cool for *The Sims 2*. Get over it.

18 Letters

How do you love us? Let us count the ways. Uh-oh. We're stuck at zero.

28 Radar

This month, we talk to an overworked game programmer who is suing his employer, we see which games-on-demand services make the grade, and we even try to hook up one of our reporters with a date. And a whole lot more (like a candid AIM chat with the man behind *Neverwinter Nights 2*) awaits you in this month's Radar section. So what are you waiting for?

48 Previews

Get ready to set sail with *Sid Meier's Pirates!* and hunker down in the trenches of *Men of Valor*. After that, it's time to play king for a day with *Empire Earth 2*, then it's off to the speedway for some high-adrenaline racing with *NASCAR 2005* and *Need for Speed Underground 2*.

76 Reviews

What happens when the biggest game of the month is our cover story? Our Reviews section is stuck with licensed letdowns such as *Spider-Man 2* and *Catwoman*, that's what. Thank goodness for *Soldiers: Heroes of World War II* and *The Political Machine*—or we just might have gone insane.

89 Tech

In this month's Tech section, we review Voodoo's Envy M-860 laptop, Falcon Northwest's FragBox 2, and Actiontec's 54 Mbps wireless cable/DSL router. We also show you how to install a wireless access point, and just for good measure, there's a new Cracked Case and a new Wil Power!

99 Check Out

We've got a lean, mean Killer Rig for all you budget-minded folks, along with a fresh, new A-List of hardware recommendations. We've also assembled our very own dream cast for the perfect *KOTOR* movie.

110 Tom vs. Bruce

Tom, Bruce, and Erik: the F-Troop of the PC gaming industry.

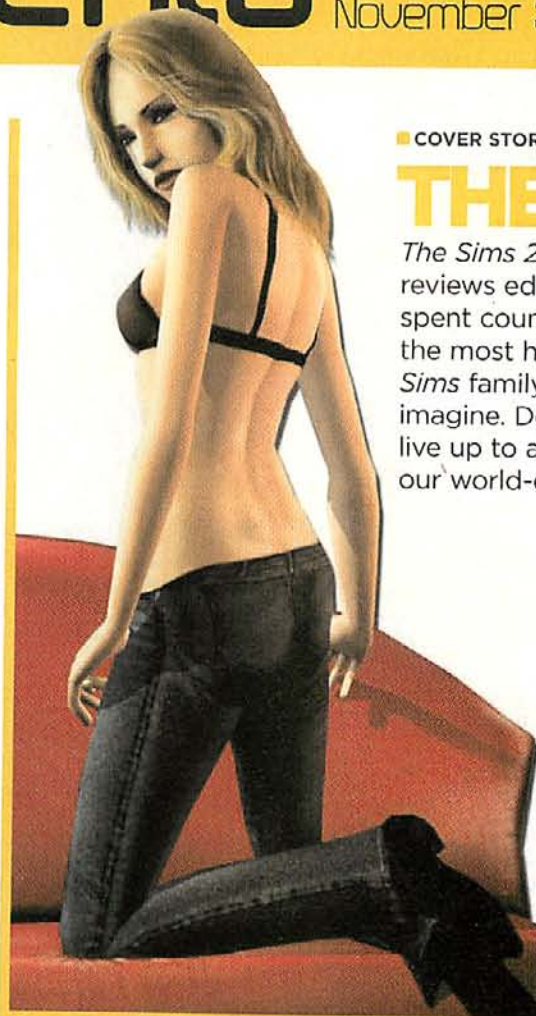
114 Scorched Earth

Owie owie owie! It burns!

COVER STORY

THE SIMS 2

The Sims 2 is finally here, and reviews editor Robert Coffey has spent countless hours nurturing the most hideously deformed *Sims* family you could possibly imagine. Does the final product live up to all the hype? Find out in our world-exclusive first review!



68





THIS MONTH ON 1UP.COM

CGW.1UP.COM

Doom 3 is this month's titanic chart-topper, closely followed by the ever-delayed *Half-Life 2*.

CGW BUZZOMETER

Rank	Game	Score
1	Doom 3	90
2	Half-Life 2	85
3	The Sims 2	80
4	Call of Duty 2	75
5	Warcraft 3: Reign of Chaos	70
6	World of Warcraft	65
7	Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	60
8	Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	55
9	Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	50
10	Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	45

We've also got plenty of media for up-and-coming games such as *Battlefield 2*, *The Sims 2*, and *Lord of the Rings: The Battle for Middle-earth*. And if you're just curious about what's going on in the industry, you'll find up-to-the-minute news about everything from the reportedly leaked *Half-Life 2* script to the recent restructuring at LucasArts.

CGWJEFF.1UP.COM

On his kinda-sorta-pretty-much-updated-regularly blog, our stalwart commander has a few things to say about being on CNN, not being able to play *The Matrix Online*, and how much *Spider-Man 2* sucks (that's the game, not the movie). Oh, and his interests include "Angelina Jolie." We'll let you draw your own conclusions on that one.



BOARDS.1UP.COM

This month on the soap opera that is the CGW Magazine Comments message board, plenty of our readers are raving about *Doom 3*, while others are up in arms over the technical terror that is Windows XP Service Pack 2. After you're done with that, hop over to the Gaming Discussion board, where you can vote on our monthly Sound Off poll and drown in a sea of videocard advice threads.



56



76



87



48

REVIEWS

- 76 Soldiers: Heroes of World War II
- 80 Spider-Man 2
- 81 Catwoman
- 82 Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban
- 84 The Political Machine
- 86 Codename: Panzers
- 87 War in the Pacific

PREVIEWS

- 48 Sid Meier's Pirates!
- 50 Stronghold 2
- 50h Men of Valor
- 52 NASCAR 2005
- 56 Need for Speed Underground 2
- 58 Empire Earth 2
- 62 Evil Genius



89

Get the most out of 1UP.com!

It's where gamers who live to play get what they need to succeed: The best news, reviews, previews, screen shots and cheats. Plus, on 1UP you can build your own community of gamers to share tips, tactics and even success stories.

>THE BEST GAME COVERAGE



WE KNOW GAMERS

HOME PLATFORMS MAGAZINES GENRES SOCIALIZE GAMES CHEATS INVITE

WELCOME TO iFUP
FREE MEMBERSHIP... JOIN NOW!
REGISTER LOGIN

Show off your game collection on a iFUP page. 

SEARCH

THAT COULD BE YOUR FRIENDS



iFUP RANKINGS:
OVERALL 13 out of 14215
PLATFORM: 1 out of 2064
GENRES: 5 out of 2841
Avg. Member Rating: 6.92

WATE IT YOURSELF

Screenshots



Slideshow

Half-Life 2

- Overview
- Reviews
- Cheats and Strategies
- Media

DETAILED INFO FOR
Half-Life 2
Release Date: 10/19/2004
Official Website
and Players: 32

Half-Life 2
It's real. It's close, and it's going to take over your life.

Platform: **PC**
Publisher: **Sierra Games; Valve Software**
Rating: Mature Only; Action

By **Robert Coffey**
05/09/2005

So kiss the wife (or husband) and hug the kids good-bye. The biggest game of your life is not only in development, it's just four or five months away from consuming you.

First Thing's First
If you really need to know is this: You're Gordon Freeman again, you've got your Crowbar, and you're fighting aliens. And it's a good thing this is all you need to know, because Valve is playing it very close to the vest—in fact, it's rewriting the book on controlling the mouse. Much of our time at Valve was spent discussing the game engine (which, by the way, seems planned to trump Doom III in terms of graphical whodun), but between nuggets like "explosions can kill enemies" and a bunch of stuff about physics, we saw just enough gameplay to get out our little reds and yellows.

Half-Life 2 takes place 15 years after the first game, and Gordon is still working for the shadowy G-Man. While some denizens of Xen are back, there's also a new army of aliens to contend with. These guys seem to rely more on technology than the beasts from the first game did—they've got flying units, minigun-riding crows, creepy masked combine soldiers, including nasty puns, and a scary-looking guy wearing an enormous suit of power armor. That guy exhibited behavior beyond anything we've ever seen before: He pursued Gordon into a building, broke the small window in the door with a massive iron-clad fist, ran a camera mounted on the wall through the hole in order to spot Gordon, and then pounded the door off its hinges with brutal efficiency. Scary stuff.

We also saw what may well become Half-Life 2's signature creature, the strider. This 40-foot-tall monstrosity glides through the game's cities on three long, spindly legs—think War of the Worlds and you've got an idea of what this baby looks like.

User Hype

Average Member Ratings:

Write Your Own Hype!

drywallie
anticipation
[05/09/2005]

Warning don't go into halo 2 with high expectations, people are jadedd especially with video games , if you go into halo 2 reading all these reviews of people drooling over the game its only gonna do 2 things, 1) Its not gonna make you itchey for release of a ...

xxxtentado [05/10/2004]

...full hype >

halomani92 [07/22/2004]
halo 2)

halo 2 sounds even better than i thought, it rockz, but will they ever send put a playable demo?...
...full hype >

Rule This Game

- Create Club
- Message Board
- Find a Gamer
- Add to a Collection
- Track this Game
- Add to Wishlist
- Add to Faves
- Declare Yourself an Expert

PEOPLE WHO OWN THIS GAME

Halo Champion 117
Invite this person to be your friend

Thornicator
Invite this person to be your friend

4papper
Invite this person to be your friend

William117
Invite this person to be your friend

XxsupersizeXx
Invite this person to be your friend

Solid Cloud
Invite this person to be your friend

YOUN-20
Invite this person to be your friend

adlionsgamer
Invite this person to be your friend

PCHammer
Invite this person to be your friend

emazing
Invite this person to be your friend

Sealbligh
Invite this person to be your friend

milkyb9
Invite this person to be your friend

See All User Hype 

MORE CONTENT
From your favorite
editors.

MORE OPTIONS
Than any other
game site.

MORE SCREENS
Than we have place
for in print.

MORE ROOM
For longer, in-depth stories.

MORE OPINION
From gamers just
like you.



1UP Partners:





**Enter 1UP's Mobile
Game Tournament!**
Text ONEUP T8 to 66236 or
visit 1up.mo2do.com

YOUR PAGE

With your own
unique 1UP URL.

YOUR FACE

Or other image, if
you're shy.

YOUR FRIENDS

Who share common
interests.

YOUR BLOG

To talk about games
and more.

YOUR GAMES

To show off that
huge collection.



>Find gamers just like you @ 1UP.com



Welcome back, Bella

The Sims 2 is here, whether you like it or not

JEFF GREEN EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Just in case the cover didn't quite give it away for you, we have a review of *The Sims 2* inside. Surprise! There was a bit of dissension about doing this cover story, by the way, amongst the normally hive-minded CGW editorial staff. Why? Because *The Sims* divides gamers that way now. It didn't always, though. As some of you may remember, *The Sims* was a game we all could admit to liking at first. After awhile, however, its popularity swelled to gargantuan proportions, becoming a massive hit amongst nongamers—always the kiss of death for any game's geek cred (as if that matters). *The Sims'* endless reign at the top of the bestseller charts, plus the seemingly countless barrage of expansion packs, made it easy to get sick of it. What we forget, though, is the game itself—how unique it was, how funny, how weird, how smart. So now, the official sequel is here at last, and I am here to tell you, friends, do not scoff. Do not be afraid. Do not let some misguided desire to be "cool" prevent you from checking this out. Because Maxis has really upped the ante this time, with a reimagining of the gameplay that should surprise even the most jaded. Or, as one bleary-eyed editor put it after yet another sleepless night with this game, "This thing is digital crack." It is. Seriously. So give in to it. You have nothing to lose but sleep.



KRISTEN SALVATORE
MANAGING EDITOR

Aspirations: Leather pants, luck of the Irish, painless waxing, whiter and brighter
Fears: Band-Aids, corner offices, game 7



ROBERT COFFEY
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Aspirations: Tasty sandwich, PJ Harvey, X-ray vision, my god-damn pen back
Fears: Tyne Daly, waiter dreams, suffocation



DARREN GLADSTONE
SENIOR EDITOR

Aspirations: ALF, cereal to stay crunchy in milk, a comfortable leisure suit, good Vegas odds
Fears: Taxation with representation, carries, Robert Coffey



WILLIAM O'NEAL
TECH EDITOR

Aspirations: New job, new mountain bike, Amanda Beard, a cocktail
Fears: New job, his wife, parole violation



JOHNNY LIU
PREVIEWS EDITOR

Aspirations: Job security, home ownership, book deal
Fears: Being forgotten, rotten food, losing my pants



RYAN SCOTT
CD-ROM EDITOR

Aspirations: That cute chick over at the sandwich place, some good games to play, Detective Comics #27, no lettuce or tomato
Fears: Spiders, ninjas, angry Kristen



ROB SCHULTZ
ART DIRECTOR

Aspirations: Good health, level 52 wizard, respect, Giants MLB World Champions!!!
Fears: Blood, needles, dentist



MICHAEL JENNINGS
ASSOCIATE ART DIRECTOR

Aspirations: Rocking out, tiny dancing, kung fu, lunch
Fears: Coat hangers, speaker-phones, big fish

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT

Editor-in-Chief Jeff Green
Executive Editor Robert Coffey
Managing Editor Kristen Salvatore
Technical Editor William O'Neal
Senior Editor Darren Gladstone
Previews Editor Johnny Liu
CD-ROM Editor Ryan Scott

DESIGN

Art Director Rob Schultz
Associate Art Director Michael Jennings

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Charles Ardal, T. Byrl Baker, Loyd Case, Tom Chick, Bruce Geryk, Jeff Lackey, Raphael Liberatore, Thomas L. McDonald, Erik Wolpaw
Founder Russell Sipe

ZIFF DAVIS GAME GROUP

Senior Vice President Dale Strang
Editorial Director John Davison
Creative Director Simon Cox
Business Director Bill Damir

COPY DESK

Copy Chief Tom Edwards
Copy Editor Greg Ford
Copy Editor Susie Ochs
Copy Editor Maritza Refuerzo

PRODUCTION

Senior Production Manager Anne Marie Miguel
Production Manager Monica Brent
Asst. Production Manager Teresa Newson

CIRCULATION

Consumer Group Tracy Schultz
Circulation Director Bob Kerekas
Single Copy Sales Director Don Galen
Senior Newsstand Sales Manager Chris Wilkes
Internet and Partnership Marketing Director

SALES

Group Publisher Lee Unickie
Assoc. Group Publisher Stan Taigen
Advertising Director Madi Yamaguchi

TERRITORY MANAGERS AND ACCT. EXECS

(listed geographically from West to East)

GAMING ACCOUNTS

Bay Area Peninsula
Mary Gray Regional Sales Manager
Amy Mishra Account Executive

Northwest

North Bay to Oregon, AR, CO, IA, ID, KS, LA, MN, MO, MT, ND, NE, NM, NV, OR, OK, SD, TX, UT, WA, WI, WY, Northwestern Canada
Aaron Gallion District Sales Representative
Rita Kline Account Executive

Southwest

Southern California and Arizona
Julie Steelman Regional Sales Manager
Eve Friedman Account Executive

East

AL, CT, DE, FL, GA, IN, KY, MA, ME, MI, MS, NC, NH, NJ, NY, OH, PA, RI, SC, TN, VA, VT, WV, Eastern Canada
Ian Sinclair Regional Sales Manager
Rita Kline Account Executive

CONSUMER ACCOUNTS

Consumer West
Marc Callison Consumer Accounts Manager
Candace Droz Account Executive
Consumer East
Matthew E. Panken Regional Sales Manager
Candace Droz Account Executive
Consumer Detroit
Ken Stubblefield Regional Sales Manager

TUP.COM

VP/General Manager Tom Jessiman
Internet Sales Account Manager Bill Young
Editor-in-Chief Sam Kennedy

Senior Advertising Coordinator Tipler Ubbelohde
Advertising Coordinator Monet Whitaker

Sales Assistants

Lynn Fortunato, Simone Deocares-Lengyel, Jessica Reback

MARKETING

Marketing Director Ray Ledda
Research Director May Tong
Marketing Coordinator Jason Freidenfelds

To contact Sales & Advertising, please call (415) 547-8000

ALL FORMATS
ALL THE TIME

Wizards
OF THE COAST

LIVE

TOURNAMENTS
24/7

PRIZES

1000'S
CARDS

unlimited
strategies

UNSTOPPABLE
ADVENTURES

ALL MAGIC
ALL THE TIME

MAGIC

The Gathering®

ONLINE

New sets
released!

BEST REWARDS

THOUSANDS OF
CREATURES

MOST COMPETITION

DEADLIEST
STRATEGIES

HALL OF CHAMPIONS

THOUSANDS OF
CREATURES



PLACE TO PLAY: WWW.MAGICTHEGATHERING.COM THIS IS THE PLACE TO PLAY: WWW.MAGICTHEGATHERING.COM THIS IS THE PLACE TO PLAY: WWW.MAGICTHEGATHERING.COM THIS IS THE PLACE



Letters

Snappy answers to stupid questions



Nothing Compares 2 U

hey, i've been getting ur mag for the last 4 months and i love them. the previews r good to have before hand when u buy a game and the reveiws r good to have to c wut other ppl think of the game. o yeah, i've been wantin to get a new computer laityly cause my parents comp isnt cuttin it (im 14). so ive been readin Wills reveiws on the comps and books and ive got a pretty good idea wut kinda computer i want. but i think gettin 1 of ur guys opions on wut kinda comp i should get when i get money for it. i would have emailed will but i could only find ur email address (at the end of ur "I'm Al Haig" article). ok so the kinda comp i would like would be a school, gaming, programming copmputer (im gonna be a programmer or something like that after college) thats around 3k. this would be rily hlpfull if u could either give ur opion or some1 on the staff (like mayb Will). By the way, ive been looking to be like a beta tester for now but i couldnt find 1 that would pay me (i need money for the computer remember), do u know of ne companys that r coming out with ne games that r paying ppl around my age and up to beta test their games. if so pls could u tell me wut games, their companies and the email address to sign up at.

Scot Garcia

We have two suggestions for you, Scot: a computer with a little feature called "spell check" and the immediate rescinding of your school's certification. Seriously, man, even Prince doesn't spell like that anymore.

Actual meaningful input!

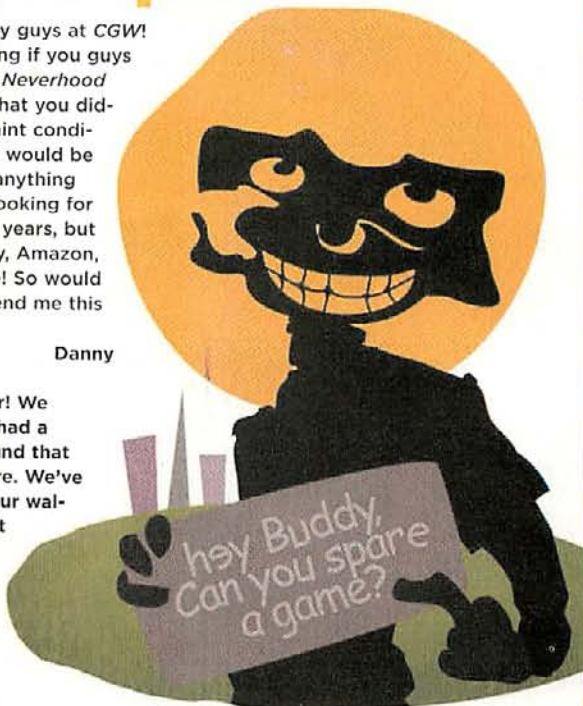
My comment is actually in reply the letter you printed from David Kovacs [Issue #243] and his problem with getting his DOS-based version of *Crusader* to run. If his problem is just that he is running on Windows XP, which can not run DOS-based games, I suggest using a program called AbandonLoader, which, ironically, is the same program I use to run all those

Quid pro quo

Hey, you friendly guys at CGW! I was wondering if you guys had a copy of *Neverhood* lying around that you didn't want anymore (in mint condition with the box 'n' all would be awesome, but I'll take anything you got). I have been looking for this game for over two years, but anywhere I find it (eBay, Amazon, etc.) it is too expensive! So would you help me out and send me this awesome game?

Danny

Hey, you friendly reader! We were wondering if you had a 50-dollar bill lying around that you didn't want anymore. We've been looking through our wallets for two seconds but we can't find one! So could you help us out and send this awesome currency?



old adventure games. He should also get VDMSound, which, after installation, works in conjunction with AbandonLoader. Both programs are free and simple to use. AbandonLoader can be found through any common search engine and VDMSound can be found at its official page (<http://ntvdm.cjb.net>).

Ryvvn

Thanks for the tip, Ryvvn. Now where did we put our copy of *Crusader*?



No trespassing

I've been a faithful CGW subscriber for the past several years (since '99 or so). I say faithful because I'm not one of those, "I'm canceling my subscription 'cuz your review of [insert game here] SUCKED!!!" No, I've never sent you any sort of correspondence, except to ask Will for some tech advice. I'm one of those people who quietly enjoys reading your magazine from cover to cover each month, getting advice, chuckling at the jokes, basing my next purchase on what your reviews say. Anyhow, I'm writing you today to tell you that my wife and I are going to be in San Francisco. While my wife wants to do all of the "wifey" things (wine tasting in Napa Valley, shopping, taking a boat ride, shopping, fine dining, shopping, you get the picture), she has actually allowed me to set aside some time in "our" schedule to do what I want. I think Jeff knows where I'm coming from. After careful consideration, I have come up with one humble request. I was

ILLUSTRATION BY MICHAEL JENNINGS

Mail Bites



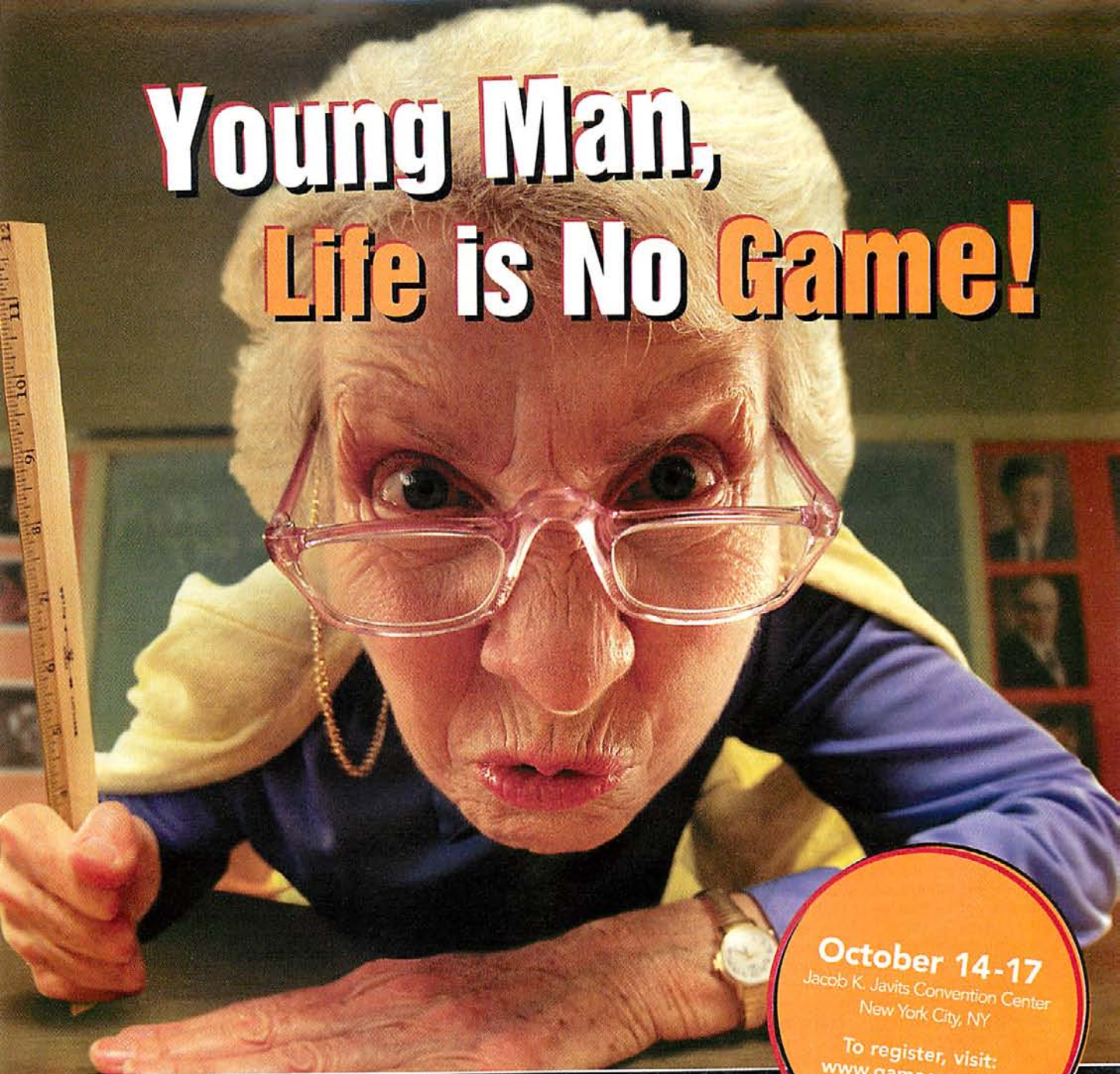
Shrimp and homosexuality—a strange-sounding combination.

—Samuel Silver

Review copies are now available of *Prom on Mars: Volume 1*—the webcomic chronicling the adventures of Liz and the seniors of Liberty High on their way to Mars for their senior prom.

—Anonymous e-mail

Young Man, Life is No Game!



digital**life**™ featuring **GameOn NY**

October 14-17
Jacob K. Javits Convention Center
New York City, NY

To register, visit:
www.gameonny.com
www.digitallife.com

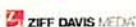
DigitalLife is this year's ultimate technology event for home, work and play – featuring GameOn NY, the first major video game expo & tournament to hit New York City. Test cutting-edge action and sports games, compete in tournaments to win cash prizes, and drop by the Gamers Lounge to catch cool entertainment and celebrity guests.

Don't get left behind! See it all at DigitalLife.

Official Gaming Sponsor:



Designed in Conjunction with:



Sponsors:





Wondering if my wife and I could either get the nickel tour of your office or even do lunch or happy hour on one of the days we are in town. I know that you probably get requests like this all the time and you have quite a busy schedule, so I can appreciate your hesitance to grant my request. And I know that even though I have helped pay your salaries for the past five years or so, I know this only entitles me to my magazine each month. So I can only offer you this: the first round of drinks are on me. Scouts' honor. I really enjoy reading your magazine each month and would like to show my gratitude in person. It would mean a lot to me. OK, enough of the guilt trip. :)

Here's a little more info about me, just so you don't think I'm some weirdo: I'm a 31-year-old airline pilot, my wife is an accountant, and we live in Houston, TX. We make a decent living, have no kids, and live in your typical quiet suburbia. While I'm a calm, professional pilot during the day, I bring my laptop with me on my trips and frag the crap outta anyone I can online at night. My drugs, err...games of choice are *Battlefield 1942*, *Counter-Strike*, and *UT2004*. While I'm new at *UT2004*, I'd be happy to kick anyone's ass in the other two games if I come over for a visit. :)

Anonymous

Sorry, gentle reader, ever since the Pants-Free Visitor episode of 2001, our company lawyers have set down strict guidelines. 1) No visitors. 2) In the event there are visitors, no taking their pants. 3) No taking their shirts, slapping a coolie hat on 'em, then dunking them in icy water. Man, lawyers are just no fun.

Dam that space-time continuum!

What's wrong with you guys? Now I love the mag and everything about it except one thing...the demos. I mean, they're great, but you send demos, and the game came out 2 months earlier! No one (if it's multi-player) is gonna be playing these anymore. So send it to us when they release the demo, not 2 months later! Thank you.

Spenser Staebler

We honestly do our best, Spenser, but a couple of things get in the way of our slapping timelier demos on the CD. First of all there's the whole "our best" issue—that's an effort easily matched by most third-graders. Further, our production schedule dictates that the disc is finished roughly two months prior to your getting it. When you couple that with the fact more and more developers are delivering demos *after* completing their games, it's hard to make sure the demos reach your home any earlier.

More demo stuff

Darren and Jeff, representing the most esteemed computer gaming magazine, schlepp all the way to Santa Monica at the whim of game-designer egos, and we didn't even rate one teeny, little level of *Doom 3* on the demo CD? What's up with that? Geez.

Or am I jumping the gun? Next month—right?

Love you guys!

Cynthia B.

We were going to package the entire game with that issue, Cynthia, but then we got Spenser's e-mail and he made us realize that if we couldn't beat *Doom 3*'s release, we just shouldn't bother. Thanks to us, you've been spared the agony of playing a marginally aged product.

Coffey talk

I don't understand how on earth people could possibly write Robert Coffey hate mail. I've enjoyed Scorched Earth ever since Greenspeak took the plunge and I've enjoyed every single one of them. He's certainly a brilliant man, and I guess you need some sort of dark sense of humor to full appreciate how much he kicks ass.



Regarding the last column about PC games not having the same liveliness as, say, playing softball or being a LAN. I fully agree with you. Playing *UT2004* and other assorted online games has really made me realize that, while PC games can be great fun online, typically:

- 1) You'll never see those people again.
- 2) Most of these people have the intelligence of a small banana.

You are once again correct that the only way to truly enjoy PC gaming online is to LAN. I've played *UT* online so many times, but nothing is quite as satisfying as hearing my friend shout from the other side of the room "HOW THE HELL?!" Thank you for your time, you are a great man.

Joe Conti



I just wanted to start by saying I've never written to an editor of a magazine before, but when I read your article about playing games on Easy, I had to make this my first. I just wanted to say that I completely agree with what you said. I'm a 28-year-old female who loves to play games, but there are times when I just want to go in and win, and I'll go in and blow things up on Easy mode. Normal and Hard modes are fun to play, too, but sometimes

they're too much of a pain in the ass to want to worry with when you just want to jump in, kill something, and jump out. Thanks again for the article; if everything you write is done as interestingly as this article, I can't wait to see what you have to say next. Keep up the good work.

Aimee Luffman

Mail Bites

Either I have the wrong idea of what a review is supposed to be, or certain CGW editors suck at reviewing games.

—Rodel Rufo

Speak the words of wisdom, Robert, but please don't plant those images of Jeff in oversized footie pajamas in my brain again!

—Memneth

VENGEANCE REIGNS FROM ABOVE.



Soar into battle with jetpack-enhanced multiplayer combat



Blast the opposition with all-new weapons and vehicles

TRIBES VENGEANCE

Destruction. Chaos. Retribution.

Tribes is back with a vengeance. The ultimate high-flying, multiplayer battle experience returns with deadly new weapons, faster and more versatile flight, in-depth strategic team action, and the first-ever Tribes single-player campaign.

www.tribesvengeance.com Coming October 2004



© 2004 Sierra Entertainment, Inc. All rights reserved. Sierra, the Sierra logo, Tribes and the Tribes logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of Sierra Entertainment, Inc., in the U.S. and/or other countries. Vivendi Universal Games and the Vivendi Universal Games logo are trademarks of Vivendi Universal Games, Inc. Developed exclusively by Irrational Games. Irrational Games is a trademark of Irrational Studios, LLC. ATI is used under license and is a registered trademark or trademark of ATI Technologies Inc. in the United States and other countries. GameSpy and the "Powered by GameSpy" design are trademarks of GameSpy Industries, Inc. All rights reserved. All other trademarks are property of their respective owners.

"Easy Does It" is a great article and I fully support your view. Easy is better for those of us that have real lives to live! Thank you. I have a younger brother who thinks he's "better" and his life is more meaningful because he frags more people than I do in Counter-Strike.

Again your article hits the spot!

Lucas Del Castillo



And so America's Youth goes down the toilet

Hello, my name is Alex; I am 17 and I have been a dedicated reader for over a year now. I first found out about CGW when I saw a magazine in a barbershop that intrigued me. It had a cover story for an interesting game called *Medal of Honor: Allied Assault*. A few months later I bought that World War II shooter, but I still wasn't happy (or geeky) yet. Then I subscribed to CGW and thanks to you, I have no life. While my other friends were at parties having fun, I was slashing orcs while downloading *Desert Combat*. While my other friends were playing sports, I was coaching the Redskins at the Super Bowl against the Cowboys. While my friends were driving their new sports cars, I was stealing them and running from the cops. I remember when all I used to care about were money, girls, and cars. Now, thanks to you, I still care about those things, only pixelated. Your reviews are awesome, Greenspeak blew, Scorched Earth rules (although I need to visit a psychotherapist because of it). But when Scooter and especially Dana left, I locked myself in my room and cried for days. In short, ladies and gentlemen, you have stolen my life, and God bless you for it.

Alexander Keen

We're sorry. Really

Messieurs Pantalons de Smartier

I just wanted to make a comment about last month's [Issue #243] Letter of the Month—you remember, Monsieur Pantalons

de Smarty? Anyway, he remarked that the word "hippopotamus" is derived from Greek words that translate to "water horse." If our Monsieur had really known his Greek, however, he would know that hippopotamus does not mean "water horse," but rather "river horse." A water horse would be a "hydrohippo."

Larry from Madrid

In the Sept. 2004 issue, there is a factual error in the *F.E.A.R.* article. Near the end it says, "The graphics are 'per pixel lit,' which means that every single pixel rendered in the game is evaluated for lighting and color—pretty much as detailed as you can possibly go—an effect not possible prior to the arrival of DirectX 9 graphics cards."

This is simply not true. Any shader effect that can be achieved in DirectX9 can be pulled off in DX8. I know because I've incorporated DX8-specific per pixel lighting into my own indie title and it works just fine. DX9 doesn't really do anything special until you start getting into ps3.0 effects.

Ryan

Thanks, Ryan. We stand corrected. And very confused.

Guess who didn't go to prom?

In his review of *Universal Combat* [Issue #243], Erik Wolpaw makes the ridiculous mistake of placing the destruction of the Death Star in the era surrounding the year 3000. However, as any nincompoop knows, the events of *Star Wars: Episode IV—A New Hope* occurred "a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away." I hereby revoke your geek licenses.

Andrew Schran



ZIFF DAVIS MEDIA

Chairman & CEO
Robert F. Callahan
President & COO
Bart W. Catalano
Chief Financial Officer
Derek Irwin
Senior Executive Vice President,
Publishing Operations
Tom McGrath
Executive Vice President & Editorial Director
Michael J. Miller
Executive Vice President, General Counsel
& Secretary
Gregory Barton

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENTS

Jasmine Alexander (Technology & Sales Operations)
Tim Castelli (PC Magazine Group)
Chris Dobbrow (Corporate Sales & Publisher, *eWEEK*)
Larry Green (Business Development & Worldwide Licensing)
Charles Mast (Circulation)
Sloan Seymour (Enterprise Group)
Dale Strang (Game Group)
Jason Young (Internet)

VICE PRESIDENTS

Sara DeCarlo (Database Marketing)
Aaron Goldberg (Market Experts)
Jim Hasl (Event Marketing Group)
Julie Herness (Event Marketing Group)
Tom Jessiman (VP and General Manager, IUProm)
Michael Krieger (Market Experts)
Charles Lee (Integrated Media)
Jim Louderback (Editor-in-Chief, Internet)
Eric Lundquist (Editor-in-Chief, *eWEEK*)
Chris Maginn (Internet)
Melinda Maginn Reilly (Integrated Media & Corporate Sales)
Angelo Mandarano (Internet)
Paul O'Reilly (Event Marketing Group)
Ellen Pearlman (Editor-in-Chief, *CIO Insight*)
Beth Repeta (Human Resources)
Martha Schwartz (Custom/Conference Group)
Pam Spector (Business Development and International Licensing)
Tom Steinhilber-Threlkeld (Editor-in-Chief, *Baseline*)
Stephen Sutton (Internet Audience Development)
Eida Vale (Research & Market Intelligence)
Stephen Veith (Publisher, *CIO Insight*)
Monica Vila (Event Marketing Group)
Senior Director, Manufacturing Carlos Lugo
Director of Corporate Communications Randy Zane
Consumer Group Circulation Director Tracy Schultz
Director of Internet and Partnership Marketing Chris Wilkes

Contact anyone on this masthead via e-mail using first name, last name@ziffdavis.com

PERMISSIONS

Copyright © 2004 Ziff Davis Media. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without permission is prohibited. For permission to reuse material in this publication (or on this website) or to use our logo, e-mail permissions@ziffdavis.com. For reprints, contact Reprints@ziffdavis.com at 866-679-9444.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

For subscription service questions, address changes, or to order, please contact us at: Web: <http://service.computergamingworld.com> (for customer service) or <http://subscriptions.computergamingworld.com> (for orders). Phone: U.S. and Canada (800) 827-4150 or (303) 624-7624; elsewhere (303) 604-7445. Mail: Computer Gaming World, P.O. Box 5767, Boulder, CO 80322-7677 (please include your mailing label with any correspondence as it contains information that will expedite processing). Fax: U.S. and Canada (303) 683-4094; elsewhere (303) 604-0588. E-mail (please type your full name and the address at which you subscribe): info@computergamingworld.com. Subscriptions: The online subscription rate is \$19.97 or \$34.97 with CD-ROM. Computer Gaming World is published monthly, with occasional exceptions. A special issue may count as a subscription issue, a combined or expanded issue may count as two subscription issues, and there may sometimes be an extra issue. Outside the U.S., add \$16 per year for surface mail. U.S. funds only. Please allow 4-6 weeks before receiving your first issue as well as for any subscription changes to take place on an existing subscription. Back issues: Back issues are \$8 each in the U.S., \$10 each elsewhere (subject to availability). Prepayment is required. Make checks payable to Computer Gaming World. Mail your requests to: Back Issues, Ziff Davis Media Inc., P.O. Box 5318, Boulder, CO 80322-3111. Mailing lists: We sometimes make lists of our customers available to makers of goods and services that may interest you. If you do not wish to receive their mailings, please write to us at: Computer Gaming World, P.O. Box 5767, Boulder, CO 80322-7677.

Audit Bureau of
Circulations
Member
ABC
AUDITED

Mail
Bites
1

Hello, I would like to present
you the House of Cool drunk-
en hottest hollywood stars!! :)
—Burritos I. Monogrammed

I would make love to Id if it
were a single
human...female...um...yeah.
—Sameer S. on 1UP.com

CALL OF DUTY

UNITED OFFENSIVE

— EXPANSION PACK —

WINNER OF OVER 80
GAME OF THE YEAR
AWARDS AND 50
EDITORS' CHOICE
AWARDS



13 new single-player missions,
as seen through the eyes of American,
British and Russian soldiers.

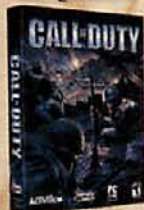


New weapons, including flamethrowers,
deployable machine guns, and the ability
to call in artillery strikes.



10 new multiplayer maps and
3 new modes, with vehicle combat
including tanks and jeeps!

REQUIRES



CALL OF DUTY™
TO PLAY

WWW.CALLOFDUTY.COM

ACTIVISION

activision.com



Visit www.esrb.org
for updated rating
information.



© 2003-2004 Activision, Inc. Activision is a registered trademark and Call of Duty and Call of Duty: United Offensive are trademarks of Activision, Inc. All rights reserved. Developed by Gray Matter Interactive, Inc. This product contains software technology licensed from Id Software ("Id Technology"). Id Technology © 1999-2000 Id Software, Inc. The ratings icon is a registered trademark of the Entertainment Software Association. PC CD-ROM logo © and TM IEMA 2003. All other trademarks and trade names are the properties of their respective owners.

CLAIM THE HIGH GROUND.
CONQUER THE DEPTHS.

© 2004 Cinergi Interactive. All rights reserved. Electronic Arts and Armies of Exigo are trademarks or registered trademarks of Electronic Arts Inc. in the U.S. and/or other countries. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.

Break new ground in *Armies of Exigo* as elves and knights wage war against vicious beasts in the forests and highlands of the surface, then descend into the dark and unforgiving caverns of the underworld to face off against an even darker evil – the Fallen. Whether fighting above ground or far beneath it, your campaign for supremacy knows no bounds.

ELECTRONIC ARTS™

ARMIES OF EXIGO

PC
CD-ROM
SOFTWARE

Visit www.esrb.org
for updated rating
information.



Break the Boundaries of the Battlefield
WWW.AOX.EA.COM



Cast Powerful Spells



Command Massive Armies



Take Strategy to New Depths

THE DELL XPS GAMING PCs. POWER AT A PRICE THAT
FIRES YOU UP
EVEN BEFORE YOU REDUCE ENEMIES
TO ASHES.



Inspiron XPS Notebook shown with Skullz design option.

Pricing/Availability: Prices, specifications, availability and terms of offers may change without notice. Taxes, fees and shipping charges are extra, and vary. Valid for U.S. Dell Home Systems Co. new purchases only. Dell cannot be responsible for pricing or other errors, and reserves the right to cancel orders arising from such errors. **Limited Warranty:** You can get a copy of our limited warranties and guarantees by writing Dell USA LP, Attn: Warranties, One Dell Way, Round Rock, TX 78682. To purchase warranty only or for information on other service options please call 1-800-915-3355 or visit www.dell.com/termsandconditions. **Service:** At Home service provided via third-party contract with customer. Technician will be dispatched, if necessary, following phone-based troubleshooting. Availability varies. Other conditions apply. **DVD+RW and DVD+RW/R Drives:** Discs burned with this drive may not be compatible with some existing drives and players; using DVD+R media provides maximum compatibility. **PURCHASE PLAN: Dell Preferred Account:** Offered by CIT Bank to qualified U.S. residents with approved credit. Taxes, fees, and shipping charges are extra and vary. **Gigabit Ethernet:** This term does not connote actual operating speed of 1 GB/sec. For high-speed transmission connection to a Gigabit Ethernet server and network infrastructure is required. **Home Installation:** Service provides for basic system set up, connection of up to three external devices, set up of Internet service, and email and system basic overview, by trained technician. Does not cover repair services. Subject to customer's contract with third party. See dell.com/servicecontracts for details. Availability varies. Other conditions apply. Please see your contract with the service provider for other important details. **Trademarks/Copyright Notices:** Intel, Intel Inside, Intel Inside logo, Intel Centrino, Intel Centrino logo, Celeron, Intel Xeon, Intel SpeedStep, Itanium, Pentium, and Pentium III Xeon are trademarks or registered trademarks of Intel Corporation or its subsidiaries in the United States and other countries. Microsoft and Windows are registered trademarks of Microsoft Corporation. ©2004 Dell Inc. All rights reserved.

DELL XPS GAMING PCs. Power. Speed. Affordability. And unparalleled experiences that'll leave you thinking "PC" stands for "perfect combination." High-quality technology, expandability, sleek designs, and a 24-hour-a-day support staff of real gamers make it the complete package. >>> **Bottom line, you win.**

DELL™ DIMENSION™ XPS ULTIMATE GAMING DESKTOP

More award-winning machine than you'll ever need, thanks to the kickin' 460 watts of power to support ultra high-end graphics cards, Intel® processors, and big-time bandwidth for now and into the future. Not to mention the cooling capability (5 ultra quiet fans) to keep the system cool and quiet so the sound is crystal clear. Top it off with an easy to upgrade chassis design and you can sum it up in a word. Sweet.

- Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor 550 with HT Technology (3.40GHz, 1MB L2 cache, 800MHz FSB)
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- 1GB Dual Channel DDR2 SDRAM
- 80GB Hard Drive
- 256MB PCI Express™ x16 ATI's Radeon™ X800 XT
- 16X DVD-ROM Drive
- 16X CD/DVD Burner (DVD+RW/+R*)

- Sound Blaster® Audigy™ 2 (D) Sound Card
- 19" (18.0" v.i.s., .24dp) M993 Monitor
- Productivity Pack including WordPerfect® 12 and Microsoft® Money 2004 Standard
- 1-Yr Limited Warranty*, 1-Yr At-Home Service* with XPS Telephone Support

Upgrade to a Power Pack for only \$239:

- 160GB SATA Hard Drive
- Dell 5650 5.1 Surround Sound Speaker System with Subwoofer
- 2-Yr Limited Warranty*, 2-Yr At-Home Service*

\$2499 or as low as **\$75/mo.***
E-VALUE Code:
01578-D50924m

Dell recommends Microsoft® Windows® XP Professional

DELL™ INSPIRON™ XPS ULTIMATE GAMING NOTEBOOK

Bring your games along for the ride with some of the latest Intel® processors, a built-in subwoofer and Gigabit Ethernet.* (Can you say...LAN parties?) We'll even up the ante with freebies like any one of our three slick design options and a killer XPS backpack. You'll be locked and loaded in style.



- Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology at 3.40GHz with 800MHz Front Side Bus
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- 15.4" UltraSharp™ Wide Screen UXGA Display
- 512MB DDR SDRAM at 400MHz
- 60GB 7200 RPM Hard Drive
- 4X CD/DVD Burner (DVD+RW/+R*)

- 256MB DDR ATI's MOBILITY™ RADEON™ 9800 AGP 8X Graphics
- 12 Cell Lithium Ion Battery (96Whr)
- 10/100/1000 Gigabit Ethernet*
- 1-Yr Limited Warranty*, 1-Yr At Home Service* with XPS Telephone Support

Upgrade to a Power Pack for only \$450:

- 100GB Hard Drive
- 1GB DDR SDRAM

\$2899 or as low as **\$87/mo.***
E-VALUE Code:
01578-D80928m

NOW AVAILABLE!

- Upgrade to 256MB graphics card for current XPS owners.
- Only \$399! Includes Home Installation.*
- Visit www.dell.com/xps to order!



XPS Metallic



Skullz



Plasma



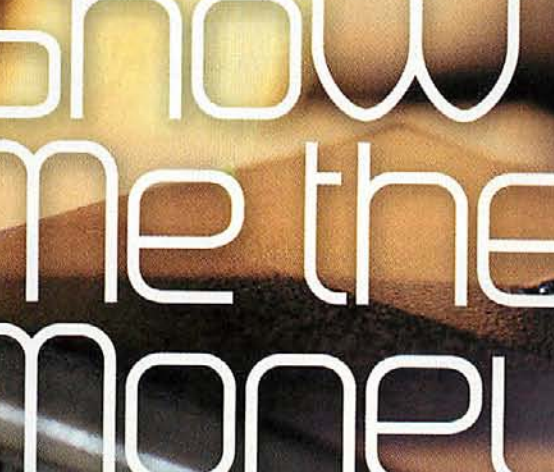
Cipher

For games, joysticks and all the hardcore gear you need to blur the line between cyber and reality. **Go online or call.**

Intense Gaming. Easy as



Click www.dell.com/cgw Call **1-877-980-3355**
toll free



Show
me the
money!

No. 67121

Name Neil Aitken

SECOND WEEK

	IN	OUT	IN	OUT	IN	OUT	IN	OUT	IN	OUT
SUNDAY										
MONDAY										
TUESDAY										
WEDNESDAY										

08:07 MAR 05
16:50 MAR 05

07:45 MAR 06
13:52 MAR 06
14:11 MAR 06
16:59 MAR 06
08:02 MAR 07
16:59 MAR 07

06:56 MAR 08
15:08 MAR 08

S.D.I. _____
F.I.C.A. _____
Fed. W/H Tax _____
St. W/H Tax _____

Reg. Time _____
Overtime _____
Dol. Time _____

Hrs. @ _____
Hrs. @ _____
Hrs. @ _____

TOTAL DEDUCTIONS _____



30

After Alice
Proud to be an American? Damn straight, he is. McGee discusses his new games.



32

Demand
Do game-on-demand services make the grade? See for yourself in our report.



34

SWG
Gamers need love, too. That's why one intrepid reporter signed up for a little field test.

Neil Aitken is fed up. Working as a programmer at Vivendi Universal's Knowledge Adventure division since February 2000, Aitken has dealt with a company unwilling to compensate for overtime. Management has forced him to change time cards to reflect fewer hours and even made him cross out weekends entirely. At least, so he claims.

Graves & Associates filed a lawsuit against VU on June 28, citing violation of five California labor codes and one business and profession code. As of press time, VU wouldn't comment. "This was a direct result of watching good friends and fellow programmers be laid off after working extraordinary amounts of overtime," says Aitken. "We were being squeezed to our limits, and those who voiced their dissatisfaction generally got cut."

OVERWORKED, UNDERPAID

That the case is being filed in California is significant, as California law specifically provides additional protection to computer programmers over federal laws. Employers have to pay their programmers at least \$45.63 an hour or a minimum salary of \$1,200 a week to avoid overtime wages. Federal laws mandate a lower rate.

The suit isn't just fighting for Aitken's overtime, either. If he's successful, all employees under similar circumstances at VU will receive back pay. "We believe that the average programmer is working between 10 and 15 hours a week of overtime. Each programmer is entitled to one-and-a-half times his hourly wage for every hour of overtime since the year 2000," says Allen Graves, Aitken's lawyer.

So, could VU be dishing out millions of dollars? "Not likely," says research analyst and former labor lawyer Michael Pachter. "The one thing that VU did poorly was define job requirements." The gist is that paying hourly wages denotes an essentially replaceable job. Programmers are skilled workers, and it would be smarter to either 1) not let them work overtime if they are hourly or 2) just make them salaried so that there is no issue of overtime pay. Well, either that or just ship jobs off to coders in India who'll work feverishly for a fraction of the price.

Many developers were surprised that Aitken had filed a lawsuit. Most felt that if the work conditions at VU really were that bad, Aitken should have gotten the hell out. As a senior programmer at Bethesda Softworks, Steve Meister has felt the heat of "crunch time" but has come away only with good experiences. "If you don't like the way you're treated at work, try to find work at a company that has more reasonable expectations of its employees," says Meister.

The results of the lawsuit could draw a close eye to the videogame industry, as



Look for Neil as he models his newest fashion line: out-of-work wear.

"The bigger risk for the publishers is that they'll have to share a bigger piece of the pie. That can translate into higher costs for the game."

overtime pay, especially in this industry, is largely unregulated and remains so. Last year, President Bush increased tensions by threatening to veto a bill with an overtime pay protection guarantee.

A MATURING INDUSTRY

The upshot is that employees just want overtime handled right. In fact, in a recent "quality of life" survey by the International Game Developers Association, a surprising 46.8 percent of game developers reported that they were not compensated for overtime. Only 4.3 percent mentioned receiving cash recompense, while others got time off, royalties, or profit sharing in exchange. Pachter, however, says that this is where the lawsuit can hit the consumer

the hardest. "The bigger risk for the publishers is that if [the Aitken case] goes through, they'll have to share a bigger piece of the pie. That can translate into higher costs for a game."

The suit's mere presence is spurring discussions between developers over the nature of the industry and how its workers should be treated. "A curious thing is happening, and the Vivendi suit is a reflection of it," says Sean Hyde-Moyer, a producer at THQ. "The industry is starting to mature."

The suit was filed long before Aitken's last day at the company, August 13, and, he says, "Many people expressed their support." The trial date for Aitken's suit isn't until at least June of next year, but the case will likely be settled before then. **Patrick Klepek**

HE GOT GAME

Everybody's All-American

McGee talks about life after *Alice*

Is the height of hubris putting your name in a game's title? Not if you're American McGee. He worked his way up through the ranks at Id Software and helped assemble the *Doom* and *Quake* series. He created *Alice*...sorry, *American McGee's Alice*...a twisted gothic revisiting of Lewis Carroll's classic children's story. He also has some big plans for what's coming next.

OVER THE RAINBOW

After the modest success of *Alice*, McGee shopped around the idea of a dark retelling of *The Wizard of Oz*. Atari (then Infogrames) bit at the pitch. "We were ahead of schedule and f***ing Infogrames pulled out because of their financial problems [in 2003]." They had the game done, a book written, toys for sale, and a film trilogy optioned by legendary überproducer Jerry Bruckheimer. "All of this is put on hold, in limbo, because nobody was willing to take a f***ing chance. Sad truth is, that's just the nature of the industry now."

GETTING ENLIGHTENED

Well, some people are willing to try something different. McGee was hanging out with Trevor Chan (creator of *Capitalism* and founder of

Enlight Studios) in Hong Kong when the two decided to do some work together. As the creative director of Enlight Studios, McGee is shepherding new titles and giving them his stamp of approval. Which brings us to McGee's first assignment: to help put together all the pieces for *American McGee Presents Scrapland*. "When I first saw what [Spanish developer Mercury Steam] created, I knew that I wanted to be involved." As executive producer of the title, he's already got a lot to do on a day-to-day basis. He's working on marketing and, more important, making sure the dialogue is polished and localized. The game does, in fact, show promise. So much so that McGee is already talking to Mercury Steam about working on his next twisted fairy-tale game. He says it's too early to discuss which classic tale will get turned on its ear next, but did say that there are other projects in the works.

The first is a possible MMO version of *Oz*. At press time, the only official word is that he's talking to a Korean (NCsoft! Cough! Cough!) company about the possibilities. The other is a game tentatively titled *Bad Day L.A.*, a *Medal of Honor*-style first-person shooter that's set in the modern day. Going for some complete goofball slapstick elements, it might even be a little reminiscent of *No One Lives Forever*. McGee promises something "damn funny with a really dark sense of humor." We expect no less. **✕ Darren Gladstone**

"When I first saw [a demo of *Scrapland*], I knew that I wanted to be involved."

REALITY CHECK

Reality Check compares the ratings of the major gaming press with GameRankings.com, which averages all published reviews.

GAME	CGW	CGM	GameSpot	IGN.com	GameSpy	1UP.com	GameRankings.com
Beyond Divinity	C	C	B	B+	B+	—	B
City of Heroes	A	A	B+	B+	B+	B+	A-
Hitman: Contracts	C	C	B	B+	D	B	B
Lineage II	D	C-	C	—	C	C+	B-
Warlords Battlecry III	B-	B+	B-	B+	C	B	B-



NEWS
FEED

» Say hello to my leetle game. VU is bringing *Scarface* back from the dead in a GTA-like third-person shooter sometime in 2005. Is it coming to the PC? Maybe, but we wouldn't bet a mound of cocaine on it. »



Greetings from Seattle

CGW wrangles Microsoft conference to find out what the future holds for Windows gaming

For the past few years, Microsoft has held a developer-only event called Meltdown. In many ways, Meltdown is like a mini Game Developers Conference, with the exception being that its focus has always been on creating games for the Windows platform. Meltdown has also been notoriously closed to the press, but with Microsoft's next OS on the way, CGW had to sneak in the back door to Microsoft's headquarters.

If the mantra for Meltdown was "Games for Windows," then the latest version of DirectX, version 9.0c, and the next Windows OS are the keys to this charge. Of course, the next OS is well off. When asked when Microsoft expects to ship it, Chris Donahue, lead technical evangelist for DirectX, stated bluntly, "On Wednesday." Which Wednesday is anyone's guess. Humor aside, according to Microsoft, gaming is one of the first few things that people do in Windows after listening to music and performing other multimedia tasks. To that end, the company touted a few of the features that highlight the next Windows OS' gaming pedigree. For instance, look for a gaming folder that's similar to the My Music and My Pictures folders already in Windows XP. The next OS may also incorporate the Windows XP Game Advisor that is currently available on Microsoft's site. (It's a utility that scans your machine and lets you know if your rig is up to snuff.) Microsoft is banking on making games both more accessible and simple to use in order to lure more of the already 120 mil-

lion people who have purchased XP into the world of gaming.

Furthermore, the next Windows OS will address many issues—old ones that have plagued PC gaming since its inception, as well as new ones—that serve to make the Windows gaming experience more plug-and-play. Namely, look for parental controls that limit access to games based on things such as ESRB rating. Microsoft is also looking to include features like buddy lists for game matchmaking and Live tools for Windows that will make Windows more like the Xbox Live experience, complete with Gamertags, voice chat, and matchmaking. One of the most anticipated features that we expect to see in the next Windows OS is a game patching system similar to Windows Updater through which publishers can specify download locations, games will look for patches, and users will be prompted by Windows when a patch is available for a particular game. We've confirmed rumors of "Drop-and-Play" functionality that will be in the next OS or maybe even sooner. One source says some EA games coming out as early as next year (ahem, *Battlefield 2*) may instantly install all the needed files (like on an Xbox), or at least let you more quickly choose where the install goes.

While a lot is still unconfirmed, at least we know that the next OS will launch on a Wednesday—at some point. We'll keep you posted. **William O'Neal** with additional reporting by **Darren Gladstone**

NEWS FEED

» Aces high. Gathering just announced that *Wings of War*, a WWI dog-fighting game, is on for a fall release. »

Get in Touch with Your Inner Evil.



SIERRA



Comic Mischief
Suggestive Themes
Violence

ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

Game contents and software copyright © 2004 Elvir Studios Limited. Evil Genius and the Evil Genius logo are trademarks of Elvir Studios Limited. All rights reserved. Published by Sierra Entertainment, Inc. Sierra and the Sierra logo are registered trademarks or trademarks in the U.S. and/or other countries. Vivendi Universal Games and the Vivendi Universal Games logo are trademarks of Vivendi Universal Games, Inc. All other trademarks are property of their respective owners.

www.howevilareyou.com

MAKING THE GRADE

Report Card: Games on Demand

As broadband users increase, is the time finally right?

Downloading a game is nothing new—Shareware, demos, you name it. But it's been a hard sell convincing some to forgo the whole "buying the box" experience. Times are changing thanks to the proliferation of broadband, and some key players are trying their hand at making games available on demand. That's why it's high time that someone (namely us) took a hard look at these services to see if they really are worth your hard-earned money. **By Darren Gladstone**

AMERICA ONLINE

SERVICE So what if AOL caters most of its gaming channel (keyword: Games) to soccer moms with casual puzzle and arcade fare? People still want to play 'em, right? In talking with the folks at AOL, it appears they are already taking steps in the right direction. Spokespeople say that while you can currently download demos (like you can at any number of places), you can also download full commercial games from AOL's partner site, Trymedia (www.trygames.com). The deal works like this: Download a full game. It's yours to play for a couple hours to get a feel for it, and then you're locked out. If you like your first taste, you have the option to pay for unlocking the full game. Want to burn it onto a CD for backup? Go right ahead, it's yours now. The same practice has been done forever with smaller shareware games, but seeing it employed for larger retail games is a nice change.

GAMES The games themselves, well, that's a whole other issue. Among the most notable multiplayer games offered were *Dead Man's Hand*, *Civilization III*, *Monopoly*, and *MechWarrior 3*. Obviously, AOL has its work cut out for itself, lacking any hot games from the past two years, but the company promises more compelling titles. We'll see.

COMCAST CABLE

SERVICE A relative newcomer to the gaming world is Comcast. It has recently acquired and merged G4TechTV (into whatever the heck it plans on calling it). The next step is

Report Card			
STUDENT: Games on Demand		SEMESTER: Fall 2004	
PROVIDER	SERVICE GRADE	GAMES GRADE	COMMENTS
AMERICA ONLINE	B	C-	Good performer, but has trouble making friends.
COMCAST CABLE	B	B	A very eager student. Shows great signs of improvement.
YAHOO! GAMES	B+	B+	Good work, keep it up! Don't let your grades start to slip.

launching into online gaming. Unlike what AOL/Trymedia is doing with full game purchases, Comcast provides a rental service. Installing a basic applet, games are streamed to your PC. Only the basics needed for game performance are downloaded while the rest is done on the fly. Not sure how to play? The manual is available as well. After that initial download, the results onscreen are pretty impressive when playing a game. The only real downside: The games don't come with you. If you want to play on the road, you'll need a Net connection to navigate a website and choose the game you want to play.

GAMES For \$15 a month, you get unlimited use of Comcast's stable of games. While it is still early on, Comcast has already made some smart partnerships with Ubisoft and Atari for a fairly healthy collection of games. Among some of the notable ones to check out are *Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow*, *Ghost Recon*, *Unreal Tournament: Game of the Year Edition*, *XIII*, and *Neverwinter Nights: Shadows of Undrentide*.

YAHOO! GAMES

SERVICE Yahoo! has been in online gaming the longest. As a result, it has the largest selection of titles and the smartest variety of price-plan options. This is why it struck us as strange that spokespeople for Yahoo! outright refused to participate in our little competition. They assured us that there are no plans to discontinue its Games on Demand service, but it did give us pause. Undaunted, we signed up and found that it uses the same exact technology as Comcast for downloading and streaming games.

GAMES How you play dictates how much you'll spend. Only plan on trying three games at a time? It'll run you 10 bucks a month. Other options include paying \$15 a month for unlimited play or \$35 for three months at a clip. Yahoo! has a leg up because of a two-year head start. Thanks to that, you'll find a bunch of favorites, ranging from *Freelancer* and *Rise of Nations* to *Oni*, *Serious Sam*, and *Rainbow Six*. But where's *UT2003* or *UT2004*?

NEWS FEED

➤ Psychotic! Tim Schafer's Xbox title *Psychonauts* has been acquired by Majesco. It's now coming to the PC as well. ➤ *Fuller Spectrum Warrior*. It's coming to the PC this fall with sharper graphics and two brand-new missions. ➤

CHAT ROOM INTERVIEW

The AIM Game

Furquhart - CGW - Instant Message

File Edit Insert People

Furquhart has entered the room.

CGW: Welcome to the party. How should I address you, Feargus: Mister? Doctor? Esquire?

Furquhart: How about Feargus Urquhart, CEO, Obsidian Entertainment, Inc.

CGW: Well, that's a start. Anything shorter?

Furquhart: Smooth Motherf***er.

CGW: Done! OK, Mr. Motherf***er, can you clue us in on Neverwinter Nights 2?

Furquhart: We've been working on it for about a month now and things are going really well. We are finishing up the story and the list of new features, and the programmers are getting the engine ready for the new stuff.

CGW: So this is a new engine?

Furquhart: No, but it will be a heavily modified one. One of the first things we did was move it up to DirectX 9. That will give us the ability to pull in a lot of the new graphic features.

CGW: Gotcha. What is the biggest change design-wise between NWN1 and 2?

Furquhart: Our big focus is the single-player game. We really want to wow people with a great story. Internally, we've been talking a lot about older RPGs and how RPGs have evolved. We want the world to play a role in the game again. Another big focus for NWN2 is on the NPCs—we want the player to care about them and have them be real. So we are focusing on the key NPCs and putting a lot of time and energy behind them, to reinforce their part in the world.

CGW: OK, so we're getting a rockin' story this time around. What else is going to make NWN2 stand out beyond the first game?

Furquhart: Well, that it's Neverwinter 2. :-)

CGW: Nice.

Furquhart: Seriously—I think the key is the story and to make sure it's as mod-able or even more so. There are some interesting ideas that we have, but we can't really talk about them right now.

CGW: Aw, c'mon. I promise I won't tell anyone. I swear.

Furquhart: Oh, OK. [I'm easy.] Some of the new things are going to be pulling in more of the flavor of the Forgotten Realms, full support for many of the sub-races. We are also going to be working on the henchman system. We are working on having them be a lot more reactive and making it easier to control.

CGW: Really? You won't have to dig into 10 menus to set A.I. coding routines for henchmen?

Furquhart: Exactly. One of the ideas is to have them call out to you and ask if you need help and then you just have to acknowledge it with a single button press. That help will be context sensitive, so you won't have to press different buttons. It will also make a fight feel more like a fight. We are also looking at where you can ask for help and you will yell out in combat and then your henchmen will yell out in response. That might even be based on their personality.

CGW: Sounds like a much more reasonable setup. Does that mean you're hotkeying commands?

Furquhart: Kind of. Our theory is that you can just yell for help and they can figure out to a limited degree what you want. Then there will be other keys where you can ask for specific help, like "Attack my target." If you yell for help and your hit points are low, then the cleric will heal you. If you aren't wounded but your opponent is really tough, the cleric will help you attack it.

Furquhart: Something will go in like this. We're just not sure how robust it will be.

CGW: Very cool. I'm definitely looking forward to seeing this in action.

Furquhart: We are also looking at a lot of MMP stuff right now to see what might fit into Neverwinter. Can a hunting and crafting system be interesting enough to be a part of the overall story? Dunno.

CGW: You're looking to incorporate that end of the MMO world? Any dancing like in *SW Galaxies*? :-)

Furquhart: Well, we haven't really ruled out anything yet, other than camping for 12 hours for the 33 percent spawn chance. Although, think of the gameplay hours we could quote. :-)

CGW: I can see it on the box already! 900,000,000 hours!

Furquhart: We do want to give the player things to do that are off the main path of the story and reward them for exploring. MMOs do that very well.

CGW: Well, I don't want to hog up any more of your time—you've been awesome about this already. But I gotta try asking: Anything you can tell us about the plot?

Furquhart: Not really, but it is rated A: A**hole to Everyone.

CGW: You know this is for an article, right?

Furquhart: Ah, I've said much worse. Besides, you can't print that.

Think this is the whole conversation? Think again! Darren had a great time talking to Feargus. To see the entire hour-long ramble with gaming great Feargus Urquhart, check out aimgame.iupcom right now.

Trend

ECHO

COMICS

ECHO

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS

COMICS



NERD LOVE

Single, White Gamer Seeking Girl...Any Girl

Looking for game love in all the wrong places



As a hardcore gamer, it's tough to get a date—that's the embarrassing truth. Enter matchmaker John Villafrate. At 23, he's the founder of MModating.com, the first online dating service geared specifically toward lonely keyboard jockeys. "Being a gamer, I couldn't see myself replying to someone whose interests were going out to a bar and clubbing every night," he explains.

But don't assume this new dating destination just caters to dorks. "Some people think all gamers live in their mom's basement and only come out dressed as a wood elf, casting level 2 spells on everyone," Villafrate laughs. "Ninety-nine percent are absolutely average people who just love the entertainment that games provide."

With 2,300 presumably "average" people currently registered on MModating, this single game journalist reveled in the idea of putting the service to the test via a series of three Los Angeles-centric outings. The following is an unadulterated field account...of course, the names of the lovely ladies have been changed to protect the innocent.

DATE #1 POLLY MORPHOUS

Historically, people lie about their weight—but never so much as Polly. Trying to channel conversation topics while munching on a Cheesecake Factory sandwich, I couldn't help but wonder how her dangerously swaying arm flap equated to an "athletic and toned" descriptor. Sure, she was per-

fectly nice, but she had an unhealthy liking of all things reality—*Cops*, *Springer*, you name it—which struck me as the perfect "check please" cue.

DATE #2 TOO-TALL TINA

Being 6' 3", it's not often I meet a lady who can stand tall next to me—but Tina was the exception. She nearly matched my skinny-ass proportions, too, making for more of an inbred brother-sister pairing than a sexy one. But that didn't hinder our talks about mods, her urges to toggle her joypads in the nude sometimes, and her adorably vicious Chihuahua (apparently, it bit a boy's crotch once but then whimpered apologetically). At some point, she slipped me her number—and some tongue.

DATE #3 LITTLE ASIAN ANNIE

I wouldn't call it a fetish, but it's certainly difficult to broom a cute Asian girl to the curb. Luckily, Annie was much more honest in her posting than Polly—even admitting to being a "bit of a perv" (let's not go there). At a quaint Italian joint in Burbank, we discussed burning G.I. Joes and Barbies as kids, dropping wads of cash in the electronic hubs of Tokyo, and a strange position called "The Sidewinder." Indeed, numbers were exchanged.

After one month, MModating has given me at least a glimmer of hope. The only real problem left is finding more women, since the service is so new. **Jon M. Gibson**

ON THE DL

Freebies live and direct from the Web



Battlefield: Pirates

www.bfpirates.com



We've kept an eye—the one without the patch—on this mod for a while now, and with the beta 3 release it's finally worth writing about. *Battlefield: Pirates* lets *Battlefield 1942* players trade in their aircraft carriers for galleons and their BARs for flintlocks as they swashbuckle across the high seas and the higher skies. Man the cannons, use a spyglass to perform recon from a rickety balloon basket, and let the seas run red with your enemy's blood. Sail everything from barely seaworthy runabouts to towering ships-of-the-line in battles against other vessels and forts bristling with guns. It's everything a pirate's life should be, minus the scurvy, buggery, and need for peg legs.

Jonesing for more mods that stand BF1942 on its head? Why not drive a heavily armed, rocket-boosted car in *Battlefield: Interstate '82* (www.bf1982.com), relive the *Star Wars* trilogy in *Galactic Conquest* (www.galactic-conquest.net), or turn back the clock to the Great War with *Battlefield: 1918* (www.bf1918.com)?

NEWS FEED

» Stuck in the '80s? A recent London concert celebrated Commodore 64 games. See for yourself at www.c64audio.com.» Mad game. *Madden 2005* sold 1.35 million copies in its first week. Believe it or not, you can already preorder for 2006.»

XPECTING PATCHES

Window Shutters

Firewall's fickle flaw targets games in XP Service Pack 2

When you install something on Windows XP, it usually works, but now there's a catalogue of programs—mostly games—that “may behave differently” if you've downloaded XP's new Service Pack 2 (SP2) release. Don't worry, the lengthy list posted on Microsoft's Knowledge Base (article 884130 at <http://support.microsoft.com>) only mentions little games like *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic*, *Age of Empires II: Age of Kings*, *Rainbow Six 3: Raven Shield*, and *WarCraft III: Reign of Chaos*.

SP2, according to Microsoft, “introduces a number of new features that help increase performance and security.” Unfortunately, the titles listed are getting tagged by Windows' firewall as security risks. What happens is that when you start a game, a dialogue box pops up and asks you to permit the title through the firewall. You don't see that pop-up box because the game is playing, so when you try to go online, you get nothing. Chris Donahue, Microsoft's lead technical evangelist for Windows gaming and graphics,



assures us that this problem is easily fixed. The obvious solution is to Alt-Tab out and answer the dialogue box if you can. Alternatively, you can go into the Security control panel applet and either permit games through the firewall prior to playing them or just customize the level of security with the slider (you can go to the point of turning off everything, but that is definitely not recommended). Don't panic, though. Donahue says that “[our internal teams] have not seen any other issues in the huge amount of testing we have done.” **✕ Darren Gladstone**

CONSOLE CORNER

What's worth swiping from your kid brother

PS2, XBOX

Burnout 3: Takedown

What better way to unwind after a hard day's work than a head-on collision? The *Burnout* series has been great but hidden in obscurity. Now that EA has acquired developer Criterion and this kick-ass title, it's getting the polish and attention it deserves. If you haven't heard of the series before, here it is in a nutshell: drive really, really fast, crash, repeat.

This blazing arcade racing game has a number of modes and conveys blistering speed better than just about anything you can find on the road. But the one mode that has everyone in the office playing long after we should be are the ridiculous crash modes, which reward



you for creating massive pileups. We've noticed that we seem to get higher scores in this mode after a couple drinks.

ALSO CHECK OUT: *Tony Hawk's Underground 2* (GC, PS2, XB) and *Sly Cooper 2: Band of Thieves* (PS2)

**NEWS
FEED**

» Bin Laden found in bad PC game. System 3 is set to release *America's 10 Most Wanted* late in 2004. No doubt it'll be tasteful and well-polished. »

BADDEST



THE WORLD DOMINATION SIMULATION



Everyone Wants
to Rule the World.



SIERRA™



Comic Mischief
Suggestive Themes
Violence
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

Game contents and software copyright © 2004 Sierra Studios Limited. Evil Genius and the Evil Genius logo are trademarks of Sierra Studios Limited. All rights reserved. Published by Sierra Entertainment, Inc. Sierra and the Sierra logo are registered trademarks or trademarks in the U.S. and/or other countries. Vivendi Universal Games and the Vivendi Universal Games logo are trademarks of Vivendi Universal Games, Inc. All other trademarks are property of their respective owners.

www.howevilareyou.com

Begin Your Journey



Enter the amazing world of Vana'diel.
Join an ever-growing population
of adventurers in exploring the only
online FINAL FANTASY game, the
award-winning FINAL FANTASY XI!

Available
for Windows

Or specially packaged
with the Hard Disc Drive
for your PlayStation 2
computer entertainment system



Expand the Adventure



The world of Vana'diel gets even
bigger with this FINAL FANTASY XI
expansion pack, featuring massive
new regions to explore, frightening
new enemies to engage, and an
unfolding mystery to confront.



PlayStation 2



Animated Blood
Mild Language
Violence

Game Experience May Change During Online Play



for
Windows



A WORLD BEYOND BORDERS



FINAL FANTASY XI

ONLINE

Chains of Promathia™

THIS EXPANSION PACK CANNOT BE PLAYED WITHOUT INSTALLING THE ORIGINAL VERSION OF FINAL FANTASY XI. Users are responsible for all applicable internet and subscription fees. Online play requires Internet connection, Internal Hard Disc Drive (for PlayStation 2) and Network Adaptor for PlayStation 2 (sold separately).
© 2004-2004 SQUARE ENIX CO., LTD. All Rights Reserved. IMAGE ILLUSTRATION © 2004 Yoshinori Katsube. FINAL FANTASY and SQUARE ENIX are registered trademarks of Square Enix Co., Ltd. SQUARE ENIX, the SQUARE ENIX logo, PLAYONLINE, the PlayOnline logo, and THE CHAINS OF PROMATHIA are trademarks of Square Enix Co., Ltd. Windows is a registered trademark of Microsoft Corporation in the United States and/or other countries. NVIDIA, the NVIDIA logo and the Way to the Moon to the Play logo are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of NVIDIA Corporation in the United States and/or other countries. "PlayStation" and the "PS" family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. The Online icon is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. The Online icon is a trademark of the Entertainment Software Association. Software platform logo™ and © ESRM 2004.

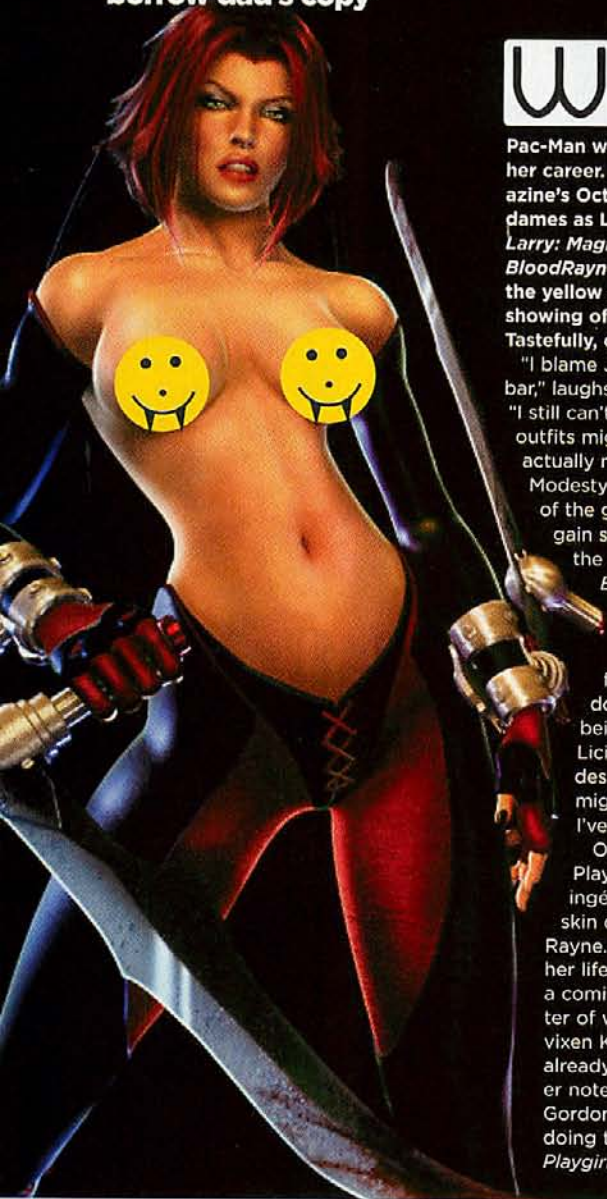
PlayOnline™

SQUARE ENIX
www.playonline.com

PARENTAL CONTROL

Naked Ambition

Gaming gals pose for *Playboy*; fanboys to borrow dad's copy



While it was inevitable that a videogame heroine would someday pose for *Playboy*, we always just assumed Ms. Pac-Man would do it first, to resurrect her career. But with a layout in the magazine's October issue, such digital dames as Luba Licious from *Leisure Suit Larry: Magna Cum Laude* and *BloodRayne 2* babe Rayne have beaten the yellow binge eater to the punch by showing off their naughty bytes. Tastefully, of course.

"I blame Janet Jackson for raising the bar," laughs Rayne of her topless shoot. "I still can't believe I did it. I know my outfits might indicate otherwise, but I'm actually not much of an exhibitionist." Modesty aside, the Anna Kournikova of the game industry has a lot to gain since this shoot coincides with the release of her newest game, *BloodRayne 2*, this October. It wasn't modesty that almost stopped some from showing off their special features, though. "I really don't want to be thought of as being just some cute code," says Licious. "but I'm not going to be designed this way forever. I might as well do it now, while I've got the pixels."

Of course, like most Playmates, these interactive ingénues have more than just skin on their schedule. Take Rayne. Besides the new PC game, her life story has been optioned for a comic book and a movie, the latter of which stars *Terminator 3* vixen Kristanna Loken and has already begun shooting. On another note, there's no word from Gordon Freeman's people if he'll be doing that alleged spread in *Playgirl*. **✉ Paul Semel**

THE GOOD, THE BAD & THE UGLY

News and views from the Wild West



The Good *The Sims 2*

Yeah, yeah, we know it's cool to bag on *The Sims*, but *The Sims 2* is out now, whether you like it or

not, and once again, whether you like it or not, Will Wright and company have proven their genius. So do yourself a favor and get over it, or risk missing out on one of the best games of the year so far. Just because your mom likes it doesn't mean it's not cool. Wait—did we really just type that?



The Bad Windows XP Service Pack 2

As much as it's humanly possible to love an operating system without it being

creepy in a David Cronenberg sort of way, we love Windows XP. Love it. But the new, highly publicized Service Pack 2 is a bit of a nightmare for gamers, who, after installing it, are finding a whole host of games are now incapable of running. This is after Microsoft has made a big PR push to show how serious it is about PC gaming. Ya know, we're still waiting to see it.



The Ugly *Star Wars* not dead yet?

We don't mean the games. LucasArts has been on a nice roll for years now with

a mostly solid series of *Star Wars* games. But as we went to press, a nasty rumor started floating around the Web that Lucas is actually seriously considering making the *Episodes 7* through *9* movies now. Please, we are begging you: Stop trampling on our childhood memories. *Episodes 1* and *2* were bad enough. Let the movies die now.

NEWS FEED

» You can't keep a good girl down. Or Lara Croft. The tomb raider will be back at it again next summer with a new game by Crystal Dynamix. Croft creator Toby Gard has joined the effort. » Sega is coming back to the PC. Stay tuned. **✉**

CRY HAVOK

Let's Get Physical

What exactly does the future of game physics have in store?

Anyone who has blasted a thug's legs out from under him in *Max Payne 2* or staked a few demons to the walls in *Painkiller* knows that Havok physics makes games more realistic. Objects move realistically in the environment and, of course, there's the fan-favorite "rag doll" effect of the recently deceased. But this is just the beginning. We decided to see for ourselves how the magic happens and what needs improving. So, who better to visit than the engineers at Havok headquarters?

CUTTING THE STRINGS

According to Evin Levey, one of the engineers who helps developers integrate Havok into their game's code, "We're looking at three or four ways to take us away from that bag-of-bones rag doll toward more realistic behavior. When a character gets shot, you don't want to turn on the physics immediately—unless he gets shot in the head. You want to see him put his hands to the wound, maybe fall to his knees, and then feather in the rag doll. Or when a guy gets hit in the head, he's going to have a little control, but he's dazed, so you want a blend between some type of A.I. behavior and physics behavior."

There's another problem right now with rag-dolling, though. As soon as you cap a target in current games, it's like you've just cut a marionette's strings. Joints disappear, the limbs fold in on themselves, and the illusion of reality is broken. "Biomechanics" is the key word there, and the trick is creating joint and muscle limits. This is still very much in development.

As processor power continues to increase, more detailed simulations of the real world become possible, which means more



Here's a hit list with a bunch of the games currently using Havok Physics.

dynamic gameplay. "How about a virtual skydive level?" muses Steve Cooper, Havok's director of marketing communications. "You transition from a chaotic free fall to a controlled freestyle dive position, and then once your chute opens, you descend to the ground, fighting side drafts using the chute's steering toggles, finally hitting your target. It comes down to creative designers wanting to replicate more of the real world."

Levey agrees. "I think we'll begin to see games where every object has a physical model associated with it, and not just rigid models, but also all kinds of soft bodies, such as hair that flows and cloth that can drape and ripple as it moves. This will open the door to a broader range of natural interactions and more realistic environments."

Already we've seen how authentic physical simulations allow players to bring real-world experience to bear on problem solving in the game world (most notably in *Deus Ex: Invisible War*), and that trend will continue. But imagine the difference in gameplay when A.I. opponents can use similar circumstantial strategies against us. That's something to look forward to.

"Gamers have very discerning appetites," says Herman Kaiser, Havok's vice president of sales for North America. "They constantly expect the next visual leap, the next level of interaction in any sort of gameplay, so we have to continue to provide that." —Paul Byrnes

"[Gamers] constantly expect the next visual leap, the next level of interaction in any sort of gameplay"

5, 10, 15 YEARS AGO IN CGW

What we said when you were nursing



5 Years Ago, November 1999

"So the best-case scenario is that we ate cow ass." Ah yes, five years ago, CGW endured the infamous biltong fiasco, where jerky made from bull testicles and ass was unwittingly consumed by the edit staff. The less said about that, the better. We gazed into our +5 Ball of Scrying with our cover story on the five games that would change gaming forever. Not so great, our forecasting skills—*Halo* became the first big Xbox game, *Freelancer* languished for years, *Black & White* failed to live up to its promise, and *Good & Evil* just plain died. Hey, at least we called *The Sims* right.



10 Years Ago, November 1994

Sweet sassy molassy, has it actually been a full decade since we reviewed *Doom II*? Time sure flies when you're gibbing the minions of hell. Not surprisingly, we loved the game, gave it 4.5 stars, and even ran a full feature on 10 "Doom Toos" (golly, we're clever with headlines). Some good games made that list: *Dark Forces*, *Descent*, *Heretic*, and *Rise of the Triad*. And so did the very lame *Isle of the Dead*. We had two surly cover boys this month: the hellacious Ben from *Full Throttle* and a really constipated-looking Patrick Stewart.



15 Years Ago, November 1989

Before classic-style games were available as free Flash-driven entertainment, we reviewed things like *Cribbage King/Gin King*—over two pages. We don't do that nowadays, though the Q4-loaded release schedule for PC games has made us consider if we should, lest we have an empty Reviews section. Pickings were slim 15 years ago as well, but our Holiday Gift Guide did hint at some happiness with titles like *SimCity*, *MechWarrior*, *Hero's Quest*, and *It Came from the Desert* getting buy recommendations.

■ STAR STRUCK

Field Report

The *Star Wars* game you've always wanted to play



The toughest part of killing an Ewok? Scraping its innards out from between your AT-ST's toes. During an editorial throwdown of intergalactic proportions, we got to play more of the upcoming FPS fragfest *Star Wars Battlefront*. We won—big surprise. Long live the Empire!

The long and the short of it: the game looks good and has a solid sampling of the *Star Wars* universe. We just need to see more of the single player campaign. The game played well in a number of maps—Endor, Hoth, and Camino—and looks like it's on target for a firm September 21 release date (that's right around the time this issue should be in your hands—so go buy the game already!).

As for the event itself: Well, a shuttle dropped us in the hot zone, one of the more Endor-like quadrants of San Francisco (the Presidio), where we were greeted by the troops. Very surreal.



DUMPSTER DIVER

Digging up gold in the bargain bins



Ever since the *Grand Theft Auto* series took off, countless developers have made shameless attempts to ape its success with their own crime-themed action games. The trouble is, most of them end up as little more than shallow imitators, devoid of the sophistication that makes the *GTA* games as great as they are. Take, for instance, Activision's recent *True Crime: Streets of L.A.* For the \$50 that this rip-off costs, you could instead get the superior *GTA3* and *Mafia*—and even have enough left over to rent *Scarface*.



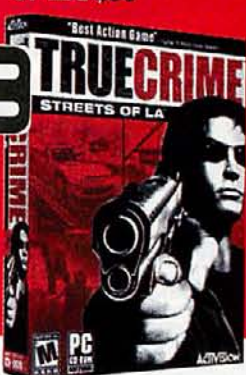
MAFIA \$20



GRAND THEFT AUTO III \$20



TRUE CRIME: STREETS OF L.A. \$50





"ONE OF THE SCARIEST
GAMES EVER MADE."

-THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



"TOO LIFELIKE FOR COMFORT."

- TIME MAGAZINE

"ELEVATES GAMING
AS AN ART FORM."

- COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

"A NEW CLASSIC."

- PC GAMER

"ONE OF THE MOST
IMMERSIVE GAMES
THE INDUSTRY HAS SEEN"

- CNN.COM

"QUITE POSSIBLY THE BEST
LOOKING GAME EVER."

- AOL GAMES

"BOTH TECHNICALLY AND
ARTISTICALLY, THIS IS A
BRILLIANT PIECE OF WORK."

- IGN.COM

THE MOST FRIGHTENING AND GRIPPING FIRST-PERSON
PC GAMING EXPERIENCE EVER CREATED IS NOW AVAILABLE.



Blood and Gore
Intense Violence

Distributed By
ACTIVISION

Developed By



idSoftware.com

DOOM 3

THE NERD HERD

Street geeks speak

What type of war games do you prefer: modern, historical, or futuristic? Why?



David Bauer

TROY, NY

I'm totally into the old-school warfare. The weapons had class, and the bad guys were bad guys. And as they say,

"Everyone likes killing Nazis." (I recall the distinctive ping of an M1 Garand ejecting its cartridge.)



Amy Hoskins

WATERFORD, CT

I prefer futuristic warfare games because the tools and weapons have much more variety. Games based on

older time periods are fun, but I'd miss being able to use plasma guns!



Erik Elsasser

HIGH BRIDGE, NJ

Modern and even future warfare is much more interesting. Sure, firing older weapons like an M1A is fun, but you just can't beat

cool tech like night or thermal vision and fully automatic weaponry.



Ryan Coyle

ORLANDO, FL

It depends. For multiplayer games, I prefer the good ol' days because of the slower pace, but when it comes to

playing alone, I enjoy modern warfare for the exact opposite reason.



Michael Hawash

HOUSTON, TX

Modern combat games often have to be politically correct. It's much easier and wiser for developers to demonize Nazis

than your average Iraqi.

Think you got what it takes to be one of the few, the proud, THE NERD? Drop us line at cgwletters@ziffdavis.com and tell us how much of an opinionated nerd you are.

KINGS OF INDUSTRY

Music to Suck to

How Ministry saved the day, er...night, for *Vampire: The Masquerade—Bloodlines*



Want to hear a bit of "Bloodlines" for yourself? Check it out on next month's CD.

Activision was screwed. The bloodsucking role-playing game *Vampire: The Masquerade—Bloodlines* was due to be released, and Rob Zomble, who was going to record the game's theme song, dropped out. So Activision did the only thing it could do: The company asked Ministry's main man Al Jourgensen to record a song. "They were very lucky," explains Jourgensen from his Texas abode, "because it just so happened that we were in the studio working on our new album, *Houses of the Molé*, when they called."

Within days, Jourgensen was on a flight to Activision's HQ, where he was promptly blown away. "The graphics and the amount of options are both pretty mind-boggling," he says. "In fact, the game made such an impression on me that I wrote the song in my head on the plane coming back, and it was recorded and

sent back to them in a week."

Unfortunately, the whole process was so last-minute that the song, "Bloodlines," didn't make it on to *Molé*. Not that it would've been included anyway. "It really doesn't fit the gist of the album," Jourgensen explains. "The album is very political, and all the song titles begin with the letter 'W'—'Worthless,' 'Wrong'—and I didn't want to call the song 'Wloodlines.'"

"I also wanted to make sure the album came out well before the elections in November because during our tour we are going to do a lot of voter registration in conjunction with punkvoter.com."

That isn't to say "Bloodlines" won't turn up on a Ministry album someday or that the band won't play it during their upcoming tour. After all, they'll be playing the game. "Between me and my game-addicted drummer," Jourgensen says, "I'm sure it will be a staple when we start touring." **Paul Semel**

100 BUCKS

It's burning a hole in your pocket. Go spend it

DVD

Star Wars Trilogy

\$41, WWW.AMAZON.COM

That George Lucas sure knows how to market himself and make some greenbacks in the process. A long overdue, remastered retelling of the original trilogy comes to DVD with a Death Star's worth of extras, including behind-the-scenes featurettes, commentaries, and a sneak peek at *Star Wars Episode III*—the movie and the game. Oh, and as if you didn't have enough things to spend money on already, the sweet-looking *Star Wars Battlefront* comes out on the same day.



MUSIC

Bad Religion, The Empire Strikes First

\$12, WWW.AMAZON.COM

Speaking of empires, who better to shout out in song than those Bad Religion punks? Bang your head or use it to think as you listen to such punk-rock anthems as "Los Angeles Is Burning" and "Let Them Eat War." These socially aware rockers have been commenting on the state of things with a driving, hard, punk rock beat for years, and they aren't fading with age.



COMIC

Ex Machina

\$3, WWW.WILDSTORM.COM

Comics don't have enough of a wiseass edge to them—at least not enough to satisfy our tastes. Thankfully, *Ex Machina* has come along. In it, an average Joe with superheroic aspirations gets the power to remotely control all



machinery. The interesting twist, though, is how he turns his back on his powers to become the mayor of New York City and has to deal with the everyday problems of running the Big Apple.

DVD/MUSIC

Pixies

\$16, WWW.AMAZON.COM

This DVD, which coincided with the CD release of the Pixies' greatest hits CD (you DO have that, right?), is a fantastic chronicling of this intense band. Well over 2 hours of footage awaits you here. There's concert footage, all of the Pixies' videos, and documentaries that show you about their life on the road. A must for fans, and a great glimpse for newbs who want to check this band out.



person who knows that he's working for the good guys, is in a coma. The comic series, split up into "seasons," reads like a great—and tense—TV show, such as *The Wire* or *The Sopranos*.



DVD

Hellboy—Director's Cut

\$20, WWW.AMAZON.COM

The movie, in case you missed it in theaters, was awesome. The DVD was equally impressive, chock-full of extra features and quality commentary tracks. Now here's the thing that cheeses us off: A director's cut version is on the way with all the bells and whistles and, word has it, 15 extra minutes restored to the film. We dug the movie, so we could be talked into buying this version. One warning to Del Toro: If you make another one after that, we ain't buying unless there are gold bricks inside.

CHOW

Quiznos, small turkey sub

\$4.50, WWW.QUIZNOS.COM

Last month we declared the Rice Krispies Treat the de facto snack of CGW. Now, we're going to out ourselves as Quiznos sub fans. No, it wasn't the TV ads of creepy singing Chihuahuas that lured us in (OK, maybe a little bit) or even the sub sandwiches themselves. It's because we are totally surrounded. There are at least three locations within a three-block radius. Is this the new Starbucks or something?



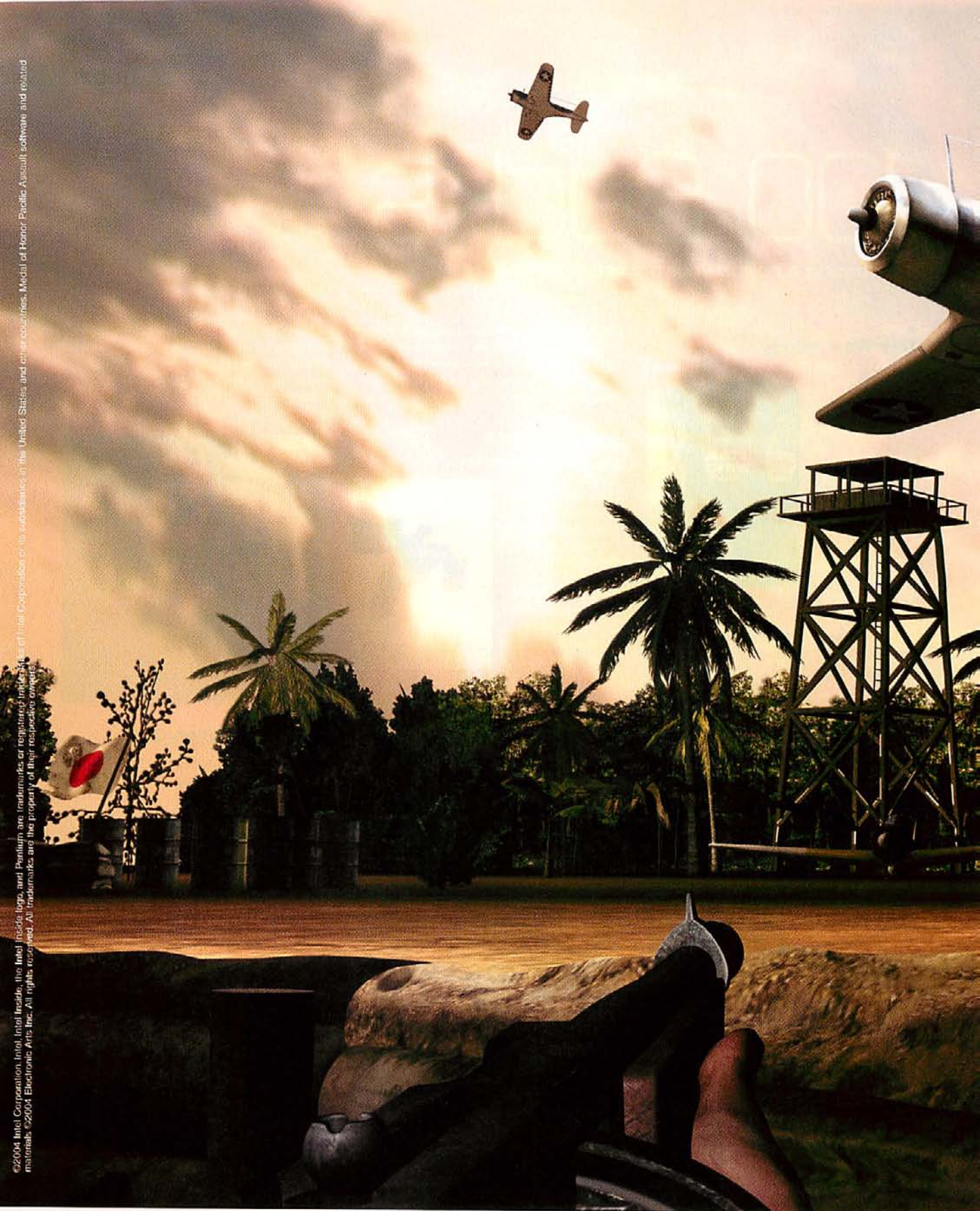
COMIC

Sleeper

\$3, WWW.WILDSTORM.COM

Sleeper is a superpowered glance at the covert-ops world. Special agent Holden Carver gains strange abilities in a freak accident. Now, he's infiltrating a supervillain organization as a double agent. There's a problem, though: His handler, the one

Pocket Change: \$.50




©2004 Intel Corporation. Intel, Intel Inside, the Intel Inside logo, and Pentium are trademarks or registered trademarks of Intel Corporation or its subsidiaries in the United States and other countries. Medal of Honor Pacific Assault software and related materials ©2004 Electronic Arts Inc. All rights reserved. All trademarks and the property of their respective owners.

Make sure you play *Medal of Honor Pacific Assault*™ on a PC powered by it just isn't fair. To get a free download to optimize your motherboard for



*Look for systems with the Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology logo which your system vendor has verified utilize Hyper-Threading Technology.



Run for your life!
He's using Hyper-Threading
Technology.



the Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology.* Otherwise,
faster game play, visit intel.com/go/gaming.

Performance will vary depending on the specific hardware and software you use. See <http://www.intel.com/info/hyperthreading/> for information.

intel®

THIS IS TOTAL WAR.



DECISIVE
BATTLES

A 21ST CENTURY LOOK AT ANCIENT BATTLES
WATCH FRIDAYS 9PM/8C



THE HISTORY CHANNEL
History.com



www.totalwar.com



ACTIVISION

activision.com

Total War Software © 2002-2004 The Creative Assembly Limited. Total War, Rome: Total War and the Total War logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of The Creative Assembly Limited in the United Kingdom and/or other countries. Published by Activision Publishing, Inc. Activision is a registered trademark of Activision, Inc. All rights reserved. PC CD-ROM logo TM and © IEMA 2003. The NVIDIA logo and the "The way it's meant to be played" logo are registered trademarks or trademarks of NVIDIA Corporation. Alienware and the Alienware logo are registered trademarks and trademarks of Alienware Corporation. GameSpy and the "Powered by GameSpy" design are trademarks of GameSpy Industries, Inc. The ratings icon is a registered trademark of the Entertainment Software Association. All other trademarks and trade names are the properties of their respective owners.

ROME™

— TOTAL WAR —



Carve your victories into history as you lead one of eleven old-world armies in epic, real-time cinematic battles.



Forge an empire on the revolutionary 3D campaign map with an intuitive display of your cities and armies.



Command unique units, from Carthaginian elephants and Scythed war chariots to Roman war dogs, using pick-up-and-play controls.



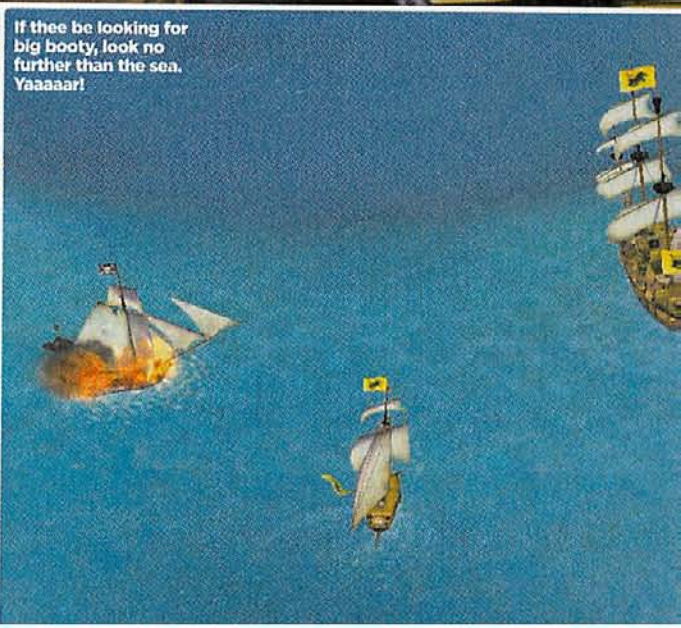


Previews

Your sword may be swift, but my armpit odor is **STRONG!**
"sniff" "sniff"



Tactical battles work on a turn-based system, similar to *Advance Wars*.



If thee be looking for big booty, look no further than the sea. Yaaaaa!



Stronghold
 CGW has the exclusive first look at the sequel to our 1999 Strategy Game of the Year.



Men of Valor
 This Vietnam-based FPS is from one of the splinter factions that created *Medal of Honor: Allied Assault*.

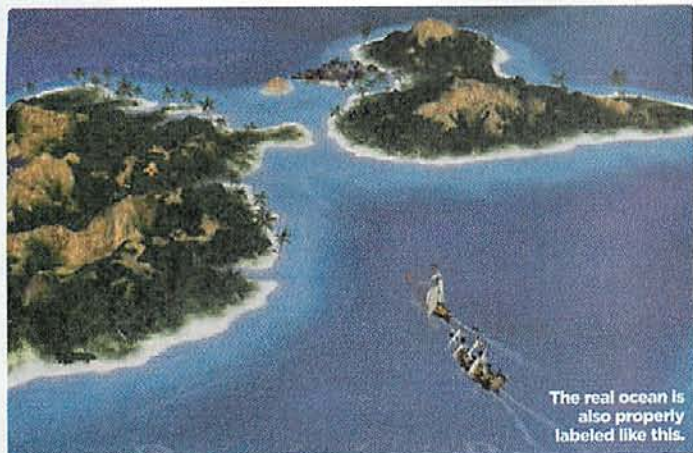


NASCAR 2005
 Get your motor running. Head out on the racetrack. Looking for adventure and a lot of left turns.

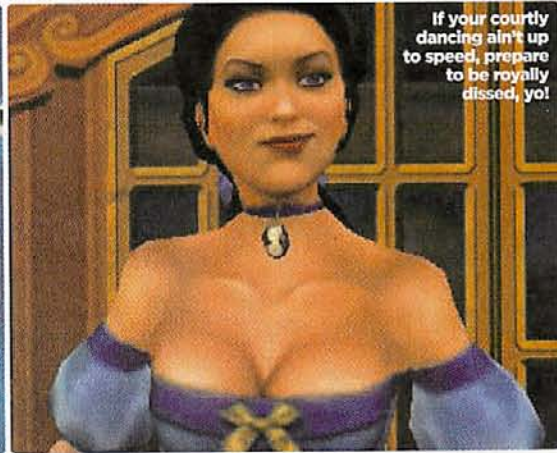
PUBLISHER: Atari DEVELOPER: Firaxis GENRE: Pirate Sim RELEASE DATE: November 2004

Sid Meier's Pirates!

Shiver me timbers!



The real ocean is also properly labeled like this.



If your courtly dancing ain't up to speed, prepare to be royally dissed, yo!

At Firaxis, the mantra is: "It's all about the gamer." It's almost a cliché, but when Sid Meier says it in that quiet, unassuming tone of his, it sounds more like a holy mission. The concept for his next game is simple: be a pirate. The implementation of that concept, however, is markedly complex. While the original 1987 *Pirates!* evokes imagery of assorted pirate-themed minigames, the upcoming remake is the sum of many parts that go far beyond this simple convention.

Sid Meier's Pirates! is a role-playing game in the broadest sense: You assume the role of a grog-swilling pirate and live a life of debauchery and mayhem. The statistical elements of most role-playing games are nowhere to be found, though. Sure, you can take up skills such as fencing, medicine, and dancing. Your character even ages and rises in reputation and rank as time passes—but that's where the RPG elements end.

PLAYING A ROLE

Instead, Meier and his team at Firaxis have cherry-picked the most entertaining elements of the swashbuckling, high-seas sailing genre to create a unique and multifaceted experience. At the heart of it all is, of course, your trusty pirate ship. You'll sail your mighty vessel around a sun-drenched

Caribbean, attacking other ships and plundering their booty. Sea combat is fairly simple: There is just enough detail to provide interesting choices, but it never gets overwhelmingly tactical.

There's plenty of action on good old terra firma for all you landlubbers out there, too. When you're not terrorizing the high seas, you'll be visiting taverns for information and crewmen, courting the governor's daughter, sneaking through darkened streets, and taking over cities. These elements encompass several game genres—the tavern sequences have a distinct adventure-game feel, while wooing the governor's daughter involves a timing-based music game. The sneaking segments call for some stealth action, and land battles unfold as tactical, turn-based combat sequences. You can even dabble in trading for some tycoon-style fun. Taken together, these elements form an interesting sort of gaming gestalt.

TACTICAL LAND BATTLES

Throughout most of its development cycle, *Pirates!* used Meier's *Gettysburg* and *Antietam* as models for its land-based combat: three-dimensional battlefields, complex group movements, and morale elements, all in real time. While

Meier's historical approach might have been tantalizing for fans of his previous games, he feared that dropping gamers into a comparatively complex tactical element would be jarring. "Suddenly they were in a real-time strategy game, not a pirate game," he says.

Instead of trying to keep the sinking ship afloat, Meier rewrote the land combat engine from scratch, converting it from real-time to turn-based combat. Units now spend points to move and attack, and facing, flanking, elevation, routing, ranged fire, and terrain are all key parts of the combat model. Unit selection is still being locked down, but it is expected to include a balanced assortment of pirates, swordsmen, horsemen, scouts, buccaneers, cannons, and Indians.

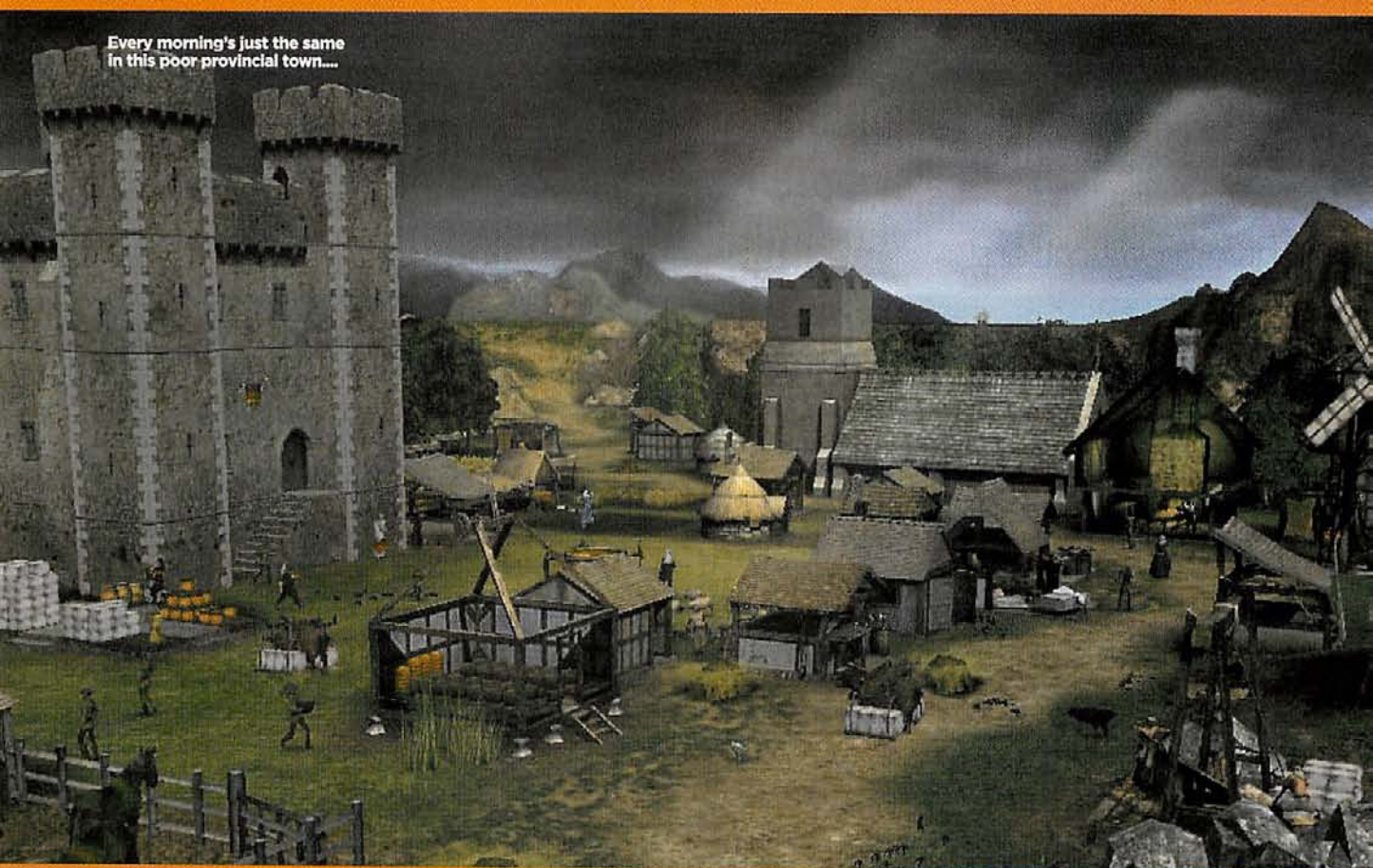
THE RETURN OF ECLECTICISM

All told, the overall structure and flow of the new *Pirates!* does a seemingly good job of paying homage to the original. A few jaded gamers may find that 17 years of radical shifts in game design theory has soured their appreciation for such an eclectic cross-genre experience, but the rest of us have waited long enough. It's been a good long while since we last tried to win the hand of the governor's lovely daughter, and if we have to shake our moneymakers to do it, then by the beard of Long John Silver, we will. **Tom McDonald**

The Word: **ARRR!**

Meier and his team have cherry-picked the most entertaining elements of the high-seas sailing genre.

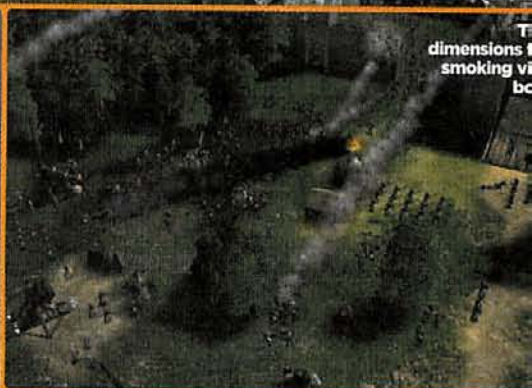
Every morning's just the same
In this poor provincial town....



Good knight.



The
dimensions of
smoking vi
bo



"It was a dark
stormy nig



PUBLISHER: Take-Two/Gathering DEVELOPER: Firefly Studios GENRE: RTS RELEASE DATE: April 2005

Stronghold 2

Lord almighty



Making a sequel to a best-selling game is always a challenge. Not only must developers give people more of what they liked the first time around, but they've also got to come up with enough fresh material to justify the sequel's existence. *Stronghold: Crusader*, which was the first sequel to the medieval castle-building-and-defense sim *Stronghold*, was criticized in some circles for feeling too much like an expansion. Designers Simon Bradbury and Eric Ouellette are determined not to invite such criticism this time around. "Our goal in *Stronghold 2*," says Bradbury, "has been not to reinvent the wheel, but also not just to do the same game again with new graphics."

STORMIN' THE CASTLE

Accordingly, while the game's premise remains the same—construct castles, manage the economy of the surrounding town, and conduct RTS-style military campaigns—several new gameplay elements have also been added. Though your mission in the original games is to protect the lord of the castle, the lazy lord doesn't actually do much; instead, the gameplay focuses on the peasants and foot soldiers

at his disposal. This time around, you get to go inside the royal lord's chambers and manage various aspects of the royal life: feasts, tourneys, criminal trials, and so forth. Conducting yourself well enough as a lord yields valuable honor, which, among other things, can be used to train elite combat knights.

The designers have also taken the opportunity to correct the shortcomings in the interface that players have been hollering about for three years. "A lot of the fansites let us know their views," says Bradbury, sounding the slightest bit weary. No longer do you have to dig moats painstakingly while castle walls go up in an instant, and enemies can no longer bring down castle walls with their hand weapons. The old isometric perspective that occasionally hid the exploitable holes in your enforcement has been replaced by a full 3D view that can be rotated at will.

Speaking of the 3D view, the development team has done an absolutely stunning job with the game's visuals. In place of the largely static landscape of the first game, you now have a world full of trees that sway in the breeze and water that ripples and flows. Life in your village goes on as you watch, with potentially

hundreds of fully animated figures going about their business: criminals skulking furtively or getting flogged, rats spreading plague, and drunken priests tottering about outside the alehouse. The level of detail is just astonishing. The same goes for combat—you can now watch swordsmen fight their way up spiral staircases and across battlements or see castle defenders hurled through the air by a hit from a lovingly animated trebuchet. The battle scenes, with their teeming hordes of combatants, clearly owe something to Peter Jackson, but it's hardly a criticism to compare *Stronghold 2* to last year's Academy Award winner for Best Picture.

KING ME

Of course, all we've seen at this stage is a guided tour, not a hands-on trial—perfect conditions to evaluate the game's visuals but not an opportunity to comment on the experience of actually getting behind the keyboard. All the changes and additions certainly sound good, but we won't know how significant or successful they are until the gold master hits our mailbox.

On the other hand, if—despite Firefly's protestations—*Stronghold 2* turns out to be largely the same game with new graphics, would that be so terrible? We think not. With graphics this good, even if nothing else changes one iota, we still expect Firefly to have a strong game on its hands. **Charles Ardal**

It's hardly a criticism to compare *Stronghold 2* to last year's Academy Award winner for Best Picture.

The Word: **KINGMAKER**

MILLIONS HAVE EXPERIENCED



THE ADVENTURE.





Unprecedented voiceover for most non-playable characters.

Advanced character customization including 16 races and 24 classes for extraordinary player individuality.

New players' tutorial for orientation into the vast land you are about to inhabit.



AVAILABLE ON:

PC
DVD-ROM
SOFTWARE

PC
CD-ROM
SOFTWARE



NOW IT IS TIME FOR YOU



www.everquest2.com

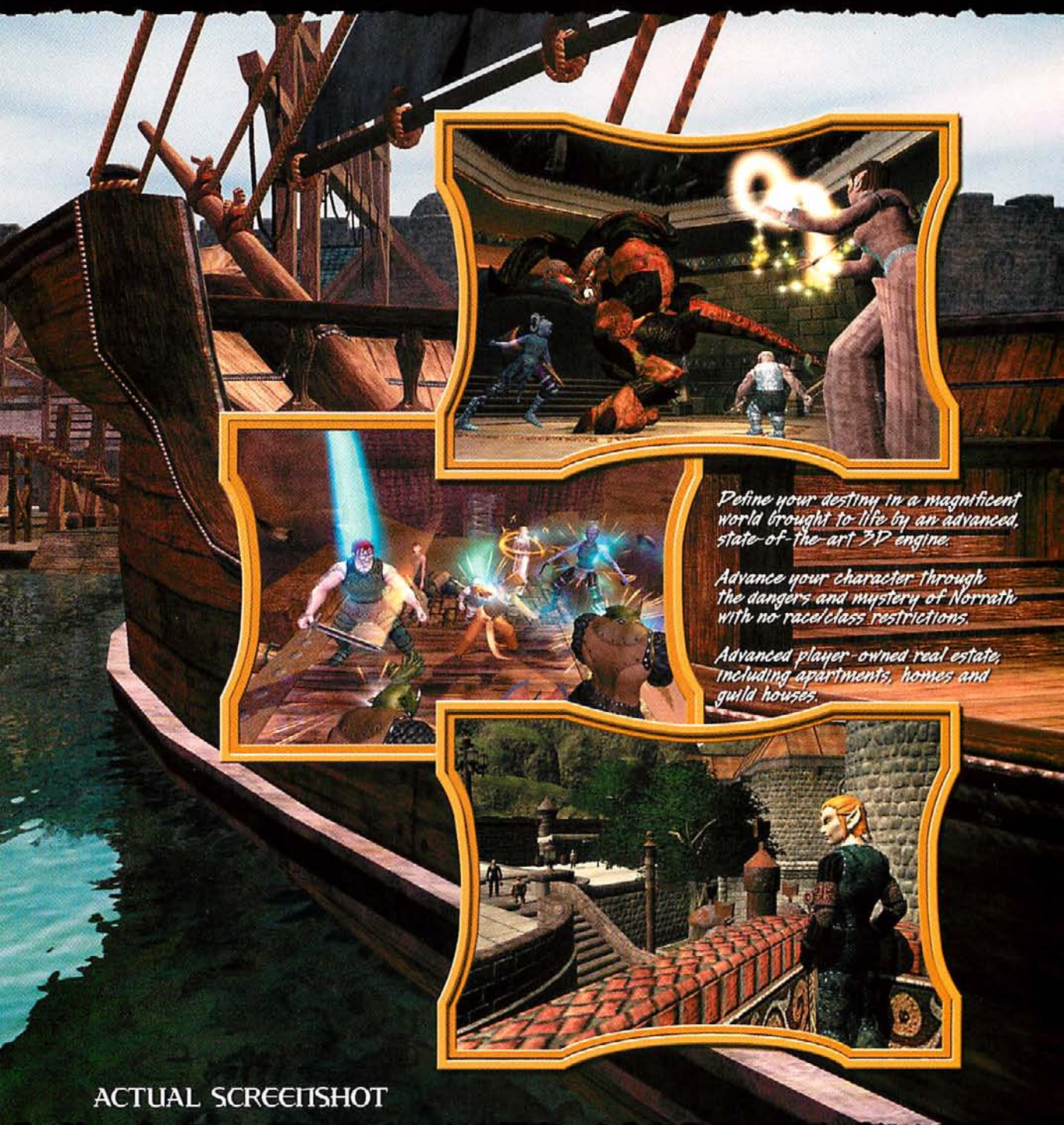
©2004 Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. EverQuest is a registered trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. SOE and the SOE logo are registered trademarks of Sony Online Entertainment Inc. All rights reserved. All other trademarks or trade names are properties of their respective owners. The NVIDIA logo and the "The way it's meant to be played" logo are registered trademarks or trademarks of NVIDIA Corporation. "Where Adventure Comes Alive" is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. The software platform logo (TM and ©) IEMA 2004.

TO JOIN THE QUEST.



Behold the future of online gaming: the rich, inviting world of EverQuest II. Millions have experienced the legend, now it's time for you to join the quest. Choose your side, sharpen your weapons, practice your magic, and embark on a journey filled with majestic landscapes, bustling cities, ancient dungeons — and adventure beyond your dreams.

COMING SOON



ACTUAL SCREENSHOT

Define your destiny in a magnificent world brought to life by an advanced, state-of-the-art 3D engine.

Advance your character through the dangers and mystery of Norrath with no racial/class restrictions.

Advanced player-owned real estate, including apartments, homes and guild houses.

EVERQUEST II

WHERE ADVENTURE
COMES ALIVE™

PUBLISHER: Vivendi Universal Games DEVELOPER: 2015 GENRE: Shooter RELEASE DATE: October 2004

Men of Valor

The horror, the survival horror...

It used to be that just making the somewhat risky decision to place your game in Vietnam would be more than enough to distinguish it from the pack of military shooters. Not anymore. Vietnam is fast becoming the new World War II, with more and more titles joining the conflict. With so much competition, how do you carve out your own little piece of the jungle? The answer, in *Men of Valor*, is to retain the action while ratcheting up the tension with a significant shift in tone.

If anyone can re-create the war shooter, it's this design team, one of the shards of the exploded *Medal of Honor: Allied Assault* team. The work on the game reflects 2015's continuing refinement of the combat shooter—*Men of Valor* features multiple firing modes for the weapons, a damage model that handles both "permanent" damage and quickly patched up "bleeding" damage, new multiplayer modes, including search & destroy, where teams race to assemble a mortar to destroy their opponents, and all sorts of graphical effects and buzzwords like "parallax mapping textures."

WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE

But the biggest innovation is going to be the one that's hardest to put your finger on—the tone of the game. Thanks to the easily despised Nazis and the clearer good vs. evil understanding of World War II, games based upon that conflict can wrap themselves in glory and classic movie-style heroism. Vietnam is a much trickier, more conflicted war, and yet *Men of Valor* is still shooting for that movie-style experience, albeit in the darker, murkier vein of *Platoon* and *Apocalypse Now*. The sense of combat in *Men of Valor* will be focused on simple survival, on enduring the sudden, brutal violence of war. 2015's trademark scripted sequences, the heat shimmer



The game takes you from Da Nang in 1967 through the Tet offensive.



At dawn, a firefight rages on a distant bridge.

If anyone can re-create the war shooter, it's this design team, one of the shards of the exploded *Medal of Honor: Allied Assault* team.

mer of smoldering fires, and the more than 300 lines of gritty dialogue per character (all dynamically triggered based on game situations) are brought into play to create a more desperate, threatening game world than we've ever seen in a combat shooter. "Displacement mapping on foliage" sounds like just another designer catchphrase, until you see the game in action and realize that the only way you might pick up on an NVA ambush is by noticing the subtle parting of long grass in the distance. This is a game that quietly warns you it's coming to get you before it hits. Hard.

Don't misunderstand the chief focus of the game: It will still deliver the run-and-gun thrills that you expect and want. We watched a rail-shooter portion of the game taking place during a nighttime boat patrol and were riveted. The pounding shockwaves of artillery, the wisps of fog on the water's surface, the blistering sound of the mounted machine gun, the reflected tracer fire upon the river, all of it added up to a truly gripping combat experience. **Robert Coffey**

The Word: JUNGLE FEVER



VAMPIRE[®]

THE MASQUERADE

BLOODLINES[™]

Choose to swear allegiance to 1 of 7 different clans, then use an array of vampire powers to complete quests and gain experience.

Witness the destructive power of your weapons, including guns, swords and supernatural vampire powers, in next-gen first-person and third-person gameplay.

Get sucked in to the streets of Los Angeles, where the options are endless and the dangers are boundless.

Interact with mortals and other vampires in a world that reacts to clan, gender and dialogue in this deep, immersive RPG.

"One of the most anticipated RPGs this year" —Gamespot



Visit www.esrb.org
for updated rating
information.



powered by
source

ACTIVISION

activision.com

vampirebloodlines.com

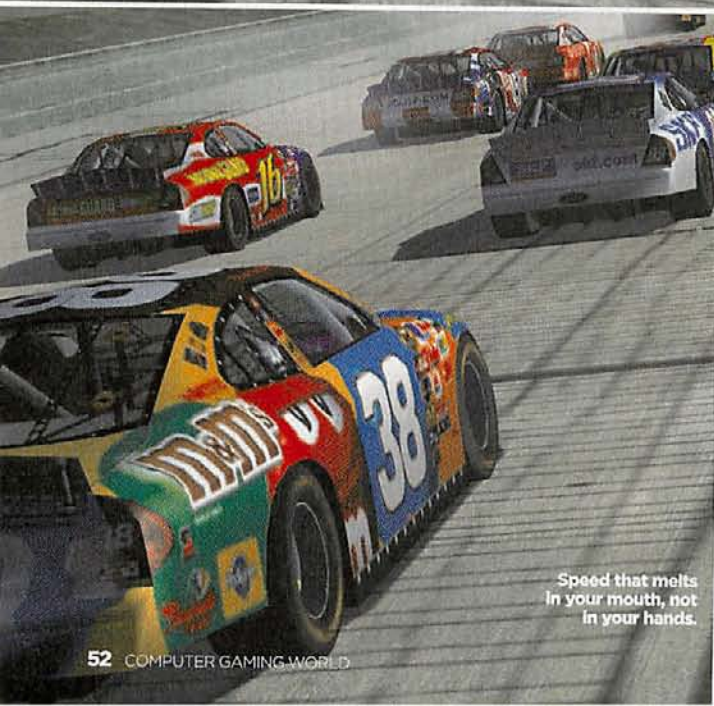
© 2004 White Wolf Publishing, Inc. Vampire: The Masquerade, White Wolf and the World of Darkness are registered trademarks and Vampire: The Masquerade-Bloodlines is a trademark of White Wolf Publishing, Inc. Game code © 2004 Activision, Inc. Published by Activision Publishing, Inc. Activision is a registered trademark of Activision, Inc. All rights reserved. Developed by Troika Games, LLC. This product contains Valve Source technology. © 2004 Valve Corporation. All rights reserved. Valve, Half-Life, Valve Source and the Source logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of Valve Corporation. The NVIDIA logo and the "The way it's meant to be played" logo are registered trademarks or trademarks of NVIDIA Corporation. PC CD-ROM logo TM and © IEMA 2003. The ratings icon is a registered trademark of the Entertainment Software Association. All other trademarks and trade names are the properties of their respective owners.



Speed your way to victory in the most up-to-date simulation of NASCAR.



A fully re-created racing cockpit.



Speed that melts in your mouth, not in your hands.



The most realistic NASCAR yet.



PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts DEVELOPER: EA Tiburon GENRE: Racing RELEASE DATE: Q1 2005

NASCAR 2005

Days of thunder



☞ You've got mail, losers!

NASCAR fans, start your engines. EA is revving up for another high-octane race to the finish. EA Tiburon, the Florida-based studio responsible for EA's *Madden NFL* franchise, is developing *NASCAR 2005* completely in-house, which is a first for the series. Tiburon's intention is to create a deep, realistic racing simulator—something that traditionally hasn't had much competition in the PC market. Now that EA holds the exclusive NASCAR gaming license, it's got a straight shot at the checkered flag with what promises to be the most accurate and up-to-date NASCAR simulation to date.

START YOUR ENGINES

NASCAR 2005 one-ups its predecessors with completely overhauled textures, better-looking environments, and even more realistic vehicular modeling. Tiburon has done its homework when it comes to the racetracks, with the in-game tracks echoing recent real-world course revisions.

As an example of said course revision, let's look at the Homestead Miami Speedway. This racetrack was renovated just last year, with its banking maximized to 20 degrees, the highest possible. The modification was digitally duplicated into *NASCAR 2005* before the actual track's construction was even completed, giving

NASCAR champs an early opportunity to sample the revised Homestead course before starting their engines on the real thing. In fact, participation from real NASCAR drivers has been instrumental to *NASCAR 2005*'s development process—Tiburon's offices have been graced by everyone from Jeff Gordon to Dale Earnhardt Jr., and their input has gone a long way toward making this new *NASCAR* game the biggest yet.

Course geography isn't the only big revision, though. *NASCAR 2005* will also reflect all the recent changes throughout the NASCAR circuit, such as the new Nextel Cup, which replaced the all-important Winston Cup in the end of 2003. This also carries with it a new playoff point system, pitting the 10 highest-scoring racers against one another in the final 10 of the 36 races that make up the series.

Besides the Nextel Cup, there are two other series that should provide even more for NASCAR junkies: the Busch Series and the Craftsman Series. The

Craftsman Series is a particularly interesting choice, since it marks the first appearance of Craftsman truck racing in a PC NASCAR title. Trucks have a distinctly different feel—much heavier, yet still fast and able to plow right through the wind. All of the trucks—and cars, for that matter—will feature detailed textures, customizable color choices, and full damage modeling for all you crash-up derby fans.

SPEEDY SIMULATION

While *NASCAR 2005* doesn't have the steepest learning curve in the world, it's heavily grounded in real-world physics. For example, there seems to be a marked necessity to compensate steering even while on some straightaways in order to account for the lean in the track. In fact, it's safe to say that the PC version of *NASCAR 2005* is a decidedly different beast than its more arcade-like console cousin, *NASCAR 2005: Chase for the Cup*. Players with a hankering for a less-realistic racing experience might be better served elsewhere—not that it's a *bad* thing, but *NASCAR 2005* isn't for everyone.

The PC version of *NASCAR 2005* is scheduled to launch early next year, to coincide with the 2005 season of NASCAR racing. ☞ Johnny Liu

Tiburon's offices have been graced by everyone from Jeff Gordon to Dale Earnhardt Jr.

The Word: VROOOOM

ZILLION FX

- AMD® Athlon™ 64 Processor with HyperTransport™ Technology
The ONLY Windows-compatible 64-bit PC processor
up to 1600MHz system bus
- Raidmax® Samurai Gaming Case
- Gell 512MB DDR400 Memory
- Serial-ATA 160GB 7200RPM Hard Drive w/ 8MB Cache
- 16x DVD-ROM Drive
- 16x Double Layer DVD±R/RW + CD-R/RW Drive
- Creative Labs 56K V.92 Fax Modem & 1.44MB Floppy Drive
- NVIDIA® GeForce™ 6800 Ultra 256MB DDR AGP 8X
Video Card Powered by XFX
- 5.1 Channel Surround 3D Premium Sound
- 10/100/1000 MBps Ethernet LAN
- Creative Cambridge Desk Top Theater 5.1 S560
Surround Sound Speakers
- 19" ViewSonic® Perfect Flat E90F+SB .21H mm Monitor
- Microsoft® Optical 5-Button IntelliMouse Explorer
- Multimedia Keyboard
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Free Norton AntiVirus™ 2004 CD
- Free 1-Year 24/7 I-Care Deluxe Technical Support
+ On-Site Service

\$ 1589

AMD Athlon™ 64 FX-53 Processor	\$ 2349
AMD Athlon™ 64 3800+ Processor	\$ 2129
AMD Athlon™ 64 3500+ Processor	\$ 1809
AMD Athlon™ 64 3400+ Processor	\$ 1749
AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor	\$ 1659
AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor	\$ 1609
AMD Athlon™ 64 2800+ Processor	\$ 1589



The ONLY
Windows-compatible
64-bit PC processor



- Provides leading-edge 32-bit performance for music, video, and games and is ready for future 64-bit software.
- Improves security against certain types of viruses, with Enhanced Virus Protection for the upcoming Microsoft® Windows® XP SP2.
- Conserves power and operates quietly with AMD Cool'n'Quiet™ technology.



iBUYPOWER

WWW.IBUYPOWER.COM

GAMER FX

- AMD® Athlon™ 64 Processor with HyperTransport™ Technology
The ONLY Windows-compatible 64-bit PC processor
up to 1600MHz system bus
- Corytech® Gaming Case
- Gell 512MB DDR400 Memory
- 160GB 7200RPM Hard Drive
- 16x DVD-ROM; 52x32x52 CD-RW
- Creative Labs 56K V.92 Fax Modem
- NVIDIA® GeForce™ 6800 128MB DDR AGP 8X Video Card Powered by XFX
- 5.1 Channel Surround 3D Premium Sound
- 10/100/1000 MBps Ethernet LAN
- 600Watt Surround Sound Speakers
- Multimedia Keyboard & Optical Mouse
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Free 1-Year 24/7 I-Care Deluxe Technical Support
+ On-Site Service

\$ 979

AMD Athlon™ 64 FX-53 Processor	\$ 1739
AMD Athlon™ 64 3800+ Processor	\$ 1519
AMD Athlon™ 64 3500+ Processor	\$ 1199
AMD Athlon™ 64 3400+ Processor	\$ 1139
AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor	\$ 1049
AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor	\$ 999
AMD Athlon™ 64 2800+ Processor	\$ 979



NIGHT DREAMER FX

- AMD® Athlon™ 64 Processor with HyperTransport™ Technology
The ONLY Windows-compatible 64-bit PC processor
up to 1600MHz system bus
- Raidmax® Aluminum 8-Bay Super Light Weight Tower Case with 420 Watt Power
+ See-Through Window + Sound-Activated Neon Light
- Gell 1024MB DDR400 Memory
- 160GB 7200RPM Hard Drive
- 16x Double Layer DVD±R/RW + CD-R/RW Drive; 16x DVD-ROM Drive
- Creative Labs 56K V.92 Fax Modem
- ATI® RADEON™ X800 Pro 256MB DDR AGP 8X Video Card
- 5.1 Channel Surround 3D Premium Sound
- 10/100/1000 MBps Ethernet LAN
- Logitech Z-640 5.1 Surround Sound Speakers
- 19" ViewSonic® Perfect Flat E90FB .21H mm Monitor
- Microsoft® Optical 5-Button IntelliMouse Explorer; Multimedia Keyboard
- Microsoft Windows® XP Home Edition & Free Norton AntiVirus™ 2004 CD
- Free 1-Year 24/7 I-Care Deluxe Technical Support + On-Site Service

\$ 1579

AMD Athlon™ 64 FX-53 Processor	\$ 2339
AMD Athlon™ 64 3800+ Processor	\$ 2119
AMD Athlon™ 64 3500+ Processor	\$ 1799
AMD Athlon™ 64 3400+ Processor	\$ 1739
AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor	\$ 1649
AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor	\$ 1599
AMD Athlon™ 64 2800+ Processor	\$ 1579

BARGAIN 64

- AMD Athlon™ 64 Processor with HyperTransport™ Technology
The ONLY Windows-compatible 64-bit PC processor
up to 1600Mhz system bus
- Raidmax® A268 Mid-Tower Case with 420 Watt Power
- Gell 512MB DDR400 Memory
- 80GB 7200RPM Hard Drive
- 16x DVD-ROM
- Creative Labs 56K V.92 Fax Modem
- ATI® RADEON™ 9200 128MB DDR AGP 8X Video Card
- 5.1 Channel Surround 3D Premium Sound
- 10/100 MBps Ethernet LAN
- 600Watt Surround Sound Speakers
- Microsoft® Mouse & Keyboard
- Free 1-Year 24/7 I-Care Deluxe Technical Support + On-Site Service

\$ 539

AMD Athlon™ 64 3800+ Processor	\$ 1069
AMD Athlon™ 64 3500+ Processor	\$ 749
AMD Athlon™ 64 3400+ Processor	\$ 689
AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor	\$ 599
AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor	\$ 559
AMD Athlon™ 64 2800+ Processor	\$ 539

BATTALION-101 S-Turbo

- 15.4" Wide Screen 16:10 WXGA TFT LCD 1280x800 Display
- AMD® Mobile Athlon™ 64 Processor with HyperTransport Technology
- Mobile ATI® Radeon™ 9700 PRO 128MB DDR Video
- 512MB PC-2700 DDR Memory
- Removable 8x DVD & 24x16x24 CD-RW Combo Drive
- 60GB 5400RPM Ultra-ATA100 Hard Drive
- 10/100Mb Ethernet LAN & 56K Modem
- Wireless 802.11g 54Mbps Mini-PCI Network
- 3x USB 2.0 & 1x Firewire IEEE-1394 Ports
- 3-in-1 Build-in Media Card Reader
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Free 1-Year I-Care Deluxe 24/7 Phone Support
- Choice of 6 Exclusive Reflective Colors
- High Performance Li-Ion Battery
- Free Deluxe Carrying Case



\$ 1419

Mobile AMD Athlon™ 64 3400+ Processor	\$ 1569
Mobile AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor	\$ 1489
Mobile AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor	\$ 1439
Mobile AMD Athlon™ 64 2800+ Processor	\$ 1419

TOLL FREE 888.462.3899

• Features HyperTransport™ technology
for improved multitasking performance.

ASUS



Picture Shown with Optional Sincro RW-670XL 5.1 Gaming Speaker System

64 BEST BUY

- AMD Athlon™ 64 Processor with HyperTransport™ Technology
The ONLY Windows-compatible 64-bit PC processor
up to 1600Mhz system bus
- NZXT® Guardian MOD Tower Case with 420 Watt Power
+ See-Through Window + Sound-Activated Neon Light
- Gell 512MB DDR400 Memory
- 80GB 7200RPM Hard Drive
- 16x DVD-ROM & 52x32x52 CD-RW Combo Drive
- Creative Labs 56K V.92 Fax Modem
- NVIDIA® GeForce™ FX 5200 128MB DDR AGP 8X Video Card Powered by
XFX
- 5.1 Channel Surround 3D Premium Sound
- 10/100 MBps Ethernet LAN
- 600Watt Surround Sound Speakers
- Optical Mouse & Multimedia Keyboard
- Microsoft Windows® XP Home Edition
- Free 1-Year 24/7 I-Care Deluxe Technical Support + On-Site Service

\$ 679

AMD Athlon™ 64 3800+ Processor	\$ 1219
AMD Athlon™ 64 3500+ Processor	\$ 899
AMD Athlon™ 64 3400+ Processor	\$ 829
AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor	\$ 749
AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor	\$ 699
AMD Athlon™ 64 2800+ Processor	\$ 679

BACK TO SCHOOL 64

- AMD Athlon™ 64 Processor with HyperTransport™ Technology
The ONLY Windows-compatible 64-bit PC processor
up to 1600Mhz system bus
- NZXT® Guardian MOD Tower Case with 420 Watt Power
+ See-Through Window + Sound-Activated Neon Light
- Gell 512MB DDR400 Memory
- 80GB 7200RPM Hard Drive
- 16x Double Layer DVD±R/±RW + CD-RW Drive
- Creative Labs 56K V.92 Fax Modem
- ATI® RADEON™ 9600-XT 256MB DDR AGP 8X Video Card
- 5.1 Channel Surround 3D Premium Sound
- 10/100 MBps Ethernet LAN
- 600Watt Surround Sound Speakers
- Optical Mouse & Multimedia Keyboard
- Microsoft Windows® XP Home Edition
- Free 1-Year 24/7 I-Care Deluxe Technical Support + On-Site Service

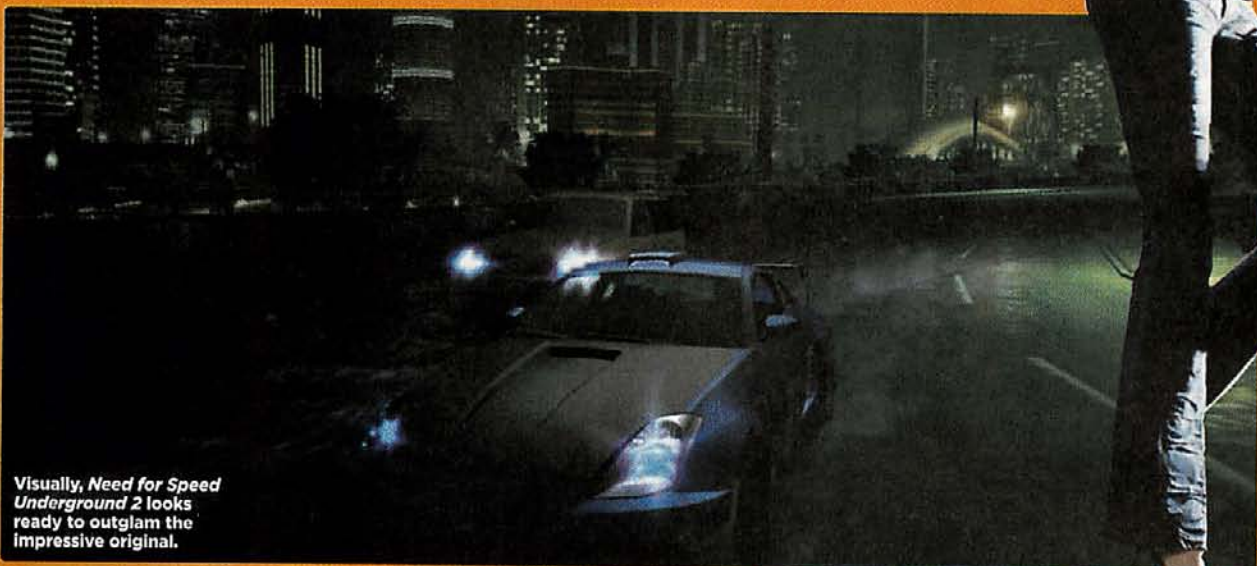
\$ 829

AMD Athlon™ 64 3800+ Processor	\$ 1369
AMD Athlon™ 64 3500+ Processor	\$ 1049
AMD Athlon™ 64 3400+ Processor	\$ 989
AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor	\$ 899
AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor	\$ 849
AMD Athlon™ 64 2800+ Processor	\$ 829

PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts DEVELOPER: Electronic Arts Canada GENRE: Racing RELEASE DATE: Fall 2004

Need for Speed Underground 2

A fast and furious free-for-all



Visually, *Need for Speed Underground 2* looks ready to outglam the impressive original.

Soup up your road rockets! Last year's hottest racing game is back on the road. *Need for Speed Underground 2* is well into production, and this time, you won't be forced through strictly linear courses. Instead, you drive around and pick up challenges in an open city. Indeed, *NFSU2* aims to immerse players in the tuner culture with a customized gaming experience.

"NOS" TO MEET YA

Instead of presenting races in a linear fashion, *NFSU2* is driven by an open-world concept. While searching for challenges, you can scout out any of the game's five distinct neighborhoods, which are linked together by freeways. What's more, you can choose your own battles. Not into drag racing? Don't bother with it. Race drift challenges instead.

In the Outrun challenge, you attempt to outrun your opponent's car within a set number of miles. The tough part is keeping up with your foe as he tries to evade you; the nonlinear nature of the game map

means that your rival can drive anywhere he wants, losing you instantly with a sharp turn if you aren't quick enough.

Free-form gameplay gets boring quickly if there's no underlining point to it. Knowing this, the development team has focused on providing choices with purpose: A player's success or failure will hinge upon the choices made in the overarching story that steers the game.

Open-ended gameplay isn't the only thing to look forward to. Famed beauty Brooke Burke will star as Rachel, a wise and enticing race organizer. Think of her as your own personal hot Yoda, guiding you on the path toward racing enlightenment.

FENDER BENDING

NFSU2 will include LAN capabilities, but the development team still hasn't decided whether there will be multiplayer cross-compatibility between the PC and console versions. While this feature was offered in

Chrome tires, carbon matte hood—pimp dat ride!



the original, cheating PC players undermined the online experience for all. This sequel would have to be cheatproof.

Plus, with the huge number of missions and exercises available, there's always the possibility of "too much of a good thing." Hopefully, each of the race world's five neighborhoods will capture a distinctive look while maintaining that "hard to nail" sense of a natural city. Otherwise, it would be easy to get lost, leaving you to roam the city's streets in search of something to do. Let's hope this one smokes some rubber come fall 2004. **Jason Allen**

Famed beauty Brooke Burke will star as Rachel, your own personal hot Yoda.

The Word: TUNED UP

Coming... Soon!



© 2004 Sierra Entertainment, Inc. All rights reserved. Leisure Suit Larry, Sierra and the Sierra logo are registered trademarks or trademarks of Sierra Entertainment, Inc. in the U.S. and other countries. "PlayStation 2" and the "PS2" Family Computer logo are registered trademarks or trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Microsoft, Xbox and the Xbox logo are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the U.S. and/or other countries. All other trademarks are property of their respective owners.



Meet loads of hot babes!



A dozen swingin' games like quarters.

Pre-Order at
EBGAMES
electronics boutique

&
GameStop
for a **FREE**
Bonus DVD!

LEISURE SUIT
LARRY
— MAGNA CUM LAUDE —



PlayStation 2



PIPELINE

Ship dates and slip dates for games in the stream

Game	Developer	Expected
Advent Rising	Majesco Games	Q1 2005
Atlantis Evolution	The Adventure Company	October 2004
Auto Assault	NCsoft	2004
Axis & Allies	Atari	Q4 2004
The Bard's Tale	InXile Entertainment	2004
Battlefield 2	Electronic Arts	Q1 2005
Black & White II	Electronic Arts	2005
BloodRayne 2	Majesco Games	October 2004
Brothers in Arms	Ubisoft	October 2004
City of Villains	NCsoft	January 2005
Civilization IV	Atari	2005
Conflict: Vietnam	Gathering	October 2004
Creature Conflict: The Clan Wars	Conoga Publishing	September 2004
Dark Age of Camelot: Catacombs	Mythic Entertainment	December 2004
DRIV3R	Atari	November 2004
Dragon Age	Microsoft	2004
Dreamfall: The Longest Journey	Funcom	January 2005
Dungeon Lords	DreamCatcher	October 2004
Dungeon Siege II	Microsoft	Q1 2005
Dungeons & Dragons RTS	Atari	2005
Empire Earth 2	Vivendi Universal	Q1 2005
EverQuest II	SOE	November 2004
F.E.A.R.	Vivendi Universal	2005
Freedom Force vs. The Third Reich	Irrational Games	2004
Ghost Recon 2	Ubisoft	November 2004
Guild Wars	NCsoft	February 2005
Half-Life 2	Vivendi Universal	2004?
Hitman 4	Eidos Interactive	Q2 2005
The Incredibles	THQ	October 2004
Leisure Suit Larry: Magna Cum Laude	Vivendi Universal	October 2004
LOTR: The Battle for Middle-earth	Electronic Arts	Q4 2004
The Matrix Online	Sega	October 2004
Men of Valor	Vivendi Universal	Q4 2004
Middle-earth Online	Vivendi Universal	February 2005
The Movies	Activision	March 2005
NASCAR 2005: Chase for the Cup	Electronic Arts	February 2005
NBA Live 2005	Electronic Arts	October 2004
0	Electronic Arts	November 2004
Operation Flashpoint 2	Codemasters	Q4 2004
Origin of the Species	Tri Synergy	January 2005

New Update



PUBLISHER: Vivendi Universal DEVELOPER: Mad Doc Software GENRE: RTS RELEASE DATE: Q1 2005

Empire Earth 2

History of the world, part two



The world can be a better place. Oh, who are we kidding? Let capitalism reign and grind the world under your boot. The world on a silver platter is yours in *Empire Earth 2*. A few months back, we broke the news about Mad Doc Software's work to improve Stainless Steel Studios' original *Empire Earth*. We've had a chance to check out the progress thus far, and we've got to say, Alexander the Great would be proud.

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

As in the original game, you'll grow nations from approximately 10,000 B.C. to about A.D. 2230. This time, there are around 15 civilizations to cultivate, including Aztec, Babylonian, Greek, Incan, and Turkish. Each nation will have distinct advantages, bonuses, and military units. There's a traditional campaign traversing 15 epochs, three smaller campaigns (ancient Korea, Germany during the Middle Ages, and modern America), and a 10-player skirmish mode. This is where the similarities to the previous game—and a lot of other RTS games—end.

"In the past five or six years, not a lot has changed when it comes to RTS games," says Mad Doc associate producer Brian Mysliwy. That's the motivation that has been pushing the developers for the past year on this project. Their goals: more intelligent options and controls that are as seamless as possible.

TOTALITARIAN CONTROL

And, really, control is what these games should be all about. What impressed us most during our demo were the tools that streamline everything from war-mongering to peacemaking. A citizen manager makes it a simple matter to command the teeming masses and automate the micromanagement.

The diplomacy and war managers will make or break this game. With diplomacy tools, you can set up alliances, and with a simple slider interface, you can set the terms of your peace accords. Allies can travel through your land, but while there, they won't be able to build military outposts or see what's happening in your territory. Want to declare war when your neighbor hits the fifth epoch? It's on!

The war manager is perfectly suited for multiplayer matches when you want to coordinate attack plans with allies. Call up a world map and draw out your plans, telling where and how to strike. Put the plans up for a vote and execute them. How will that translate into the single-player campaign? Conceivably, the A.I. will pick up the slack, but Mysliwy didn't have a firm answer as we went to press.

While the jury is still out on whether the sequel will surpass the original, this *Empire* is yours for the taking come February 2005. **Darren Gladstone**

The Word: TOTALITARIAN

What impressed us most during our demo were the tools that streamline everything from warmongering to peacemaking.

KOHAN II

KINGS OF WAR

AWAKEN, IMMORTAL WARLORD!
COMMAND THE ARMIES OF MANKIND AND BATTLE INTO THE HEART OF EVIL.



RECRUIT YOUR ARMY FROM SIX WARRING RACES
AND FIVE RIVAL POLITICAL ALLIANCES.



HANDPICK YOUR HEROES, WARRIORS, AND
BEASTS TO DEVELOP THEIR SKILLS, SPELLS AND
STRATEGIES AS YOU WAGE WAR AGAINST THE
ARMIES OF THE SHADOW.



KOHAN'S REVOLUTIONARY COMMAND SYSTEM
STREAMLINES EMPIRE MANAGEMENT,
TO FOCUS ON CONQUEST.

THE SEQUEL TO THE 2001 STRATEGY GAME OF THE YEAR
PC GAMER, COMPUTER GAMES MAGAZINE, COMPUTER GAMING WORLD



TIMEGATE
SOFTWARE



©2004 TimeGate Studios, Inc. Kohan II: Kings of War, TimeGate Studios and the TimeGate Studios logo are trademarks of TimeGate Studios, Inc. The ratings icon is a trademark of the Entertainment Software Association. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. Developed by TimeGate Studios. Published by Global Star Software. ©2004 Global Star Software. Global Star Software, the Global Star Software logo, and Take-Two Interactive Software are all trademarks and/or registered trademarks of Take-Two Interactive Software, Inc. All rights reserved.

Are you trying to tell me I can dodge bullets?

No. I'm trying to tell you that when you are ready, you won't have to.



THE MATRIX ONLINE. WITH ADVANCED PLAYER VS. PLAYER COMBAT.

The Matrix goes massively multi-player. An intelligent mission system. Ongoing input from the Wachowski brothers. Realistic and intense fighting in wire-fu and bullet time. The chance to alter Matrix history forever. And a huge, ever-evolving world the likes of which have never been seen in MMOs. It's *The Matrix Online* and you're going to need guns. Lots of guns.



Sega is registered in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. SEGA and the Sega logo are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Sega Corporation. Developed by Monolith Productions, Inc. MONOLITH and the Monolith logo are TM and © Warner Bros. Entertainment. All Rights Reserved. THE MATRIX ONLINE characters, names and all related are trademarks of and © Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. 2004.



THE
MATRIX
ONLINE

To pre-order, jack into www.thematrixonline.com

PIPELINE

Game	Developer	Expected
Pacific Fighters	Ubisoft	October 2004
■ Painkiller: Battle Out of Hell	DreamCatcher	October 2004
Pariah	Groove Games	February 2005
Playboy: The Mansion	Arush Entertainment	November 2004
Priest	JC Entertainment	2004
Prince of Persia 2	Ubisoft	November 2004
Psychotic	CDV Software	2004
Quake IV	Activision	2005
■ Robots	Vivendi Universal	March 2005
RollerCoaster Tycoon 3	Atari	November 2004
Serious Sam 2	Gathering	2004
■ Shade: Wrath of Angels	Gehega	October 2004
Sid Meier's Pirates!	Atari	November 2004
Silent Hill 4: The Room	Konami	Q3 2004
■ Silent Hunter III	Ubisoft	2005
Silent Storm: Sentinels	Encore Software	2004
Splinter Cell Chaos Theory	Ubisoft	Q4 2004
S.T.A.L.K.E.R.: Shadow of Chernobyl	THQ	November 2004
Star Wars Galaxies: Jump to Lightspeed	LucasArts	October 2004
Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic II—The Sith Lords	LucasArts	February 2005
Star Wars Republic: Commando	LucasArts	February 2005
State of Emergency 2	Born Entertainment	Q4 2004
■ Starship Troopers	Empire Interactive	Q4 2004
Supremacy: Four Paths to Power	Strategy First	2004
Supreme Ruler 2010	Strategy First	Q4 2004
SWAT 4	Vivendi Universal	Q1 2005
Tabula Rasa	NCsoft	March 2005
Team Fortress 2: Brotherhood of Arms	Vivendi Universal	2004*
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 2	Konami	October 2004
Tony Hawk's Underground 2	Activision	October 2004
■ Top Spin	Atari	Q4 2004
Tribes: Vengeance	Vivendi Universal	October 2004
■ Ultima Online: Samurai Empire	Electronic Arts	November 2004
■ Universal Combat: Edge to Edge	DreamCatcher	November 2004
Vampire: The Masquerade—Bloodlines	Activision	October 2004
Vanguard: Saga of Heroes	Microsoft	2005
World of Warcraft	Blizzard Entertainment	Q4 2004
■ Worms Forts: Under Siege!	Acclaim	Q4 2004
Ys VI: The Ark of Napishtim	Konami	2005
Zoo Tycoon 2	Microsoft	October 2004

■ New ■ Update

PUBLISHER: Vivendi Universal DEVELOPER: Elixir Studios GENRE: Strategy RELEASE DATE: September 2004

Evil Genius

Throw us a frickin' bone here!



What would an evil genius be without his inner sanctum?

Being a criminal mastermind takes more work than the average Bond villain might have you believe. *Evil Genius*, Vivendi's upcoming world-domination strategy/simulator, casts you as a would-be dictator. We recently had a chance to delve into the criminal life with a late build of the game.

At first, your cavernous mountain lair consists of a simple entryway and a nearby construction room. You can order your few minions to expand your base by carving out corridors and other rooms, such as barracks, control rooms, and research areas. Your minions have statistics such as health, loyalty, and attention—which they seem prone to losing. The game is a little slow early on, since your workers tend to mill about and forget assignments.



Loyal henchmen are your front line against the forces of freedom and justice.

Fortunately, you can recruit a steady stream of followers, building an ever-growing league of workers, scientists, and social minions.

THIS IS MY NO. 2 HENCHMAN, NUMBER TWO

You've also got a henchman at your command. Unlike minions, whose actions are governed by the orders they're collectively issued, you can directly control your henchman—you can choose the likes of a swordsman named Jubei or a big-haired *Pulp Fiction*-esque gangster named Eli. Your henchman, along with myriad traps with which to furnish your lair, are your prime defenses against the secret agents who constantly try to sabotage your operations.

Money and notoriety are gained by dispatching operatives via a world-map screen on which you can direct thievery and "acts of infamy" to raise your standing in the criminal underworld and open up new objectives. This portion of the game feels somewhat disconnected from the rest of *Evil Genius*' strategy-centric elements, but it definitely breaks the monotony of waiting around for minions to finish their jobs.

The life of a criminal mastermind is risky business. Is world domination truly worth all the hard work? Find out in next month's full review! **Ryan Scott**

The Word: **NOTORIOUS**

FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR™



★★★★★

— MAXIM

“Top 10 Games of 2004”

— PC GAMER

“Overall, Full Spectrum Warrior is perhaps the most realistic military game ever made.”

— GAME INFORMER

“Redefining both the war and strategy genres.”

— OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE

“Oh-My-God Experience. Full Spectrum Warrior is an amazing achievement in design.”

— IGN.com



“RIVETING &
ENGROSSING.”

— GAMESPY



Command two fire teams in strategic
squad-based combat



Team up with a friend online
for 2 player co-op

AVAILABLE NOW ON PC & XBOX

TAKE COMMAND

WWW.FULLSPECTRUMWARRIOR.COM



Blood
Strong Language
Violence



www.pandemicstudios.com



www.thq.com

© 2004 Pandemic Studios, LLC. All Rights Reserved. Pandemic®, the Pandemic logo®, and Full Spectrum Warrior™ are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of Pandemic Studios, LLC and are reproduced under license only. Exclusively licensed by THQ Inc. THQ and the THQ logo are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of THQ Inc. All rights reserved. Microsoft, Xbox, Xbox Live, the Xbox logo and the Xbox logo are registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the United States and/or other countries and are used under license from Microsoft. The ratings icon is a registered trademark of the Entertainment Software Association. PC CD-ROM Logo and TM ESRM 2003. All other trademarks, logos and copy rights are the property of their respective owners.

DIGITAL UNDERGROUND

The best games you've never seen



FROM: Third Wave Games AVAILABILITY: December 2004

War World

Word on the street: Offering futuristic third-person mech combat, the first title from fledgling studio Third Wave borrows heavily from console competitors like *MechAssault*. Its delightful droid-on-droid action includes solo scenarios, minigames, and online multiplayer options in which pilots storm the ranking ladders for bragging rights and upgrades. Available via download for less than \$20, the prospect of regular expansions has our thrusters thrumming.

Sounds kinda beat: Due to inherently limited development budgets, value-priced outings typically pack limited thrills. Besides, if the PC market really wanted more mech simulators, publishers would already happily provide them. But with *Heavy Gear*'s heyday long past and *Battletech*'s "stock" plummeting, opportunities for carving out a new niche do exist. Thus far, the product's creators primarily have experience designing award-winning wares for Nintendo and Sony systems—let's hope their luck holds out on the PC.

FROM: DTF Games AVAILABILITY: December 2004

Stalingrad

Word on the street: War is hell, unless you portray it using *Blitzkrieg*'s software engine, in which case it's irresistibly attractive. Based on one of World War II's most storied battles, this strategic challenge sees players command both Russia's Red Army and Germany's Wehrmacht through two lengthy campaigns. Conflicts—captured in real time and depicted as missions modeled on historical data—sprawl across detailed maps inspired by actual aerial photography from the era. Participants don't so much play as enlist.

Sounds kinda beat: "Sounds" inappropriately rockin', thanks to a proposed "dub metal" soundtrack by St. Petersburg band Skafandr. In terms of gameplay, the program that first inspired this package was decently received but didn't score high marks when it debuted. The technology behind the game's tactics is getting a little long in tooth. The studio, DTF, hasn't yet proven its prowess, either. Nevertheless, if early screenshots are any indication, this is one romp you should be rooting for.



FROM: G5 Software AVAILABILITY: December 2004

Cuban Missile Crisis

Word on the street: Remember when the Commies torched America? Neither do we. The events portrayed in this politically charged RTS ruckus throw the U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. into war in 1962. Framed by a turn-based tactical front end, the skirmishes feature four sides rioting for resources such as clean soil and water throughout a postapocalyptic planet Earth. The gist: beware of radioactive contaminated zones while blowing enemy units apart. Hey, works for us....

Sounds kinda beat: Granted, we realize that most of the major historical conflicts have been overdone, but give us a break...the Cuban Missile Crisis? No matter how good the game is, you'll always be wondering whether it's actually thinly veiled propaganda funded by Castro. Furthermore, Russian studio G5 has produced only one other title for American consumption (*Fair Strike*), a mediocre game at best. Let's hope we needn't nuke their asses, too.

DEVELOPED BY
TIMEGATE
POWERED BY
gameSpy

ATARI

**DRAG AND
DROP**

Determine the fate of the world as you command the army, navy and air force of one of five world powers and wage war against an advanced Battlefield AI. It's the most dynamic WWII Real Time Strategy experience you've ever booted up. The start of the conflict is 1939. The end? Well, that all depends on you.

**WORLD WAR II
IS IN YOUR HANDS**



www.axisandalliesrts.com



Violence



World Cyber Games,

World's largest computer

Have



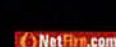
official sponsors :

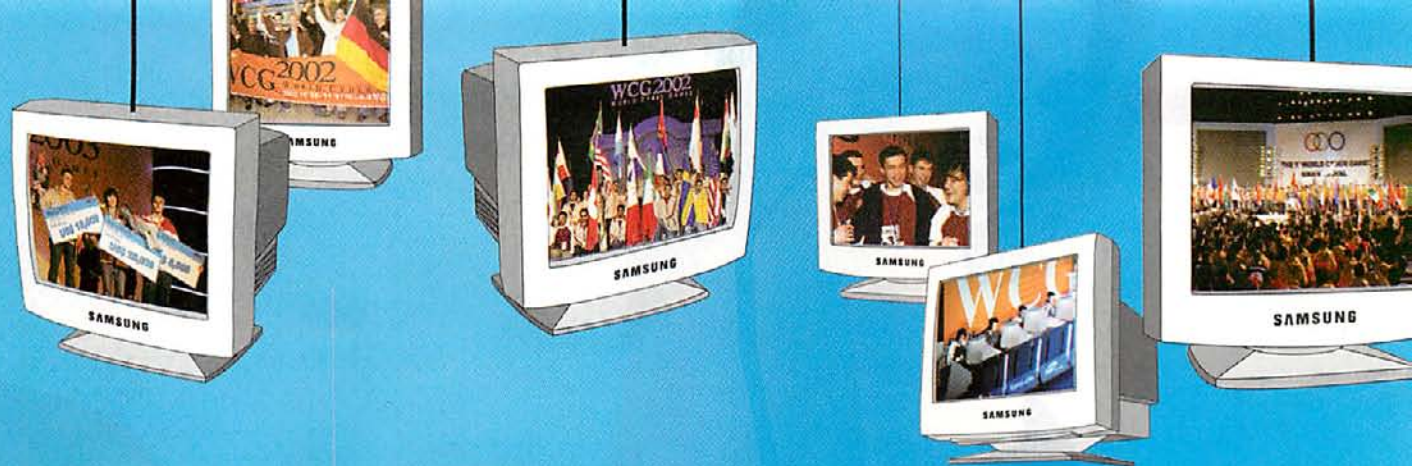


nVidia.

yepp

official suppliers :





and video game festival

Blast!

WCG 2004 Grand Final in San Francisco

Meet 700 world's best gamers from all over the world at WCG 2004

Date Oct. 6-10

Venue Bill Graham Civic Auditorium, San Francisco

Total Prize \$ 400,000

Official Games 6 PC Games and 2 Console Games

6 PC Games StarCraft[®], Brood War[®], Warcraft[®] III: The Frozen Throne[®]

Counter-Strike[®], Condition-Zero[®], Need for Speed[®], Underground

FIFA Soccer 2004[®], Unreal[™] Tournament 2004

2 Console Games Halo[®] (Xbox), Project Gotham Racing 2[®] (Xbox)

WCG 2004 Bring Your Own Computer (BYOC)

Date Oct. 6 13:00 ~ Oct. 10 17:00 (5 days)

Venue Civic Center Plaza, San Francisco

Visit now

www.worldcybergames.com

media partners :



official partners :





PUBLISHER: **Electronic Arts** DEVELOPER: **Maxis** GENRE: **Simulation** ESRB RATING: **T** REQUIRED: **Pentium III 600, 256MB RAM,**



TAKE YOUR SIMS
FROM THE CRADLE
TO THE GRAVE IN
THE SIMS 2

MORE FUN IN THE NEW WORLD

BY ROBERT COFFEY

3.5GB install, 32MB videocard RECOMMENDED: Pentium 4 2GHz, 512MB RAM, 128MB videocard MULTIPLAYER: None

Do I like *The Sims 2* so much because it's been four years since I played the first one, so it feels fresh to me again? Has the time between *The Sims* and *The Sims 2* acted like a delicate melon sorbet and simply cleansed my palate?

Well, some, sure, but the bottom line is, there are so many new elements to the game that even the most die-hard *Sims* fans, the expansion-pack addicts who've been playing daily since they got the first game, are going to discover a game that feels both familiar and brand new. Much as each iteration of *Civilization* has leapfrogged its predecessor and rendered it obsolete, so has *The Sims 2* eclipsed the original.

THE ONCE-OVER TWICE

You can see how incredibly different *The Sims 2* is from its predecessor the moment you create your first Sim. The personalization options are virtually limitless. While there are a finite number of hairstyles, body types, skin colors, eye colors, eyeglasses, and clothing, it's in the facial construction options that you can truly make your mark. Simple-to-use tools govern everything from face length to eye size to neck-flap size. Even better, Sims who procreate will pass on their combined genetic data to their children for wholly unique yet familial new Sims. What *City of Heroes* did for costume creation, *The Sims 2* does for character creation. It's hypnotically addictive.

The end result is that you create faces that are incredibly alive—much of that due to the large number of emotive animations. Every tragedy or triumph, every seemingly mundane moment in a Sim's life has an accompanying facially expressive component. The new fully 3D world and full camera control create an environment rich in moments when you'll want to zoom in and enjoy the action, even if that action is as benign as a romantic moment shared by a long-married couple. Then again, those are the daily, moment-to-moment victories that drive the gameplay.

All that happens once the proper game is started. You've got more to do when creating your Sims this time around, even beyond the mind-boggling physical choices. In addition to adjusting each Sim's personality quirks (neatness, shyness, etc.), you must select one lifetime aspiration for your Sims (see sidebar for more details). Aspirations are an absolutely huge addition that elevate the game beyond the daily bladder maintenance of the first game—but more on that later.

IN THIS HOUSE THAT I CALL HOME

Once you've created your Sim or whole Sim family, it's time to move into one of three sprawling neighborhoods—or a custom one



Use the facial construction tools to create your own Steven Tyler or some other Aerosmith goon. Or maybe something a little more human.



Have your talented Sims paint portraits of beloved family members before they shuffle off this mortal coil.

WHAT CITY OF HEROES DID FOR COSTUME CREATION, THE SIMS 2 DOES FOR CHARACTER CREATION.

created by you, including landscapes you've created in *SimCity 4*. Building homes continues to be one of the game's countless charms, and the tools have been upgraded to make it even easier; for example, you can use a room-building tool to quickly lay out a basic four-sided room instead of laying down each wall individually. The building interface, as well as the purchasing interface, lets you sort things quickly by type or room (i.e., you can click on Flooring and open up submenus, or you can click on Bathroom and then a Flooring submenu to open a selection of appropriate choices). It's all pretty well organized, but there are some mental lapses—why aren't cribs and changing tables in the Children's Room option instead of under Miscellaneous/Kids? I had Sims abandoning babies on kitchen floors for the night and tossing dirty diapers on the floor until I stumbled across those hidden items.

There's a ton of stuff to buy and use to customize your home, and you should expect roughly a *Citizen Kane*'s basement-sized amount of user-made items, paint schemes, carpeting, clothing, and more to be available about three minutes after the first *Sims 2* box hits a store shelf. You'll have ample opportunity to play with all that stuff since *The Sims 2* essentially includes a house-building sandbox mode. You can build to your heart's content on any empty lot, the amount of building and furnishing you do setting the home's price should you decide to move a family into it later. ■



ASPIRATIONS

FAMILY

This is the easiest aspiration for jacking up Aspiration points.

The Family Sim just wants to flirt with their spouse, read to the kids, and have more kids. The constant breeding and growing family are the real challenges here: The more

Sims in the house, the harder they are to manage.



FORTUNE

These money-grubbers need to develop their skills fully in order to rise to the top of their careers so they can buy all the high-end stuff they crave. Pair a Fortune Sim with a Family Sim: One works while the other stays home and maintains the social network needed for career advancement. Just a little quality time every night will keep the Family Sim happy so the Fortune Sim can spend off-hours developing skills.



POPULARITY

This one's tough—keeping up friendships in *The Sims 2* is tough enough without basing all your gameplay around it. Still, if you master throwing parties, you'll succeed and can rise to the top of the lucrative Athletics or Politics career tracks.



ROMANCE

One high-end Romance want is to have "woo-hoo" with three different Sims—this is the aspiration to take if you're looking for lots of drama because jealousy, heartbreak, and rage walk hand-in-hand with all that canoodling. Pair a Romance Sim with a Family one and watch the SimKiddies get emotionally scarred from all the fighting and breakups.



KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge Sims have the weirdest want in the game: They want to be saved from death. The burning desire for self-improvement forces these Sims to study all the time, thus making it hard to fulfill their other basic needs. Thankfully, items like the chessboard or telescope let these Sims improve skills while enhancing their social or fun needs.



Flabby and Flappy Arbuckle, America's original fun couple, get down. Soon they will be making babies.





Ingrid Slaphead née Ingrid Plinth is so happy to give birth. That'll change real soon.

REAL CHILD OF HELL

Having a baby in *The Sims 2* is a lot like having one in real life. Too much like having one in real life, in fact. Forget the tiredness, nagging hunger, and open-hose constant urination of a *Sims 2* pregnancy, it's when those little brats pop into the world in a wholly misleading shower of confetti and fireworks (which makes it look like a celebration of all things) that life nosedives right into the crapper. As infants, SimBabies are unknowable caterwauling hellspawn. Are they hungry? Do they need attention? Maybe a fresh diaper? Maybe, or maybe they're just hateful beasts. At any rate, they will utterly destroy the sleep patterns and daily routines of the Sims you've so lovingly managed up to that point. Dead tired, your Sims will see their friendships deteriorate from lack of attention, their careers stall (if they're lucky enough to avoid demotion), and their persistently red Fun meters glow angrily. Sadly, just like in the original *Sims*, your virtual creations cannot stick their heads in the oven, no matter how desperately they want to.

As babies mature into speed-crawling toddlers, your strategies, again as in real life, focus on containment. Small and too quick to easily click on, toddlers will make a beeline to the bathroom for a bit of toilet clogging—if they're not eating garbage or thinking about playing with the stove. When the Arbuckle twins, Flimsy and Floppy, made toilet destruction their daily ritual, I made moving the toy chest to block off the bathroom mine. And while an iron maiden would've been nice, the crib and high chair serve as suitable baby imprisonment devices. My advice? Never teach 'em to walk. What's so bad about a teenager that crawls everywhere anyway?

SEX AND DYING IN HIGH SOCIETY

Obviously, you can play with a single Sim, but the focus in *The Sims 2* is squarely on the family, and you'd really be cheating yourself if you never explored that dynamic.

The Bladder, Social, Hunger, and other needs of the first game have been dramatically rebalanced this time, so they require far less attention, freeing you to play with the daily drama of your Sim's life. Further, the auto-management A.I. is much better as well, so you can focus on one or two Sims in a household with relative confidence that no one else will let themselves starve to death.

There really aren't words—or enough pages in this magazine—to describe how captivating the complexities of family life are in this game. In a dramatic break from the stagnant time stream of the first game, every Sim in *The Sims 2* ages and matures, passing from baby to toddler to teenager to adult

to elder to a nice little urn full of ashes. While there are some ways to cheat Father Time, the finite life span of every Sim makes each of your decisions crucial, especially since every event or action in the game has an emotional consequence that will affect and shape your Sims. Families have to operate as a unit to thrive. If someone isn't serving dinner to everyone, if someone isn't housebreaking the toddler, if someone isn't getting enough rest to succeed at work, everyone suffers: The children grow up angry and unhappy, parental relationships fail, and so begins a cycle of misery that's really tough to break.

WE'RE HAVING MUCH MORE FUN

As tough as that may sound, it's not all that hard to get the hang of it, and there are plenty of rewards you can treat both yourself and your Sims to. About those aspirations—each Sim's life aspiration generates a frequently changing list of four wants and three fears. Meeting

THE SIMS 2 IS HUGE, AND YET IT IS COMPOSED OF THOUSANDS OF LITTLE MOMENTS AND DELICATE TOUCHES.



The Slaphead family cheers as the law wrassles with a burglar.



Why is Audrey Delfino so happy? Because she just got a job promotion, that's why.



An old lady plays pinball in her underwear. Does it get any sweeter than that?



There's a fine line between life  and disc death.

The world can be a devastating place to a gaming disc. One scratch and it's game over permanently. So protect your corner of the gaming landscape with d_skin™ disc protectors – the guard that never needs to come down even when you're playing.

SNAP ON



LEAVE ON



PLAY ON!™



Available at major gaming retailers nationwide.

d-skin.com





❑ In *The Sims 2*, Sims don't just play videogames—they play EA's own *SSX 3*. ❑ Offspring in *The Sims 2* carry their parents' DNA—so pity the poor Arbuckle twins, Floppy and Filmsy. And pity the nanny as well—she has to look at these freaks all day. ❑ Oh, dear God, no!



EVERY NEIGHBORHOOD COMES WITH COMMUNITY LOTS WHERE YOUR SIMS CAN GO ON DATES, BUY NEW CLOTHES, PLAY VIDEOGAMES, OR EVEN VISIT A WATER PARK.

❑ these wants—having a baby for a Family Sim or buying a really expensive statue for a Fortune Sim—drives up an Aspiration meter and garners Aspiration points. These points can be spent on things like the Thinking Cap (for faster learning), the Money Tree (for faster earning), or the Elixir of Life (to reverse aging). There's a variety of these items, all whimsical, all worth trying at least once, all with potential drawbacks.

Unlike the first game's endless seven-day workweek, *The Sims 2*'s workweek has two days off scheduled for every job in every career track, as well as a pool of accruing vacation days. These times off are great opportunities to shore up lagging needs, fulfill a bunch of wants, or just take a trip downtown. That's right, every neighborhood comes with community lots where your Sims can go on dates, buy new clothes, play videogames, or even visit a water park.

SEE HOW WE ARE

Recognizing the overwhelming desire of die-hard players to share their experiences, the game offers two different types of photo albums for creating stories. In fact, players can set up a number of predetermined camera positions within a home in order to capture those magic moments at just the right angle. Even better, up to 30 seconds of video can be captured during the game—perfect for preserving a Sim's first kiss or fiery death. The game isn't without its rough edges.

Loads can take a long time on slower machines, the framerate can drop at times, and occasionally commands in your queue vanish, which is aggravating. The most frustrating thing I encountered was the obsessive A.I. navel-gazing that constantly drove my Sims to write in a diary instead of doing other things like, oh, feeding their screaming baby. I don't understand why the A.I. renders an adult incapable of serving dinner to his family, instead opting to feed only himself. Since Serve Meal is a selectable menu option, why can't Sims select it on their own? And with such a game-wide emphasis on customization, why can't you choose the default clothing for your Sim's kids?

These concerns, while not minor, are overwhelmed by all that is great in a game that may well be the definitive "just one more turn" title. *The Sims 2* is huge, and yet it is composed of thousands of little moments and delicate touches, like the actual chess games Sims play against each other; the slovenly, splayfooted gait and poor posture of untidy Sims; the nighttime spooning of a slumbering couple; the brilliantly animated cops-and-robbers games kids play; the stolen moments of warmth between parents besieged by rampaging toddlers. *The Sims 2* is as big as life and as consuming. At heart, and with heart, it is a masterpiece. ❑



Verdict ★★★★★
Won't change the minds of *Sims* haters, but for fans, it's a triumph.

IS IT EVEN A GAME?

"Can you win?" the detractors sniff, as if the lack of an end boss made *The Sims* ineligible for gamedom and their intellectual consideration. These small-minded snobs argued themselves right out of appreciating the most innovative game of the last decade. While developers ape the allegedly "open-ended" gameplay of *Grand Theft Auto*, *The Sims* games have delivered gameplay in which the player determines not only the methods to success, but the goals as well. Satisfying a goal is at the heart of every game, whether it's defending an alien base or killing a giant monster. Goals, long-term and short, constantly present themselves in *The Sims* series, and meeting those shifting demands is a nonstop challenge. Where failure in most every other game results in restarting a mission or reloading a save, failure in *The Sims 2* affects the entirety of each character's personal existence/game and can ripple throughout the game world to alter the games of other characters. If that's not a game—if that's not an amazing game—then I don't know what is.

Gary Grigsby's WORLD AT WAR™

"This morning the British Ambassador in Berlin handed the German Government a final note stating that unless we heard from them by eleven o'clock that they were prepared at once to withdraw their troops from Poland, a state of war would exist between us. I have to tell you that no such understanding has been received and that consequently this country is at war with Germany." -British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, 3 September 1939

KEY FEATURES

- * Four full-length scenarios (Spring '40, Summer '41, Spring '42, Summer '43) lasting to the end of the war
- * Over 350 areas on a sprawling world map
- * Five playable forces (Germany, Japan, the Soviet Union, the Western Allies, and China) and 38 different countries
- * Command fifteen different combat units in the air, on the land, and at sea, as well as infrastructure and supply units
- * Each unit has up to 14 attributes, most of which can be improved through research and development
- * Rules that cover strategic movement, forts, cold weather zones, airborne attack, amphibious invasions, partisans, militia, and many other features
- * Fog of War rules that hide enemy units and production
- * Supply rules that can be set to provide a common pool for all units to draw from, or the creation of field units that must accompany the armies
- * PBEM playability for two to five players
- * Challenging AI that offers a unique gaming experience
- * Ability to automate either or both the Production and Research functions
- * An in-depth tutorial that smoothly integrates the player with the game

Not even one year before these words were uttered, Chamberlain himself returned from Munich and uttered the words, "I believe it is peace in our time." As German panzers and aircraft poured across the border into Poland, slicing a sovereign nation into a digestible conquest, Chamberlain was forced to acquiesce to the inevitable and declare war. France followed soon after, and World War II began.

Inevitably, the mighty Axis armies eventually bit off more than they could chew, and soon were bowing under the enormous pressure applied to them by the Western Allies and the Soviet Union. China, despite being at war with Japan for almost 14 years by 1945, proved to be too big a challenge for the Japanese; combined with increasing Allied pressure throughout the Pacific, the Japanese soon followed the Germans into defeat in the summer of 1945.

But with Gary Grigsby's World at War™, things may turn out different. The Western Allies may be conquered by Germany, or Japan may defeat China. With you at the controls, leading the fates of nations and alliances, anything is possible in this new strategic offering from Matrix Games and 2 by 3 Games.

Lead your armies to victory by honing their abilities in research and development, creating a more powerful force than any other on the planet. Build with foresight, however; the bigger and more expensive units take longer to build and are invested in over time rather than being an instant purchase. Players will then have to plan several game turns in advance, tailoring far-reaching strategies to fit the current strategic situation.

Take command in this dynamic turn-based game and test strategies that long-past generals and world leaders could only dream of: make it happen in World at War.



ALSO FROM MATRIX GAMES



PLAYS BEST ON
ALIENWARE

www.worldatwaronline.com

www.matrixgames.com

Order online or call: 1-888-229-7864



Reviews

Making the world safe for mouth-breathing loners one month at a time



Odds are often ridiculously against you. Here, I've got a single captured panzer to stop all these enemy tanks and troops from holding the town.

i PUBLISHER: Codemasters DEVELOPER: Best Way, 1C Company GENRE: Small-Squad Tactical Combat ESRB RATING: T REQUIRED: Pentium III 1GHz, 256MB RAM, 32MB videocard, 2GB install, broadband Internet for multiplayer RECOMMENDED: Pentium 4 2GHz, 512MB RAM, 64MB videocard MULTIPLAYER: Internet, LAN (2-4 players)

Soldiers: Heroes of World War II

So much better than the last *Commandos* game



1 One of my Shermans keeps this Tiger occupied while the other moves into position to decapitate him.



2 Use of commandeered enemy ordnance is key: My boys repaired and rearmed this captured Tiger for the cause.



3 When my lone T-34 breaks through this defensive line, it's going to RULE!



80

Spider-Man 2

Generally, we tend to highlight the good games here. Except right now.



81

Catwoman

There's more than one way to skin a cat, and they're all more fun than this.



84

Political Machine

More fun than a swift boat full of monkeys!

There are two kinds of difficulty in electronic games: "good difficulty" (which is challenging) and "bad difficulty" (which leads you to snap the CD in half in frustration and curse the developers' misbegotten offspring). *Soldiers: Heroes of World War II* has both. But when the good difficulty of *Soldiers* becomes bad, it's not exactly the gameplay that's at fault—it's what's missing from it.

What is there, however, is outstanding: There are more than 30 missions commanding Soviets, Brits, Americans, and Germans—each side with its own faithfully modeled equipment, from mobile artillery to hand grenades (although you might want to grab a 1944 edition of *Guns & Ammo* because the woefully slim manual lacks any descriptions). The game engine is awesome, allowing you to destroy virtually anything, and despite some framerate problems, it looks just gorgeous. Plus, while *Soldiers* is fundamentally a small-squad RTS à la *Commandos*, the designers added a nifty "direct control" system that permits manual takeover of any unit at any time. This gives the game a visceral element often lacking in the genre.

HARD TIMES

But while direct control works great for handling a single unit (tanks and gun emplacements, in particular, are outrageously fun to get your hands on), you'll frequently be commanding more than just one, and that's where the problems begin. There aren't enough hotkeys (not even quicksave!) for managing the task load. Worse, your troops will commonly be spread throughout big, elaborate maps, but there's no way of knowing if they're under attack unless you're looking right at them. There's nothing quite as maddening as painstakingly sneaking a soldier past an enemy defensive perimeter only to scroll back and find that the rest of his squad has been silently annihilated. All this is compounded by the fact that there's no way to issue orders or even select different units with the game paused, a feature that should be standard in this genre. There is a "slow-motion" function (which makes for some awesomely cinematic sequences), but even slowed down, war is frickin' fast; switching back and forth between units in the middle of a firefight ain't easy and can become really annoying really quickly.

However, the most frequent frustration is that *Soldiers* tends to be rather, oh, circumspect in letting you know what you're supposed to do next, or more often, how in the hell you're supposed to do it. One mission objective essentially reads, "Find some way to signal the rescue plane." Now, I appreciate the figure-it-out-yourself angle, but I could have used a neighborly hand start into the extended ritual necessary to hail that damn pilot.



4 The game engine does a great job of rendering both idyllic scenery and the devastation of war.

When all cylinders are firing, *Soldiers* is an absolute blast.

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

If this all sounds like I'm coming down rather hard on *Soldiers*, it's only because these problems are the clay feet of an otherwise golden statue. Make no mistake: When all cylinders are firing, *Soldiers* is an absolute blast. If you're a stickler for detail, get ready to be blown away. From the lifelike rumbling of the various tanks' engines to the way you can shoot off (and then pick up and put on) enemy soldiers' helmets, it's apparent that the designers sweat the small stuff.

Enemy A.I. is solid, making good use of cover, combined arms, and its perpetual numbers advantage. The missions, while hard, are always well constructed; the sometimes ridiculous odds the game puts you up against make it all the more satisfying when you grind your muddy Rick James boots into the enemy's new suede couch. Even the supplemental features are well done: The enjoyable original score differs in style depending on which country you're playing, and the faux History

Channel mission briefings give the whole experience a sense of authenticity.

OUR MUTUAL FRIEND

Adding to the fun is a cooperative multiplayer mode that allows up to four buddies to give one another a hand against the A.I. This addition could have been even cooler if the game offered a simple matching service. So if you, like me, have no friends, you'll be reduced to soliciting partners on the forum boards. Also, there's no saving in multiplayer, which tends to amp up the frustration.

Still, *Soldiers* is full of that "good difficulty." While it lacks the polish of releases from major studios, it's a great game: unforgiving, unapologetic, and just fun.

✕ Eric Neigher

Verdict ★★★★★

A little rough around the edges, but if you like a challenge, you'll love it.

THE ART OF WAR

Destructible environments are big these days, and *Soldiers* more than holds its own in that regard. But what's so impressive about the game's design is that it doesn't necessarily encourage you to take a scorched earth approach. Sure, you could put a grip of bazooka rounds into that artillery piece and cackle gleefully at the pretty orange mushroom. On the other hand, you could sneak in a sniper, pick off the artillery crew, then man the piece yourself and lay waste to the enemy pillbox across the map. Part of why *Soldiers* is so cool is that, while you can swing a broadsword, you're generally rewarded for using the rapier instead.



syncTM

**the new men's magazine about
gear, technology and entertainment**

FREE PREVIEW ISSUE

The new magazine that believes it's not about the stuff. It's what you do with it and the fun and entertainment it brings. *Sync* will bring you the latest and hottest trends, and products in the world of gear and gadgets and put them to the real test: everyday life.

Sign up now to try an issue of *Sync* magazine FREE! There's no risk. In the unlikely event that you don't enjoy *Sync*, you may cancel and keep the free trial issue — no questions asked.

Just go online now:

<http://trysync.syncmag.com>

PUBLISHER: Activision **DEVELOPER:** Fizz Factor/Amaze Entertainment **GENRE:** Action-Adventure **ESRB RATING:** E **REQUIRED:** Pentium III 600MHz, 128MB RAM, 827MB install, 16MB videocard **RECOMMENDED:** None **MULTIPLAYER:** None

Spider-Man 2

With a great license comes great disappointment

Remember back in the old days, like last month, when we complained that we didn't want to play ports of console games? Well, we take that back. If the original PC games are going to be as bad as this one, then please, give us the ports instead. Because this game just feels like an insult. Or maybe a practical joke.

To coincide with the *Spider-Man 2* movie, Activision has simultaneously published two *Spider-Man 2* games: one for the consoles and one for PC. The console game is a big-budget, smartly designed action-adventure with *GTA*-style openness and freedom. The PC version, though cleverly (or, some might say, deceptively) packaged in a nearly identical box, is actually a totally different game, from a different developer. Why? Because those who would play a *Spider-Man* game on the PC, in Activision's mushroom-fueled world view, must be little kids. So what we have here is a kiddie version of *Spider-Man 2*, with dumbed-down controls and simplified gameplay.

Not that there's anything wrong with kids' games. Some of us have kids. Some of us still are kids. But a kids' game that sucks? A kids' game that takes, at best, six hours to finish? That just makes us mad.

SPIDER BITES

You know you're in for a bad time right away, since the game opens with a spectacularly slapdash, poorly rendered cut-scene that essentially begins in midscene and then ends in midscene, as if they forgot to finish it or maybe didn't care. It's also from a point about an hour into the movie, with none of the characters introduced or explained—so unless you've



No silly free-roaming swinging for PC Spider-Men! We get web targets!

This game just feels like an insult. Or maybe a practical joke.

seen the film, you won't have any clue what's going on.

Anyway, it doesn't really matter, because you are immediately transported away to an unrelated tutorial area, where the basic controls are snarkily explained by Bruce Campbell, who, even for him, is seriously slumming here. Not that you'll need a tutorial. Can you click your mouse buttons? Congratulations: You are now a PC *Spider-Man 2* expert.

Unlike the console game, which features a robust set of upgradeable combat and webslinging moves, the PC version offers only rudimentary controls from start to finish. Combat is limited to a punch and a jump kick, with a couple of basic long-range web attacks. All of which is more than enough for the game's brain-dead enemies, none of whom pose any challenge whatsoever. Webslinging, so awesome on the consoles, has been stripped bare here: You can swing



He's Puma, he's fierce, get used to it.

only to designated targets onscreen.

The game's few levels, before it's all mercifully over, offer a listless assortment of easy combat and easy jumping puzzles, as well as a few easy boss battles with random *Spider-Man* villains that have nothing to do with the movie, including the ever-popular Puma, who appears to have been watching lots of *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*.

My "favorite" boss battle, however, was with Mysterio, because I got to throw rocks at him. And, you know, that's what I always dreamed of doing as *Spider-Man*, ever since I was a little boy. Throwing rocks at bad guys.

Are we done here? **Jeff Green**

Verdict ★★☆☆☆

The consoles get the cool *Spider-Man* game. We get the lame kids' version.

PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts **DEVELOPER:** Electronic Arts **GENRE:** Action **ESRB RATING:** T **REQUIRED:** Pentium III 800, 256MB RAM, 1.5MB install, 64MB videocard
RECOMMENDED: Gamepad, some sort of mental disorder **MULTIPLAYER:** None

Catwoman

Nine lives too many

A prolific DC Comics writer once shared an amusing anecdote on a message board I frequent. DC, as many of you probably know, is the comic book division of Warner Bros. Studios. One day, the writer in question was introducing himself to one of the suits from the studio's film division; upon being asked what he did at Warner Bros., the writer replied that he wrote for DC Comics. The suit came back at him with a puzzled "Oh, we still publish comics?" This, sadly, is the type of person who makes the movie decisions at WB. The studio's films, naturally, lead to tie-in games, and that's how we get crap like *Catwoman*, an epic disaster of a game derived from a movie that simply shouldn't exist in the first place.

KITTY LITTER

Like the movie that spawned it, *Catwoman* has nothing to do with Catwoman. The sultry Selina Kyle, occasional love interest of Batman and prostitute-turned-high-society-dilettante-turned-cat-burglar, is nowhere to be found here. Instead, we're stuck with the uninspired Patience Phillips, who returns from the dead as a vengeance-seeking leather fetishist after being murdered by her colleagues for being in the wrong place at the wrong time. She enacts said vengeance by running around the city, falling off buildings, stealing stuff, and kicking people into Dumpsters when they start glowing yellow. If there's more of a story to it than that, somebody forgot to include it.

You'll wander around a dozen or so badly lit areas, including a jewelry store, a nightclub, and a factory, as you progress through the game. And you'll do it without the benefit of a decent camera, since the developers apparently abandoned that along with the story. Aside from a slightly helpful first-person-view mode, you're stuck with camera angles that are often awkward and frustrating, and are made even worse by the game's perpetually dark scenery and thoroughly confusing level layouts.

When you do manage to figure out what's going on, you'll spend most of your time climbing up walls, hanging on to poles, swinging around on your whip, and probably falling down and starting



Yes, you'll use your whip to "disarm guys."



This is what you're paying 40 bucks for, folks.

An epic disaster of a game derived from a movie that simply shouldn't exist in the first place.

the process all over again—it's like *Prince of Persia* gone bad. Every now and then, a few thugs will show up and attack you. After you flail about at them with the horrendously implemented combat controls, they will thoughtfully throw themselves into the nearest Dumpster, since they obviously know you're going to have a hard time doing it yourself. A word of advice: If you're going to subject yourself to this, at least use a gamepad.

Catwoman is one of the worst games you are ever likely to play. When you aren't falling to your death or spending your

hard-earned loot on special moves that do absolutely nothing, you'll be enjoying such Halle Berry-voiced witticisms as "I'll claw my way to the top!" and "What's that my cat eye spies?!" Fortunately (more like sadly), you can treat yourself to a bunch of cheesy T&A close-up poses by leaving your controller idle for a few moments—that is, if you haven't thrown it through the screen. **Ryan Scott**

Verdict ★★★★★

It gets a star only because it actually runs when you install it.

PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts **DEVELOPER:** KnowWonder Studio/Amaze Entertainment **GENRE:** Action-Adventure **ESRB RATING:** E **REQUIRED:** Pentium III 600, 256MB RAM, 850MB install, 32MB videocard. **RECOMMENDED:** None

Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban

Not very Harry, but still pretty fun

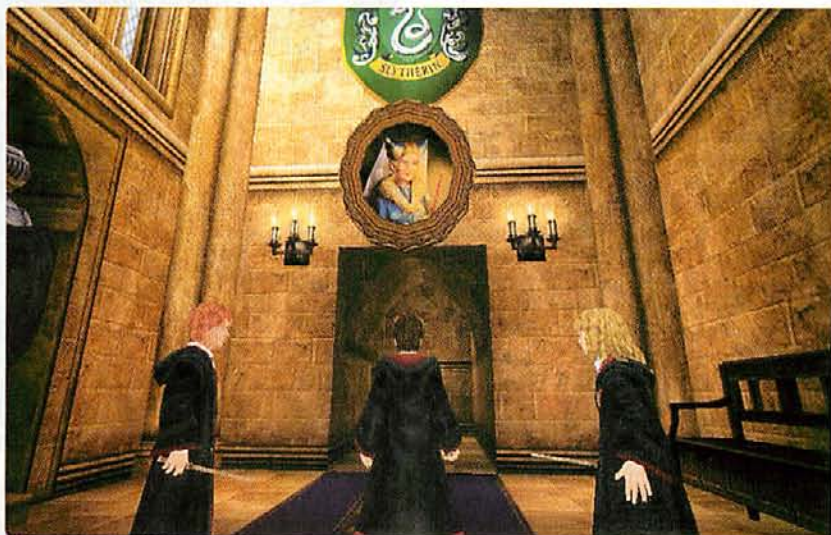
If you haven't read *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* or seen the movie, this game is not the place to learn what it's all about. That doesn't mean it's bad. It's actually pretty fun. It's just not very *Harry*.

NO FANCY BOOK LEARNIN'

For Harry Potter sticklers who tolerate no changes from JK Rowling's books, there is a lot to complain about here. The entire first part of the book is missing (starting on the Hogwarts Express rather than at the Dursleys' house), Hogsmeade is missing, and many of the major characters, including Sirius Black, the prisoner in the story's title, are barely explained at all. You probably won't understand what's going on if you don't know the story already.

But the game isn't really about the story, and if you can get over that, you can have a good time. It's more about exploring Hogwarts, collecting goodies and finding secret areas, and beating a series of challenges and minigames. Both Hermione Granger and Ron Weasley follow Harry around this time, and at different parts of the game, you will play as each of them, sometimes using all three at once to cast spells.

Spellcasting is fun and easy. Almost all of the spells were taken from the books, and some, like *Rictusempra* (used for defeating small enemies) and *Depulso* (which pushes and pulls things), are not the popular spells that everyone knows, which shows that the gamemakers really did read the book. Other spells, like



Harry, Ron, and Hermione discover a secret passageway in Hogwarts.

We're not sure what playing as a rabbit has to do with *Harry Potter*, but we liked it anyway.

Draconifors and *Lapifors*, which make small statues turn into temporary live beings that you control, were not from the books at all but were still cool. We're not sure what playing as a rabbit has to do with *Harry Potter*, but we liked it anyway.

I'M JUST MILD ABOUT HARRY

Overall the spellcasting is fun but really too easy. Any time you needed to cast a spell, the right one was automatically chosen for you. It would have been more challenging and interesting if you could have experimented and tried to figure out the right one to use yourself.

This is actually true of the whole game. It's very easy, and if you beat everything on the first try (which Dad here failed to do), the game would be very short. It's only from

repeating things that the game takes any time at all. And the only part that we really got stuck at was trying to ride Buckbeak, the hippogriff, through a series of hoops, which almost had Dad break his keyboard in half out of frustration. Or, to let the younger half of this review team speak directly in her own words: "It probably isn't hard for most people, but for losers like my dad, it was very hard." Yeah. Thanks a lot. Go to your room.

Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban looks great, does a nice job of re-creating Hogwarts, and is fun if you like exploring and finding secret areas. It's a good game, just not a good *Harry Potter* story. If you want to know about Harry Potter, read the book instead. **Sarah (age 10) and Jeff (age 42) Green**



Poor Ron Weasley dangles in midair. Can he panic now?

Verdict ★★★★★

For casual gamers and casual *Harry Potter* fans—diehards may be let down.

ACQUIRE AN UNFAIR ADVANTAGE

REF:
104 KEY KEYBOARD
TITLE:
BLUE LED BACKLIT
PC GAMING KEYBOARD
+ 9 - BUTTON
PROGRAMMABLE PAD
CREATOR:
SAITEK

Now you can control your game like never before with the all-new PC Gaming keyboard from Saitek.

Created especially for gamers, this full size backlit curvaceous powerhouse is more than just a keyboard. It's the perfect weapon for high performance gaming.

Designed for hours of comfortable play with its ultra-sleek flat panel body, 3-position extendable wrist rest and angle adjustment feet. Plus it comes packed with a 9-button programmable keypad with 2 shift buttons that allow up to 27 programmable commands. So don't just sit there and stare. Go get one.



• Programmable Keypad

- > 9 Blue LED backlit buttons
- > Two shift keys on pad for 27 button commands

- > Ambidextrous design
- > Comfortable wrist rest

• PC Gaming Keyboard

- > Blue LED backlit keyboard with Bright/Dim/Off selector
- > Thin, flat design

- > Comfortable adjustable wrist rest
- > Quiet responsive keys



PUBLISHER: Ubisoft DEVELOPER: Stardock Entertainment GENRE: Political strategy ESRB RATING: T REQUIRED: 1GHz Pentium III, 256MB RAM, 64MB videocard, 750MB install, broadband Internet connection RECOMMENDED: 2GHz Pentium 4, 512MB RAM MULTIPLAYER: Internet (2 players)

The Political Machine

You don't vote for king



While a game about a presidential election is undoubtedly more interesting three months before the fact as opposed to three years, these kinds of games are usually either abstract strategy exercises with no basis in reality or dull political simulators interesting only to C-SPAN-watching insomniacs. The fact that *The Political Machine* manages to be both a reasonable facsimile of a presidential campaign and an absolutely absorbing strategy game that will keep you coming back for beating after beating is a testament to the design skills of a small developer called Stardock Entertainment, also responsible for last year's excellent *Galactic Civilizations*.

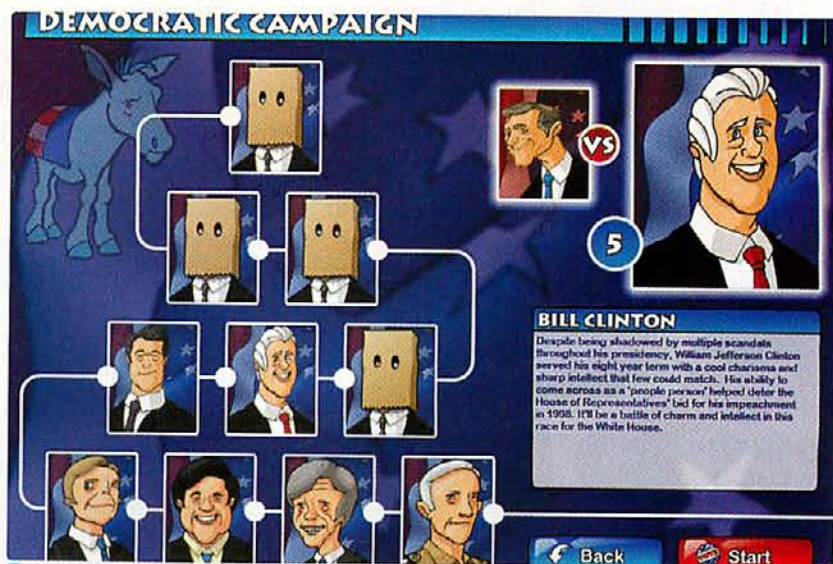
SOLIDIFYING THE BASE

The Political Machine succeeds primarily because it concentrates on being a good strategy game rather than a strict political simulator. The game gives you the freedom to choose how to run your campaign, using an elegant game system that provides you with a lot of options while ensuring that you'll never be able to take advantage of them all—the basis of a successful strategy game.

Each campaign is divided into 41 turns, each representing a week. Candidates travel from state to state giving speeches; building organizations (headquarters); running radio, television, and print ads; and gaining endorsements from special-interest groups. The key is to frame the debate around issues where you agree with state or national opinion, while restricting the focus on areas where you're weak. For example, in a state where your opponent is soft on crime, you might give speeches about fighting crime to raise awareness on this topic. If you're weak on foreign-policy issues, you can get an endorsement from a foreign-policy think tank to bolster your position. While you're doing this, though, you won't be running ads or raising funds, because you only have so many action points to spend per week, and the choices are stark.

CHARACTER ISSUES

Candidates are rated in a number of characteristics, such as integrity, compassion, experience, credibility, and stamina. Some of these are easy to understand (stamina determines how many action points you'll have



The campaign pits you against a series of 10 opponents whom you unlock for solo or multiplayer.

A political campaign would be nothing without dirty tricks, and *The Political Machine* gives you a whole arsenal of them.

each week), while some are more nebulous (such as media bias). Unfortunately, the character-creation system is a bit broken due to several characteristics (stamina, experience, and fund-raising ability—and to a lesser extent, starting money) being much more important than others. So creating your own characters for multiplayer isn't as interesting as it could be, since the choices there are pretty obvious.

A political campaign would be nothing without dirty tricks, and *The Political Machine* gives you a whole arsenal of them. You can hire smear merchants to lower an opponent's ratings in a state or use hecklers to increase their stamina cost—effectively giving them fewer actions in a turn. Some of the game's random events give you advantages (which occasionally prove unbalancing), like less costly ads or celebrity support to help raise your awareness in different states.

EXIT POLLS			
GEORGE W. BUSH ELECTORAL VOTES: 389 Popular Vote: 78,000,000 Money Spent: \$18.30 MIL. Political Capital Spent: 67		JOHN KERRY ELECTORAL VOTES: 149 Popular Vote: 67,788,000 Money Spent: \$17.87 MIL. Political Capital Spent: 0	
ISSUES	BUSH	RUSH	KERRY
The War on Terror	18%	91%	8%
The Environment	14%	77%	22%
Tax Cuts	12%	88%	3%
Fighting Crime	10%	87%	32%
More Jobs	9%	52%	47%
Freedom of speech	8%	79%	20%
Prescriptions for Seniors	7%	19%	88%
Social Security	6%	51%	48%
The War in Iraq	5%	90%	9%

You can examine the exit polls to see how you did on each issue.

While the timeliness of the topic definitely enhances the game's appeal, the fundamental system would be interesting even if it were set on Mars. That's the mark of a good design and a worthy purchase. **B** Bruce Geryk

Verdict ★★★★★
A great strategy game, even if you never watch the news.

Introducing the world's first *unlimited*
Small Form Factor PC

It has over 500 Watts of power

Cools the fastest components on the planet

And it's about the size of a shoebox

Small Form Factor, Redefined

FragBox
BY FALCON NORTHWEST



 **NSIST ON
NVIDIA**

1-888-FALCON-1
www.falcon-nw.com

PUBLISHER: CDV Software DEVELOPER: Stormregion GENRE: RTS ESRB RATING: T REQUIRED: Pentium III 750MHz, 256MB RAM, 32MB videocard, 2.5GB install
RECOMMENDED: Pentium 4 1.8GHz, 512MB RAM, 64MB videocard, 3GB install MULTIPLAYER: Internet (2-4 players)

Codename: Panzers

Suddenly, my humvee looks like a sissy car

Some games are all about the story, and some games are all about the pulse-pounding action. *Panzers* falls squarely into the latter camp. It's WWII—that's all you need to know. The story will fail to compel you, and the spoken dialogue will never seem quite right. The best writing in the game (and the only information worth paying attention to) comes in the form of the commander's journal, which you get to look at between missions. Make no mistake: *Panzers* does no favors for the spoken word. But what it lacks in story, it compensates for with missions that make you want to trade in your beat-up Chevy for an M36 Slugger.

First things first: This game is all about tanks. Lots of tanks. As you blast through the German, Russian, and Allied campaigns, you will constantly be swallowed up by the sights and sounds of battle as your armored units thunder across the landscape, churning up dust. Earthshaking explosions bombard you in each chapter, engulfing your senses in the chaos and fire of war. These war machines shudder when hit by enemy fire and rock from the recoil of their massive guns. The graphics engine wonderfully renders detailed landscapes, from wide-open plains to ravaged cities with claustrophobic avenues, putting you in some of the most titanic battles to grace a PC game.

REMEMBER THE LITTLE PEOPLE

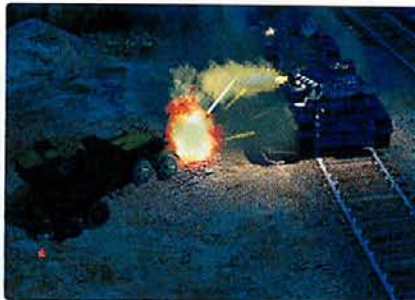
Though tanks are the main thrust of your army's might, your infantry units are invaluable when used correctly. In each level, they heighten the war-movie atmosphere, whether they are running alongside the tanks or lying in wait to snipe the enemy. They may be fragile in comparison to the armored behemoths, but foot soldiers can hole up in abandoned buildings or bunkers, shoot from cover, and take great advantage of the terrain. The various units also have different detection ranges and stealth abilities, making teamwork both rewarding and necessary. Snipers, for instance, can creep up close enough to put an enemy in their line of sight, making an excellent advance pair of eyes for your artillery, mortars, and tanks further away.

Troops cannot be replaced midmission, so you have to take care of them. You are either assigned your infantry, armored units, artillery, and support vehicles or forced to "buy" these units using prestige earned in previous missions. And that's pretty much it—no reinforcements until the



Ⓜ Pedestrians DO NOT have the right of way in Mother Russia.

Codename: Panzers is all about tanks. Lots of tanks.



Ⓜ Why invade Russia with two tanks? Because the rest are in a five-panzer pileup on I-90.



Ⓜ When the Germans come to play, they invite all their friends.

next mission. In more challenging modes of play, fallen troops aren't replaced at all.

As great as *Panzers'* action is, some pretty wonky pathfinding issues mar the experience. Controlling large groups of vehicles tends to create armored traffic jams; this is a particularly frustrating problem in city environments, where myriad obstacles and buildings complicate the pathfinding problems even more.

If you're patient, don't really care whether the story is engaging, and just want to crank up the speakers and blow stuff up, you could do a lot worse than *Codename: Panzers*. **Ⓜ Stephen F. Gehringer**

Verdict ★★★★★

The pathfinding problems suck a lot of the joy out of this WWII tankfest.

PUBLISHER: Matrix Games **DEVELOPER:** 2by3 Games **GENRE:** Turn-based Strategic War Game **ESRB RATING:** None **REQUIRED:** Pentium II 600, 128MB RAM, 900MB install **RECOMMENDED:** Pentium III 800, 256MB RAM **MULTIPLAYER:** Hotseat, PBEM (2 players)

War in the Pacific

Don't make any plans for the rest of this year

War in the Pacific is the long-awaited update to Gary Grigsby's landmark *Pacific War*, released in 1992. Two years ago, war gamers were treated to a preview with *Uncommon Valor*, a smaller-scale game depicting the battle for the Solomon Islands that used essentially the same game system. Preview or not, there is nothing that really could have prepared you for this.

The premise of the game is nothing less than being able to refight the battles of the Pacific theater of WWII in single-day turns, using just about every ship, plane, and ground formation that fought there. The map stretches from India to the west coast of North America, and units of battalion strength are rated for number and size of individual guns. Each turn cycles through numerous subphases, and you can find detail down to the individual commander level, with inspiration and leadership ratings for squadron commanders and ship captains. It even keeps track of kills on an individual pilot basis. The whole thing screams one design philosophy: detail über alles.

The problem with the game as a game is that while the important decisions are generally metastrategy (which bases to build up, how to construct your logistics network, etc.), the game also plunges you into a lot of detail that is unavoidable unless you turn entire sectors over to the A.I. That's not necessarily a problem if you see this more as a self-contained virtual world where you can completely immerse yourself in WWII's Pacific theater. Even so, because strategy takes game-years to



You want suffocating detail? You got it.

take shape, you can expect to get hundreds of turns into a game only to find you're doing it all wrong. It's an unforgiving game that demands dedication unlike anything seen before.

GRUNT WORK

War in the Pacific isn't really so much a game as it is a project. The longest campaign scenario lasts almost 1,500 turns, and before you're anywhere near ready to handle that, you're well advised to spend time with several of the smaller scenarios. It will take you more time to read and absorb the material in the manual than it would to complete some other games. The familiar Grigsby interface is back—and comes up short time after time—but in a game of this scope that's almost irrelevant. If you make the decision to learn the game, you're going to have a lot more to

overcome than just nonmodal windows and inconsistently placed Exit buttons.

This title is essentially an MMO game for dedicated, hardcore war gamers, not in the massively multiplayer online sense, but simply because it lends itself to complete

immersion on a time-sink scale similar to *EverQuest*'s. To dismiss it as an impenetrable chore is to miss the point. The \$70 price tag is a clear warning sign: Casual players need not apply. For war gamers, the game requires total commitment. If you invest enough, you'll be amply rewarded. **B** Bruce Geryk

Verdict ★★★★★

War in the Pacific answers the prayers of hardcore Pacific war reenactors.

WAR COLLEGE

If you're serious about getting into the game, don't just read the 62-page tutorial (50 pages of which are devoted to describing just two turns). You can find additional help, including an intro from producer and codesigner Joel Billings, in the Unofficial WITP Strategy Guide at mathubert.free.fr/witp_files/witp_tips.doc.



The A.I. can be set by sector, so you can concentrate on your favorite part of the war.

This title is essentially an MMO game for dedicated, hardcore war gamers.



GAMEON NY

@digitallife™

STILL PLAYING WITH YOURSELF?

LEARN TO PLAY WITH OTHERS AT
NY'S FIRST EVER VIDEO GAME EXPO & TOURNAMENT
OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

register at: www.gameonny.com

SPONSORED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:



SPIN

:: Play the hottest new games

:: Compete for great prizes

:: 4 days of gaming insanity



ADDITIONAL SPONSORS:

OFFICIAL U.S.
PlayStation
MAGAZINE

GMR

XBN
XBOX NATION



COMPUTER
GAMING
WORLD

MLG
Major League Gaming

ELECTRONIC
GAMING
MONTHLY

ION GAMERS™
International Organization of Networked Gamers

OCTOBER 14 - 17, 2004 JACOB K. JAVITS CONVENTION CENTER NEW YORK, NY



YOU CAN TAKE IT WITH YOU

The days of huge desktop PCs and birds' nests of Ethernet cables are fading



Watch any science-fiction movie and you'll notice that many of the items featured are simply smaller, sleeker versions of everyday products we already use. With the exception of *Blade Runner*, it seems that CRTs have gone extinct, their place having been taken by supersleek flat-panel monitors like those seen in *Minority Report* and *I, Robot*. Of course, these are movies that take place decades in the future. Just a few years ago, however, going "small" meant giving up performance, and as gamers, well, that's just not acceptable. Thankfully, there's a new movement afoot, and we're being treated to cool products that are both small and powerful. Whether it's VoodooPC's wickedly fast Envy M:860 laptop or Falcon's awesome new small form-factor rig, the FragBox 2, gamers are learning that we can take it with us—and it won't kill us, either.



Inside +



FALCON FRAGBOX 2 84



ACTIONTEC ROUTER 95



ATI GRAPHICS CHIP 97

MANUFACTURER: Voodoo PC PRICE: \$3,500

VOODOO'S AWESOME DESKTOP REPLACEMENT

Voodoo Envy M:860



From its pure white paint job to its glowing blue power button, you can tell right away that this amazing notebook from VoodooPC is going to be something special. For those who question the logic behind notebook gaming, this powerful beast should silence all objections; there's no reason for high-performance, high-quality multimedia to be left to the realm of the desktop PC. The Envy M:860 will live up to its name, turning heads wherever you unleash its awesome might.

Every tick in its spec sheet is impressive. The Envy is fitted with an Athlon 64 3400+ processor and an ATI Mobility Radeon 9700 graphics chip, which together should run just about any game on the market. Before you ask, we don't know how the Envy stacks up against *Doom 3*—the deadline for this article came before we got our dirty little hands on a copy of *Id*'s long-awaited title.

The heavy laptop (it weighs in at about 8 pounds) has a huge and wonderful 15.4-inch widescreen display that's crisp and sparkingly clear in Windows and while displaying games at any resolution. The touchpad, which has a handy scroll pad on the right side, matches the display's aspect ratio. One of our few complaints concerns mousing: Even with the mouse motion set to maximum, the mouse cursor was sluggish, requiring repeated drags of our fingers on the touchpad to get that damn arrow across the screen. Of course, any gamer worth a damn will attach a USB mouse to this puppy, which is exactly what we did.

Otherwise, the ergonomics are stellar. The keyboard is snappy and responsive,

with good tactile feedback. In a cool twist, the LEDs for things such as Num Lock and Caps Lock are a cool, icy blue rather than the mundane pale green used by most PC manufacturers.

If you're away from an electrical outlet, you'll get about an hour and a half of high-performance gaming out of the Envy before the battery sputters to a halt. That's not bad, and it translates to at least two hours of battery life doing more mundane stuff such as e-mail and word processing.

If you plan on using the Envy for LAN fests, you'll be happy to know that it's network ready, with both wired and wireless Ethernet controllers built right in. Of course, besides convenience at a gaming gathering, you'll command bragging rights. This notebook is as close to a modder's dream as a notebook can be—complete with symbol-laden graphics on the top cover.

The Envy did a terrific job crunching system hogs such as *Far Cry*, *Halo*, and *Splinter Cell*. The Mobility Radeon 9700 may not be an X800, but it can certainly hold its own when it comes to gaming prowess. WASD warriors will get a charge out of its smooth framerates, and it's even powerful enough to bump up antialiasing and anisotropic filtering to match the quality of the rendering to the awesome LCD display.

If you choose to purchase a gaming laptop, be warned: Most laptops aren't upgradeable. Fortunately, Voodoo offers graphics card upgrades for the Envy. The Voodoo Envy M:860 is easily one of the gnarliest gaming laptops on the market.

✉ Joel Durham Jr.

SCORE: ★★★★★



Of course, besides convenience at a gaming gathering, you'll command bragging rights. This notebook is as close to a modder's dream as a notebook can be—complete with symbol-laden graphics on the top cover.

THE ULTIMATE GAMING MACHINE

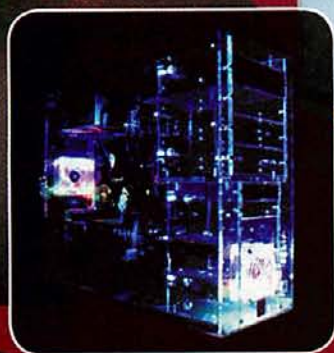
Leading-edge Performance Today, With Readiness For The Future.

VICIOUS PC



The Only Microsoft® Windows® Compatible 64-bit Pc Processor

Leading-edge Performance Today, With Readiness For The Future.



Assassin

Price: \$2299

AMD Athlon™ 64 3500+ Processor With Hyper Transport™ Technology
NVIDIA GeForce 6800 GT 256MB DDR
1024MB Dual-Channel PC3200 400MHz DDR RAM Memory
Dual 120GB SATA 150 7200 RPM RAID Array Hard Drive
16x52x24x52 DVD+CD-RW Drive
ViewSonic 19" PerfectFlat G90FB .21mm dp Monitor
Altec Lansing 251 5.1 6-Channel Speakers w/Subwoofer
500W Translucent Case and Lighting
Lifetime Technical Support
Multimedia Office Keyboard and Optical Mouse
Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition w/ Full CD
Conserves power and operates quietly with AMD Cool'n' Quiet™ technology



www.viciouspc.com
Order Toll Free 1.866.289.2872

© 2004 Viciouspc.com. All rights reserved. All brands and product names are trademarks or registered trademarks of their respective companies. All prices and configurations are subject to change without notice or obligation. Original shipping charges and opened software are non-refundable. All returns have to be accompanied by an RMA number and must be in re-salable condition. Systems pictures may include some equipment and/or accessories which are not standard features. Vicious PC is not responsible for any typographical errors. This model number indicates relative software performance among AMD processors.





\$ 829

GAMER ULTRA 7000 ELITE

- Abit KV8 Pro Athlon™ 64 MB w/ 8X AGP
- Geil 512MB PC3200 DDR400 Memory
- 160GB 7200RPM 8MB Cache Serial ATA150 HD
- NVIDIA® GeForce™ FX 5500 8X AGP 256MB Video Powered by XFX
- LG 16X DVD-ROM
- LG 52X32X52 CD-RW Drive
- nForce 3 5.1 3-D Surround Sound
- 600Watt Subwoofer System
- 56K V.92 Modem & 1.44MB Floppy Drive
- Multimedia Control Internet Keyboard & Mouse
- A-TOP X-BLADE Case 420Watt with See Through Windows and Sound Activated Neon Light
- 6 Cool Custom Colors to Choose From
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Microsoft® Work 7.0
- Free First Year On Site Service plus 24/7 Tech Support

AMD Athlon™ 64 FX-53 Processor	\$ 1609	CAH101
AMD Athlon™ 64 3800+ Processor	\$ 1405	CAH102
AMD Athlon™ 64 3700+ Processor	\$ 1199	CAH103
AMD Athlon™ 64 3500+ Processor	\$ 1075	CAH104
AMD Athlon™ 64 3400+ Processor	\$ 955	CAH105
AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor	\$ 889	CAH106
AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor	\$ 845	CAH107
AMD Athlon™ 64 2800+ Processor	\$ 829	CAH108



\$ 915

GAMER ULTRA 8000 DREAM

- Abit KV8 Pro Athlon™ 64 MB w/ 8X AGP
- Geil 512MB PC3200 DDR400 Memory
- 160GB 7200RPM 8MB Cache Serial ATA150 HD
- NVIDIA® GeForce™ FX 5700 8X AGP 256MB DDR w/ TV Out Powered by XFX
- LG 8X DVD+RW Drive & LG 16X DVD-ROM
- nForce 3 5.1 3-D Surround Sound
- Creative Cambridge Desk Top Theater 5.1 5560 5.1 Surround Sound System
- 56K V.92 Modem & 1.44MB Floppy Drive
- Ideazon CrossFire Gaming Swapable Z-Board & Mouse
- Nzxt® Aluminum X-Nemesis Tower Case 420W w/MOD "See Through Windows" & Neon Light
- 5 Cool Custom Colors to Choose From
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Microsoft® Work 7.0
- Free First Year On Site Service plus 24/7 Tech Support
- Upgrade to Siculo RW-670XL 5.1 Spk for \$139

AMD Athlon™ 64 FX-53 Processor	\$ 1719	CAG101
AMD Athlon™ 64 3800+ Processor	\$ 1499	CAG102
AMD Athlon™ 64 3700+ Processor	\$ 1299	CAG103
AMD Athlon™ 64 3500+ Processor	\$ 1179	CAG104
AMD Athlon™ 64 3400+ Processor	\$ 1069	CAG105
AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor	\$ 985	CAG106
AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor	\$ 935	CAG107
AMD Athlon™ 64 2800+ Processor	\$ 915	CAG108



\$ 1509

GAMER ULTRA X800 PRO

- Abit KV8 Pro Athlon™ 64 MB w/ 8X AGP
- Geil 1024MB PC3200 DDR400 Memory
- 200GB 7200RPM 8MB Cache Serial ATA150 HD
- ATI® RADEON™ X800 Pro 256MB DDR Video Card w/ TV Out & DVI
- 12X DVD+RW Drive & LG 16X DVD-ROM
- Creative Lab 5B Audigy 2 ES 7.1 Sound w/ IEEE
- Creative Cambridge Inspire T7700 7.1 Surround Sound System
- 56K V.92 Modem & 1.44MB Floppy Drive
- Ideazon CrossFire Gaming Swapable Z-Board
- Microsoft® Optical Intelli Explorer Mouse
- Aluminum X-Super Alien Server Tower Case 425W w/ MOD "See Through Windows" & Neon Light
- 6 Cool Custom Colors to Choose From
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Microsoft® Work 7.0
- Free First Year On Site Service plus 24/7 Tech Support

AMD Athlon™ 64 FX-53 Processor	\$ 2315	CAF101
AMD Athlon™ 64 3800+ Processor	\$ 2099	CAF102
AMD Athlon™ 64 3700+ Processor	\$ 1899	CAF103
AMD Athlon™ 64 3500+ Processor	\$ 1779	CAF104
AMD Athlon™ 64 3400+ Processor	\$ 1669	CAF105
AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor	\$ 1579	CAF106
AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor	\$ 1535	CAF107
AMD Athlon™ 64 2800+ Processor	\$ 1509	CAF108

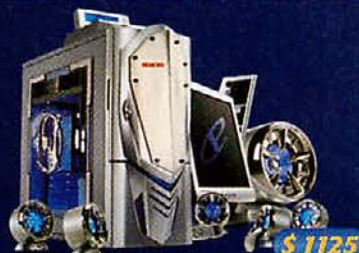
- Provides leading-edge 32-bit performance for music, video, and games and is ready for future 64-bit software
- Improves security against certain types of viruses, with Enhanced Virus Protection for the upcoming Microsoft® Windows® XP SP2
- Conserves power and operates quietly with AMD Cool'n'Quiet™ technology

Picture Shown w/ Optional Siculo RW-670XL 5.1 Gaming Speaker System



CYBERPOWERINC.COM

AMD®, the AMD® Arrow logo, AMD® Athlon™, and combinations thereof are trademarks of Advanced Micro Devices, Inc.



\$1125

GAMER ULTRA 8000 PRO

- Abit KV8 Pro Athlon™ 64 MB w/ 8X AGP
- Geil 1024MB PC3200 DDR400 Memory
- 160GB 7200RPM 8MB Cache Serial ATA150 HD
- NVIDIA® GeForce™ 6800 8X AGP 128MB DDR3 Video Card w/ TV Out & DVI Powered by XFX
- LG 16X DVD-ROM Drive
- LG 52X32X52 CD-RW Drive
- nForce 3 5.1 3-D Surround Sound
- Creative Cambridge Desk Top Theater 5.1 SBS 560 5.1 Surround Sound Speakers
- 56K V.92 Modem & 1.44MB Floppy Drive
- Ideazon CrossFire Gaming Swapable Z-Board
- Microsoft® Optical wheel Mouse
- Nxt™ Aluminum X-Nemesis Tower Case 420W w/ MOD "See Through Windows" & Neon Light
- 5 Cool Custom Colors to Choose From
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Microsoft® Work 7.0
- Free First Year On Site Service plus 24/7 Tech Support
- Upgrade to Siculo RW-670XL 5.1 Spk for \$139

AMD Athlon™ 64 FX-53 Processor	\$ 1929	CAI101
AMD Athlon™ 64 3800+ Processor	\$ 1715	CAI102
AMD Athlon™ 64 3700+ Processor	\$ 1515	CAI103
AMD Athlon™ 64 3500+ Processor	\$ 1395	CAI104
AMD Athlon™ 64 3400+ Processor	\$ 12719	CAI105
AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor	\$ 1195	CAI106
AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor	\$ 1149	CAI107
AMD Athlon™ 64 2800+ Processor	\$ 1125	CAI108



\$579

GAMER ULTRA 8000 VALUE

- Abit KV8 Pro Athlon™ 64 MB w/ 8X AGP
- Geil 512MB PC3200 Dual Channel DDR400 Memory
- 160GB 7200RPM Hard Drive
- ATI® RADEON™ 9200 128MB DDR Video Card w/ TV Out & DVI
- LG Combo Drive (16X DVD-ROM & 52X32X52 CD-RW)
- nForce 3 5.1 3-D Surround Sound
- 600Watt Subwoofer System
- 1.44MB Floppy Drive
- Internet Keyboard & Mouse
- Turbo X-Infinity Case 420 Watt with See Through Windows and Sound Activated Neon Light
- 6 Cool Custom Colors to Choose From
- Free First Year On Site Service plus 24/7 Tech Support
- Upgrade to Siculo RW360XL 2.1 Gaming Speakers System for \$75

AMD Athlon™ 64 FX-53 Processor	\$ 1369	CAI101
AMD Athlon™ 64 3800+ Processor	\$ 1155	CAI102
AMD Athlon™ 64 3700+ Processor	\$ 959	CAI103
AMD Athlon™ 64 3500+ Processor	\$ 839	CAI104
AMD Athlon™ 64 3400+ Processor	\$ 729	CAI105
AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor	\$ 649	CAI106
AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor	\$ 599	CAI107
AMD Athlon™ 64 2800+ Processor	\$ 579	CAI108



\$1409

GAMER XPLORER-84 8000

- VIA K8T800 Chipset Motherboard
- 512MB PC3200 DDR400 Memory
- 60GB Ultra ATA100 Hard Drive
- Mobile ATI® Radeon™ 9700 PRO 128MB Video
- 15.4" XGA TFT Display 1024x768 Pixels
- CD-RW/DVD Combo Drive
- 10/100 Network Card & 56K V.92 Modem
- Wireless 802.11G 54Mbps Networking
- 3-in-1 Built-in Media Reader
- 1 Firewire IEEE 1394 & 3 USB 2.0 Ports
- 1 PCMCIA Type II Slot
- Weight only 6.39 Lbs
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Free Carrying Case
- 5 Custom Colors to Choose From

AMD Mobile Athlon™ 64 Processor 3700+	\$ 1765
AMD Mobile Athlon™ 64 Processor 3400+	\$ 1529
AMD Mobile Athlon™ 64 Processor 3200+	\$ 1465
AMD Mobile Athlon™ 64 Processor 3000+	\$ 1425
AMD Mobile Athlon™ 64 Processor 2800+	\$ 1409



\$595

GAMER X-TREME 8000 LIGHTNING

- NVIDIA nForce-2 400 Ultra MB with 8X AGP
- 512MB PC3200 Dual Channel DDR400 Memory
- 80GB 7200RPM Ultra ATA133 Hard Drive
- ATI® RADEON™ 9200 128MB DDR Video Card w/ TV Out
- LG 16X DVD-ROM & 52X32X52 CD-RW Drive
- nForce 2 5.1 3-D Surround Sound
- 600Watt Stereo Subwoofer Speaker System W/ Matching Neon Light
- 56K Modem & 1.44MB Floppy Drive
- Multimedia Control Internet Keyboard & Mouse
- Turbo X-Infinity Case 420 Watt with See Through Windows and Sound Activated Neon Light
- 6 Cool Custom Colors to Choose From
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Microsoft® Work 7.0
- Free First Year On Site Service plus 24/7 Tech Support

AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 3200+	\$ 665	CBL901
AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 3000+	\$ 649	CBL902
AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 2800+	\$ 635	CBL903
AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 2600+	\$ 605	CBL904
AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 2600+	\$ 595	CBL905



\$1285

GAMER XPLORER-84 8000

- VIA K8T800 Chipset Motherboard
- 512MB PC3200 DDR400 Memory
- 20GB Ultra ATA100 Hard Drive
- Mobile ATI® Radeon™ 9700 PRO 128MB Video
- 15.4" XGA TFT Display 1024x768 Pixels
- CD-RW/DVD Combo Drive
- 10/100 Network Card & 56K V.92 Modem
- Wireless 802.11G 54Mbps Networking
- 3-in-1 Built-in Media Reader
- 1 Firewire IEEE 1394 & 3 USB 2.0 Ports
- 1 PCMCIA Type II Slot
- Weight only 6.39 Lbs
- Free Carrying Case
- 5 Custom Colors to Choose From

AMD Mobile Athlon™ 64 Processor 3700+	\$ 1639
AMD Mobile Athlon™ 64 Processor 3400+	\$ 1405
AMD Mobile Athlon™ 64 Processor 3200+	\$ 1339
AMD Mobile Athlon™ 64 Processor 3000+	\$ 1299
AMD Mobile Athlon™ 64 Processor 2800+	\$ 1285



The ONLY Windows-compatible 64-bit PC processor

• Features HyperTransport™ technology for improved multitasking performance



CyberPower Inc.

4802 Little John St. Baldwin Park, CA 91706
Tel: (626) 813-7730 • Fax: (626) 813-3810
Technical Support (877) 876-4965
Hour: Mon-Fri 8:30A.M. ~ 6:00P.M.
Sat 9:30A.M. ~ 3:00P.M.

MANUFACTURER: Falcon Northwest PRICE: \$4,100

FALCON'S ALL NEW FRAGBOX 2

Falcon Northwest starts from the ground up and builds an awesome "transportable"



In talking to Kelt Reeves (the outspoken owner of Falcon Northwest), I've come to realize that the original FragBox was in many ways an experiment. As with any experiment, one begins with a question. From there, you form a hypothesis before reaching a conclusion. The question with the FragBox may have been something like: "Can you play games (even demanding ones) with the current generation of small form-factor technology?" The hypothesis may then have been: "With enough power, can you expect to play games (even demanding ones) with a small form-factor rig?" And the conclusion probably sounded something like this: "The power supplies that ship with the current generation of small

form-factor boxes are not robust enough to handle the power needs that hardcore Windows gamers demand." The experiment concluded, and Reeves decided that the only way to go about this small form-factor trend was to start from the ground up. Enter the FragBox 2.

Rocking a 520-watt power supply and Intel's D925XBC PCIE/Socket T micro-ATX motherboard, the FragBox 2 isn't so much a small form-factor PC as it is a standard PC, only smaller. Where its predecessor lacked upgradeability, Falcon boasts that "the FragBox 2 now has the power to run any graphics card and processor combination possible." And this is a blessing to Windows gamers. In fact, the FragBox 2 is about as fast as a similarly configured Mach V.

In addition to a real power supply and superfast motherboard, the FragBox 2 boasts an Intel 3.6GHz Pentium 4 processor, 1GB of Corsair DDR2 memory, dual 74GB Western Digital hard drives in a 150GB RAID 0 configuration, a Sony DVD/RW drive, a four-type media-card writer/reader, and, most important, a 256MB Nvidia GeForce 6800 Ultra PCI Express graphics card.

We put the FragBox 2 through our standard barrage of benchmarks, and boy, were we impressed. We tested it at 1280x1024 with 4x AA and 8x AF turned on. Its 3DMark 2003 score of 5,899 is one of the highest we've seen. Furthermore, none of the games we threw at the machine challenged it. Hell, the FragBox 2 scored *Doom 3* framerates of more than

62 frames per second at 1280x1024 with 4x AA and 8x AF.

Of course, at more than \$4,000 (as tested), the FragBox 2 is exponentially more expensive than the original \$1,000 FragBox (the FragBox 2 starts at around \$2,600). That said, this baby pulls no punches. Boasting the fastest graphics card and processor available, a RAID configuration, and a ton of memory, the FragBox 2 is a no-brainer for the gamer who wants a small machine that you can take with you. Oh yeah, it also comes with a pound of really good coffee.

William O'Neal

SCORE: ★★★★★

We put the FragBox 2 through our standard barrage of benchmarks, and boy, were we impressed. None of the games that we threw at this machine challenged it.



Free Falcon Fuel is served with every FragBox 2 purchase.

MANUFACTURER: Actiontec PRICE: 54 Mbps Wireless Cable/DSL Router \$100, 54 Mbps Wireless PC Card \$60

LOOK MA, NO WIRES!

Actiontec's 54 Mbps Wireless Cable/DSL Router works like a charm



So you've finally purchased that killer gaming laptop or you've set up a small form-factor rig in another part of your house. Seeing as it's 2004, any machine, regardless of how "badass" it may be, is nothing if it's not connected to your broadband network. Of course, there are a lot of ways to connect a machine to a network. But the \$100 question is, "How do you do it?" Well, you could run Ethernet cable all over your house by drilling holes in the floor and finally finding out what's in that crawlspace beneath your home, but whose wife is gonna allow that? The myriad CGW wives, for instance, ain't. The simplest solution is to set up a wireless network.

When it comes to broadband routers, most products (whether they're from D-Link, Belkin, Linksys, or Actiontec) are pretty similar. That said, there are differences in areas such as software bundles, security features, and ease of use. To that end, Actiontec's 54 Mbps Wireless Cable/DSL Router turned out to be a great solution. Lately, I've been torn between Belkin and Actiontec products. Both companies offer similar items that

are simple to set up and affordable, but, of course, there are differences. While Belkin's 54Mbps wireless router connects to your existing DSL modem, Actiontec's product replaces it. At first, I was reluctant to replace my DSL modem (it has served me well for some time) with something new, but Actiontec's 54 Mbps Wireless Router was simple to set up and has yet to let me down.

Setup was extremely simple. I connected the router to my DSL line, plugged it in, and then logged on to the router via the supplied IP address. I found Actiontec's Web-based setup utility (the installation buddy) to be a bit more difficult to figure out than Belkin's, but this is a learning curve issue that's easily overcome by...uh...reading the manual.

Actiontec's 54 Mbps Wireless Cable/DSL Router is 802.11g compliant, and it's also backward compatible to 802.11b. The great thing about 802.11g products is that they'll even support older 802.11a items. In addition to its wireless features, the router also supports the 64-bit and 128-bit WEP encryption that's needed to ensure that your wireless network is good and secure. At around \$100, Actiontec's 54 Mbps Wireless Cable/DSL Router is a great base with which to build a wireless network. **William O'Neal**

SCORE: ★★★★★

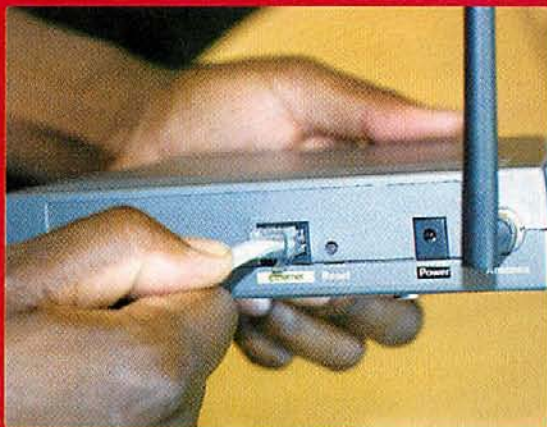


At first, I was reluctant to replace my DSL modem (it has served me well for some time) with a new product, but Actiontec's 54 Mbps Wireless Router was simple to set up and has yet to let me down.

HOW TO INSTALL A WIRELESS ACCESS POINT

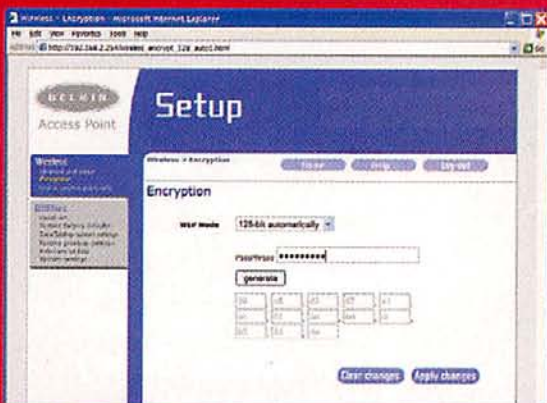
Internet access untethered

You've heard about all this wireless networking stuff, but you think that setting up your own network will be too tough? Wrong! Setting up a wireless network is supereasy, and we'll show you how to do it. For this How To, we used Belkin's 802.11g Wireless Access Point, or WAP (around \$100), but setup should be nearly the same for any manufacturer's access point.



LOG IN TO YOUR WAP

STEP 2 Each manufacturer's WAP will require a different IP address in order to access the device's Web-based user interface that you'll use to configure the WAP. In my case, I entered "192.168.2.254." Once you do this, you'll be able to set up those all-important security features. You don't want that a**hole down the street to use your bandwidth.

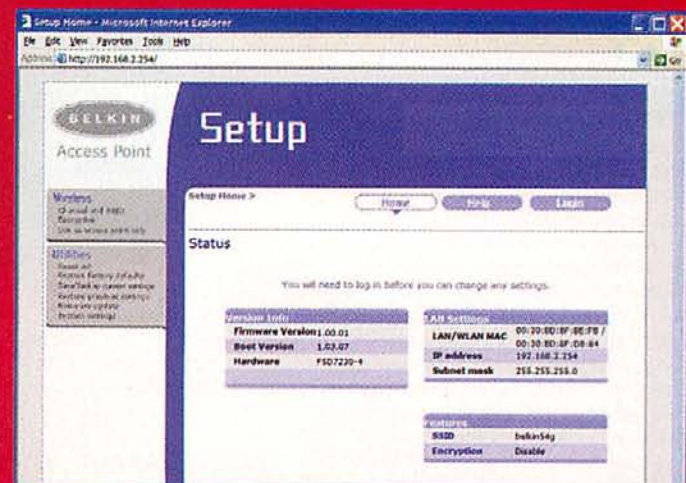


WIRELESS IS ALL ABOUT ENCRYPTION

STEP 3 Without encryption enabled, anyone can tap into your network and wreak all manner of mayhem. In the Setup screen, click on Encryption and use 128 bit. You'll be asked to enter a password that will be used to generate a WEP security key. Once your WEP key is created, be sure to record this information in a place where only you can retrieve it. Lose this information and you're screwed.

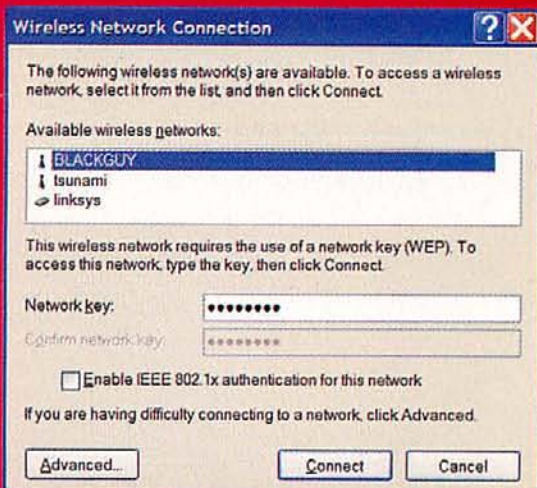
CONNECT THE CABLES

STEP 1 Locate an Ethernet port on the back of your broadband router and connect an Ethernet cable from that port to the one labeled either Ethernet or LAN on the back of your WAP. If the Ethernet port is "live," all the lights on your WAP should light up. Check your documentation to figure out what the various lights indicate.



CONNECT TO YOUR NOW-SECURE NETWORK

STEP 4 Right-click on the Wireless Network icon in the system tray and choose View Available Wireless Networks. Choose your wireless network, mine is called BLACKGUY, and enter that ridiculously long WEP key that was generated with your password and hit Connect. Restart your machine and, barring any technical issues, you should be up and connected to your very own wireless network.



MANUFACTURER: ATI PRICE: \$399 (price charged by Dell to install card in new Inspiron XPS)

ATI'S LATEST MOBILE CHIP HANDLES DOOM 3

The promise of upgradeable mobile graphics pays off

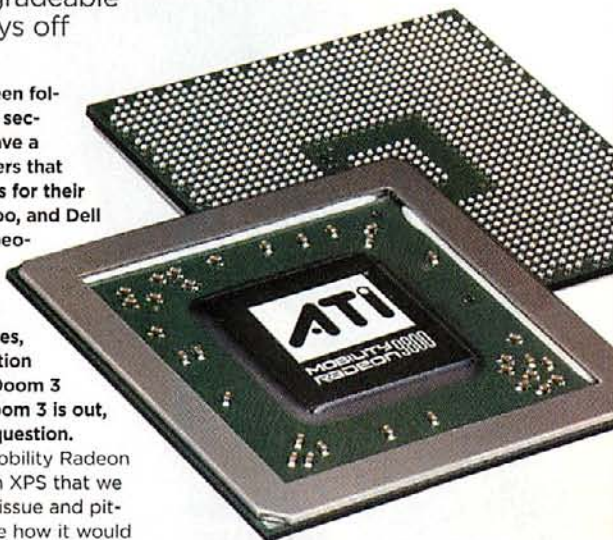
Anyone who has been following CGW's Tech section knows that I have a thing for laptop manufacturers that offer graphics-card upgrades for their machines—Alienware, Voodoo, and Dell come to mind. While most people agree that many of the so-called gaming laptops on the market are powerful enough to handle most games, there was always a big question regarding the two biggies: Doom 3 and Half-Life 2. Now that Doom 3 is out, we can answer part of that question.

We took the 128MB ATI Mobility Radeon 9700-powered Dell Inspiron XPS that we reviewed in the September issue and pitted it against Doom 3 to see how it would fare. "Not too well" is the answer. Now keep in mind this machine is a beast with a 3.4GHz Intel Pentium 4 processor and 1GB of DDR memory. Only by knocking Doom 3's settings down to 640x480 and turning off every single visual detail were we able to achieve a benchmark score of 65 frames per second. This may sound OK, but remember, at these settings, the game is hideous. And this is where upgradeable mobile graphics come into play.

ATI recently released its 256MB Mobility Radeon 9800 graphics chip, and we had one installed in our Dell Inspiron XPS. Sweet Jesus! Not only did this card fly in our benchmark and game tests, but most important, we were able to play Doom 3 at 640x480 with most of the visual details turned on at 66 frames per second, as well as at 800x600 at 45 frames per second. How does the Mobility Radeon 9800 do this? In addition to an

Only by knocking Doom 3's settings down to 640x480 and turning off every single visual detail were we able to achieve a benchmark score of 65 frames per second.

additional 128MB of memory, it rocks eight pixel pipelines (instead of four like its predecessor) and runs at an even higher clock speed. **William O'Neal**



Will Power
His monthly spew of filth

Is there a ghost in the machine?

Being a hardware enthusiast as well as a journalist means balancing the enthusiasm I have for things shiny and new with the skepticism that I'm supposed to levy on the same shiny and new objects—case in point, small form-factor PCs.

When I first began to look at these machines, I was so impressed that I was quick to overlook many of their shortcomings. In my reviews, I mentioned that their weak power supplies meant that you were severely limited in your upgrade options. "But so what," I thought, "they're still just so damn cool."

In my excitement to play with something new, I overlooked a critical aspect of these machines. Outfits like Voodoo and Falcon are known for building gaming machines from the ground up. After doing a ton of research, they pick the best components and put them together in machines that they stroke and nurture like brand-new babies. Building a machine based on a Shuttle XPC box means that you're going with Shuttle's case, power supply, and motherboard. While Voodoo and Falcon do their best to squeeze as much as possible from these boxes, either way, you're getting Shuttle's or FIC's case, power supply, and motherboard.

I suppose these first attempts were more of a test of the small form-factor market. However, whether from dead power supplies or other hardware incompatibilities, these machines are, at best, "quirky." Having sold a ton of FragBoxes, though, Falcon has now designed its own box from the ground up. For the FragBox 2, the company designed the case and chose the motherboard and power supply. If you bought an early small form-factor machine, you may be wondering if there's a ghost in the machine. I'm happy to say that what you're experiencing with that little baby is nothing more than old-fashioned growing pains. **William O'Neal**

BY THE NUMBERS

Graphics Processor	128MB ATI Mobility Radeon 9700	256MB ATI Mobility Radeon 9800
3DMark2003 Pro v. 340	3,362	6,464
AquaMark 2003	31	45
3DGameGauge 3.5	60	73
Comanche 4	60	61
Serious Sam: TSE	97	115
Dungeon Siege	100	100
UT2003 Botmatch	80	79

NOTE: ALL TESTS WERE RUN AT 1024 X 768 WITH AA AND AF TURNED OFF.

Loyd's Cracked Case

Small is beautiful

We recently reviewed VoodooPC's F50 "silent" PC that weighs 65 pounds. My back hasn't been the same since unpacking it from its box.

If you've ever moved a Dell XPS, the muscles in your back probably went on strike, too. Sure, you need a big chassis if you're an overclocker, but we want something svelte that still runs *Far Cry* or *Doom 3* with wicked fast framerates.

"WTF? Svelte?" I can hear you cry. "Case has finally become a high-tech wimp, too old to lift a real man's PC!"

Next time you load that huge freakin' PC into your car for the local LAN party, I'll show up with an entire clan's worth of high-performance PCs. The small form-factor revolution is upon us.

IS THAT A SHOEBOX IN YOUR...UH...BACKPACK?

I'm not talking about some pizza box piece o' crap with integrated graphics. I'm talking about those sleek, tiny cube-shaped PCs that have become all the rage. Taiwanese manufacturer Shuttle built the first cube-shaped PC, which the company has since dubbed "the XPC." But other companies have weighed in with their versions of small form-factor systems. The salient feature of these PCs is performance in a tiny package. Most of these machines can accept the fastest CPUs.

The cramped quarters inside the small cases are not always friendly to high-end graphics cards, however. Double-wide cards, like Nvidia's GeForce 6800 Ultra, don't fit into many of these systems. Even if they do, they consume an additional slot space, which eliminates the possibility of having a PCI sound card. But you can still build them with really fast graphics cards—just not the two-slot behemoths.

I'm not talking about some pizza box piece o' crap with integrated graphics. I'm talking about those sleek, tiny cube-shaped PCs that have become all the rage.



And they're, well, cute. You can trick them out with different skins, get carrying cases for them, and the case modders have begun working their magic. Around the Case house, we have three of these babies humming along, doing the yeoman's duties for my oldest daughter as well as fueling two of the gaming systems for the Friday Night Follies LAN parties. All of them are equipped with substantial graphics cards, ranging from Nvidia's 5700 Ultra to ATI's Radeon 9800 XT. The slowest of them sports a 2.8GHz P4. Performance is not an issue. Toss in an LCD flat panel with a sub-16ms response time and you've got a sweet, semiportable gaming system.

AH, THE WIRELESS REVOLUTION

Many of these systems are being loaded up with wireless networking, too. Now all you need for a LAN party is a wireless router that connects to the Internet. Provided all the PCs are in close proximity,

latency and lag are not issues. Imagine a LAN party where you no longer have to lug miles of Ethernet cable and an Ethernet switch per table. You do have to be careful about performance, though. Some low-cost routers can theoretically handle 255 users, but if you try to actually have that many people connect, then it's lag city.

But what if you want to go even smaller? Wouldn't a laptop suffice? The answer is yes, sort of. You'll find that a machine that doesn't wrench your shoulder out of its socket when you pick it up will deliver only ho-hum graphics performance. However, the recent release of ATI's Mobility 9800 is a precursor of what's to come. Currently available only in "desktop replacements," we may see this type of performance in more mainstream laptops in a year or so as chip-manufacturing processes improve.

So dump those massive desktop PCs and heavy CRTs. You have nothing to lose but your chiropractor bills. **—Loyd Case**



Check Out

FAST FORWARD

104



KILLER RIG

100

REWIND 100

105



107

GAME DESIGN 101



102

A-LIST



Inside

What videocard should you buy for your next awesome computer? Who would play Darth Malak in a *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic* movie? What's our favorite 1UP.com club this month? What the hell did we rate *Pax Romana*, anyway? These and other pressing questions are answered in this month's Check Out pages.

Killer Rig

For the gamer on a budget!



While last month's supersexy Power Rig was designed with the hardcore gamer in mind, this month's Lean Machine is designed for gamers on a budget. I know what you're saying: "How is a \$1,680 machine a budget rig?" Well, if you look at the tower alone—without the LCD and speakers—you'll see that this thing is mad affordable.

A month or so ago, I reviewed an IBuyPower.com machine that was \$1,000. That machine shipped with a 256MB Nvidia GeForce FX 5700LE. While that card sucked, the 128MB Nvidia GeForce FX 5700 Ultra that I included in this machine is great for less-demanding games. For instance, IBuyPower's machine scored around 13 frames per second in *Halo* at 1280x1024, while my machine scored 26 frames per second at the same resolution. Of course, if you want to play *Doom 3* or *Half-Life 2*, you'll have to drop some serious coin on a more robust graphics card.

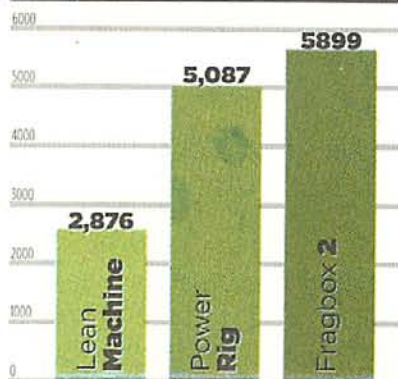
I debated making this machine an Athlon 64-based rig and decided to go the Intel route, since right now you can get these sub-3GHz Pentium 4 processors for next to nothing. And since most games rely mainly on the graphics card anyway, the 2.8GHz Pentium 4 is a great place to start when you're looking to build an affordable gaming rig. And that Intel D875PBZ motherboard is as solid as a rock. **William O'Neal**

If you want to play *Doom 3* or *Half-Life 2*, you'll have to drop some serious coin on a more robust graphics card.

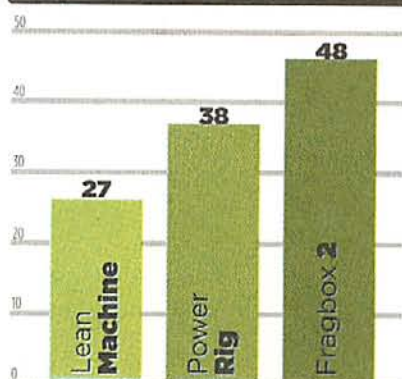


Antec
Lanboy case

3DMark03 Pro



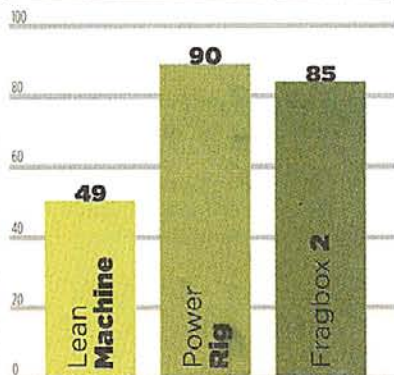
AquaMark 2003



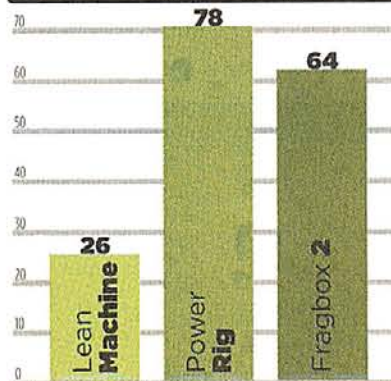
ALL TESTS RUN WITH 4X AA (ANTIALIASING) AND 8X AF (ANISOTROPIC FILTERING) TURNED ON UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.

Viewsonic
18-inch LCD monitorLogitech
Z-2200 2.1
speakers

3D GameGauge 3.5



Halo - Shader 1.0



The Guts

MODEL	LEAN MACHINE	PRICE
Operating system	Windows XP Home Edition	\$100
Case	Antec Lanboy	\$100
Processor (CPU)	Intel 2.8GHz Pentium 4	\$200
Motherboard	Intel D875PBZ	\$100
Memory	512MB Kingston PC-3200 DDR	\$100
Hard drive	40GB Maxtor	\$80
Graphics processor	128MB GeForce FX 5700 Ultra	\$150
Soundcard	Creative Labs Sound Blaster Audigy 2	\$80
Optical drive	Sony DVD-ROM	\$20
Monitor	Viewsonic 18-inch LCD	\$600
Keyboard/mouse	Microsoft Multimedia Keyboard	\$50
Speakers	Logitech Z-2200	\$100
TOTAL COST		\$1,680

A-List

Our picks



With the recent and upcoming releases of hot games like *Doom 3*, *Half-Life 2*, *The Sims 2*,

Splinter Cell Chaos Theory, *Tribes: Vengeance*, *Star Wars Battlefront*, *Knights of the Old Republic II*, and *Call of Duty: United Offensive*, plenty of you are probably wondering whether you should upgrade your not-quite-awesome-but-still-gets-the-job-done computer. We're here to tell you: do it! Sure, these games look and play fine on a midrange rig, but let's face it—*Half-Life 2* is the kind of game you really want to upgrade your system for. And with the holidays practically right around the corner, you've got the perfect excuse to buy that attractive new videocard.



COMPUTERS

If you're still on the fence about upgrading that old system of yours, you might want to take a look at recent prices—there are actually some decent, affordable rigs out there.

Intel-Based systems



PRODUCT

HIGH-END PICK

Generation 3 Dimension XPS
\$3,699 (E-Value code 6V411-XPS3REK)
Dell

WHY YOU SHOULD BUY IT

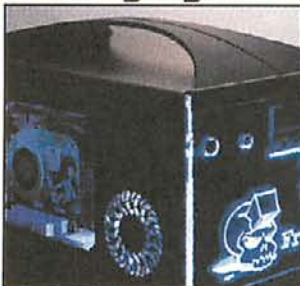
While Dell's first PCI Express-based machine isn't the fastest around, it's hard not to recommend it. With 1GB of DDR2 memory, 500GB of storage space, 5.1 speakers, and a killer 20.1-inch LCD, you're getting plenty of good stuff here.

BUDGET PICK

Back to School PC
\$1,000
IBuyPower

This rig ships with a powerful processor (3GHz Intel Pentium 4) and a weak graphics card (256MB Nvidia GeForce FX 5700LE), but since IBuyPower is a "build to order" outfit, you can easily tweak that configuration.

Lanboy system



PRODUCT

HIGH-END PICK

FragBox 2
\$4,000
Falcon Northwest

WHY YOU SHOULD BUY IT

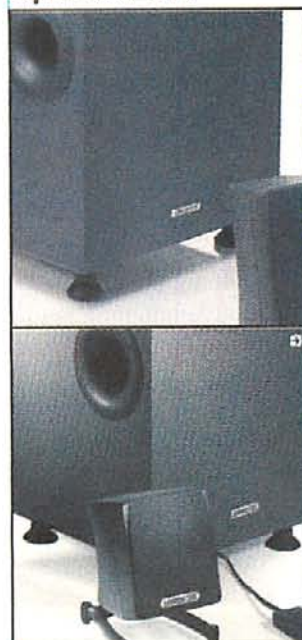
Say hello to Falcon Northwest's FragBox 2. This box rocks a 520-watt power supply and a standard Micro-ATX Intel 925X-based motherboard—which means it doesn't suffer from the same upgrade limitations as its predecessor.



PERIPHERALS

Speaking of *Doom 3*, it has some pretty eerie Dolby 5.1-enhanced audio effects. Make sure your speakers are up to par, it's well worth the cost.

Speakers



PRODUCT

WHY YOU SHOULD BUY IT

HIGH-END PICK

■ **Creative GigaWorks S750 with DTS-100 Decoder**
\$575
Creative

Creative's GigaWorks S750 speakers are simply awesome. The only catch is that they're specifically designed to go with a PC. Well, add the DTS-100 Decoder to the mix and you have the ultimate home entertainment setup. With a ton of connection options, you can easily hook them up to your PC, consoles, and standalone DVD player.

MIDRANGE PICK

■ **Creative MegaWorks 2.1 250D**
\$150
Creative

Good speakers are a must-have. The thing is, you may not want to compromise quality in order to get a surround-sound setup. In any case, the MegaWorks 2.1 250Ds are great. They are THX certified; plus, the subwoofer kicks.

BUDGET PICK

■ **Logitech Z-640**
\$80
Logitech

If you absolutely have to have a surround-sound setup, then you'll like the Z-640s. They lack all of the connections that the Z-680s boast, but you'll still be pleased with the sound.

Gadget



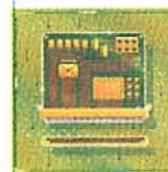
PRODUCT

WHY YOU SHOULD BUY IT

OUR PICK

■ **Creative Zen Touch**
\$270
Creative Labs

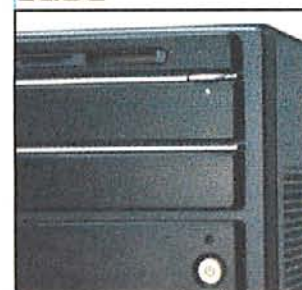
Creative's development model seems to be "wait for Apple to do something, then do it better." Hey, that's fine with us. The Zen Touch has a 10GB hard drive, 24 hours of battery life, USB 2.0 support, and plays both MP3 and WMA files.



COMPONENTS

Ever see the inside of a computer case that hasn't been dusted out in five years? Let's just say that it isn't a pretty sight.

Case



PRODUCT

WHY YOU SHOULD BUY IT

TOWER PICK

■ **TAC-T01-EIC**
\$150
Cooler Master

This case is still our favorite, but because it's pretty heavy, it's not the best choice for the LAN-party crowd. Either way, though, its industrial design looks plenty cool.

ALTERNATIVE FORM-FACTOR

■ **Shuttle SB81P**
\$300
Shuttle

Wimpy power supplies are a major problem for small form-factor cases. Shuttle hopes to fix this with the SB81P. Designed for what Shuttle calls "high voltage" computing, the SB81P boasts Intel's latest: the 915 chipset.

Fast Forward

Welcome to Fast Forward, our monthly catch-all hodgepodge of PC-gaming randomness. This month: our dream cast for *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic* and more!

CASTING COUCH

We cast the *KOTOR* movie!

Oh boy—*Star Wars Episode III* has a name now! *Revenge of the Sith*! We're so not excited! While once upon a time this news might have made our geeky little hearts leap with joy, now, after suffering through two abominable movies, we just kind of want to curl up into a ball and cry. That's why we're here at CGW are casting our own *Star Wars* movie: *Knights of the Old Republic*. As we and everyone else has said numerous times, BioWare's awesome *Star Wars* RPG—CGW's 2003 Game of the Year—told the best *Star Wars* story since the original movie trilogy. So here's how we'd cast the *KOTOR* movie. Do you have better ideas? Let us know!



Justin Theroux as Carth Onasi

Grim and brooding, Carth Onasi is a career soldier and skilled pilot determined to take down the Sith threat. Justin Theroux isn't a household name, but he does the brooding thing well, most recently on *Six Feet Under*. Alec Baldwin is just too old now.



Kurt Russell as Canderous Ordo

Every *Star Wars* movie needs its rogue tough guy, and Canderous Ordo is the one in *KOTOR*—he's a Mandalorian mercenary with lots of blood on his hands. So this role goes to Kurt Russell, who will forever own us, thanks to his godlike turn as Snake Plissken in *Escape From New York*.



Larry David as Jolee Bindo

Jolee Bindo is the cranky old man of the Jedi order, a curmudgeon who has gone into exile because, well, he hates everyone. Which leads us directly to *Curb Your Enthusiasm*'s Larry David—America's newest action hero.

Kate Beckinsale as Bastila Shan

Bastila is an incredibly gifted but impulsive and brash Jedi who exudes strength and authority with a bit of a dark edge. British actress Kate Beckinsale, who almost redeemed *Underworld* as a hot vampire warrior, definitely gets the nod here.



Wii's Picks



Madden NFL 2005

The best videogame franchise ever just keeps on getting better, and lately, I can't get enough of the nearly gold version of *Madden NFL 2005*. What more can I say?



Call of Duty

I loved this game when it first came out, and I still can't get enough of it. While the multiplayer leaves a lot to be desired (it feels like a sniperfest), the single-player experience is still compelling.



Ghost Recon

I know *Ghost Recon 2* is about to come out. But until then, I'll make do with the original. This game is infinitely replayable. Think you're a badass? Try completing the entire game solo.



Steve Buscemi as HK-47
HK-47 is a thin, wiry badass of a droid, a take-no-guff robot with attitude. For us, there's only one choice here: Steve Buscemi, the *Reservoir Dogs/Sopranos/Fargo* star, who could call humans "meatbags" with the appropriate snarl and disgust.



Hilary Duff as Mission Vao
Mission is a perky, quick-witted Twi'lek girl—street-smart and charming in that yappy, girly way. Hilary Duff has the kind of teeny-bopper spunk that this role needs. And she'll still look pretty cute, even with the blue makeup and freaky head.



Ron Perlman as Zaalbar
Mission Vao's best friend is an 8-foot-tall lumbering Wookiee by the name of Zaalbar. This hairy beast does your basic *Star Wars* double duty as muscle and furry cuddle toy. The role belongs to Ron Perlman (*Hellboy*), basically because he now gets every beast role ever until he dies. Just look at the guy.

Vin Diesel as Darth Malak
Dark Malak is a bald, brutal, arrogant former Jedi, now a Sith lord intent on conquering the galaxy. Vin Diesel gets the nod here, not just for the perfect resemblance, but also because he has the kind of geek cred that a movie with Larry David is going to need.



Jennifer Garner as Juhani Brave
Hot-tempered and passionate, Juhani battles Sith bad guys as well as her own inner demons. Jennifer Garner brings the same kind of fiery angst to her role on *Alias*, but she gets this role only if we can get her to wear leather. Hey, it's our movie. We make the rules.



Rewind 100

What should you play today? Names in **red** indicate Editors' Choice games

GAME	ISSUE	RATING
Across the Dnepr	04/04	★★★★☆
America's Army: Special Forces v2.0	03/04	★★★★☆
Armed and Dangerous	03/04	★★★★☆
Aura: Fate of the Ages	10/04	★★★★☆
Battle Engine Aquila	04/04	★★★★☆
Battlefield Vietnam	06/04	★★★★☆
Besieger	09/04	★★★★☆
Beyond Divinity	08/04	★★★★☆
Beyond Good & Evil	03/04	★★★★☆
Black Hawk Down: Team Sabre	04/04	★★★★☆
Blade and Sword	04/04	★★★★☆
Breed	07/04	★★★★☆
Chaos Legion	08/04	★★★★☆



City of Heroes	08/04	★★★★☆
Civilization III: Conquests	04/04	★★★★☆
Combat Mission: Afrika Korps	04/04	★★★★☆
Conspiracies	05/04	★★★★☆
Counter-Strike: Condition Zero	03/04	★★★★☆
Crusader Kings	08/04	★★★★☆
Crystal Key 2: The Far Realm	08/04	★★★★☆
CSI: Crime Scene Investigation—Dark Motives	08/04	★★★★☆
Dead Man's Hand	08/04	★★★★☆
Dead to Rights	04/04	★★★★☆
Desert Rats vs. Afrika Korps	07/04	★★★★☆
Deus Ex 2: Invisible War	03/04	★★★★☆

Rewind100

GAME ISSUE RATING



Doom 3	10/04	★★★★★
Far Cry	06/04	★★★★☆
FireStarter	06/04	★★★★☆
Gangland	06/04	★★★★☆
Ground Control II: Operation Exodus	10/04	★★★★★
Hitman: Contracts	08/04	★★★★☆
Horizons: Empire of Istar	05/04	★★★★☆
Jack the Ripper	05/04	★★★★☆
Joint Operations: Typhoon Rising	09/04	★★★★★
Judge Dredd: Dredd Versus Death	07/04	★★★★☆
Korea: Forgotten Conflict	04/04	★★★★☆
KumaWar	09/04	★★★★☆
Lineage II: The Chaotic Chronicle	08/04	★★★★☆
Lock On: Modern Air Combat	03/04	★★★★☆
Lords of EverQuest	03/04	★★★★☆
Lords of the Realm III	07/04	★★★★☆
Magic: The Gathering—Battlegrounds	04/04	★★★★☆
Manhunt	07/04	★★★★☆



Missing: Since January	10/04	★★★★★
MVP Baseball 2004	06/04	★★★★☆
Mysterious Journey II	03/04	★★★★☆
NASCAR Thunder 2004	03/04	★★★★☆
NBA Live 2004	03/04	★★★★★
Need for Speed Underground	03/04	★★★★★
Nemesis of the Roman Empire	07/04	★★★★☆
Neverwinter Nights: Hordes of the Underdark	03/04	★★★★☆

IMPLEMENTS OF DESTRUCTION

A few of our favorite ways to blow the competition away

There are a lot of fancy-schmancy weapons in the various first-person shooters we're all obsessed with, but have you ever taken the time to think about how well these armaments jive with their real-world versions?



Crowbar

As Seen In: *Half-Life 1 and 2*

Profile: All-purpose nonfirearm destruction

The Real Deal:

Have you ever hit someone with a crowbar? Wait,

don't answer that—let us get out of range first. Cops are more fearful of melee weapons such as crowbars and knives than they are of guns—with good reason. Crowbars tend to hurt when someone's beating the hell out of you with one.

Minigun/Chaingun

As Seen In: *UT2004*

Profile:

Your basic fully automatic death dispenser

The Real Deal: These things eat through bullets like nobody's business, but they get the job done—unless you suck as much as Ryan, who can fire 50 bullets at someone without so much as scratching them, only to be nailed by a single shot to the head five seconds later. Which brings us to our next topic....



Shotgun

As Seen In: *Half-Life 1 and 2, Quake III: Arena, Halo*

Profile: Walnut stock, cobalt blue steel...and a hair trigger

The Real Deal: Shotguns (or what the übergeeks among us refer to as "boomsticks") are good for one thing: blowing big friggin' holes in people. Especially zombies. Nothing quite like making an undead head 'splode! We're not sure how accurate that is in real life, but we do know that these things are pretty sweet.



Sniper Rifle

As Seen In: *UT2004, Halo*

Profile:

Every cheap bastard's favorite toy **The Real Deal:** "One shot, one kill." It sounds good on paper, but when you've got a flock of moronic 13-year-olds with sniper rifles on a map, camping out in the shadows and waiting for perfect head-shot opportunities, it's just...well, kind of lame. Something tells us real marksmen are a lot more impressive. And a lot less trash-talky.



Rocket Launcher

As Seen In: *UT2004, Halo*

Profile: It shoots ROCKETS. What other description do you need?

The Real Deal: Call us crazy, but it doesn't look like it would be easy—or even possible—to carry these things, around and still run at a decent clip. Sometimes, they're just plain unrealistic—some of those critters in *Far Cry* take seven or eight rockets to kill. In reality, just one rocket will turn anything into a delicious red paste.



Plasma Rifle

As Seen In: *Halo*

Profile: Awesome alien technology with no basis in reality whatsoever **The Real Deal:** We're not sure how these would stack up against other big guns in the real world, but chances are, if you're shooting plasma bolts, people should probably be running away from you. Same goes for lasers, lightning guns, radiation beams, BFGs, and other kick-ass stuff that doesn't exist yet. Our damn scientists are lazy, working on cures for "diseases" instead of inventing more powerful weapons.



LISTMANIA!

Four publishers to keep an eye on

EA wasn't always the EA we know today. Like everybody else, they started somewhere. These four publishers may not have the same level of name recognition, but they're worth your time and money every bit as much as the big guns are.



1. NovaLogic

www.novalogic.com

NovaLogic is quickly developing a reputation for high-quality tactical action games. It recently made a big splash with *Joint Operations: Typhoon Rising*, and its recent *Black Hawk Down* efforts (notably, *Team Sabre*) have been pretty solid as well.



2. Tri Synergy

www.trisynergy.com

You may not know the name, but that's not surprising, since Tri-Synergy takes a low-key approach to publishing in an effort to yield most of the limelight to its games' developers. The company has been responsible for such titles as *The Longest Journey* and *Port Royale*.



3. Bethesda Softworks

www.bethsoft.com

Best known for its *Elder Scrolls* franchise of role-playing games, Bethesda also holds the license for the H.P. Lovecraft-inspired *Call of Cthulhu* series, and the company recently announced that it is developing and publishing the eagerly anticipated *Fallout 3*.



4. Shrapnel Games

www.shrapnelgames.com

Shrapnel Games is the kind of publisher that appeals to a certain type of gamer—that is, the hardest of the hardcore strategy-game fans. Fans like freelancer Bruce Geryk, who wrote an entire tutorial for *Dominions II* because it is so damned complicated.

CGW GAME DESIGN 101

Medieval Lords of Tennis

In the screwball world that is CGW, we tend to see some pretty bizarre things on our Microsoft Outlook appointment calendars from time to time. Case in point: A few months ago, we were shown back-to-back press demos of Monte Cristo's *Medieval Lords: Build, Defend, Expand* and O3 Entertainment's *World Championship Tennis*. Somehow, this meeting made its way onto our calendars as *Medieval Lords of Tennis*. The more we think about it, the better it sounds.

Picture this: Four armor-clad knights run around on a makeshift tennis court, batting severed heads back and forth with weird-shaped swords in a 2-on-2 match to the death. You might even have different types of "rackets"—or, even better, different types of heads. The jester's head might not get the same degree of topspin as the unruly peasant's head, but the added weight from that stupid jester's hat probably makes it drop at a steeper angle. Think of the strategy involved here!

Then there are all the little bells and whistles, such as the *Monty Python*-esque announcer, the variable gore levels, and all the hot damsels cheering you on from the stands. And let's not forget the obligatory career mode, where you'll compete to become the Tennis King. Hey, it might not be Wimbledon, but it sure beats jousting.



Rewind100

GAME	ISSUE	RATING
One Must Fall: Battlegrounds	04/04	★★★☆☆
Painkiller	07/04	★★★★☆
Pax Romana	03/04	★★★★☆
Perimeter	09/04	★★★☆☆
Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time	03/04	★★★★☆
Rainbow Six 3: Athena Sword	06/04	★★★★☆
Rise of Nations: Thrones & Patriots	07/04	★★★★☆
Sacred	07/04	★★★★☆
Secret Weapons Over Normandy	03/04	★★★☆☆
Shadowbane: Rise of Chaos	04/04	★★★☆☆
Shrek 2	09/04	★★★☆☆
Silent Hill 3	03/04	★★★☆☆
Silent Storm	04/04	★★★★☆
Singles: Flirt Up Your Life	09/04	★★★★☆



Soldner: Secret Wars	10/04	★★★★☆
Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow	06/04	★★★★☆
Squad Assault: Western Front	03/04	★★★☆☆
Star Chamber	05/04	★★★★☆
Syberia II	05/04	★★★★☆
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	05/04	★★★☆☆
Terminator 3: War of the Machines	04/04	★★★☆☆



The Suffering	10/04	★★★★☆
Thief: Deadly Shadows	09/04	★★★★☆
Title Bout Championship Boxing	05/04	★★★★☆

Rewind100

GAME ISSUE RATING



TrackMania	10/04	★★★★☆
Trainz 2004	04/04	★★★★☆
True Crime: Streets of L.A.	09/04	★★★★☆



Universal Combat	10/04	★★★★☆
Unreal Tournament 2004	06/04	★★★★★
Vegas Tycoon	04/04	★★★★☆
Victoria	03/04	★★★★☆
Virtual Skipper 3	10/04	★★★★☆
War Times	08/04	★★★★☆
Warhammer 40,000: Fire Warrior	07/04	★★★★☆
Warlords Battlecry III	08/04	★★★★☆
Wars & Warriors: Joan of Arc	05/04	★★★★☆



World Soccer Winning Eleven 7 International	10/04	★★★★★
Worms 3D	05/04	★★★★☆
X2: The Threat	03/04	★★★★☆
X-Plane 7.40	04/04	★★★★☆
You Don't Know Jack—The Lost Gold	05/04	★★★★☆

HIGH SCORE

Our favorite things at 1UP.com

Hey guys! Check out our ever-expanding gaming community at 1UP.com, where you can create a journal, track your game collection, build a network of friends, and chat with other CGW readers. You can even join our club at cgwfans.1UP.com/club and let us know which clubs, blogs, and goofy pictures you'd like to see on this page each month.

FEATURED BLOG

Zoe Flower
"ZoeFlower"Rank: Lurker
Current Points: 12765
Total Points: 12765Zoe Flower
<http://zoeflower.1UP.com/>

Zoe Flower is an accomplished writer, producer, Web designer, and television personality, as well as a frequent contributor to our sister magazine, *OPM*. She's also got one of the most entertaining blogs on 1UP.com.

CLUB OF THE MONTH

Unicorn Club <http://unicorn.1UP.com/club/>

Club founder and *XBN* managing editor Cindy Lum describes it best: "Um, we...talk about unicorns, and post pictures of unicorns, and write about our unicorn sightings. You should join!"

STUPID
PICTURE
OF THE
MONTH

THIS IS WHAT'S CURRENTLY LISTED AS "ROBERT COFFEY'S DESKTOP PICTURE." AND THAT'S ALL WE'VE GOT TO SAY ABOUT THAT.

"So now that I'm a member of the CGW Fans United club, when can I get my CGW: FU! T-shirt?"
—ARCADIAN DEL SOL

WHAT'S UP WITH 1UP?

A few words from 1UP.com's editor-in-chief

By now, many of you have started your own pages on 1UP...and if you have, there's a good likelihood I've run across them. You see, I try to make it a habit to explore the many user pages of 1UP for at least a good hour or so each day—not only to get a sense of what people like or dislike about the site, but also to see what sorts of gamers we're attracting. I've actually been pretty amazed so far. Yeah, for the most part, I'll come across 18-to-24-year-old gamers who are into *Battlefield*, *Final Fantasy XI*, *Family Guy*, and *The Simpsons*. No big surprise there. But then there are those users who totally catch me off guard: For example, there's Ravi Hiranand (fowler.1UP.com/) from Hong Kong, who actually took the time to document a whole series of virtual soccer games on his blog, following his Liverpool FC team in *Winning Eleven*. Or Raychul Moore (raychul.1UP.com/), a hot 23-year-old model who loves using her page to chat about games she's beta testing...and to show off her sexy pics. And then there's Bev McClain (granniegamer.1UP.com/), a 59-year-old CGW reader who's as hardcore about games as you or I. Who knew? Certainly not me—but it's folks like these that have really made the new 1UP that much more fun to visit. **Sam Kennedy** <http://capnsmak.1UP.com/>



SOUND OFF

CGW's readers speak up

Think you're clever? Got some good game suggestions? Just want to share your two cents? Give us a holler, and you just might show up in the pages of a future Sound Off.



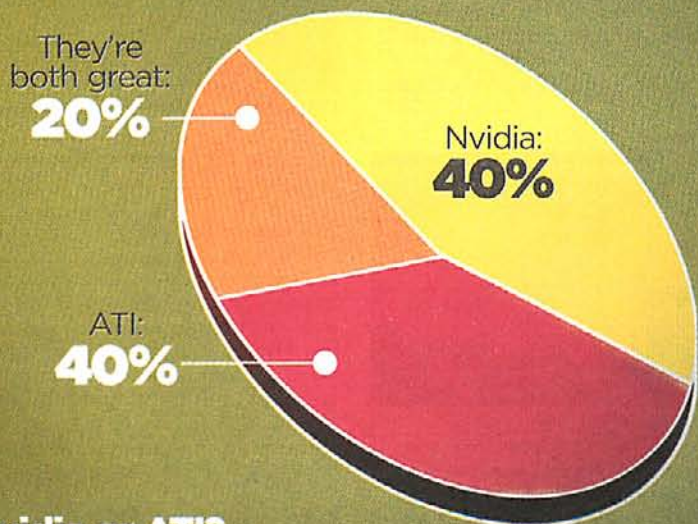
CAPTION CONTEST

Do our captions suck? Think you can come up with something wittier?

E-mail your caption for this *City of Heroes* screenshot to cgwletters@ziffdavis.com with the subject "November Caption Contest," and you just might win a brand-new copy of *Doom 3*!


POLL OF THE MONTH

Hit up our forums at <http://boards.1UP.com> and vote in our monthly poll.



Nvidia or ATI?

DESERT ISLAND GAMES

 You're stranded on a desert island with only five PC games...which ones? E-mail us at cgwletters@ziffdavis.com with the subject "Desert Island Games" and let us know which games you'd choose and why.



Ultima Online (pre-Renaissance expansion): *UO* was one of those games that made me shun the outside world. I could play this forever.



SimCity 4: Only thing better than living in civilization? Building your own!



Final Fantasy XI: My current MMO obsession. With a great expansion and another one on the way, this game could keep a person busy for quite a long time.



Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic: This game can be played over and over again—there's just so much to do in it.



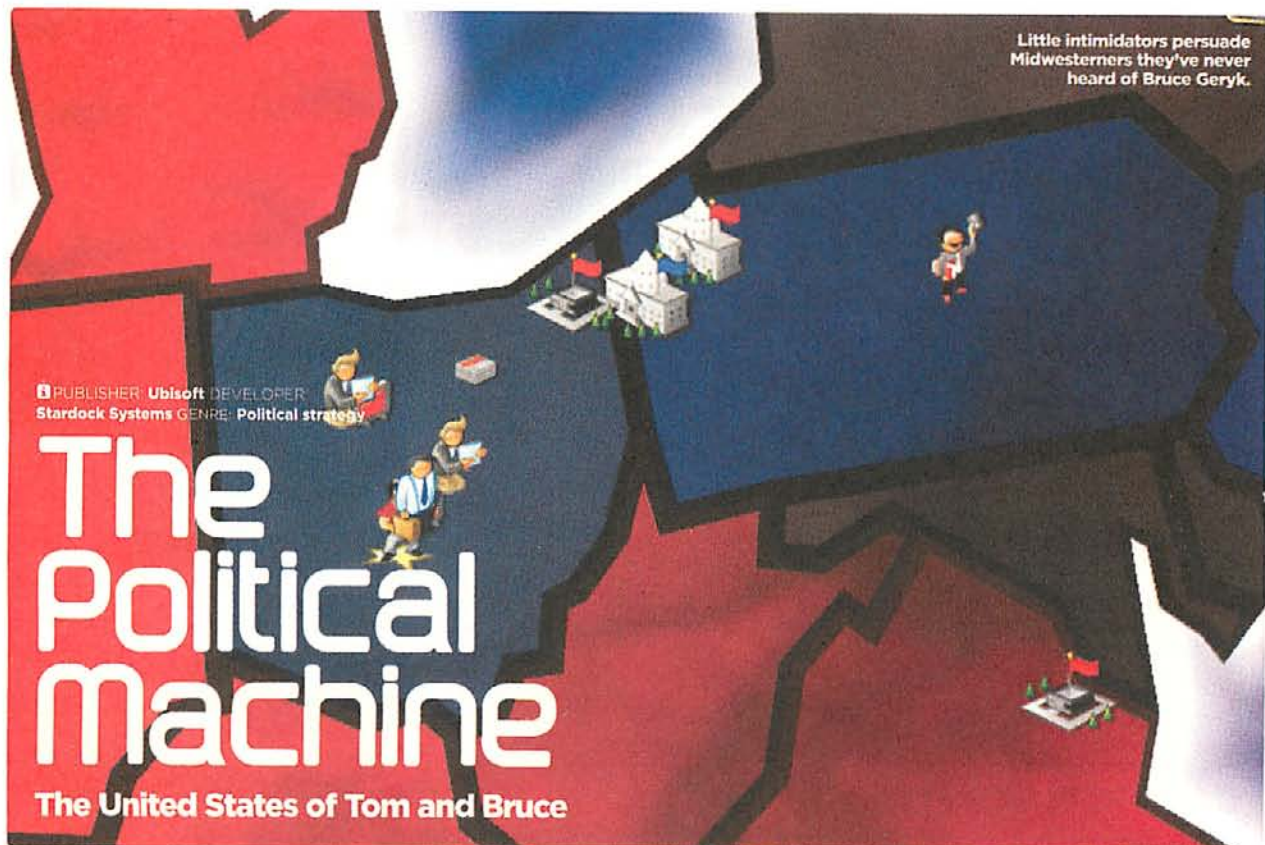
Tetris: A minute to learn, a lifetime (on a deserted island) to master.

Ryan Higgins
Sunnyvale, CA



Tom vs. Bruce

Two gamers enter, one gamer wins



Little intimidators persuade Midwesterners they've never heard of Bruce Geryk.

Bruce's strategy: The optimal strategy is to build a cheese candidate with maxed-out stamina, experience, and fundraising. But Tom wanted to roleplay, so we agreed to limit those stats. I'm not going to kid myself: Regardless of who wins, I don't expect to last 10 minutes past the closing of the polls. Like his hero Joseph Stalin, Tom is already cranking up the boxcars that will be sending political dissidents to Alaska. My job is not so much to win or lose, but to make a statement to the world, which the U.N. will ignore because I haven't paid them any money. At least I was able to successfully reject Tom's call for U.N. election monitors.

Tom's strategy: Having actually played a reporter on *The West Wing*, I think I have an enormous advantage in the media, so I boost my media bias to 10. This is helpful for swaying independents who might think, "Hey, I've seen that guy in the White House before! He must belong there!" Conversely, being a dorky white guy, I lower my minority appeal to 3. Unfortunately, Bruce is from Michigan, a state with 17 electoral votes, while I'm from Arkansas, a state with only six electoral votes. But if Clinton can do it, so can I.

Bruce, week 1: My strategy will be to use

the war on terror as a key issue. This means an early grab for the National Foreign Policy Committee endorsement, which requires sitting in one place for a while to gather the necessary political capital.

Tom, week 3: In the first weeks of the campaign, I spend most of my starting money building big, fancy headquarters in lots of states that I would love dearly, even if they didn't have lots of electoral college votes. Honest!



Bruce, week 4: The foreign policy endorsement boosts my stance on war. Most states start with the war on terror and the war in Iraq among their primary issues. Since everyone supports the war on terror, and since Republicans and most independents support the war in Iraq, my



Bruce at home in the Great Lakes state.

job will be to keep these issues in the public eye.

Tom, week 7: Just as it's important to get my awareness levels up, it's also important to squelch Bruce's lies about how he'd make a better president than me. To this end, I gather enough political capital to hire a squad of three intimidators, who do less-than-savory things to lower your opponent's awareness in a state. Imagine a group of thugs coming to your door to persuade you that you've never heard of Bruce Geryk. That's what these guys do.

Bruce, week 8: Tom's going to do his intimidator trick again. Time to shift some operatives around to preempt them.



Tom

This month, Tom and Bruce vie for the U.S. presidency, creating themselves as candidates in Stardock's *The Political Machine*. Heaven help us all.

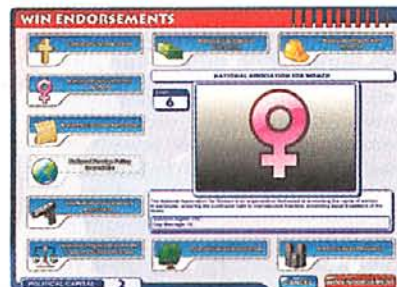
Bruce



Q Build these babies early to spread the word and bring in the Benjamins.

Tom, week 12: I'm all for the war on terror—as are most Americans, since the issue is ranked as No. 1 among voters, 83 percent of whom think Bruce would manage it better. But I need to remind everyone that there are other important things going on. Like, say...let's take a look at the national polls...crime. So my first TV ad explains that I favor fighting crime, which catapults it to the No. 1 spot. I fly to Pennsylvania—whose 21 electoral votes are a very shiny bauble for a presidential candidate—to give a speech on the subject. Now two out of three voters think that I'm a better crime fighter than Bruce Geryk. I take to wearing a cape at my campaign appearances.

Bruce, week 13: Tom has brought his own war hero to Virginia to match the one I already have there. Unfortunately for him, mine served honorably in WWII and Korea, while his was part of Gen. Vlasov's army. Due to the game not taking into account what happens if your war hero is also a war criminal, our heroes cancel each other out.



Q Special interests come calling!

Tom, week 14: You're going to be hearing a lot more of this stuff about how I'm a Soviet, which is evidence that Bruce sees no difference between a Democrat and a Communist. I don't know how he smooth-

talked the ladies at the National Association of Women into endorsing him, but I need to immediately counter it with an endorsement of my own. So I hang out for two turns, gathering the political capital to bring the National Union Action Network to my side. This pro-labor stance helps me in all those Great Lakes states where Bruce's Republican propaganda is giving him a lead among the blue-collar set.

Bruce, week 17: Now I get the ACLU endorsement. This helps me on freedom of speech but hurts me on prayer in schools, which seems completely contradictory. But whatever, it's another endorsement Tom can't get. Not that there would be any freedom of speech in Tom Chick's gulags anyway.

Tom, week 18: I have a disastrous appearance on the *O'Malley Scenario*. In coming out against reparations to slaves and in favor of women in the military, I somehow manage to alienate independent voters. What's up with those people? Didn't they see me on *The West Wing*?

Bruce, week 20: Tom's *O'Malley Scenario* appearance is causing major problems for him. In it, he answers a question wholly in Russian, and at another point, one of his advisors is seen threatening the show's host with a Kalashnikov. Because this is simply how Tom's political heroes do business, he can't figure out why he alienated anyone. It doesn't matter, though—anyone he alienated will eventually be working in Alaskan labor camps.



Q Tom, week 22: I've recently grabbed the National Gun Owners Association and Christian Confederation endorsements, which is kind of backward. Bruce and I are straying from our political bases, but it's Bruce's fault for grabbing the endorsements I wanted! For my VP, I choose Edwards to shore up support in North Carolina. While I'm fighting for Texas and Florida, I send him off to campaign in the Midwest, partly because I need more support there, but also because he creeps me out. He looks like Sam Neill in *Omen III*.

Bruce, week 22: I choose Dick Cheney as my running mate. I'm not abandoning him just because some wackos irrationally hate Halliburton. He'll start spreading awareness in Wyoming and the adjacent

states, which players tend to ignore until late because they are worth so few electoral votes.

Tom, week 24: I hire a smear merchant to spread rumors about Bruce wearing spandex pants and hating puppies. Meanwhile, I'm using Texas as the home base for my TV ad campaign, where I've saved up almost \$2 million while waiting to see what issues Bruce wants to push. He's clearly chosen the war on terror and the lack of jobs as his talking points; they're ranked No. 1 and No. 2 among voters, and he's got a healthy lead in both issues. Time to fix that with four TV ads in one turn: I favor the war on terror, Bruce opposes the war on terror; I favor more jobs, Bruce opposes more jobs. Bam, bam, bam, bam! The next turn, I pass him on his own talking points and shoot up in the polls, with 434 projected electoral votes to Bruce's 104. But I need to keep my lead without ignoring the other issues. For instance, he's passed me on "fighting crime," which is still lingering in the top five issues. I hand over my cape.



Q Home of the Democratic media machine!

Bruce, week 25: I get a heckler and put him in Texas, which seems to be Tom's base of operations for everything. Interestingly, Tom's headquarters in that state is based in Moscow, Texas.



Q When you want to send a webmaster home, this guy is the go-to man.

Tom, week 29: With a moneyman I found in Montana, I hold two consecutive fundraisers in California, which gets me over a half a million dollars. I fly back to Texas to place more ads, but Bruce's heckler is making my ad placement difficult. Since this is a cornerstone of my

strategy, I can't have that annoying little guy here. So I bring in a fixer to make the heckler "disappear."

Bruce, week 30: Two can play the fixer game. Tom has hired a webmaster in Texas to keep the cost of his ads down and to oversee the conversion of campaign contributions from rubles to dollars. I send my own fixer to gently persuade the webmaster to go back to work making *Doom 3* mods. This should increase Tom's fixed costs significantly and require him to fly in another plane-load of currency from Sheremetyevo.



Florida. Can't live with it...can't kill it.

Tom, week 32: I can't afford to pay the full price for ad maintenance in Texas, and Bruce can't afford to leave it alone, so we're hiring dueling sets of replacement webmasters taken out by fixers. I can do this as long as he wants, because I'm ahead in Florida and Pennsylvania by two points. California and Texas are dead heats, but I should be OK on the West Coast if I can offset Bruce's lying pro-environment ads.

Bruce, week 33: The essential late-game strategy is to recruit political operatives to tip the balance in the toss-up states, so I finally give up trying to sabotage Tom's



webmasters. Instead, I start spending political capital on spin doctors and smear merchants—since they can be moved around for free, I micromanage the situation for optimal placement.

Tom, week 34: As evidence of the occasional incompetence that mars any political campaign, I build a campaign headquarters in North Carolina. But somehow, a headquarters is accidentally built in Oklahoma. I immediately fire my campaign manager. Seeing as how I am both

the campaign manager and the candidate, I immediately rehire myself.



Bruce, week 34: I go for the Florida TV double whammy on Social Security: I love it, Tom hates it. The problem with negative ads is that they work more slowly than positive ads, so they're best placed early on. Right now, though, with the game so close, I need to do whatever I can to knock Tom down in Florida.

Tom, week 35: Nationally, I'm leading as the candidate most in favor of the environment. But Bruce has misinformed California so egregiously that they support him as the pro-environment candidate. It's sheer lunacy. He doesn't even drive a hybrid!

Bruce, week 36: Tom just gave a speech in California about the importance of the environment, which ends up helping me since I've advertised so effectively. That's 55 electoral votes closer to being mine. With so much of the Midwest also on my side, it's going to be close.



Tom, week 38: I just won a lot of support on the *O'Malley Scenario* by taking on Bruce's nonsense about the liberal media and Hollywood political activists. But I'm out of money, and my advertising maintenance is eating up all of my income. A spin doctor in California gives me a four-point lead.

Bruce, week 40: Tom's smear merchant in Florida knocks me down to 39 percent. He has 41 percent.

Tom, week 41: I place a last-minute newspaper ad in Pennsylvania saying that Bruce wants to outsource everyone's jobs. Then I settle in to watch the returns.

This just in: Tom Chick has narrowly defeated Bruce Geryk in the presidential



election, winning 297 electoral votes to Geryk's 241. In the popular vote, Chick led with 52,444,000 votes to Geryk's 48,899,000 votes. Geryk's campaign spent \$21.99 million to Chick's \$17.66 million, but Chick was the clear leader in gathering political favors, hiring operatives, and winning endorsements, using 76 points of political capital to Geryk's 42.

Among the results, Chick carried Texas in a landslide, while Geryk eked out a surprise win in California by three percentage points. Chick won Florida 56 percent to 43 percent, but Geryk won the bitter fighting in Pennsylvania at 57 percent to 42 percent.

EXIT POLLS				
CHICK		GERYK		
ELECTORAL VOTES	297	ELECTORAL VOTES	241	
Popular Vote	52,444,000	Popular Vote	48,899,000	
Money Spent	\$17.66M	Money Spent	\$21.99M	
Political Capital Spent	42	Political Capital Spent	76	
ISSUE	CHICK	GERYK	CHICK	GERYK
More Jobs	51%	49%	51%	49%
The War on Terror	56%	44%	56%	44%
Fighting Crime	61%	39%	61%	39%
The Environment	39%	61%	39%	61%
Universal Health Care	39%	61%	39%	61%
Protein Long Lifespan	4%	96%	4%	96%
Capitalistic Policies	4%	96%	4%	96%
The War in Iraq	4%	96%	4%	96%
Alternative Action	4%	96%	4%	96%
Unions	4%	96%	4%	96%

Exit polls showed voters' top issues were, in order of importance, the war on terror (56 percent of voters favored Chick), more jobs (51 percent favored Chick), fighting crime (61 percent favored Geryk), and the environment (83 percent favored Chick).

Bruce's concession speech: Tom Chick is a Communist. There may not be another Tom vs. Bruce article once Tom's terror machine gets rolling.

Tom's victory speech: Thank you, America, for not believing Bruce Geryk. I will now appoint my three intimidators to cabinet-level positions. California, since you have betrayed me, I present you as a gift to Mexico. Pennsylvania also betrayed me, so effective immediately, its new name will be The State of Dingleberry. Finally, since Bruce has to get up early to go to work in the morning, our victory party will be held at his house. Thank you and good night. ☑



Coming Next Month...

COMPUTER
GAMING
WORLD

DECEMBER 2004 ON SALE OCTOBER 19

AD INDEX

ACTIVISION Call of Duty - United Offensive	23	Intel Corp. P4 HT	44-45
ACTIVISION COD (50 megs)	demo	JAMDAT Mobile Inc. NFL 2005	116
ACTIVISION Doom 3	41	LucasArts Entertainment Jump to Lightspeed	8-9
ACTIVISION Rome: Total War	46-47	Matrix Games World at War	75
ACTIVISION Vampire the Masquerade: Bloodlines	51	Mythic Entertainment Dark Age of Camelot	10-11
Alienware Corp. Area-51m Mobile Gaming System	4-5	Saitek Industries LTD, Inc. Saitek	83
Atari AxIs & Allies	65	Sega Of America Matrix Online #1	60-61
Cdv Software Entertainment Codename: Panzers	115	Sony Online Entertainment EQ2	50b-50g
Cyberpower Systems Cyberpower	92-93	Square Enix U.S.A., Inc. Final Fantasy XI	36-37
D-Skin, LLC D-Skin	73	Take 2 Interactive Kohan II	59
Dell Computer Corp. Dell Home Systems	26-27	THQ Inc. Full Spectrum Warrior	63
Earthlink Software download	demo	Vicious PC Vicious PC	91
Electronic Arts Armies of Exigo	24-25	Vivendi Universal Games Evil Genius	31, 33, 35
Electronic Arts Medal of Honor: Pacific Assault	2-3	Vivendi Universal Games Leisure Suit Larry	57
Electronic Arts Sims 2	demo	Vivendi Universal Games Men of Valor	6-7
Falcon Northwest FragBox	85	Vivendi Universal Games Tribes: Vengeance	1a-1d, 21
iBuyPower ibuypower	54-55	Wizards of the Coast Magic: Online City	17

Shocking Behavior

Next month, we kiss bug zappers

"Argghh!" he cries out, his face contorted with pain, his hand spastically cramping. He grimaces again and lurches backward, the pitiable hand clutching his silvery tormentor jerking above his head. "Aaarrggghkk!" he cries out yet again, his voice more strangled than before.

Copy editor Greg Ford is a nice guy, and I'm systematically electrocuting him. Over and over again.

Now, in spite of what you're undoubtedly thinking, I have not snapped some jumper cables on to poor electrified Greg's swanky modes. Sad Mister Ford is getting fried voluntarily because barely codified pain infliction is what we at CGW call "play." Greg is in fact playing the latest thing in electric (not *electronic*) gaming—a little gizmo called Lightning Reaction, which I got from www.baronbob.com. Yeah, it's been a pretty slow few months for games around here.

The Lightning Reaction is a kinda chintzy little deal that looks like a bad original *Star Trek* prop. It's a silver-colored plastic pain machine with four handles, each with a red thumb trigger, connected with red wire to a central base holding three AAA batteries that pack a surprising amount of punch. A large button in the middle of the central unit flashes red while a banshee wail—the same whining up-and-down sound that crippled crew members of the *Enterprise* at least every third episode—screches, and then the button goes green. The last person to buzz in is treated to an electric shock that rockets up the arm and hammers the elbow. It is, at best, simply painful. At worst, it is traumatic—years of painstakingly re-establishing spousal trust after the "pull my finger" episode of '94 have been trashed, and my wife has joined the neighbors in shrieking at the mere sight of me.

So, is the Lightning Reaction a game? Well, if Russian roulette is a game, then sure. Four people can square off, and there's obviously one utterly and completely profound loser about to be served up every time that center button is pressed to launch another round. It sounds like a toy, but according to the box it came in, it isn't. "Not intended to be used as a toy!" trumpets the box over and over again. "May interfere with electrical devices such as pacemakers!" Hmm, sounds as ominous as the burrito-heating microwave at 7-11. "Do not use if you suffer from epilepsy or any similar or related ill-



Copy editor Greg Ford is a nice guy, and I'm systematically electrocuting him.

nesses!" Apparently, whatever it may or may not be in the minds of its creators, it is, at the very least, a lawsuit just waiting to happen. "Keep out of reach of children!" screams the box. "THIS IS NOT A TOY, KEEP OUT OF REACH OF CHILDREN," it proclaims, the subtext clearly being "FOR SURELY THEY SHALL BE SLAIN!"

I carried the Lightning Reaction around for weeks, disingenuously tempting innocents into trying it in an effort to discover one thing: If it isn't meant for kids, epileptics, or Dick Cheney, just who is it meant for? And if it isn't a toy, then what is it? I can't say for sure. It is an excellent taxonomy tool, easily and conveniently sorting people into one of two categories: 'fraidy cats and idiots. A good 25 percent of the people working on this floor—including alleged gamers toiling on sister mags like *Xbox Nation*—refused even to try it. People who endured tattoos couldn't muster up the courage for just one round of the Potential Voluntary 15 Seconds of Self-Electrocution Demigame. Others couldn't get enough and did it repeatedly. Even after they lost. A number of times. The most die-hard self-zappers were

found in our copy editing crew, which, upon further reflection, really makes a kind of sense: Correcting every word written in every Ziff Davis gaming magazine all day has left their arms entirely insensate, anaesthetized by the ravages of advanced carpal tunnel syndrome. Either that, or years of reading the gibberish printed in these pages makes the ritualistic application of torture pleasurable in comparison. All I know for sure is that the seemingly mild-mannered Susie Ochs could absorb a lightning strike and laugh while her eyebrows smoldered.

Ultimately, the antijoy buzzer may just be what the box alleges—"a novelty item." Because once the novelty wore off, pretty much no one wanted anything to do with it. It's not much of a game, though you could certainly construct some games around it and they'd all probably be better than the last *Tomb Raider*. Thankfully, we're finally into the good part of the year, *Doom 3* and *The Sims 2* are out, and we no longer have to resort to something on par with recreational paper cuts for entertainment. Thank God. **Robert Coffey** robert_coffey@ziffdavis.com

KONTROLLIERT 14. März 1944
INGAME SCREENSHOT

02010924



COMING SOON!

CODENAME:

PANZERS

PHASE ONE



WWII REAL-TIME
STRATEGY



WWII experiences its rebirth in 2004 with the appearance of the colossal game Codename: Panzers. Breathtaking graphics, fantastic mission design, a complete immersion in the events via amazing scenarios and intense multiplayer modes. Like never before Codename: Panzers will give you the feeling of being at the landing at Omaha Beach, the defense of Stalingrad, the conquering of Berlin or the battle in the Ardennes.

WWW.PANZERS.COM



14.15. 1. 8, GBT 224

POWERED BY
gameSpy
This product contains software technology licensed from GameSpy Industries, Inc.
©1992-2004 GameSpy Industries, Inc. GameSpy and the "Powered by GameSpy" logo are trademarks of GameSpy Industries, Inc. All rights reserved.



Stormregion

cdv
www.cdv-online.com

JAMDAT[®] SPORTS NFL 2005

IGN.COM
EDITORS' CHOICE
AWARD

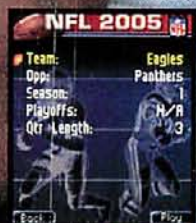
"Fans that want a great football experience to go will be well-served by JAMDAT SPORTS' NFL 2005." - IGN.COM



PLAYERS INC.



Break free and push it over for the score.



Select your favorite match-up for one game or a full 16-game season.



Select offensive and defensive plays from multiple options in realistic playbook.

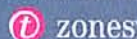


Innovative UI allows easy identification of your key players including defensive backs, QBs and wideouts.

Available now for:

T-Mobile

Download it now through:



JAMDAT SPORTS' NFL 2005 was developed exclusively for wireless and features all 32 NFL teams and their rosters.

JAMDAT
mobile

www.jamdat.com

*Ability to download depends on device capability. Charges apply. ©2004 NFL Properties LLC. Team names and logos are trademarks of the teams indicated. All other (NFL-related) marks are trademarks of the National Football League. Officially licensed product of PLAYERS INC. www.nflplayers.com ©2004 PLAYERS INC. © 2000-2004 T-Mobile USA, Inc. All Rights Reserved. T-MOBILE is a registered trademark of Deutsche Telekom AG. JAMDAT Mobile Inc. ©2004. All Rights Reserved. JAMDAT, JAMDAT Mobile and the bubbles logo are registered trademarks of JAMDAT Mobile Inc.