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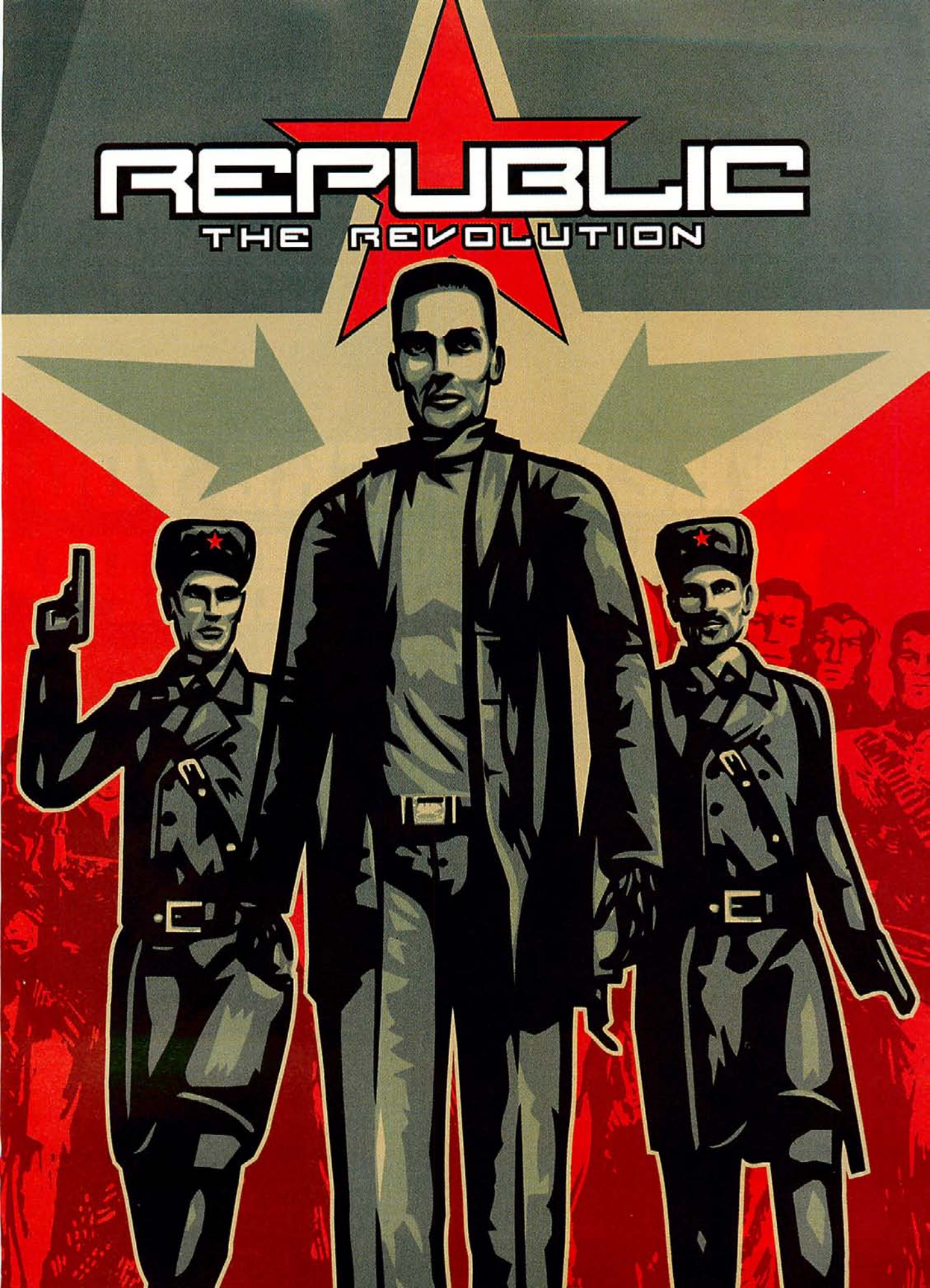
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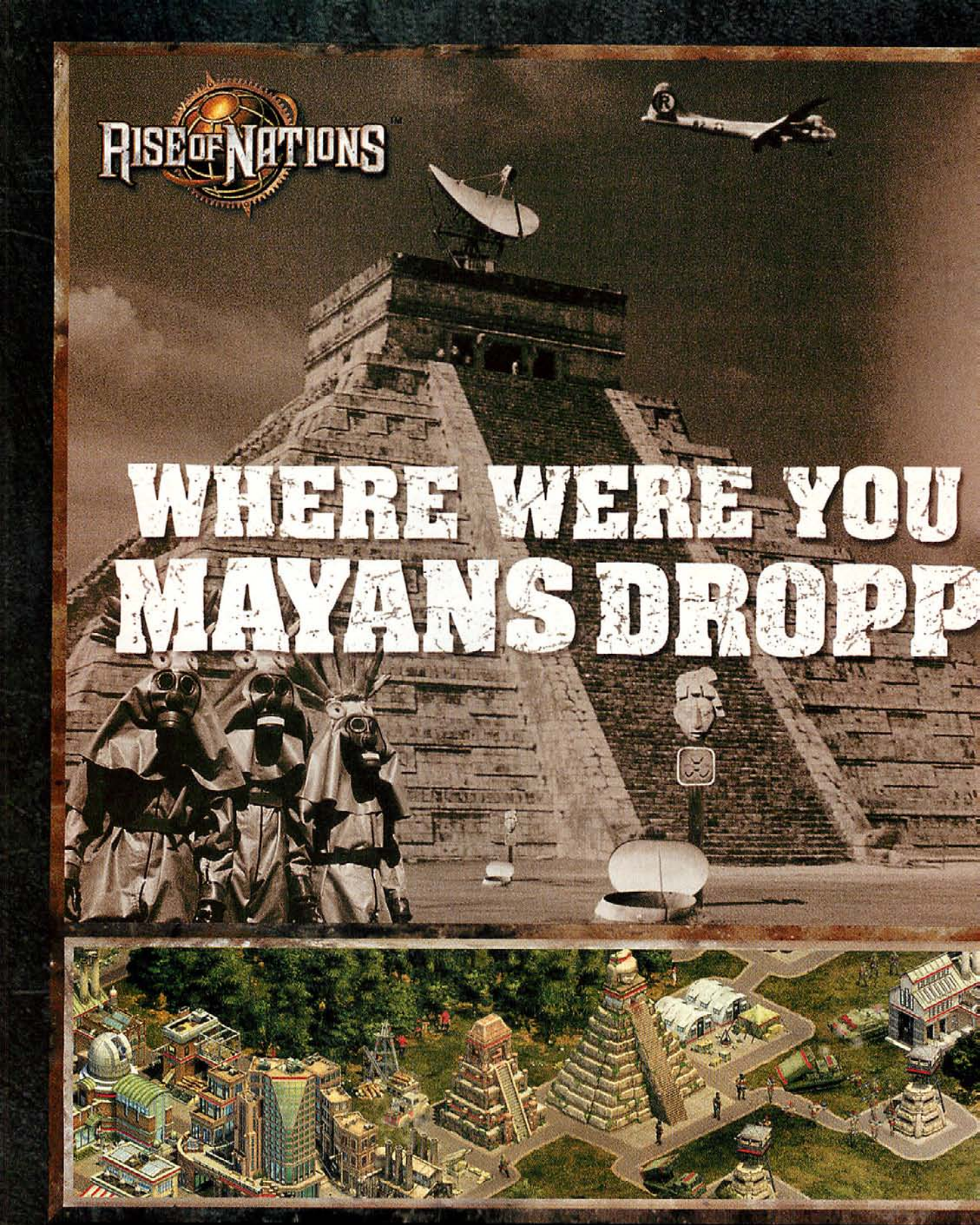

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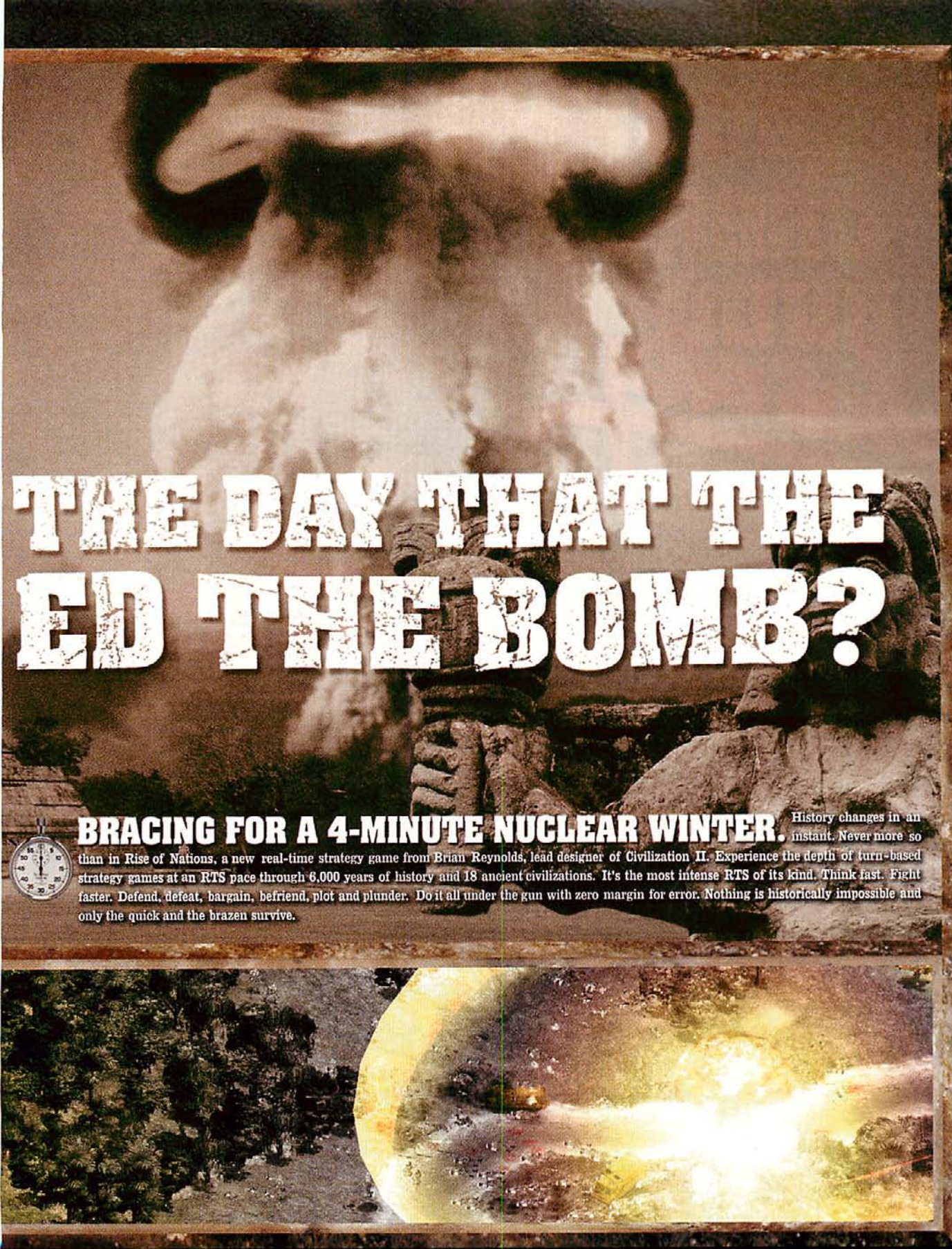

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RISE OF NATIONS

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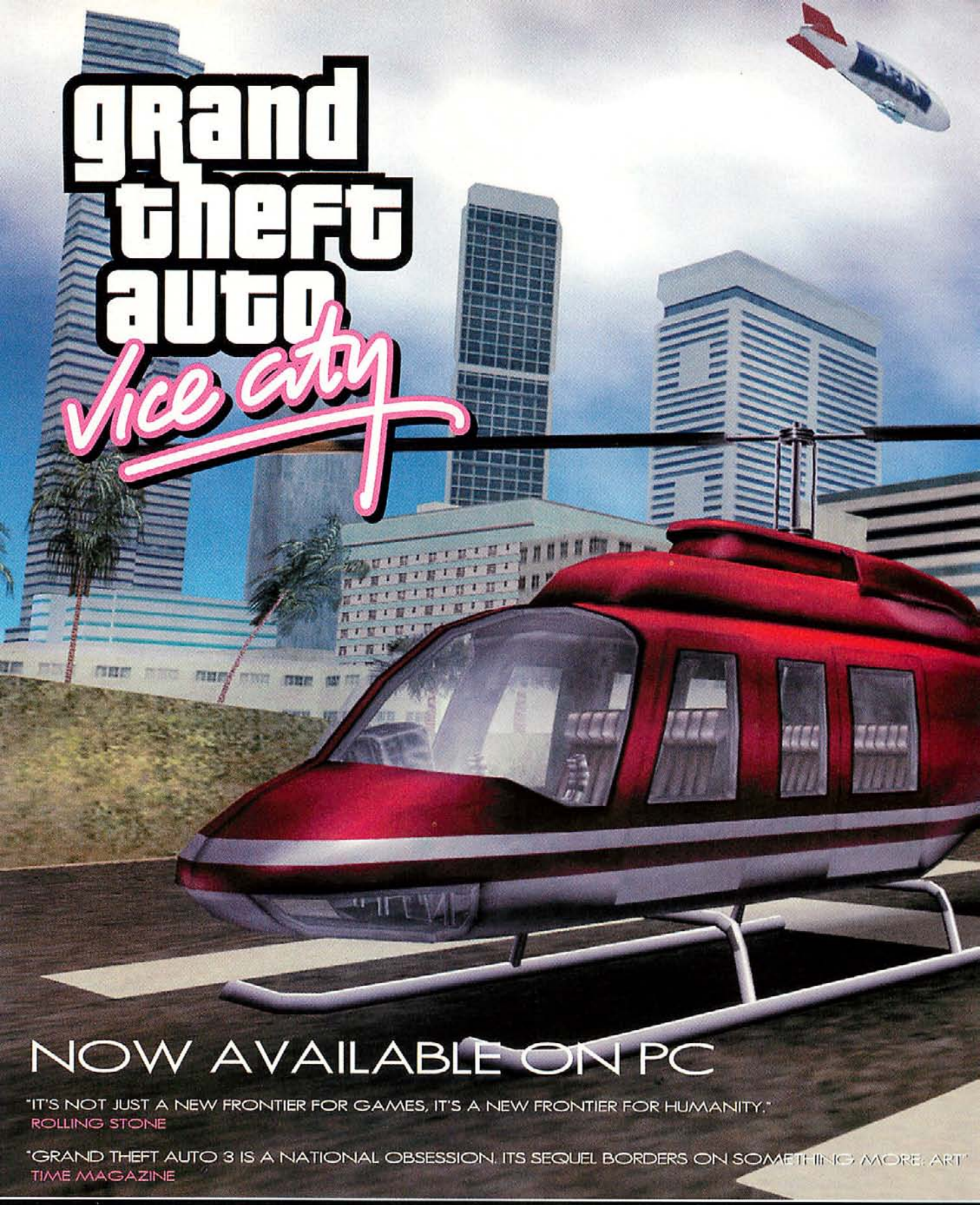

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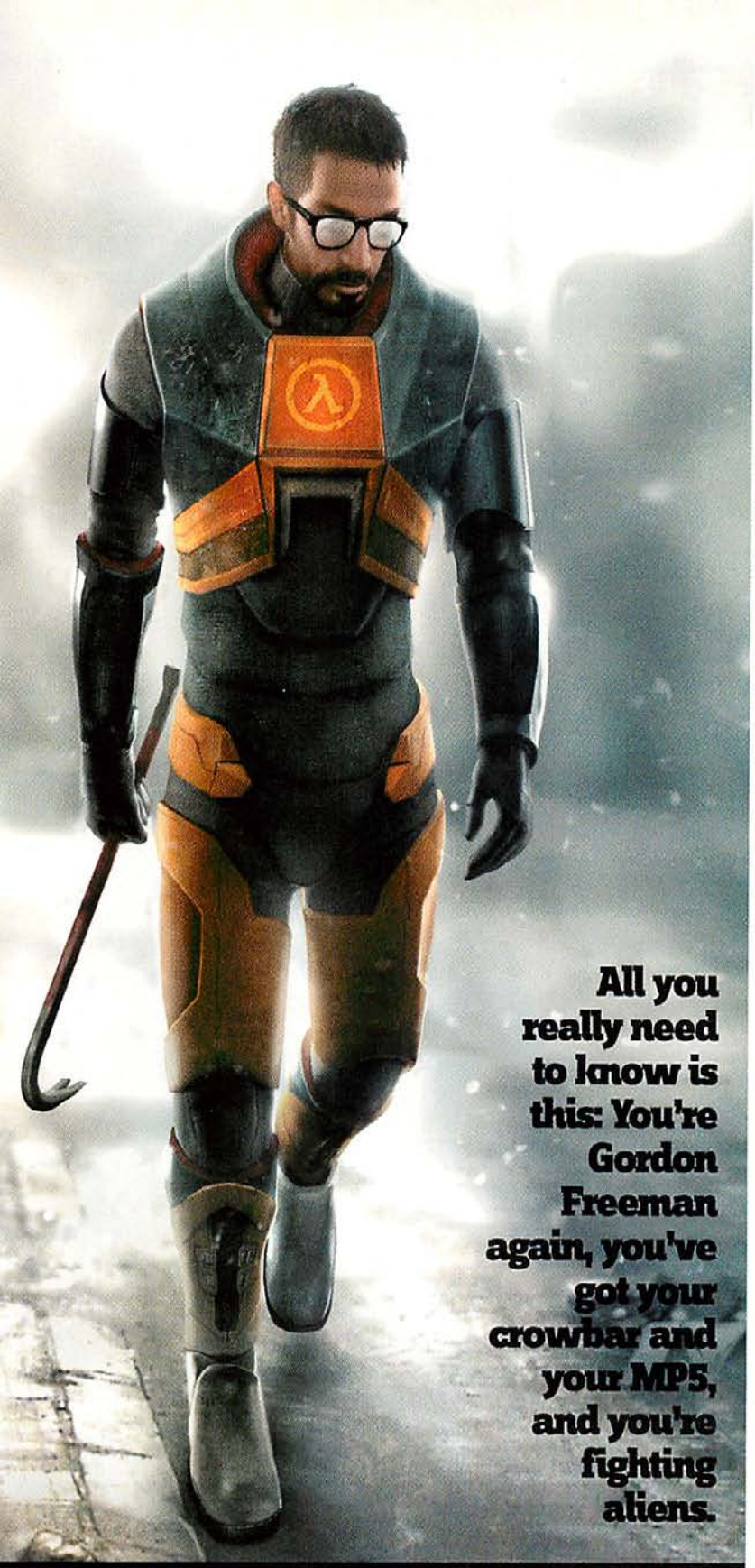

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Robert's not racist—he hates everyone!

"They're flying around levels like '40s-era superheroes, having airborne gunfights."

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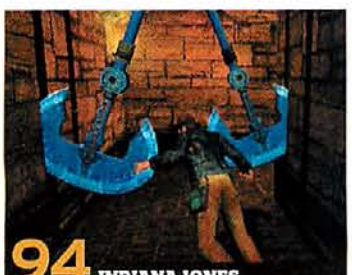

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Gaming machinery that fits your budget.

Blood Mage - The Blood Mage is quick to take vengeance upon any who threaten his brethren.

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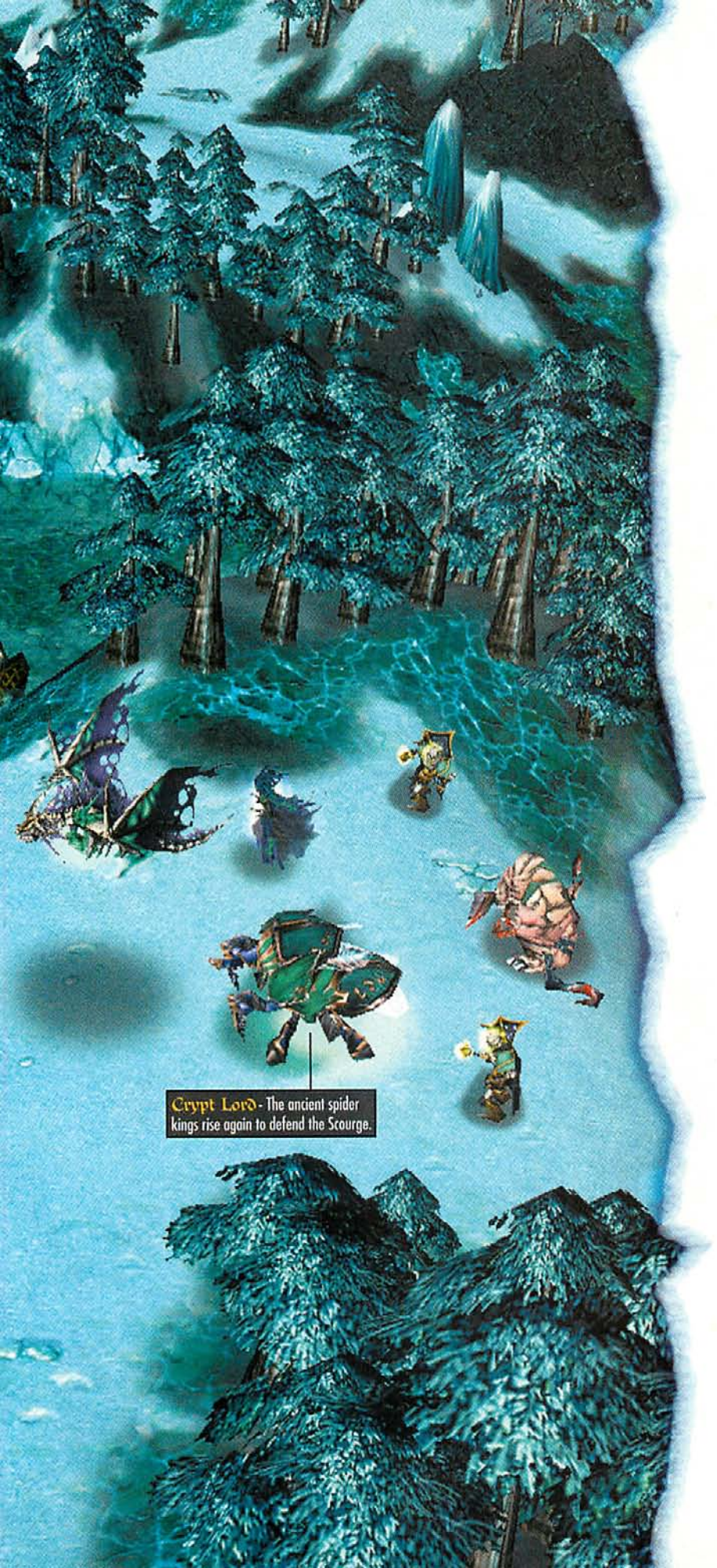

8 New Units

9 New Heroes

26 New Missions

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BATTLEFIELD 1942

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"The realization of our dream PC game. We'll be playing this one for years, and reminiscing about it when we're old."

GAME *of the* YEAR 2002: CGM

"A near perfect balance between fun and realism."

OVERALL GAME *of the* YEAR: IGN.COM

"This game has it all. ...Battlefield has hooked just about everyone I know that's laid hands on it."

BEST MULTIPLAYER GAME *of the* YEAR 2002: CGW

"Ridiculously addictive online warfare..."

MULTIPLAYER GAME *of the* YEAR: GAMESPY.COM

"...An easy and unanimous choice for Best Multiplayer Game of 2002."

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GAMESPY 2002 GAME OF THE YEAR BEST MULTIPLAYER GAME

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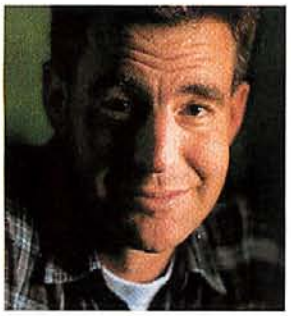

Virus Alert

Can you spell "elevation"? I can!

There is a game. It is a little game. It is a simple game. It is on our CD-ROM this month, if you'd like to check it out. But I'm warning you: Do not do it. Stay away. Throw the CD out and don't give it another thought. Because though it may look harmless, like a kid's shareware game, it is, in fact, the most insidious, time-sucking game I've played in a long, long time.

OK? So I've warned you. Don't blame me if your life hits the skids and you end up in the gutter because you failed to listen.

If you must know, if your willpower and self-control is that weak, if you're just looking for any excuse to avoid your real-life responsibilities, then keep reading. The game I'm talking about is *Bookworm*, made by Popcap Games. If that name sounds familiar to you, it's because they're the same folks who made *Bejeweled*, another fatally addictive puzzle game.

I'll let another pathetic *Bookworm* addict, managing editor Dana Jongewaard, give you the full lowdown on the game (see her review on page 101). For my part, let me just add that if you are even remotely a *Boggle* or *Scrabble* fan, like I am, then *Bookworm* will ruin you. I've been playing this game so much this month that, as *Tetris* used to do, my brain keeps playing uncontrollably, long after I actually step away from the PC. Even in my sleep, I'm still playing. Anna Kournikova and Jennifer Garner are there, too, in those dream *Bookworm* games, naked, cheering me on as I create one 9-letter word after another. And if you think that sounds sad, then I guess I won't even bring up the Justin Timberlake dream.

If you are even remotely a *Boggle* fan, *Bookworm* will ruin you.

It's ironic to me that in an issue packed with the most exciting previews lineup I can remember—including first looks at absolutely humongous "triple A" games such as *Half-Life 2*, *Jedi Knight III*, and *Full Throttle 2*—that I'd be yammering here about a little game like *Bookworm*. But this is how it goes sometimes. It doesn't take 10 million dollars, five years, a team of 100, and months of focus-group testing to create a game that people are going to love. Sometimes all it takes is just one or two people with a lot of talent and a fundamental understanding of what gaming is all about.

And what is gaming all about? Here are a couple hints. It's not the graphics. It's not the voice acting. It's not the tie-in to some hyped-up Hollywood movie franchise. No, it's something much simpler than that, friends. It's large female breasts. That, or what *Bookworm* has: challenging, brain-engaging gameplay.

By all means, read about all the big games featured on this month's cover. They are the kind of mega-entertaining big-budget extravaganzas that we live for around here. But keep your eyes on the little games, too. They are the truly evil ones.

Jeff Green
Editor-in-Chief

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WILLIAM O'NEAL

When he's not irritating *CGW* readers with his sheer blackness, Wil divides his free time between two of his favorite hobbies: downloading music in his storage-room-turned-corner-office and hoisting the occasional tall one next door at Steff's Sports Bar. Other than that, he can be found roaming the Ziff Davis hallways chatting with the beautiful saleswomen who keep this ill-fated ship afloat.

KEN BROWN

Ken's been toiling in the *CGW* salt mines since practically the turn of the century, and we don't mean this one. An old-school confederate of Johnny Wilson, Ken used to wear five hats back in the day, and now just wears a yarmulke to cover his bald spot. No one knows how or why Ken has stayed with *CGW* for 11 years, except maybe Jeff's wife. The opposite of Ken is Scooter.

JOHN MARRIN

This tall, dork, and handsome Capricorn originally hails from New York City. After honing his skills as an angler and outdoorsman since childhood, he has turned to more serious pursuits including videogames and vintage port wine. Having fulfilled his lifelong dream of being published in *CGW*, he is now headed to a Tibetan monastery.

CHARLES ARDAI

Charles Ardai started writing about computer games in 1983 and for *CGW* in 1986. Since then he's also published mysteries, edited anthologies, founded and run the Internet company Juno, and appeared as an extra in Woody Allen's *Radio Days*. The lazy bastard.

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Letters

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LETTER OF THE MONTH

Father Knows Best?

Playing the *CGW* co-Coaster of the Year: $34.99

Countless hours of *CGW*'s RPG of the Year nominee, allegedly designed by Chris Taylor: $49.99

Having your father be called a smart ass in a national magazine [Letters, April 2003]: Priceless.

James Adams

And now, humble pie

Siege–noun, slang for "keeper." Used by game magazine editors to cover up the fact that the person who proofreads the table of contents does not know the difference between Peter Molyneux and Chris Roberts.

Jamie Adams

Thank you, smart ass. But your snarkiness would be more effective if you got it right. Actually, Chris Taylor developed *Dungeon Siege*.

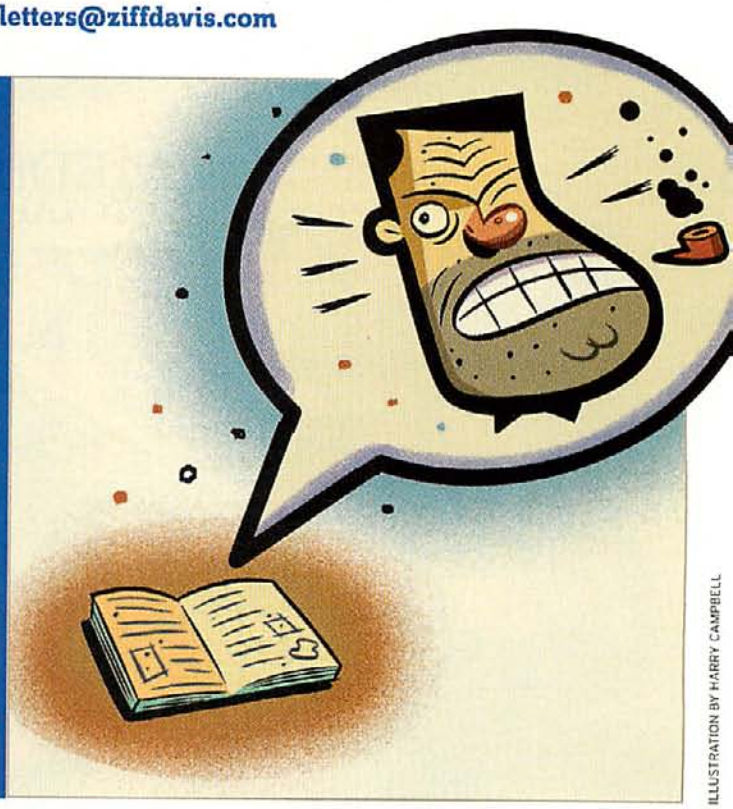


ILLUSTRATION BY HARRY CAMPBELL

Yes, we really hate it that much

Do you guys really hate *Farscape* that much? Let's face it, the game is utter crap and does not do the TV series justice. The show, however, is not cancelled, but is on its last season. If you're going to flame a TV show, please get your info right!

Otherwise I love your magazine, and I think Robert Coffey can take Jeff Green in a fight. Not that I'm trying to provoke that, of course....

Desoto

Cheaters never prosper...except at *CGW*

I love *CGW*, but you guys really yanked my chain by publishing Darren Gladstone's article "Get Booted Out of Multiplayer Games" [May 2003]. Nothing pisses me off more than wasting my precious gaming minutes with immature morons who cheat, team kill, and camp. I have stopped playing *Counter-Strike* because of rampant cheating on just about every server. Such behavior should be abhorred by *CGW*, not joked about.

CGW's ill-conceived article will only serve to inspire some limp d*ck to follow your recommendations and ruin an otherwise satisfying gaming session for the rest of us. Maybe next month you can publish a list of websites where these maladjusted idiots can obtain hacks to our favorite multiplayer games! Better yet, to further ruin the experience of the vast majority of your readership, *CGW* can include the hack of the month on its monthly CD-ROM! Giving cheaters tips is like giving plutonium to terrorists. Bad *CGW*, bad.

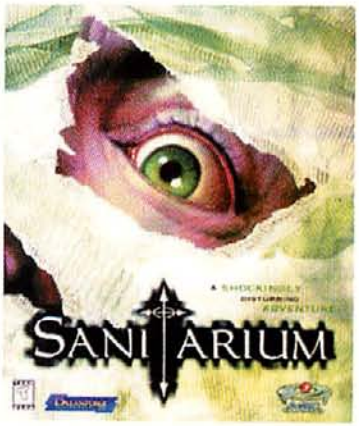
Michael A. Hawash

Sanitarium

What ever happened to that old adventure game called *Sanitarium*? The ads had a picture of this guy with his head in bandages. It was isometric like *Fallout* and had a very *Fallout*-ish feel. You had a demo on one of your old CDs. It had a cool theme and I just wondered what happened.

Josh Johnson

***Sanitarium*, from ASC Games, came out in 1998, and was a brilliant game, tying with *Grim Fandango* that year for our Adventure Game of the Year award. You can still find it online, including on Amazon.**



"I love your magazine, and I think Robert Coffey could take Jeff Green in a fight."

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TEEN T CONTENT RATED ESRB

Violence

MAIL BITES

I'd just like to point out that Dana is hot. I saw her on CNN Headline News hawking the new issue. Stay sexy, Dana.
Shawn

***CGW* is the best computer mag in the world... next to *PC Gamer* (just joking)!**
CGW"fan"

Six hours into *Freelancer*, and I have a feeling my wife is secretly starting the paperwork for divorce proceedings. I haven't felt this way since *Privateer*....
Ben Sizemore, Jr.

My dream is to come be one of you.
Jordan "FUBAR" Foltz

Impossible Creatures guide was lobster-rific!

I have never written to any magazine before. But after reading your *Impossible Creatures* strategy guide in the May issue, I had to. I laughed the whole time and fell off the crapper. Keep up the good work and keep us all laughing.

249thDeadguy

Sir, yes sir!

First off, I just want to let you guys know that I love your mag. Unlike several other gaming publications out there, you guys don't spend six months hyping up a game just to give ass-tastic ratings. I can't stand that.

I do, however, have one small bone to pick with your magazine. You see, I am a United States Marine. Anytime one uses the word "Marine" as referring to a member of the fighting force, the "m" should always be capitalized. We are not "us marines," we are "U.S. Marines." They're not "space marines," they're "space Marines" (although I know such a thing does not exist, the thought still counts, ya know?). It's a small, bothersome thing, but it's something we Marines are kind of picky about. And you know what happens when Marines get mad. We get into bar fights. So please, spare the bartenders and bouncers the trouble and capitalize the "m" in Marines. Otherwise, you might find yourselves in a bar, about to get dropped to the deck by a perturbed us marine.

David Tisdale

College counseling

What kind of degrees do you guys have? I'm a freshman in college and curious about courses one should take if interested in getting into your profession. Thanks.

Chas

The *CGW* editors all have bachelor's degrees in English or other liberal arts subjects. All except Robert Coffey, that is, who has a master's degree in embalming.

Me talk pretty one day

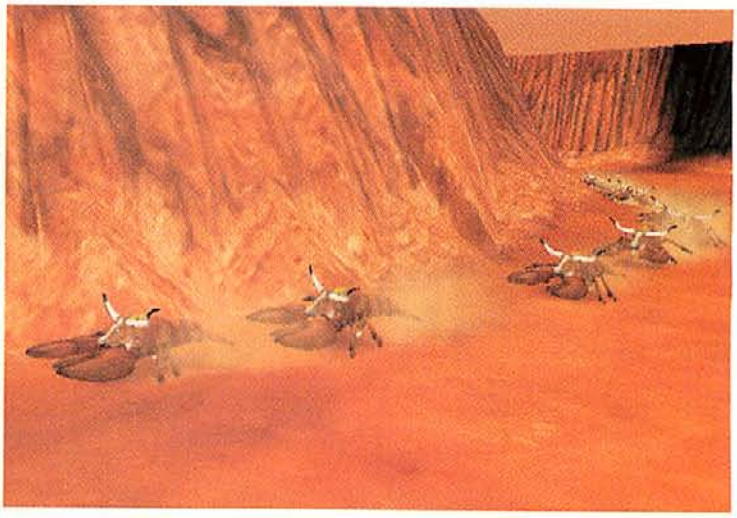
Reading anything written by Robert Coffey is the equivalent of playing a tedious FPS that allows no saves during a mission. Three or four sentences into his column and you go down, blindsided by a linguistic flak cannon ("virtual ferret in the Skinner Box," or "the chittering skinless siamang," or, heaven help me, "verdant, dew-bejeweled glen under a blazing full moon") [Scorched Earth, April 2003]. If you have already read the entire magazine and are two or more weeks away from your next *CGW* fix, you head back to the beginning for another go at translating whatever he is trying to say.

I am quite certain Robert needs a rest from the 4,000 thesaurus references it takes to write his column. So I've done him a favor and composed the opening to his next column, free of charge (I even picked his topic–the anticipated release of *Doom III*):

"This month's Scorched Earth, like a Michael Beschloss presidential encomium, turns an eleemosynary optic towards the empyrean work of John Romero back in the day when computer games were, well, games. Not like today, where soulless, esurient syndicates churn out electron-laden divertissements that are spiritually desolate. I am reminded, as I ferment in my cubicle, that in those wistful, pre-Schroedinger Cat days, computer games were really, well, games."

That should get his juices flowing.

Dan Hallagan



Let us know when you stop enjoying it

I've been enjoying your mag for some time now, but I'm really starting to think you guys have completely lost your minds a little at a time.

First, my stomach began to turn when you guys gave *Operation Flashpoint* Game of the Year last year, the worst piece of garbage FPS war game ever. Your credibility began to sink from there on, but I still had hope for you guys.

Second, you then make the words so small in your mag that one needs a magnifying glass to read it. What, are you guys trying to save paper or something? Pretty damn cheap.

Third, in the latest issue [April 2003, Wil Power], Wil O' Neal babbles on about his system having problems after an Audigy 2 install. What the hell was that? What's the point? Who cares?

Fourth, on page 144, Robert Coffey shows he must be drinking with Wil after work. What the hell was that page-long babble about anyway? Waste of a sheet of paper. Damn Jeff, get out from behind that desk and get back to the final page. You're a writer, not an editor, obviously, to allow such s**t to be printed in your monthly publication.

It's getting critical, gentlemen. Your contentment with your jobs sure isn't reflected in this monthly thing you send me in the mail. I no longer look forward to the next one. What a shame.

Peter Renda, Sr.

Questions and answers

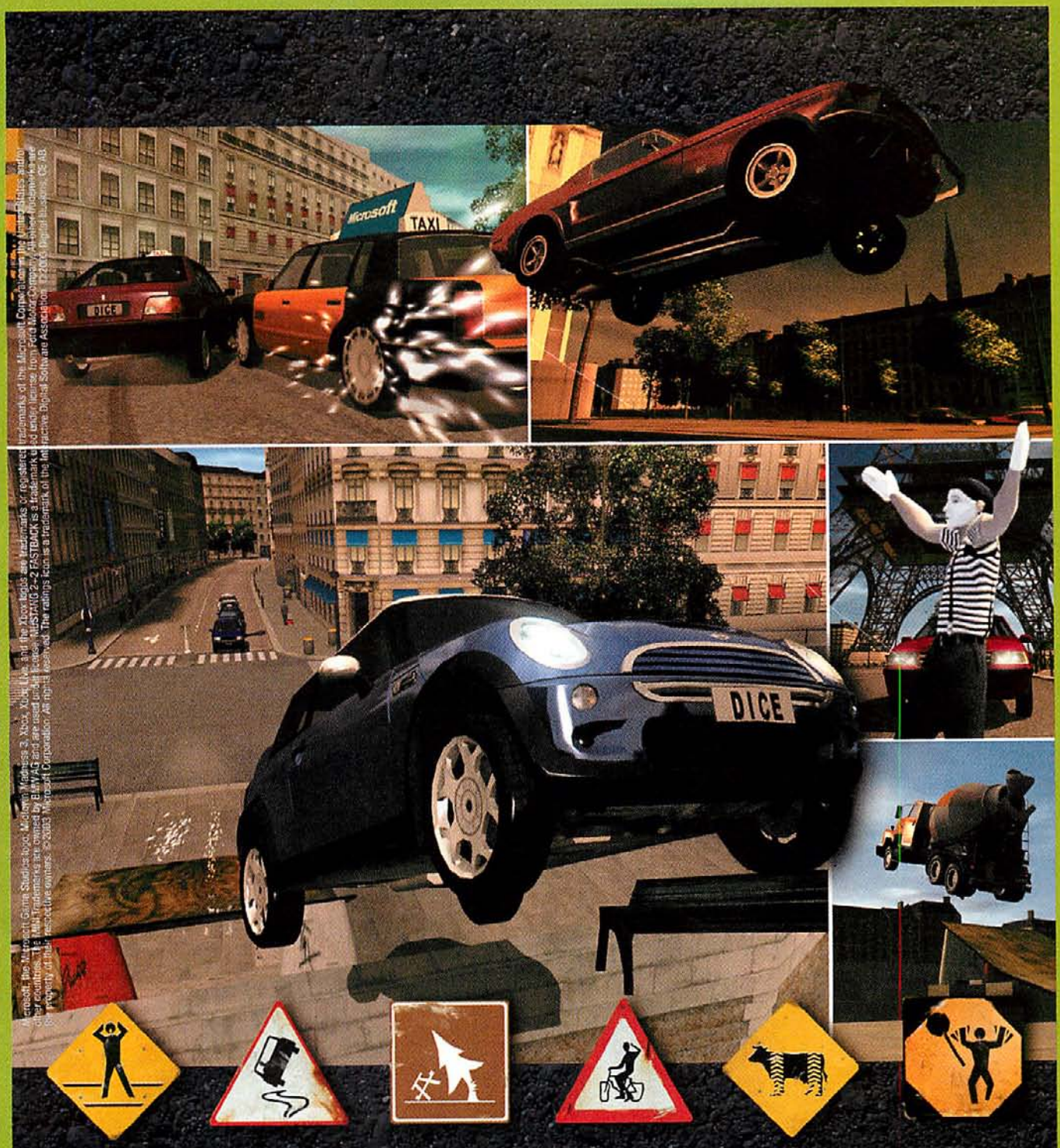
I'm pretty mixed up now and would like some clarification from you guys, OK?

1. *Halo* is on the Xbox, OK, but is it coming to the PC as Pipeline shows?
2. Will it be an MMO shooter only, like *PlanetSide*, or is there going to be a single-player mode as well?
3. Is *Tron 2.0* going to be amazing in gameplay as well as graphics?
4. Is the Radeon 9700 a better gaming graphics card than the latest GeForce?
5. Did you really mean it when you said not to trust you guys when you're excited about upcoming games?
6. And am I supposed to trust you on any answers I get?
7. Does Wil have connections that keep him from getting fired, or is he just, by some freak of nature, Jeff's son?

David Riot

1. Yes; 2. No, it's not massive-multiplayer. It's single- and multiplayer; 3. We hope so; 4. Yes; 5. No; 6. Yes; 7. Only Mrs. Green knows for sure.

"I'm really starting to think you guys have completely lost your minds."



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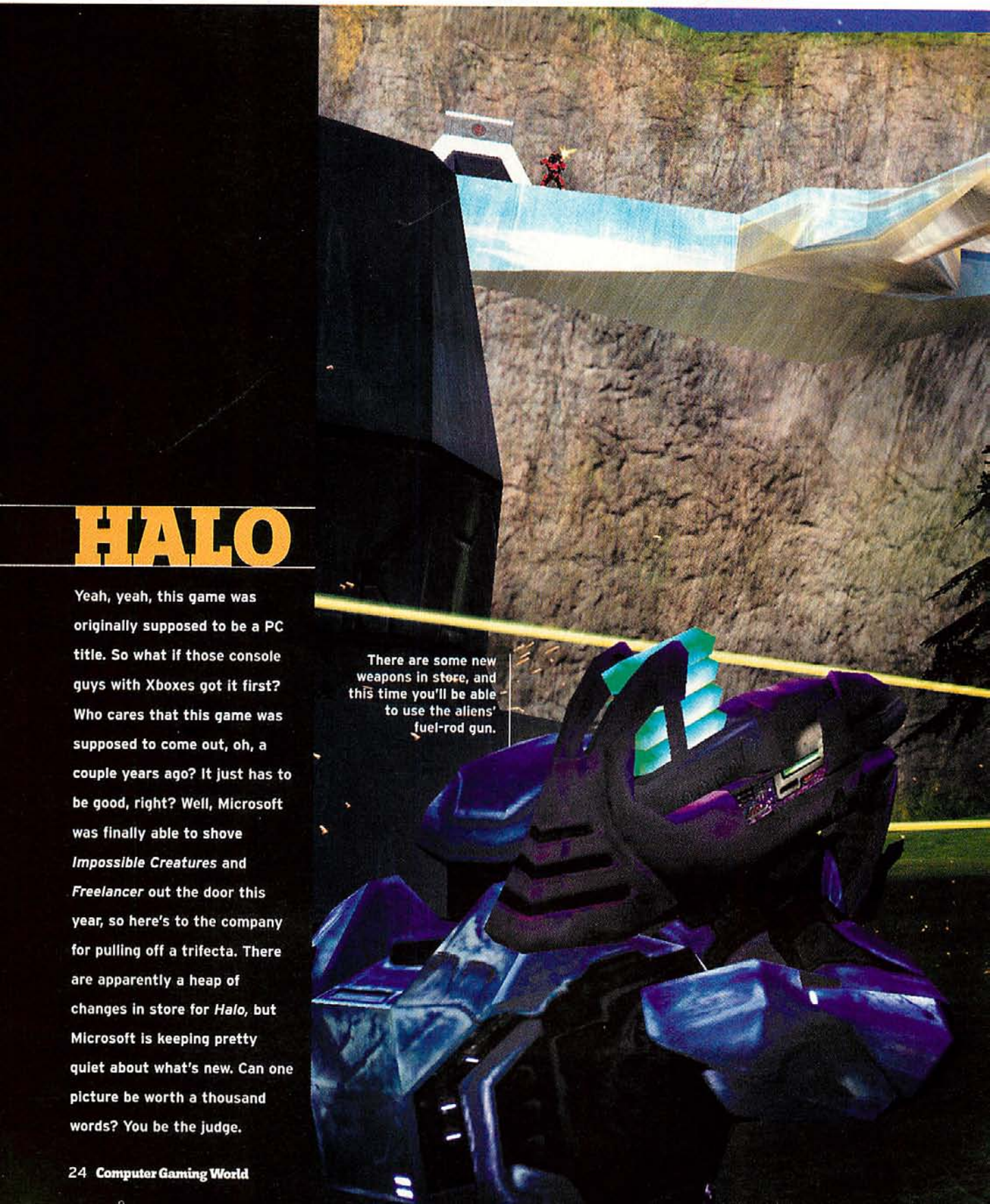
Loading...

The hottest shots of the best new games Edited by Darren Gladstone

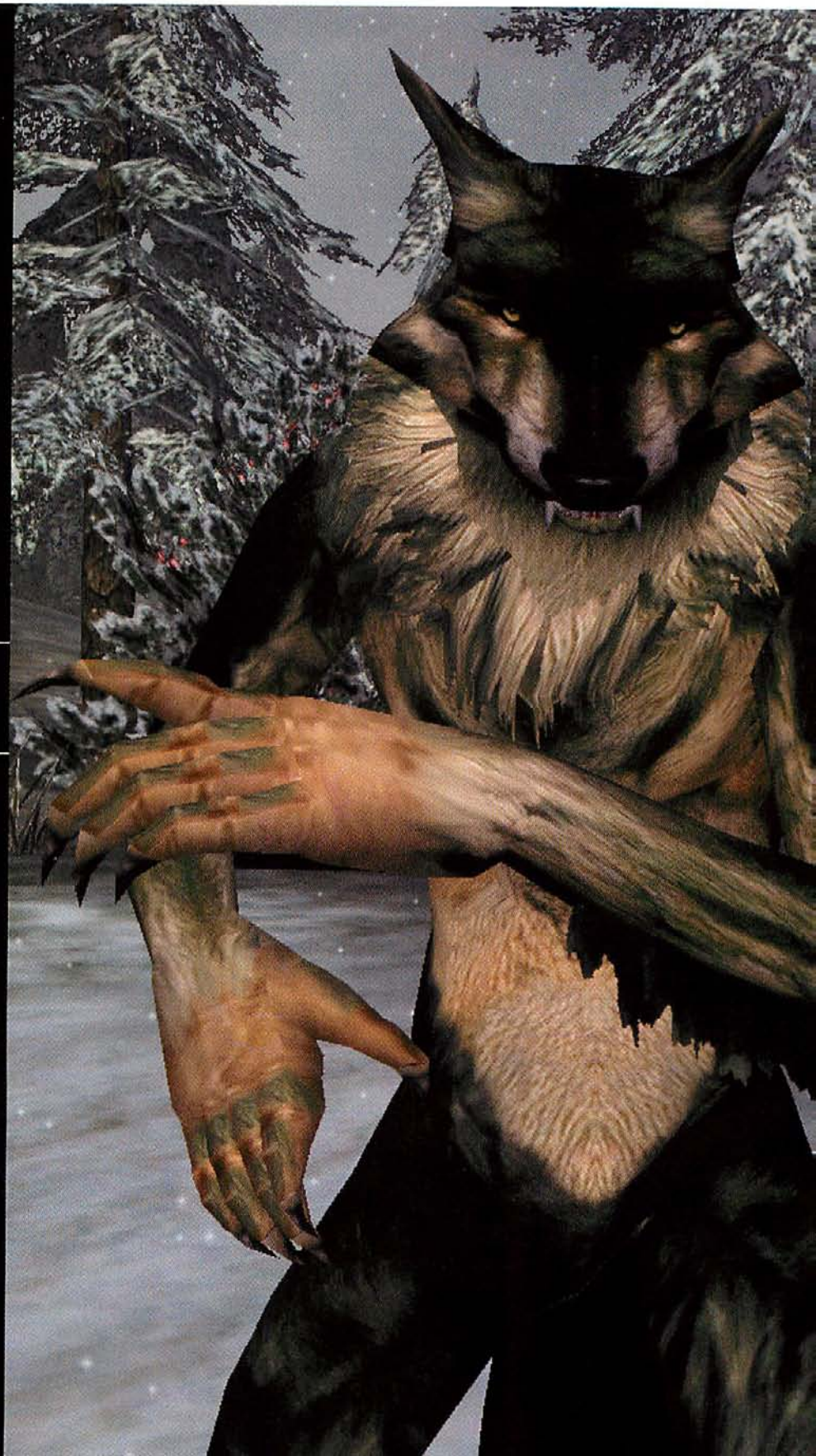
HALO

Yeah, yeah, this game was originally supposed to be a PC title. So what if those console guys with Xboxes got it first? Who cares that this game was supposed to come out, oh, a couple years ago? It just has to be good, right? Well, Microsoft was finally able to shove *Impossible Creatures* and *Freelancer* out the door this year, so here's to the company for pulling off a trifecta. There are apparently a heap of changes in store for *Halo*, but Microsoft is keeping pretty quiet about what's new. Can one picture be worth a thousand words? You be the judge.



There are some new weapons in store, and this time you'll be able to use the aliens' fuel-rod gun.

You'll be able to fly the alien Banshee in multiplayer modes here—eat that, Xbox boys.
This area look familiar? It shouldn't—there will be a number of new maps and an emphasis on multiplayer matches.



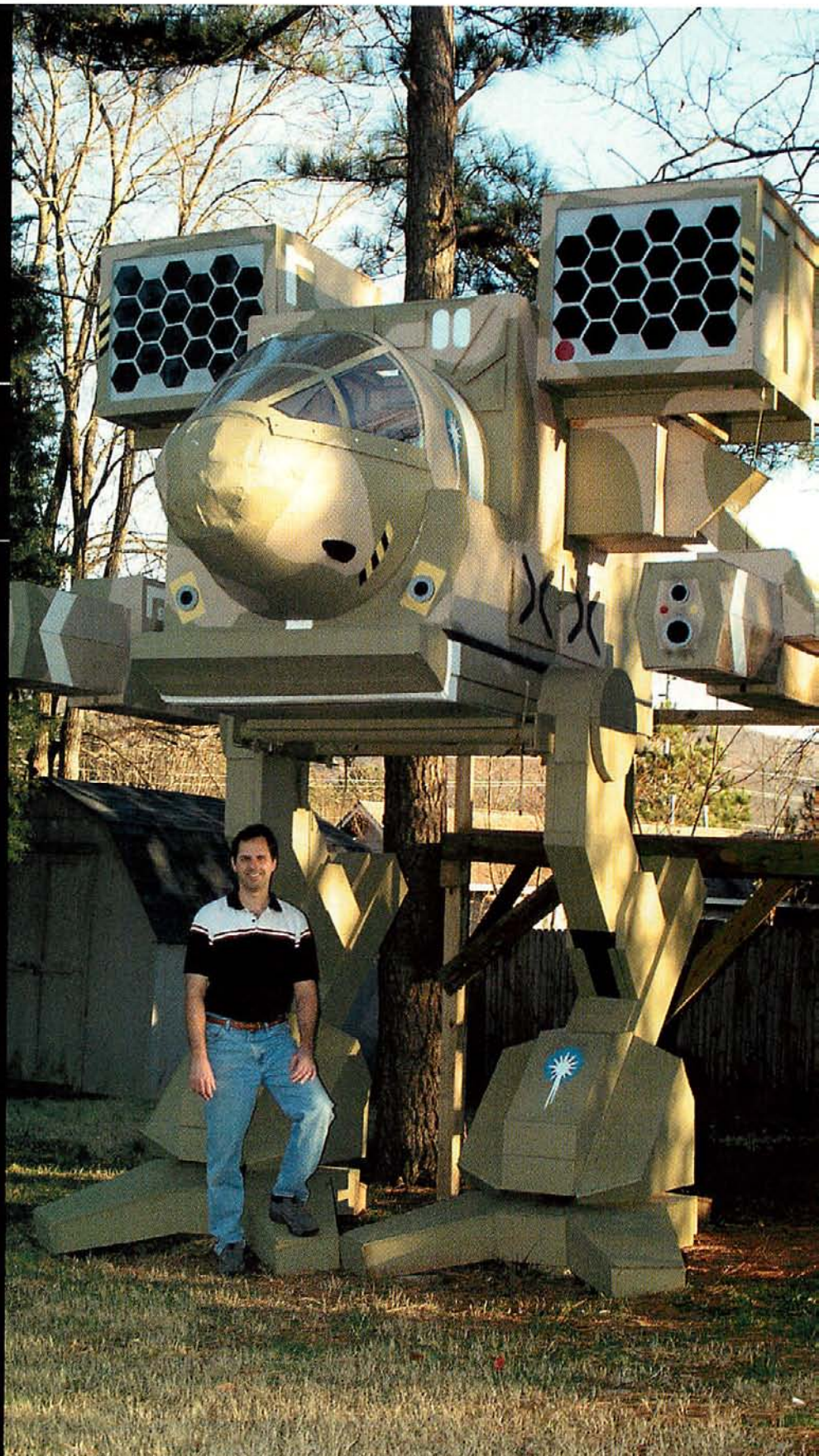
THE ELDER SCROLLS III: BLOODMOON

Another 100 hours of our lives we'll never get back! Every time we think we've finally finished exploring *Morrowind*, along comes another expansion. This time around, you're traveling to some frosty climates to get in touch with your inner wolf–werewolf, that is. That's right, you can go hunting in the wild or answer the call of the wild and become a lycanthrope in this new adventure. The folks at Bethesda promise to deliver some feral fun by the time you read this.

It wouldn't be the wild without trees—and Bethesda is promising a bunch of them. Dense, populated forests, to be precise.
Ax me no questions, and I'll tell you no lies.
Little Red Riding Hood, gone. Grandma, dead. Three little pigs, saving them for dinner. Dessert? Oh, that's you.

MECH-WARRIOR MADNESS

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to build a giant mech in your backyard–but it sure helps. Jim Martin, NASA scientist by day and mechwarrior by night, has been hooked on the PC game for years now. When he isn't serving as research engineer on the Revolutionary Propulsion Team, he's serving online in the Comstar Guard. Wanting to build a tree house for his three children, he opted to create a real-life Madcat, complete with a control panel. When the kids aren't outside, they are getting hooked on mechs as well–the oldest, age 8, likes playing *Mech Commander*. The whole effort took a couple weeks and a few hundred dollars worth of metal, wood, and cement.



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Out of the tombs. Into hell.

New 3D Engine and character control take full advantage of Nvidia technology.

Player/character, Kurtis Trent, brings his own distinct gameplay mechanics.

Stealth and hand-to-hand attacks help remove anyone in your path.

The gritty urban underbelly of Europe offers whole new environments.

A grisly crime scene. A ritual killing. A shocking suspect. And so the daring pursuit of good becomes the desperate flight from evil. And if the dark forces arrayed against her believe she's incapable of the ultimate, they're about to learn a painful lesson.

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Read Me

The poop my peeps be needin'–booyakasha! **Edited by Ken Brown**

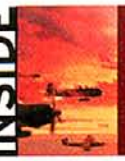
Sweet sights of the south: swaying palms and silky thighs.

WHIP IT GOOD

Vice, Vice Baby

GTA: Vice City finally makes its way to the PC By Darren Gladstone

INSIDE



MEDAL OF HONOR
Island-hopping through the Pacific
Page 34

CALL OF DUTY
Activision's WWII shooter
Page 35

THE MOVIES
You gotta break some bones to build an empire
Page 37

FATAL1TY
He earns $100,000 a year kicking gamers' asses
Page 40

PC gamers can breathe a sigh of relief. After 20 years of secreting themselves in a basement when listening to Wang Chung, it's finally cool to celebrate all things '80s thanks to *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*, coming to the PC on May 13.

If you haven't heard of *GTA*'s felonious phenomenon, welcome back from Afghanistan (or the federal pen). More than eight million PlayStation 2 owners have been happily pillaging, looting, and car-jacking in *Vice City* since late last year—and, as usual, the mainstream press has been quick to blame most of society's ills on a videogame. Now it's the PC's turn to corrupt your brain.

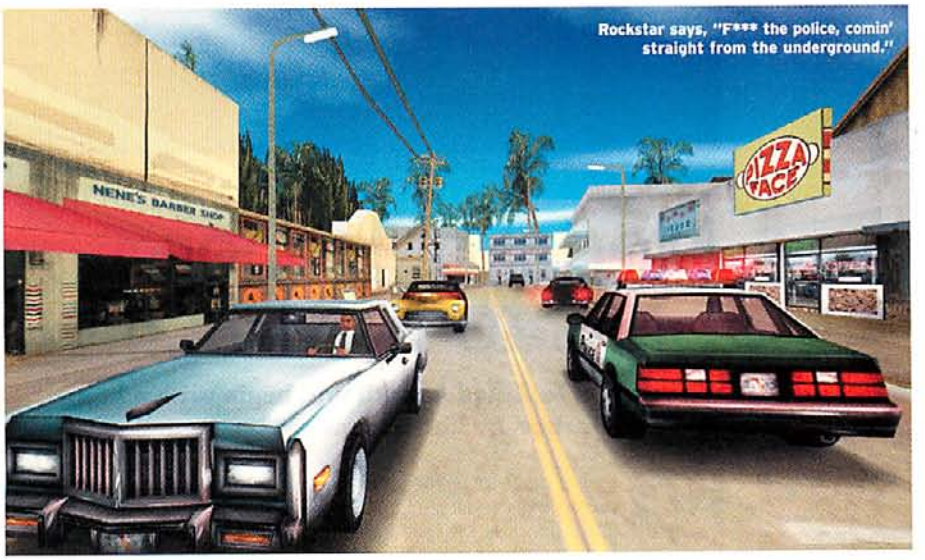
What's so hot about it? It plays out like a cross between *Miami Vice* and *Goodfellas*. You play Tommy Vercetti, fresh from the joint and ready to start a new crime empire. An all-star cast—including Ray Liotta, Burt Reynolds, and Luis Guzman, among others—lends its talents to the game. There are tons of vehicles to play with, including speedboats, helicopters, motorcycles, and even a moped. Adding to the overall vibe are characters clad in unstructured linen suits à la Crockett and Tubbs, and radio stations filled with '80s tunes (you can also plug in your own MP3s).

Why did it take nine months for *Vice City* to arrive on the PC? A Rockstar North spokesperson said, "Although we get the head start of having the basic assets to move across [from the PS2], there is still a huge amount of work to do." More than 50 people at the Edinburgh, Scotland-based company have been slaving away on improvements for the PC version. By far, the biggest issue has been ensuring that the game will work across a wide variety of PC configurations.

Obviously, we'll be treated to higher resolutions (1600x1200, anyone?) than the PS2 can deliver. In addition, according to Rockstar, "the viewable distances onscreen are massive. The texture resolutions increase from 32 colors [on the PS2] to 32-bit color [with billions of shades]."

Other enhancements include support for EAX 3.0 audio and for all major gamepads, joysticks, mice, and steering wheels. Rockstar also added the ability to save a 30-second gameplay clip that can be exported as an e-mailable video file.

Unfortunately, *Vice City* won't have multiplayer support. Rumors circulated about its inclusion in *GTA3*, but it was apparently nixed due to time constraints. This time around, word is that multiplayer isn't being considered until "the online experience can equal or exceed the quality of the single-player experience." So much for taking a bat to HaXor21 online.



Rockstar says, "F*** the police, comin' straight from the underground."

Nice wheels, eh? Tommy's driving one of the many cars available.

It's the PS2 version with higher resolutions. But that's not necessarily a bad thing.

Vice City for the PS2 has sold millions of copies and garnered record-breaking review scores from critics across the board. *GTA3* for the PC was *CGW*'s 2002 Game of the Year, and it was basically the same game as the PS2 version. That said, Rockstar probably doesn't need to add much to make *Vice City* for the PC a great game. No doubt the company is already setting its sights on *GTA4*, and on sales numbers in the tens of millions.

Early concept art suggests the feeling the design team is going for.

RECON

Medal of Honor Sails to the Pacific

The sequel to *Allied Assault* will begin with a bang at Pearl Harbor By Ken Brown

One of the goals of the game is to more emotionally involve players in the action.

Eager to capitalize on the success of its *Medal of Honor* franchise, EA recently announced no fewer than five new *MOH* games. They're not all for the PC, but three out of five ain't bad.

The headliners are *MOH: Rising Sun* for consoles and *MOH: Pacific Assault* for PC. Both games will kick off with a signature level set in Pearl Harbor and will follow life-and-death struggles during the first two years of the Pacific campaign. As with *Frontline* and *Allied Assault*, the games will be developed by different teams, will follow unique story arcs, and will offer different challenges.

Rising Sun is scheduled to ship later this year, while *Pacific Assault* is slated for January, 2004. EA will follow up both games with expansions, but the company isn't talking about the add-ons yet. To tide over PC players, EA plans to release another expansion for *Allied Assault* that focus on North Africa and Southern Europe. If you're still stuck in the back of that antitank truck in *Spearhead*, getting killed every time you careen down that hill, this may or may not come as good news.

What's in store in *Pacific Assault*? Producer Matt Powers says it will keep the things people loved about *Allied Assault*—exciting scripted events and team-based action—while minimizing the frustrations of that game (such as the unerring accuracy of those bastard snipers). For starters, the snipers' visibility will be reduced in the jungle. But Powers says they also won't be as accurate, which will add to the tension as you hear rounds whiz by and see puffs of dirt kicked up. You won't always be able to see where they're shooting from, but the muzzle flash should make it easier.

In terms of design, *Pacific Assault* will offer greater variety in the way the levels are played: You won't always be limited to following the golden path. There will be branch points where you can break off and either confront enemies you would have missed or try to skirt enemies you would have faced. The outcome of the level won't change, but it should mean more variety and replayability.

The complexity of re-creating the Japanese attack on *Pearl Harbor*, as well as portraying jungles like those of Guadalcanal, is daunting. Every object and leaf must be rendered with accurate lighting, wind effects, rain, and water. The design and programming teams are redoing the graphics engine to support more objects, better water effects, improved particle effects, and larger outdoor areas.

Obviously, there will be new weapons and vehicles to play with, including flamethrowers and tank-mounted flamethrowers, but it's too early to see them in action. We'll be sure to bring you a major, in-depth preview as *Pacific Assault* nears its January release.

Evidently, there was lots of water and boats in the Pacific Theater.

THE GOOD, THE BAD & THE UGLY

THE GOOD
PORTABLE GAMING

The new Game Boy Advance SP is the greatest invention of all time. Especially now that some old PC games are showing up as GBA ports, including the old *D&D* classic *Eye of the Beholder*, and one of Blizzard's early endeavors, *The Lost Vikings*. It's new life for old games, and yet another reason not to read that book you've been putting off! Go buy one.

THE BAD
MISLEADING PRE-ORDERS

Don't believe everything you read. And don't get your hopes up for games that won't be out soon. Specifically, we'd like to let Amazon.com know that *SWAT: Urban Justice* and *Doom III* will not be released in June and July, so you may want to stop misleading people. Gamers, check our Pipeline and sites like Gonegold.com for real release dates.

THE UGLY
GERMANY RESTRICTS C&C GENERALS

The German government has imposed restrictions on *C&C Generals*—it can't be advertised or displayed on store shelves in Germany—because, they say, it "advocates war, and gives military force an aesthetic appeal." To which we say: Give us ein break. If you're going to ban the game, at least do it for legitimate reasons. Like the trademark lousy interface.

Allies and enemies will use cover intelligently, says Activision.

RECON

Call of Duty

Activision's answer to *Medal of Honor* puts you in the boots of three different soldiers By Ken Brown

Activision is working on a new WWII shooter that promises to be an interesting alternative to *Medal of Honor*. *Call of Duty*'s claim to fame is that it will let you play as three different soldiers: a U.S. paratrooper on D-Day, a member of the British Airborne, and a Russian conscript.

Activision says the use of different soldiers won't just be cosmetic. Senior producer Thaine Lyman says, "The player will be experiencing a different battle style, from the coordinated tactical strikes of the U.S. to British commando raids to the massive Russian ground charges throwing wave after wave of bodies at the enemy. There will be a great variety of missions: huge battle sequences, assault and defense, infiltration, sabotage, stealth, sniper, and several vehicle-based missions, to name just a few."

Lyman says the game's A.I. is an area of major focus. "Both allies and enemies will understand and make intelligent use of cover points, different stances, suppressing fire, squad movement and tactics, leaning, corner behavior, field of fire, visibility, and more. They will look and act like real soldiers in a real war."

Crafting a *Medal of Honor*-style game with the A.I. of a game like *Operation Flashpoint* may be a tall order, but the development team has some major street cred. Infinity Ward is comprised of more than 20 former members of 2015, the company that developed *Allied Assault*.

The game will include multiplayer, but he says it's too early to say what forms that will take.

"The scale of the battles around you will really convey the huge scope of the war."

However, Lyman did confirm that *Call of Duty*, unlike *Medal of Honor*, will have blood: "We're not intending to glorify violence, but if you want to be realistic, you have to show blood. The animators at Infinity Ward will be conveying the harshness of war through location-based hit, pain, and death animations. It's all a part of the realistic gameplay experience that *Call of Duty* is about."

DUMPSTER DIVER

Digging up gold in the bargain bins By Thierry Nguyen

It's criminal when grandiose ambition results in rampant mediocrity; it's like promising a kid you'll take him to the moon and then shoving him on a bus to Barstow. But that's exactly what happened with *Master of Orion 3*. Fortunately, there are better things to drop your dinero on. For the price of one glorious piece of interface bloat, you could get the best comic-book game ever, a fine simulation of WWII air antics, and hell, the previous *MOO* game, which is still better than the new game.

Freedom Force $15 **IL-2 Sturmovik $20** **Master of Orion II $10** **Master of Orion 3 $50**

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#15

Living ONLINE

by Scott McCloud

The idea of online gaming as an ***alternative lifestyle*** or ***society*** has its roots in ***science fiction,*** ***M.U.D.s**** and recent games like ***EverQuest.***

*The text-based "Multi User Domains."

But rarely has the line between ***life*** and ***gaming*** been so thoroughly ***blurred*** as in ***The Sims Online.***

Goal-oriented players, more accustomed to explicit ***quests*** and ***death matches,*** may not take to TSO's brand of ***"free will."***

But the ***emergent societies*** of those looking to simply ***be somebody else*** and ***connect*** with ***others*** in such games are likely to grow in some ***strange*** and ***interesting ways*** in coming years.

The ***selling of assets*** from online communities could easily become a ***full-fledged industry*** in time.

Coveted ***locations*** will gradually succumb to the law of ***supply and demand*** and emerge as ***valuable hot spots...***

...while ***performances*** and ***creations within*** the game could yield ***real value*** as ***processor speed*** and ***bandwidth*** allow for more ***latitude*** in gameplay.

Will Wright himself didn't disagree when it was suggested that the original Sims were more a ***"toy"*** than a ***"game."***

*"Most games are based on a movie model that has a clear beginning, middle and end with a linear narrative. Our games are more like a train set or a doll's house where each person comes to it with their own interest and picks their own goals."**

But even when there are no ***constraints,*** no ***overt goals,*** no ***limits,*** there are still ***structures*** in the ***minds*** of the ***human players*** --

-- and sooner or later, we all draw ***our own limits*** and make ***our own games*** out of whatever ***chaos*** we ***live in.***

5, 10, 15 YEARS AGO IN *CGW*

Five Years Ago, June 1998

Talk about coincidence: The original *Half-Life* was on our cover half a decade ago. Sadly, the *Half-Life* monster was wrestling with John Blade from *SiN*. Guess who won that battle? Following the release of the *Half-Life: Day One* demo in late 1998, Activision put a big publishing gun against Ritual's head and made it release *SiN* way too early. A veritable hive full of bugs kept this perfectly decent shooter from any success—that, and the Valve-crafted juggernaut that came out a few weeks later.

Ten Years Ago, June 1993

The seeds of the present-day dearth of PC sports games were apparently planted a decade ago. Thumb through the June 1993 issue and you'll find all sorts of sports games—every misbegotten one of them text-based. Final tally: two hockey games, one basketball game, two soccer games (one of which includes ASCII-based replay), and a greyhound-racing management sim. Ten years later a nation wonders, "Whither the next great dog-racing game?"

Fifteen Years Ago, June 1988

What happened in June of 1988? You've got us. We can't find a copy of this issue to save our lives. Oh, we've got May and July, with their informative preview of the original *Pool of Radiance* and Scorpia's hints for *The Bard's Tale* and *Return to Werdna*—but what did we cover in June? It is as strange and mysterious as the reason this photo was printed in our May 1988 issue.

Horror freaks can film some pretty ghoulish action.

UPDATE

The Movies

Lionhead's graphic take on *Hollywood Mogul* looks like a blockbuster By Ken Brown

There's always a moment of incongruity when Peter Molyneux shows you his latest brainchild. A tall, soft-spoken Englishman, Molyneux is obviously sophisticated and articulate, and his enthusiasm is infectious. But there's always that moment when, as you're listening to him describe his game, something onscreen starts to get brutalized. And that's when it hits you: Tormenting his digital creations is clearly what fuels this guy's engine.

The Movies doesn't have as many examples of onscreen torment as *Black & White* or *Dungeon Keeper 2*. But that moment came nonetheless, when two cowboys squared off on a Western set for their fight scene. That's when Molyneux moved the violence slider around to show its impact on the action. At the lowest setting, the cowboys waved their arms around like Pee Wee Herman shadowboxing Bobby Trendy. But as Molyneux moved the slider, the violence increased from moderate to severe to extreme, resulting in savage bone-breaking combat. The two fought on stoically, flailing their broken appendages at each other, while Molyneux quietly observed, "Oh, that looks painful. That's quite unfortunate."

This is just one example of the kinds of scenes you could film in *The Movies*, the tycoon-style game that lets you build a Hollywood studio from the 1920s until the present. There will be other genres (romance, horror, etc.) and there will be other sliders that let you shape the action for each scene. The key will be to cater your studio's films to current tastes so your movies will be successful. If you make the right decisions about building sets, buying props, hiring actors, and selecting scripts, you can build up your studio and become a Hollywood mogul (apologies to Carey DeVuono).

Though still under construction, *The Movies* shaping up to be one of the most unique games since *The Sims*. It has the same sales potential as games like *Theme Park* and *RollerCoaster Tycoon*, but it could appeal to an even broader audience because movies are one of the world's most popular entertainment forms. *The Movies* will have its limitations, of course, (some movie genres will have to be released as add-ons), but that didn't limit *The Sims*' success.

Activision obviously agrees; it has signed on as the game's publisher. The release date is vaguely listed as 2004, but that's OK with us. It takes time to make movie magic.

Fancy yourself the next Samuel Goldwyn?

Quiet on the set! The artwork looks pretty amazing.

You can position the camera for maximum dramatic effect.

WHAT DO YOU WANT ON YOUR TOMBSTONE?

TOMBSTONE PIZZA

Tombstone "Ultimate Summer Job" Game

OFFICIAL RULES NO PURCHASE NECESSARY. 1. HOW TO OBTAIN A GAME MESSAGE: Beginning on or about May 6, 2003, game messages will be available inside specially-marked packages of Tombstone 12" pizzas. To receive a game message by mail, send a self-addressed, stamped #10 envelope to: Tombstone "Ultimate Summer Job" Game, P.O. Box 5190, Ellenton, FL 34222-5001. Requests must be received by October 10, 2003. Residents of VT only need not affix postage to self-addressed envelope. Limit one request per outer envelope, mailed separately. **2. HOW TO PLAY:** Open packaging and look on the back of the pizza label for game message. If your game message says, "Congratulations" and the name of a prize, you're a winner of that prize, subject to verification **3. PRIZE CLAIMS:** To claim a prize, sign your initials in ink across the face of your original game message. Mail original game message (entire pizza label) in a stamped envelope, together with a piece of 3" x 5" paper on which you have printed your complete name, address (including zip code), daytime and evening telephone numbers and age to: Tombstone "Ultimate Summer Job" Game Claim, P.O. Box 5443, Ellenton, FL 34222-5004. Grand Prize claims must be sent via Registered Mail, return receipt requested. First Prize claims may be sent via First Class mail. First Prize claims must also indicate winner's preferred gaming system AND a ranking (from 1 – 4) of available games on the form provided with the winning message. If winner's 1st-choice game selection is not available, the 2nd choice game selection will be awarded, and so forth. All games are subject to availability. If no game choice/ranking is indicated in the game claim, the game awarded is at Sponsor's discretion. All claims must be received by October 31, 2003. All prize claims are subject to verification. All claims submitted become the sole property of Kraft Foods North America, Inc. (Sponsor). Any claim received that is tampered with, illegible, mutilated, reproduced, contains printing or other errors, obtained where prohibited or not obtained legitimately, will be null and void. Sponsor and affiliated companies are not responsible for printing, distribution or production errors or for lost, late or misdirected mail. **4. PRIZES, APPROXIMATE RETAIL VALUES (ARVs)/ODDS OF WINNING:** (1) Grand Prize – Trip for 2 to Los Angeles, CA where winner will spend 5 days playing video games at the Activision Studios and receive $10,000 awarded in the form of a check. Trip consists of roundtrip, coach class air transportation for two from major airport nearest winner's residence to Los Angeles, CA; 6 days/5 nights hotel accommodations (single room, double occupancy); roundtrip ground transfers between airport/hotel and hotel/Activision studios; and $500 spending money. ARV: $15,800/ODDS: 1:10,559,146. (1,000) First Prizes – Activision Prize Pack including one Activision game, a tech deck, a t-shirt (adult large), a hat, and a coupon good for one free Tombstone Original pizza (up to $4.69). ARV: $100/ODDS: 1:10,559. Total approximate retail value of all prizes: $115,800. Travel is subject to availability. Winner and guest must be available to travel on same itinerary, and travel must be completed by October 31, 2004 or prize will be forfeited. Trip dates are subject to approval by Sponsor and Activision Studios. Prizes consists of only those items specifically listed as part of the prizes. Unclaimed prizes will not be awarded. No substitutions, cash equivalents or transfers of prizes permitted, unless prizes are unavailable, in which case prizes of equal or greater value will be substituted. *Grand Prize winner will not be employed or offered any type of employment by Activision, whether as an employee, independent contractor, temporary worker, intern or otherwise, and the Grand Prize shall not constitute or be construed as any such employment or offer of employment by Activision. **5. GENERAL RULES:** Open to residents of the U.S., 16 years of age and older, except employees of Kraft Foods North America, Inc. (Sponsor), Promotions.com Inc., Activision Publishing, Inc., their respective parents, affiliates, subsidiaries, advertising and promotion agencies, independent contractors, employees of prize suppliers, individuals engaged in the development/production/distribution of materials for the game, game piece printers, persons living in the same households, whether related or not, and the families (spouse, parents, children and siblings) of each. This game is void where prohibited or restricted. All federal, state and local laws apply. All taxes are the sole responsibility of winners. Winners will be notified by mail. Potential Grand Prize winner (and his/her parent/legal guardian, if winner is a minor) must sign any required Affidavit of Eligibility, a Liability Release and a Publicity Release within 14 days of attempted delivery or prize will be forfeited. Grand Prize winner's guest must also sign a Liability Release and Publicity Release prior to travel. If winner is a minor, winner must be accompanied on trip by a parent or legal guardian. If any prize/prize notification is returned as undeliverable, if the required documents are not returned in a timely manner, or in the event of non-compliance with any other requirements, the prize will be forfeited in its entirety. By entering, participants (and their parents/legal guardians, if participants are minors) agree to abide by and be bound by these Official Rules and the decisions of Promotions.com Inc., an independent judging organization, whose decisions are final in all matters. If due to a printing or other error, more prizes are claimed than intended to be awarded according to Rule 4, remaining prizes will be awarded in a random drawing from among all excess prize claims received. In no event will Sponsor be liable for more than the stated number of prizes in Rule 4. 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WHOA

Matrix Contest

Enter the Matrix...and win lots of cool stuff!

Are you the One? In celebration of the upcoming *Matrix* movies and game, *Computer Gaming World* and *Electronic Gaming Monthly*, along with our sponsors–Nintendo, Sony Computer Entertainment, Infogrames, and Warner Home Video–challenge you to follow the white rabbit through our magazines this month and find out the truth! Just find all five (5) rabbits hidden on the pages of each magazine and submit your answers at http://gamers.com/feature/matrix/. All correct entries will be entered in a random drawing for a chance to win one of the following great prizes:

Grand Prizes
(Five will be given away!)
Sony PlayStation 2
Nintendo GameCube
Microsoft Xbox

First Prizes
(10 for each platform!)
Infogrames' *Enter the Matrix* game for PC, PlayStation 2, GameCube, and Xbox

Second Prizes
30 *Animatrix* DVDs
20 *The Matrix Special Edition* DVDs
10 *The Matrix* DVDs (regular version)

Runners-Up Prizes
20 1-year subscriptions to *Computer Gaming World*
20 1-year subscriptions to *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

HOW TO PLAY

The June issues of *CGW* and *EGM* will each have five white rabbits hidden on five different pages. To enter, you need to:

1. Find the five pages with white rabbits in *CGW*.
2. Find the five pages with white rabbits in *EGM*.
3. Log on to the contest page at http://gamers.com/feature/matrix/.
4. Enter the five white rabbit page numbers for *CGW* in sequential order from lowest to highest.
5. Enter the five white-rabbit page numbers for *EGM* in sequential order from lowest to highest.

Correct entries received by June 2, 2003, will be entered into a drawing for the prizes. Only one entry per person is accepted.

And, oh yeah, the rabbit on this page–it counts! It's a freebie. Now go find the four (4) others...and good luck! Be sure to come back next month for another chance to enter!

Full legal rules available on page 131 or at http://gamers.com/feature/matrix/.

GET A LIFE

Why waste the next half of your life the way you did the first?

A Song of Ice and Fire

If most fantasy books are too fey for you, try George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* saga. Replace dorky heroes and flashy magic with political intrigue, epic sex, violence, and devious plotting, and you'll see why this is often called "great high fantasy for adults."

Elephant

Who knew such a great sound could come from a man, a woman, and an eight-track? The White Stripes' new album intersperses blues-rock with off-kilter elements such as a Burt Bacharach cover and a lecture about squirrels. It's the logical progression of everything White and a damn good buy for all.

A Mighty Wind

Christopher Guest's mockumentaries have consistently doubled us up in laughter, and after watching the clips from his newest movie, *A Mighty Wind*, we insist that you find a showing in your area and check this movie out. Log onto amightywind online.warnerbros.com and see the light.

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THE CGW INTERVIEW

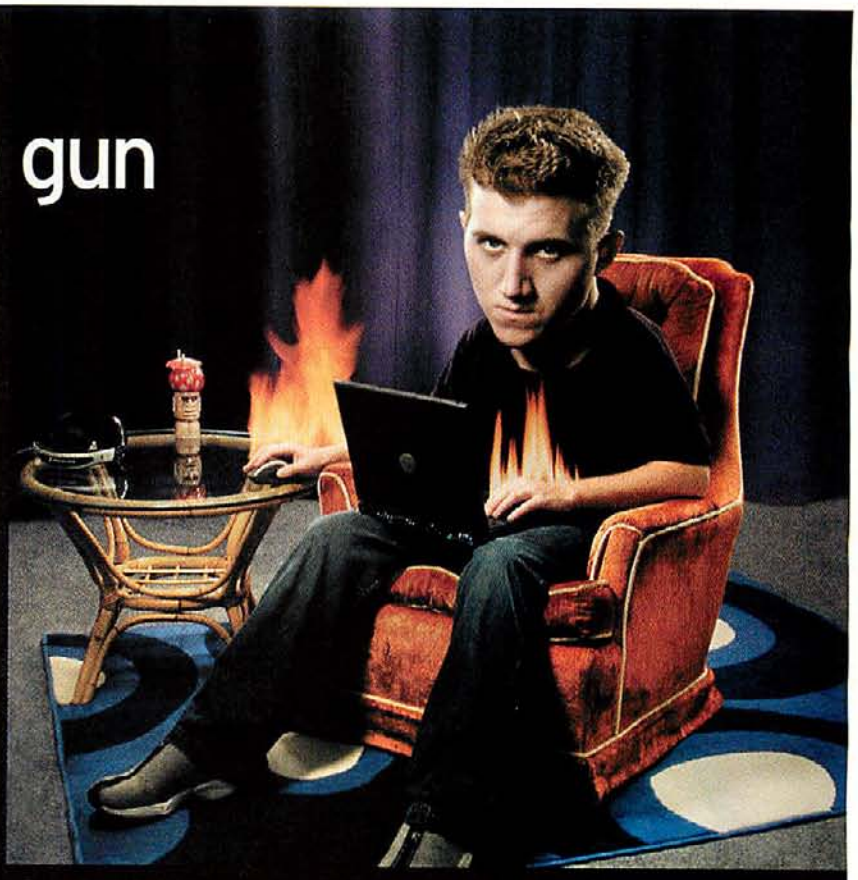
No. 1 with a gun

The world's top FPS player makes $100,000 a year

By Ken Brown

Johnathan Wendel, aka Fatality, isn't what you'd expect a professional gamer to be. He doesn't spend his days sleeping between pizza boxes in his parents' basement. He has his own place near Kansas City, MO, makes a six-figure income, and invests much of his money in IRAs. Why is he saving for retirement at age 22? The same reason he wins so often: He thinks ahead.

Since 1999, Wendel has dominated professional gaming competitions. He's won more than $150,000 in prizes (including a new car), has been profiled in *Maxim*, *Entertainment Weekly*, and *Details*, and is currently featured in an hour-long MTV special entitled *True Life: I'm a Gamer*. He sells his own line of mouse pads and gamer apparel and even has his own agent. But is he a whiz-kid cyber-athlete or just a deadeye geek?



"The things I learned from playing sports help a lot in playing games."

CGW: Why did you want to become the best FPS player in the world?

JOHNATHAN WENDEL: Before I went pro, I just wanted to travel overseas to play a videogame. For me that was like "Wow!" That was the best it could be.

CGW: What makes you so good?

JW: I've always been good in sports: hockey, tennis, baseball, football, pool, and ping-pong. I have really good hand-eye coordination and reflexes. The things I learned from sports help a lot in games. I learned to know what people were thinking before anyone else. When I'm playing a match, I'm thinking about what's going to happen three or four shots ahead of what's happening.

CGW: How many pro gamers are there?

JW: I'm pretty much the only one making a living at it in North America. In Korea, it's way bigger, and lots of guys have managers and make a living at it. One guy from Canada moved to Korea, got sponsored, and made $40,000 or $50,000 in 2000.

CGW: What are your goals for the future?

JW: My big goals with my company are to make high-quality gaming products. Hopefully, 5 to 10 years from now, I can start sponsoring gamers, so other gamers can have the same luxury I've had and fly around the world. I'm trying to make this a mainstream sport.

Trash Talk

A few of the terms competitive gamers use during a match:

FACIAL: Shouted at someone you just shot in the face

SWONED: "So owned" Something you would say after owning your opponent in a fight

URFACE: "Your face" Often spoken as a slang term to make it sound funny, but still dishonoring

COMBO MEAL: Said when you kill a player with the shock combo in *Unreal Tournament 2003*

LLAMA: A weak player who does nothing for the team; worthless

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY WILLIAM DUKE

REALITY CHECK

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

GAME	CGW	PC Gamer	CGM	Gamespot.com	IGN.com	Gamespy	GameRankings.com
Battlefield 1942	B+	A	B+	A-	A	A-	B+
Impossible Creatures	C-	A-	C-	B	B+	B-	B-
SimCity 4	B+	B+	C-	B+	A	B	A-
The Sims Online	C	C+	B+	C+	B-	C	B-
Splinter Cell	A	A	A	A-	A	A	A
Unreal II	B+	B-	C	B-	B+	B	B

TOYS

Mini Mechs

Detailed die-cast figures look like their 80-ton big brothers

By Jason Babler

If, like the rest of humanity, you don't have the means to build a huge mech in your backyard like the nuthouse in this month's Loading section, you'll have to settle for these 1:55 scale toys from JoyRide Studios. Based on BattleTech designs, these little guys measure about 8 inches tall and weigh in at a pound or two (due to the large number of die-cast parts).

The poseable action figures have more than 15 articulation points, interchangeable parts, a tiny scale pilot that fits in the cockpit, and some very cool faction/regiment stickers.

Serious toy freaks could quibble with the paint job—mostly flat color without much detail—but we didn't mind. Most people will feel they got their $25 worth. You can pick from the Mad Cat II, Jupiter, Forestry Mech, and my favorite, the Legionnaire.

For *MechWarrior* fans, there's no reason not to pick up at least one. If you get two, you can stage mock battles on your coffee table. Just don't let your girlfriend see you, or your Gauss gun could face a long, dry summer.

FREE GAMING: HOMEBREW

By T. Byrl Baker

Bountiful UT2003 Bonus Pack

More free *UT* lovin—woo hoo! Digital Extremes already gave us a five-map pack, but Epic's new 150MB bonus pack adds a whopping 10 maps, three new game types, and extra adrenaline combos that open up new tactical possibilities. Here are some of the highlights:

Mutant is probably the best new game type. Score the match's first kill to become the almighty mutant—armed to the teeth, invisible, and the only player capable of scoring frags (unless Bottom Feeder mode is used, in which the last-place player can score until he's in last no more). Whoever kills the mutant instantly takes his place, becoming the new target of his former teammates. **Camouflage** is a new adrenaline combo that turns you into a seemingly harmless object (you need to crouch to use it properly). Hope you know all the maps, because that bush might actually be another player.

Ice Tomb Carved entirely out of ice and rendered in thousands of shades of blue, this Deathmatch map is a refreshing change from the typical metallic industrial and gothic look. The gameplay matches the visuals, making this the pack's best overall map.

Canyon *UT2003* could do with more Bombing Run maps, so the fast and furious Canyon is a welcome addition. Two closely spaced goals separated by towering rock walls provide ample sniping opportunities for players who use the jump pads to reach the top. The walls don't extend all the way across the map, so you have to watch for intruders from both sides while keeping an eye out for sneak attacks from above.

See over there, where it looks like nothing is going on? That's your future if you just sit there.

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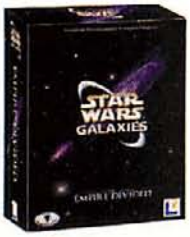
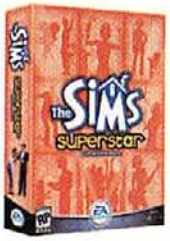
THIS MONTH'S TOP 5 PRE-ORDERS



Star Wars Galaxies: An Empire Divided *(LucasArts)* A massively multiplayer online role-playing game that lets you assume the role of nearly any type of character in the Star Wars universe. Interact with thousands of other players, as well as established characters from the movies.



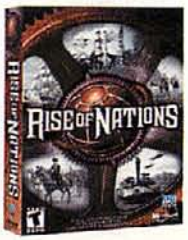
The Sims Superstar *(Electronic Arts)* In this expansion pack for The Sims, players can realize their fantasies of fame and fortune as they pursue the dream of being a rock star, a movie star, or a supermodel and live the lifestyle of a celebrity. This is your all-access pass to the world of superstardom.

Grand Theft Auto: Vice City *(Rockstar Games)* Released for the PS2 last October, GTA: VC became the best-selling video game of 2002. The game's Miami Vice look, hit soundtrack, well-told criminal story, and open-ended gameplay made VC a hit with gamers and makes its foray onto the PC.

Neverwinter Nights: Shadow of Undrentide Expansion Pack *(Infogrames)* NWN's first official expansion pack includes a new 40-hour single player campaign plus game features new to Neverwinter Nights, such as additional D&D skills, feats, classes, monsters, weapons and spells.

Warcraft III Expansion: The Frozen Throne *(Blizzard Entertainment)* Following in the tradition of previous Blizzard expansion sets, this game provides gamers with a vast new chapter in the epic Warcraft saga. Revisit the war-torn world of Azeroth where a new threat has arisen throughout the land.

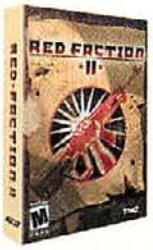
THIS MONTH'S TOP 5 RELEASES



Rise of Nations *(Microsoft)* Combines the sweeping scope of epic historical turn-based strategy games with the quick decision-making of real-time games. You can move through the entire sweep of human culture quickly and have a satisfying game experience without playing for hours!

Lara Croft Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness *(Eidos Interactive)* Lara Croft returns in Tomb Raider: Angel of Darkness. Accused of the murder of her one time mentor Von Croy and pursued by the police, Lara is drawn into a dark world of blood, betrayal and vengeance.

Roller Coaster Tycoon 2: Wacky Worlds Expansion Pack *(Infogrames)* Climb the Great Wall of China, witness the splendor of the Taj Mahal and have lunch in the shadow of the Eiffel Tower! Include the most exotic rides and attractions from around the globe when creating the ultimate virtual amusement park.



Red Faction II *(THQ)* This is the sequel to one of the most critically acclaimed original game franchises of 2001. Features an enhanced engine that allows players to strategically alter and destroy the game environment in real-time. RFII expands and builds upon the experience and technology of the original.

EVE Online: The Second Genesis *(Simon & Schuster Interactive)* Breathtaking graphics, special effects, and intricate gameplay provide an experience unlike any space combat, commerce, and exploration game. Become a spaceship captain and cruise around in a universe teeming with life.

All available now at the Computer & Video Games store at

amazon.com.

Get thousands of game titles at amazon.com/videogames

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SURVEY

CGW Top 20

It's a first-person-shooter shoot-out!

No. 1 bloodsport among PC players: *UT2003*.

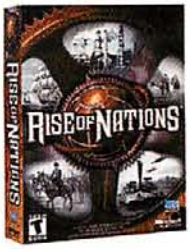
Hitman 2: bald to the wall.

Nazis again make nice targets in *Spearhead*.

RANK	GAME	RATING
1	**Unreal Tournament 2003** (Infogrames)	★★★★½
2	**Hitman 2** (Eidos)	★★★★½
3	**Medal of Honor: Spearhead** (EA)	★★★½
4	**Battlefield 1942: Road to Rome** (EA)	★★★★½
5	**Neverwinter Nights** (Infogrames)	★★★★½
6	**Command & Conquer: Generals** (EA)	★★★½
7	**No One Lives Forever 2** (Sierra)	★★★★½
8	**SimCity 4** (EA)	★★★★½
9	**Unreal II: The Awakening** (Infogrames)	★★★★
10	**Freelancer** (Microsoft)	★★★★½
11	**Madden NFL 2003** (EA)	★★★★★
12	**Rainbow Six 3: Raven Shield** (Ubi Soft)	★★★★½
13	**Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit 2** (EA)	★★★★½
14	**Medieval: Total War** (Activision)	★★★★★
15	**MechWarrior 4: Mercenaries** (Microsoft)	★★★★½
16	**RollerCoaster Tycoon 2** (Infogrames)	★★★★½
17	**Impossible Creatures** (Microsoft)	★★½
18	**Civilization III: Play the World** (Infogrames)	★½
19	**Master of Orion 3** (Infogrames)	★★½
20	**EverQuest: Shadows of Luclin** (Sony Online Entertainment)	★★★★½

The Top 20 is obtained from a survey of 1,000 readers' favorite games from the last six months. To vote, visit our website at www.computergaming.com.

GREAT DEALS ON PC GAMES



Rise of Nations
(Microsoft)
$49.99

Combines the sweeping scope of epic historical turn-based strategy games with the quick decision-making of real-time games. A satisfying game experience without playing for hours!

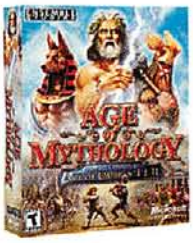
Features:
- Historical real time strategy game; battle from the Ancient Age to the Information Age
- Multiplayer mode is accelerated to let you quickly accumulate resources and move up through the ages.

Enter the Matrix
(Microsoft)

Go to www.amazon.com/matrix for
Special Offers!

Features awesome gunplay and spectacular martial arts that bend the rules of the Matrix. This game is an integral part of the experience, with a story that weaves in and out of The Matrix Reloaded, the sequel to the Academy Award®-winning film.

Features:
- Game script written and directed by the Wachowski Brothers
- Nearly one full hour of exclusive, never-before-seen Matrix footage using the film's actors.



Age of Mythology
(Microsoft)

Regular Price: ~~$49.99~~
Sale Price! *$39.99*

Transport yourself to a time when heroes did battle with monsters of legend and the gods intervened in the affairs of mortal men.

Features:
- Age of Empires strategy combined with ancient mythology
- Dynamic 3D game engine beautifully renders battles, creatures, and the miracles of the gods
- Epic 36-scenario singleplayer campaign and easy-to-use multiplayer gaming.

Check Out More Great Deals Online at

amazon.com.

PIPELINE

Ship dates and slip dates for games in the channel By Di Luo

Here's the latest on when those games are finally shipping. Just don't expect any news on *Duke Nukem Forever*. For all we know, it's still being knit by a group of dour senior citizens in a suburb of Dallas.

1 STAR WARS: KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC: When you have billions, you can toss millions around like flipping pennies into a fountain. Microsoft's Xbox launch has hardly been a success story, and the company's still trying hard to push people toward it. First, it bought off Bungie in order to give us *Halo* two years after the Xbox version was released. Now, we hear that *Knights of the Old Republic* will be out on Xbox for at least four months before it ships on PC. Don't count on seeing *KOTOR* before October.

GAME	PUBLISHER	EXPECTED
All American: The 82nd Airborne	Shrapnel	02 2003
American McGee's OZ	Carbon 6	02 2004
Black 9	Majesco	04 2003
Black Moon Chronicles: Winds of War	Cryo Networks	Unknown
Blitzkrieg	CDV	02 2003
Breed	CDV	02 2003
Chrome	Strategy First	03 2003
City of Heroes	NCsoft	02 2004
Commandos III	Eidos	02 2003
Conflict: Desert Storm	SCi	04 2002
Cossacks 2: Napoleonic Wars	CDV	01 2004
Crusader Kings	Strategy First	5/6/03
Defender of the Crown	Cinemaware	03 2003
Devastation	Arush	03 2003
Deus Ex 2	Eidos	05/2003
Doom III	Activision	04 2003
Dragon Empires	Codemasters	03 2003
Driver 3	Infogrames	03 2003
Duke Nukem Forever	GOD Games	Unknown
Empire of Magic	Summitsoft	02 2003
Empire: Dawn of the New World	Activision	03 2003
Enter the Matrix	Infogrames	5/15/03
Etherlords 2	Strategy First	03 2003
EverQuest II	Sony	04 2003
Full Throttle 2	LucasArts	04 2003
Ghost Master	Empire	04 2003
Grand Theft Auto: Vice City	Rockstar Games	5/13/03
Hannibal	Arxel Tribe	02 2004
Half-Life 2	Sierra	09/2003

2 PRINCE OF PERSIA: SANDS OF TIME: The first two *Prince of Persias* were among the best PC platformers. The third game in the series, however, was a big disappointment. Ubi Soft hopes to revive this franchise with *Sands of Time*. Producer Yannis Mallet says the game will be "bigger, stronger, better" while recapturing the spirit of the first two games. Expect more intense combat, as the company has turned to console titles like *Devil May Cry* and *Onimusha* for inspiration. Look for this game toward the end of the year.

GAME	PUBLISHER	EXPECTED
Counter-Strike: Condition Zero	Valve	02 2003
Halo	Microsoft	02 2003
Harpoon 4	Ubi Soft	5/6/03
Heart of Stone	Eidos	Unknown
Heaven and Hell	CDV	02 2003
Hidden & Dangerous 2	GOD Games	03 2003
The Hobbit	Vivendi	03 2003
Homeworld 2	Sierra	03 2003
Hooters: Trampoline Pack	BubiSoft	DD 2003
The Hulk	Vivendi	02 2003
Imperium Galactica III	CDV	03 2003
Lineage II	NCsoft	03 2003
Lionheart	Interplay	02 2003
Lock-On	Ubi Soft	03 2003
Lords of the Realm III	Sierra	04 2003
Max Payne II	GOD Games	Unknown
Medal of Honor 2	EA	01 2004
Medieval Total War: Viking Invasion	Activision	5/6/2003
Men of Valor	Sierra	2004
Middle-earth Online	Vivendi	04 2004
The Movies	Lionhead	Unknown
Nexagon	Strategy First	02 2003
No Man's Land	CDV	03 2003
Panzers	CDV	01 2004
Port Royale	Tri Synergy	02 2003
Postal 2	Unknown	Unknown
Prince of Persia: Sands of Time	Ubi Soft	04 2003
Quake 4	Activision	Unknown
Rise of Nations	Microsoft	5/20/2003
Republic: The Revolution	Eidos	06/2003

3 XIII: We finally had a chance to see this animation-style shooter firsthand, and we were impressed. It has a gritty style that works beautifully with the cell-shaded graphics. The comic-book aura is very adult—full of exaggerated violence like blood splatters, flying bodies, and pop-up comic panels illustrating especially good shots. The environment seems highly interactive, with lots of items you can use as weapons. There's still no exact release date, but it'll likely ship for the holidays.

GAME	PUBLISHER	EXPECTED
Rolling Thunder	Strategy First	02 2003
Rome: Total War	Activision	04 2003
Sam and Max 2	LucasArts	01 2004
Savage	iGames	02 2003
Sea Dogs II	Bethesda	03 2003
Silent Storm	Jowood	04 2003
The Sims 2	EA	02 2004
The Sims: Superstar Expansion	EA	02 2003
Star Trek: Elite Force II	Ritual	06/2003
Star Wars Galaxies	LucasArts	02 2003
Star Wars Knights of the Old Republic	LucasArts	04 2003
Stalker: Oblivion Lost	GSC	04 2003
SWAT: Urban Justice	Sierra	Unknown
Team Fortress 2	Sierra	Unknown
They Came From Hollywood	Octopus Motor	02 2003
Thief III	Eidos	03 2003
Tomb Raider: Angel of Darkness	Eidos	05/2003
Total Annihilation 2	Infogrames	04 2003
Tribes Game	Sierra	Unknown
Tron 2.0	Disney	03 2003
Tropico 2	GOD Games	02 2003
Two Towers	Vivendi	03 2003
WarCraft III: The Frozen Throne	Blizzard	03 2003
War of the Rings	Vivendi	03 2004
Warlords IV	Ubi Soft	04 2003
World of WarCraft	Blizzard	Unknown
World War II	Codemasters	01 2004
XIII	Ubi Soft	04 2003
Zero-G Marines	Strategy First	Unknown

NEW UPDATE

MADE WITH NO LIMITS IN MIND

If looks could kill, RADEON™ 9800 PRO would be deadly. Powering movie-quality images, revolutionary cinematic lighting, textures and effects, it delivers an incredible 3D gaming experience. And nobody beats its performance: 8 pipes and 256-bit memory give you the fastest 3D board available. Proof again that ATI is no alien to the most advanced gaming technology in the universe.

RADEON™ 9800 PRO

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ATI

ATI.COM

Those Rancors are just so darn huggable and loveable, "and damn hard to kill," according to Associate Producer Dan Pettit.

This is actually a picture of us escaping from LucasArts' offices with this exclusive preview.

Besides looking flashy, the saberstaff makes quick work of enemies.

After-school practice for Jedi Academy's kickline.

JEDI KNIGHT: JEDI

You want the force? You can't handle the force! By Darren Gladstone

ACADEMY

Never play poker with Brett Tosti. The cagey director of *Jedi Knight: Jedi Academy* is excited about what's in store, sure, but he's damn good at not showing you his hand. We did, however, get an exclusive behind-the-scenes test drive, and we're here to tell you that the Force is with him.

One big change up front: You're not Kyle Katarn. Picking up about a year after the conclusion of *Jedi Outcast*, in this game, Luke Skywalker's Jedi Academy on Yavin 4 is training initiates in the ways of the Force. Katarn may have flown off into the sunset at the end of *JK2*, but he does come back in the new game as a teacher. You, on the other hand, have to go back to class.

JEDI SCHOOL DROPOUT

You start off by creating a highly customizable character. First, you choose gender and species. While the final number of races hasn't been buttoned down, we saw Rodian, Twi'lek, and human characters in action. Next, you pick out skin tone, facial pattern, and outfit—nice, but fairly standard decisions. After that, however, comes the cool part: selecting your lightsaber. Not only can you modify the hilt and blade color, you can also choose your fighting style. Go for the traditional saber, get in touch with your inner Darth Maul using a saberstaff, or go for the dual saber approach popularized in *Episode II*. The way you arm yourself affects your character's moves. Take the saberstaff, for example: It's perfect for fighting off hordes of enemies with sweeping kicks and spinning blades. The single saber approach, by comparison, is all about stabbing and slashing.

A pet peeve of many is that you started off the previous games without any Jedi powers. Here, you at least have a base level of abilities you can hone as you advance. The way those powers work has also been refined: Instead of being able to use either the lightsaber or force powers, you can now combine attacks. Force pull someone into you and swing away, then use Force lightning and strike at the same time for a double shot.

BRAVE NEW WORLDS

Par for the course with *Star Wars* games, you'll visit a number of familiar planets from the books and movies (we saw a number of areas on Tatooine, including a trip inside a Jawa sand crawler). In fact, Tosti says there will be a larger variety of locations, and that the total size of the game is larger than *Outcast*. He was also quick to point out improvements to the graphics engine. In the Tatooine level, "All the rock structures look smoother and more natural. There's a much higher level of detail." Eyeballing it up close, we're inclined to agree. The average character in *JK2* consisted of 10,000 polygons; this time around, that figure's been doubled.

The increased detail is also apparent in the creatures you'll fight. We saw Tuskan raiders, Jawas, and various Dark Jedi to deal with and dismember—not to mention a number of end-level bosses. They all look impressive, even at this early point.

Choose your style of light saber combat: single, double, or Darth Maul-style.

In one mission, some prisoners are in need of rescuing. As we break into the detention center, we're told that the prisoners are to be fed to a Rancor for sport. Some sport—you try coming between a two-story monstrosity and his lunch. It grabs a prisoner and shakes him around in its giant paw before biting the poor guy's head off.

There will be many more surprises in store when the game ships later this year. Tosti tantalized us with the possibility of more controllable vehicles than just the AT-STs from *Outcast*, and even some multiplayer modes, but as usual, he couldn't yet put his cards on the table. "You've got to keep some things a secret. Right?"

The Force is strong in this one.

It's closing time at the Mos Isley cantina. Just be careful not to hook up with the lone snaggle-toothed alien left in the bar.

GAME STATS

PUBLISHER: LUCASARTS
DEVELOPER: RAVEN
GENRE: ACTION/ FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER
RELEASE DATE: FALL 2003

Blitzkrieg tactic of the day: Send your AW-52 on a bombing run. Then, with a C-47 trailing right behind, drop a squad of soldiers behind enemy lines.

Notice that thing trying to stop that U.S. bombing run? That's a Wasserfall rocket.

Let's not give biker gangs any bright ideas here.

BATTLEFIELD 1
WEAPONS OF

World War II gets a slightly sci-fi makeover **By Darren Gladstone**

942: SECRET WORLD WAR II

D-Day is done. The road to Rome has been leveled. What other tricks does developer Digital Illusions have up its sleeves for the *Battlefield 1942* series? Well, slap on your rocket pack, Fritz, 'cause Electronic Arts' newest war machine gets some declassified intel, the *Secret Weapons of World War II*.

"What if" experimental technology has made its way into the war effort: rocket packs, jets, guided missiles, and so on. It may sound farfetched, but of the 16 new vehicles included here, seven are experimental crafts actually built and tested during World War II. These prototypes had faults that made them unsuitable for actual field use (you know—small problems like spontaneous combustion), but this expansion assumes all the bugs have been worked out by industrious WWII engineers.

SCIENCE FACT OR SCIENCE FICTION?

"It seems unreasonable to think that a responsible organization would put skilled pilots into an armed missile," says Armando "AJ" Marini, producer and lead designer for *Battlefield 1942: Secret Weapons of World War II*. "But that's exactly what the Germans did [with the Natter rocket plane]—and they did it often." Truth is often stranger than fiction, and with the amount of research put into creating this expansion, Marini has become a bit of an expert.

When those wacky Nazis weren't busy driving missiles, they were strapping rockets onto their backs like Wile E. Coyote. As another experiment from the war that's coming to bear in *Secret Weapons*, Marini says the rocket packs are a favorite of the development team. "They're flying around levels like '40s-era superheroes, having airborne gunfights!" The jet propulsion hijinks don't stop there—you'll also be able to launch and control Wasserfall and V2 rockets.

There's a wide variety of additional vehicles, among them the Horton HO 229 fighter plane, the U.S. Sherman tank with a T-34 Calliope, a Russian T95/T28 American Super Heavy Tank, the German Sturmtiger, and the Armstrong Whitworth AW-52—all pretty effective in the field.

The obvious sticking point that comes with having so many futuristic vehicles in one place is that it upsets the play balancing. Marini assures, though, that strategy and skills still win out in the end. He threw in a bit of historical context to support his point: In WWII, the Allies combated Natters by flying close enough to them to use their wingtips as destabilizers, sending the Natters out of control. "I thought that story was fiction until I saw the accompanying photo," says Marini.

Here, one trooper is manning the door gun as the rest wait to jump into the action.

Those wacky Nazis kept busy strapping rockets onto their backs like Wile E. Coyote.

SURGICAL STRIKES

Speaking of strategy, Digital Illusions is providing more ways to literally jump into the fray. The most notable are mobile spawn points in the form of C-47 cargo planes. The option to blanket a focused area with paratroopers adds a whole new dynamic. It also happens to be Marini's favorite new tactic: "I love manning the door gun, laying down suppressing fire, and then bailing out of the plane with a few of my comrades."

What about the troops that'll hit the shores? Two new classes, British commandos and German elite troops, bring new sets of weapons to the battle. The new British forces come armed with Auto 5 shotguns, the Bren light machine gun, and the Sten—a silenced machine gun for those sneaky types. To equal out the balance of power, the Germans get the Gewehr 43 semiautomatic sniper rifle, the FG 42 machine gun, and a grenade launcher.

OK, so you've got your new weaponry, vehicles, and classes. *The Road to Rome* had those as well. What's really new here are eight interesting maps (including Telemark, Essen, and even Hitler's hideaway, the Eagle's Nest) and a new objective-based mode akin to concentrated versions of *Unreal Tournament*'s assault maps.

The folks at Digital Illusions have high hopes for *Secret Weapons*. Will it be able to uphold the core *Battlefield* gameplay while adding a whole new slant on World War II? We'll let you know as we near the game's September release date.

While you can't get a redeemer, there is the Wasserfall guided missile. It can be controlled via a first-person perspective.

GAME STATS

PUBLISHER: **ELECTRONIC ARTS**
DEVELOPER: **DIGITAL ILLUSIONS**
GENRE: **FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER**
RELEASE DATE: **SEPTEMBER 2003**

Orcs and Humans battle in the swampland.

A troll witch doctor gets down with his bad self.

Horse riding is just one form of transportation. Orcs, for example, can ride wolves.

WORLD OF WARC

Blizzard reveals trade skills, a new character class, and more By Jeff Green

WARCRAFT

WarCraft fanboy alert: Your secret dream of becoming an Orc is now ever-closer to fruition. Since announcing its massively multiplayer RPG, *World of WarCraft*, more than a year ago, Blizzard Entertainment has been very quiet about the details—partially to keep all of its competitors at bay—but now it's finally starting to spill the goods. Here's a quick update, including the first info on a previously unannounced character class, the warlock.

Blizzard has announced four playable races so far—Humans, Orcs, Taurens, and Dwarves—with at least one more coming soon. Our money is on either the Undead or Night Elves. Along with the warlock (more on that in a minute), you'll be able to play as a warrior, mage, and shaman. However, as in all MMORPGs, not all classes will be available to all races.

World of WarCraft is a huge risk, but if there's one thing we know about Blizzard, it never does anything half-baked.

CLASS WAR

Right now, Blizzard is working on the class kits, ensuring that each is unique while remaining distinctly *WarCraft* in feel. Warriors, for example, will have their standard melee combat skills enhanced with special abilities like Battle Shouts to either enhance your stats or lower those of your enemies. They will also have unique weapon abilities depending on the weapon wielded. Try using Stun or Crippling Blow, as well as a variety of stances that will modify your stats during combat. Assume an aggressive posture, for example, and you'll dish out more damage, but you'll also be more susceptible to getting hit. Finally, warriors will be able to perform specific *WarCraft III* hero abilities, such as the Orc blademaster's Bladestorm, a whirlwind attack with brutal area-effect damage.

Mages are offensive, multipurpose magic users with an emphasis on fire and frost magic. They'll mete out more damage than any other class, but will be very weak in melee situations, wearing only cloth armor. Some of the cooler spells include Invisibility (the only class for which this is planned), and crowd-control spells such as Freeze, which briefly stuns enemies, and Chain of Ice, which roots monsters in place. The mage will also be able to summon a variety of elementals as pets, which won't be directly controllable by the player, but will act as guardians to the mage and his allies.

The shaman, another magic user, has both offensive spells and healing and buffing abilities. Along with brutal combat spells—like Molten Blast, Lightning Bolt, and Chain Lightning—the shaman can summon spiritual guardians and enhance allies with strength and stamina buffs. Shamans are less frail than mages since they can wear leather armor and wield a mace, thus mixing up melee combat with spellcasting.

The just-announced warlock is a fire and shadow magic caster who can cast direct-damage spells, like Firebolt and Death Coil, as well as spells that cause damage over time, like Immolate and Corruption, which drain hit points continually. Most important, the warlock is an expert in demonic magic who, as he/she levels up, will accumulate a suite of demons—including (in increasing order of strength) imps, fel hounds, succubi, and void walkers—that can be summoned as pets. Unlike other summoning classes, however, the warlock develops a specific relationship with his pets. The imp he summons will be the same imp with the same name every time.

At the highest levels, warlocks will be able to summon huge, brutal creatures like this Hulk-like infernal.

A female shaman ponders life in her form-fitting leather armor.

GAME STATS

PUBLISHER: BLIZZARD ENTERTAINMENT

DEVELOPER: BLIZZARD ENTERTAINMENT

GENRE: MMORPG

RELEASE DATE: BEFORE DUKE NUKEM FOREVER

A mage kicking arse against some trolls. Mages will actually mete out more damage than warriors–but will be very weak defensively.

(A demon that dies in combat will revert to the demonic plane and recharge over time.) Unlike mage pets, you can command demons directly–they'll have their own interface so you can use them to attack specific targets or use specific abilities. Finally, warlocks can create a powerful item called a Soul Stone that will instantly revive anyone who is carrying it upon death.

MAD SKILLS

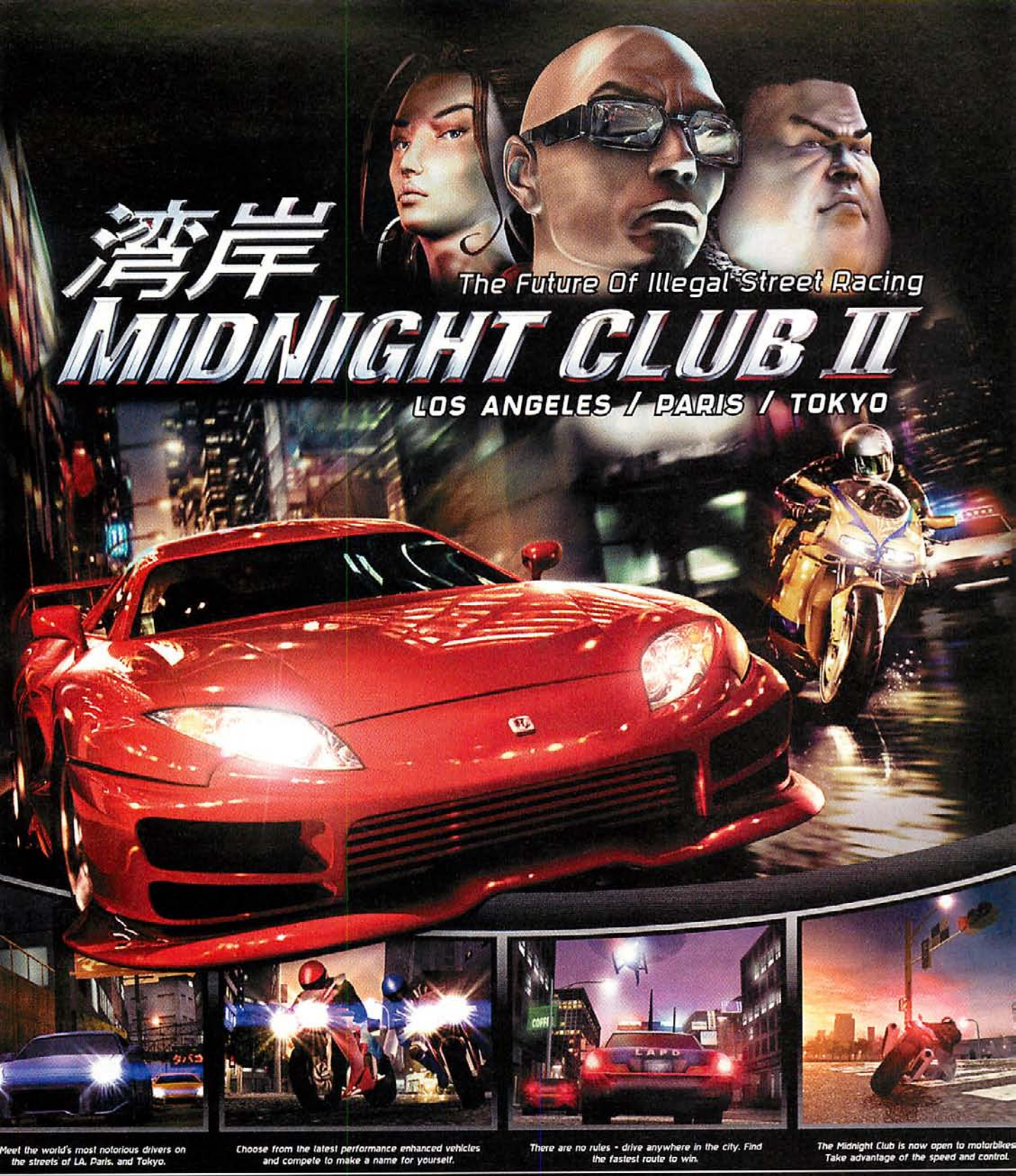
Blizzard has also begun leaking information about skills, which will play a huge role in *World of WarCraft*. All classes and races will have both core and secondary skills players can develop. Core skills, such as Weapon Use for warriors, will increase automatically as you use them and level up. Secondary skills are optional skills that you spend points on to improve. As in *Diablo II*, there are more skills than you'll have points to buy, so every player will choose the skills they prefer, allowing for tons of customization amongst players of similar classes. For example, one warrior might choose to master Lockpicking and Horse Riding, while another might specialize in First Aid and Languages. Both will be good warriors because of the core skills, but beyond that, they'll be totally different. (You can also abandon skills and respend later–but it will be at a cost.)

Blizzard is also working on an elaborate trade-skill system in which players can specialize, for example, in Herbalism, which involves collecting herbs littered throughout the world in order to make magic potions and elixirs (for health, strength, agility, and so on). You'll level up your trade skills by using them, finding trainers, or completing quests–offering a huge optional metagame for those not as interested in bashing monsters. At mid to high levels, players will need to work together for certain trade skills. To create a flaming sword, for example, an alchemist will need to make a potion of flame oil, while a blacksmith will have to forge a particular sword, after which the two can be combined.

MORE CRAFT

This is just the beginning. Blizzard, normally reticent with info, gave us more than we could possibly print here. Is the company excited, or maybe just nervous about venturing into a genre that's produced more failures than hits? *World of WarCraft* is a huge risk, but if there's one thing we know about Blizzard, it never does anything half-baked. Watch for a bigger feature on this huge game soon in *CGW*.

Warlocks accumulate a suite of demons to command.



Meet the world's most notorious drivers on the streets of LA, Paris, and Tokyo.

Choose from the latest performance enhanced vehicles and compete to make a name for yourself.

There are no rules - drive anywhere in the city. Find the fastest route to win.

The Midnight Club is now open to motorbikes. Take advantage of the speed and control.

"Midnight Club 2 is the first PlayStation®2 game to really get my heart racing." ★★★★★ 5/5 - OPM Magazine April 2003

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB — Violence, Mild Lyrics

PC CD ROM

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Never mind the guy with the mullet standing next to me—get me a Pabst, quick.

FULL THROTTLE II: HELL ON WHEELS

Putting the pedal to the metal

By Darren Gladstone

"Adventure games aren't dead," say Dale Geist (producer) and Sean Clark (director), "but they aren't exactly for a mass audience at this point." That's why the minds behind *Full Throttle II: Hell on Wheels* have been firing on all pistons for about two years now.

You're Ben, leader of a motorcycle gang, the Polecats. Someone is building a dam and flooding the town. Our hero doesn't really give a damn—well, not until the roads get so flooded he can't ride. Those worried that the sequel may not fly without the humor and supervision of Tim Schafer can relax; Clark's writing credits include various LucasArts adventures over the past 15 years, including *Escape from Monkey Island* and *Sam & Max*.

How is it different from the original? "Well, it's 3D, for starters."

How is this game different from the original? "Well, it's 3D, for starters," Geist jokes. Though still a ways off, the game is already re-creating and animating the original style of *Full Throttle*. This time around, though, there'll be more of a slant towards action with a focus on smoothly integrating the action and adventure. For example, you can hop onto Ben's bike and drive off whenever you feel like.

The trick is balancing the adventure and action elements. Clark wants you to be able to walk up to characters and have a seamless series of choices. Choose your conversation style or threaten to beat the living tar out of someone and the people will respond accordingly—timid townsfolk will buckle like a belt while local toughs might throw the first punch. Ultimately, though, they want to reward the player with interesting payoffs for the different ways you choose to interact. After all, nothing's worse than getting the same canned response regardless of what you do.

As for action, it won't be like *Tekken*, but there is street fighting. There's a comic-booky feel to the combat à la *Indiana Jones and the Emperor's Tomb*. There's also bike combat. In the original, that was a minigame in which you'd swing a chain at the right time to knock somebody off their bike. This time around, it's fully 3D and you have a lot more control. But that's just the start. You'll be in the midst of gang brawls in addition to all the puzzle solving.

Are Clark and Geist concerned about letting down graphic-adventure fans? "We just want to go beyond what has already been done. We think [classic adventure-game fans] will groove on this, but there are some purists who might complain."

GAME STATS

PUBLISHER: LUCASARTS
DEVELOPER: LUCASARTS
GENRE: ACTION/ADVENTURE
RELEASE DATE: FALL 2003

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Source Code 11416

Ha! Can't hurt me–I've got dermal armor!

"Yes, I think I will investigate this seemingly abandoned installation..."

Chrome balances between FPS action and more-detailed adventure games.

In the world according to cyberpunk, chrome is the color of the future...well, chrome and some goth-black hues. So, what happens when you cross *Halo*, *Deus Ex*, and a bit of *Rogue Spear*? You get *Chrome*, an interesting first-person-shooter twist on the future.

Strategy First, better known for publishing strategy titles (what a surprise), is jumping into FPS action with this title. You get the anarchic future and the cybernetic enhancement you've come to expect in this sort of game, but *Chrome* trades in the de rigueur dank urban alleyways for a sunnier world and interplanetary colonization. There are still trees and clean water, along with deserts and frozen tundra covering 14-plus stages on unexploited planets. Nice scenery doesn't equate to friendly inhabitants, though–our hero, Logan, finds himself amid a violent dispute between colonizing powers.

The first few levels gave us flashbacks to *Soldier of Fortune II*, but *Chrome* is mercifully different. Here your mercenary hero gets as many as 20 bionic toys to play with: Improved targeting increases accuracy, armor plating absorbs damage, speed enhancements increase movement ability, infrared sight grants keen *Predator*-vision, and so on through the gamut of post-modern science.

OK, I've got cool new eyes, but where the hell did my skin go?

It's a good thing those toys are at your disposal, though–it looks like ensuring your character's survival demands exploiting every advantage. Even at this stage, *Chrome* fields some savvy A.I. opponents. Solitary guards are a bit rigid, sticking to patrol routes in the face of a mobile threat, but groups are smart enough to break up and outflank their prey. Cover, stealth, and enhancements can counter superior numbers, while the arsenal of 14 weapons allows the player to tailor attacks to the nature of an opponent. Aside from basic pistols, rifles, and grenades, there are sniper weapons, electro-beam throwers, and the GL dragoon rocket launcher (when subtlety is unnecessary). You have to pick and choose your gear carefully, because there's only so much you can hold onto at any given time. The finished version is also set to include six disparate vehicles, including speedy dune buggies, powerful humanoid mecha, and a nimble air transport.

The sniper scope has a handy target highlight.

What we wind up with in *Chrome* strikes a balance between FPS action and more-detailed adventure games. It's primarily a shooter, but one with extra flexibility for more cerebral players. It also packs in a full-featured multiplayer mode, offering mission-based teamplay with all the cybernetic goodies. If the state of its visual presentation improves (the game still looks rough in action, although the ragdoll physics system produces ace death animations), *Chrome* should polish to a respectable shine.

GAME STATS

DEVELOPER: TECHLAND
PUBLISHER: STRATEGY FIRST
GENRE: TACTICAL SHOOTER
RELEASE DATE: SUMMER 2003

CHROME

Cyberpunk is starting to see the light **By Dave Smith**

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CDV

Blitzkrieg is the fine art of strategy: instead of blind hits with a huge club, you dissect the enemy with a thin blade of a sword! Halt the enemy's position with strategic tank and air assaults. This will keep your relentless offensive rolling. Prove your tactical skills in historical battles of World War II all around the globe. You command German, Soviet or allied troops, which will gain experience and fight more effectively over the course of the war. As you progress, you will obtain access to the latest technology of warfare.

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Tomb Raider 6: Angel of Darkness
Eidos

A series of grisly murders brings Lara into conflict with a sinister Alchemist from the past, and a secret alliance of powerful individuals shrouded in mystery. At the center of these mysteries are the Obscura Paintings - five 14th century pieces of art that the Alchemist is desperate to repossess. Accused of the murder of her one time mentor, Werner Von Croy, Lara becomes a fugitive on the run. Pursued by the police, she follows the Alchemist into a dark world of blood, betrayal and vengeance where it is up to her to defeat this unholy alliance, and stop them from unleashing their incredible powers on the world.

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WarCraft III: Frozen Throne Expansion
Blizzard

Warcraft III: The Frozen Throne provides gamers with a vast new chapter in the epic Warcraft saga. In the single-player campaign, players revisit the war-torn world of Azeroth. Several months have passed since Archimonde and the Burning Legion were defeated at the battle of Mount Hyjal, yet a new threat has arisen throughout the land...

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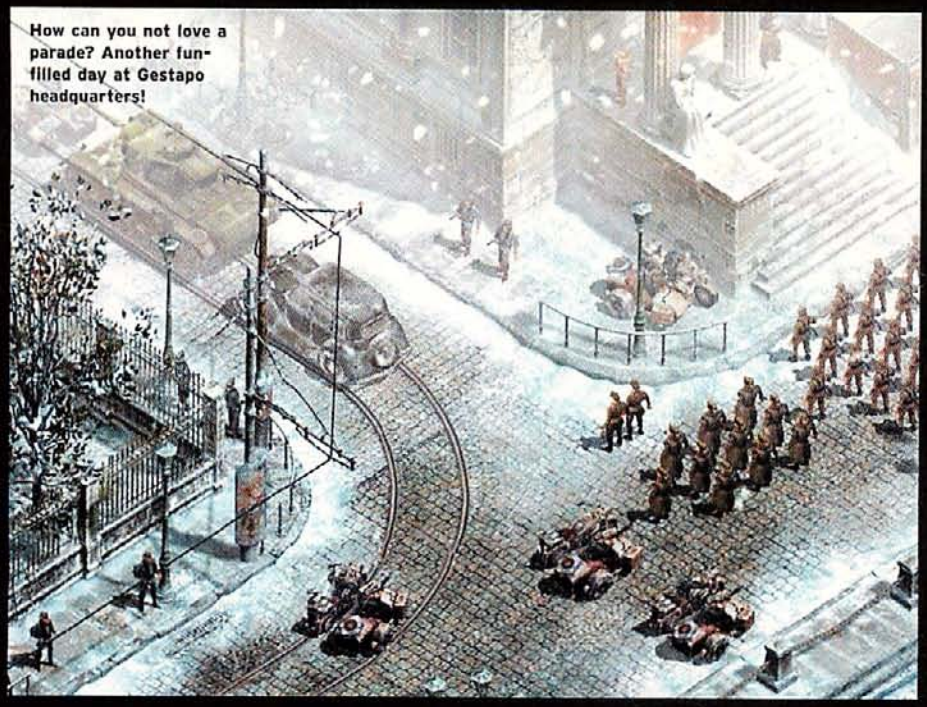


How can you not love a parade? Another fun-filled day at Gestapo headquarters!

"Damned termites, nothing seems to work. Maybe I should've tried gassing 'em first."

Scripted events like this bombing run can instantly change a mission.

Ready to race? First one to Berlin and back wins.

You really must redecorate, Fritz! Dark and musty is sooo 1938.

Those Reichstag block parties are starting to get a little out of control.

COMMANDOS III: DE

Taking the fight to der fuehrer one Nazi at a time. By John Marrin

STINATION BERLIN

Commandos III returns to its roots with dynamic pacing, and adds new gameplay layers.

Despite what you've heard about siestas, Spaniards don't have it easy. Just ask Ignacio Dolset, founder of Madrid-based Pyro Studios. Even though the company recently shipped its Roman Empire RTS *Praetorians*, it's already deep into its next project, *Commandos*—the franchise that put it on the map.

Eighteen months into development, *Commandos III: Destination Berlin* is taking the series in a new direction. Put simply, this isn't your grandma's *Commandos*. For those unfamiliar with the squad-based series, it falls somewhere between real-time strategy and straight-up action. The original game featured a kinetic pace that required quick decisions, while the sequel let players plot their strategy at a more leisurely pace. In its third iteration, the *Commandos* franchise returns to its roots with dynamic pacing, but adds new gameplay layers that mark a departure from its predecessors.

For starters, *Commandos III* is divided into three campaigns: Stalingrad, where you fight amongst the rubble of the Soviet leader's namesake city; Central Europe, where you battle in towns and villages; and Normandy, where you reenact the Omaha beach landing and push inland through farmland. You can play the campaigns in any order, with rendered cut-scenes and in-game scripted events neatly threading the story together.

CHANGING THE FACE OF WAR

Veterans will appreciate the game's new look, as scenarios are rendered in much more detail than in *Commandos II*. Weather effects (including snow and rain) and plenty of destructible environmental objects (like buildings) add gritty realism, while layered textures and detailed animations will make you stand at attention.

Once past the pretty facelift, *Commandos* fans will have to change their mission approach. While *Commandos III* follows the same general rules as its predecessors, a different gameplay style offers a fresh challenge. Dolset explains that the team took *Commandos II*'s open paths and combined them with the original *Commandos*' mission goals to create diverse and dynamic scenarios where certain events can change the goals you're working toward.

As for those missions, some have you setting up a perfect ambush against a numerically superior force, while others have you planning a retreat as you protect a specific character. Pyro has also added timed operations: In one, you must infiltrate a train station to slip aboard a Nazi train filled with stolen artwork. Once underway, you have to make your way to the locomotive to hijack the shipment. Oh yeah, while you're doing all of this, expect to run into some level bosses, too.

NEW TO THE FIGHT

To add to the playability and speed up the pace, Pyro has pared the maximum number of controllable commandos down to three. While that may not seem like enough to keep you busy, the developers feel it will help players focus on their current task rather than micromanaging characters spread over the map. Plus, there are new gameplay elements for your commandos to master. For instance, players can use more environmental objects in addition to their own equipment, be it manning a machine gun nest to fend off advancing hordes, blowing up a building to block a convoy, or finding a cache of new weapons to help you against powerful German tanks.

Also new are the 3D-rendered interior scenarios, which feature a zoomable and rotatable camera useful in plotting strategy (outside, players are able to choose from among four different perspectives).

Commandos III's multiplayer aspects still remain largely under wraps. However, Dolset promises that "it will be different from any other multiplayer game." What this means isn't clear, but this much has been declassified: *Commandos III* will let up to eight players on two teams battle against each other in deathmatches. We'll report more on the game before its summer release.

Nice of you to pop in, boys! Paratroopers can help change the tide of battle.

GAME STATS

PUBLISHER: EIDOS
DEVELOPER: PYRO STUDIOS
GENRE: SQUAD-BASED RTS
RELEASE DATE: SUMMER 2003

Well-entrenched Yanks repel a Panzer assault.

Nival hired a military historian to oversee the game's research.

Blitzkrieg includes a large and accurate library of military units.

BLITZKRIEG

The world at war...again

By Di Luo

That's right kids, CDV is at it again. The prolific German publisher of various strategy titles, including the *Sudden Strike* series, is now poised to release *Blitzkrieg*, a real-time strategy game from Russian developer Nival Interactive.

Much like the *Sudden Strike* games, *Blitzkrieg* is a top-down isometric World War II strategy game that mixes fast-paced real-time strategy action with historically inspired units and battles. The main game includes 21 historical scenarios and an unlimited number of randomly generated scenarios. Through three campaigns that span all of Europe and North Africa, you can choose to fight as the Western Allies, Germans, or Soviets.

It's *Blitzkrieg*'s RPG element that really sets it apart from the herd of RTS games out there. Your main character will have stats that are based on performance, and he will gain medals as you progress through the campaigns. A handful of core units will also follow you around, gaining experience and abilities as battles are won. Core units can be upgraded as new and better equipment is introduced. With every historical mission, several random missions help you to improve your forces. If you win those random scenarios, you earn a piece of rare equipment that can be used to upgrade your core force.

Nival is so dedicated to making *Blitzkrieg* a realistic game, it hired a military historian to oversee the game's research. In fact, so much effort has been put into the game's accuracy, Nival has on occasion described it as a "real-time wargame." There are more than 100 vehicles and 40 infantry types. Each vehicle has several stats, including the armor-penetration value of its weapons and the armor strength of its facing. Other factors, such as weather effects, supply lines, and counter-battery fire, also contribute to making gameplay feel more realistic—this is one war they don't want you to forget.

Much attention has also been given to the terrain. The great-looking graphics engine is a hybrid that combines 3D landscapes and armored units with 2D infantry sprites that can support hundreds of units on the same map. The environment is also highly interactive, with earth that will crater under bombardment, buildings that can be pounded into ruin, and obstacles crushable by tank treads. Combat engineers can also dig drenches and build obstacles.

With an unlimited supply of random missions, multiplayer support, and skirmish modes, *Blitzkrieg* should keep your thirst for WWII action sated for months to come. Plan your attack on store shelves this June when the full version hits.

A North African town in ruins after heavy bombardment.

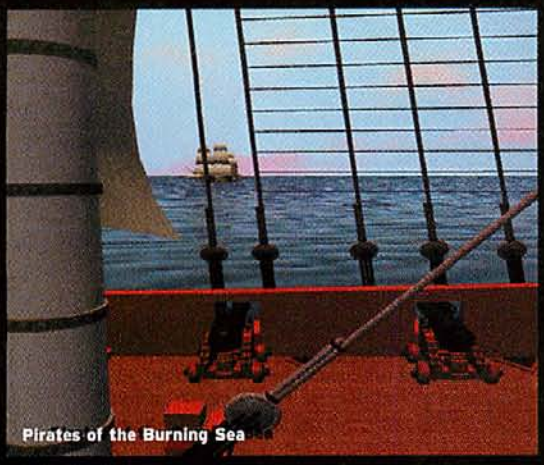
Last stand at Stalingrad: Soviet troops try to hold on to the crucial city.

GAME STATS

PUBLISHER: CDV
DEVELOPER: NIVAL
GENRE: REAL-TIME STRATEGY
RELEASE DATE: MAY 2003

OUTTA SIGHT

The best games you've never seen By Scott Steinberg


Pirates of the Burning Sea

Wild Earth

Big-time, fancy-pants publishers spend millions in ads and press tours to promote their newest games. Sure, we'll cover that stuff, along with every other industry rag out there, but what about the little guy making the next *Doom* in his basement? What about those great games that aren't being distributed Stateside? You see, there are plenty of good titles you've never heard of...something we aim to remedy right here.

PIRATES OF THE BURNING SEA

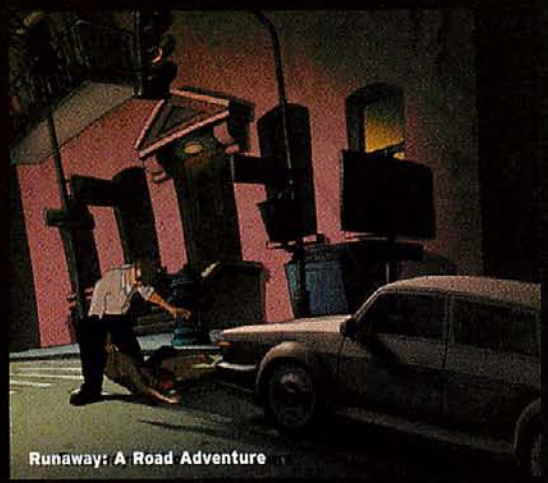
FROM: FLYING LAB SOFTWARE
GENRE: SEA-FARING ADVENTURE
AVAILABILITY: FALL 2003

THE PROMISE: From Flying Lab, creators of the award-winning *Rails Across America*, comes an MMMA (a massively multiplayer maritime adventure). You're an 18th century Caribbean captain in search of glory. As adventure goes, the sky's the limit—you can be a merchant, naval officer, privateer, and more, interacting with thousands of peers at any given time. Impressively, players shape the game—design an item and it can find its way into active play...and you can charge real-world money for the use of it. Cha-ching!
THE CATCH: Apart from obvious booty puns, not every mainstream enthusiast will find donning a peg leg and eye patch fashionable. Attracting enough players to render in-game systems (including ongoing downloadable content) worth their weight in doubloons will also be a challenge. With the backing of a medium-size publisher, be it Strategy First, CDV, or Microids, there's good reason to believe gamers may soon find themselves happily humming, "Yo ho, yo ho, a pirate's life for me."

WILD EARTH

FROM: SUPER-X STUDIOS
GENRE: SHUTTERBUG SIMULATION
AVAILABILITY: HOLIDAYS 2003

THE PROMISE: The 2003 Independent Games Festival judges were definitely onto something—Super-X Studios' *Wild Earth* looks to deserve every one of the three awards it walked away with, including the grand prize. In this unique (and visually striking) entry, players assume the role of a photojournalist, snapping away at the lovely flora and fauna populating the Serengeti plains in Africa. Provided the title succeeds commercially, it'll spawn further installments which take place at exotic locations around the globe.
THE CATCH: Games with even a modicum of educational value and meaningful content tend to leave us Neanderthals perplexed. And independent productions typically sell less than 1,000 copies online. But the fact that *Wild Earth* is so different from anything else on the market, and that it appeals to all ages, gives it the potential to be a sleeper hit. With the backing of a company experienced with similar offerings, this journalistic jaunt could receive front-page billing.


Runaway: A Road Adventure

RUNAWAY: A ROAD ADVENTURE

FROM: GMX MEDIA
GENRE: ADVENTURE
AVAILABILITY: NOW—UK, GERMANY, SPAIN

THE PROMISE: While U.S. publishers have all but abandoned point-and-click graphic adventures, the foreign market keeps the faith. *Runaway*, a prime example, sees college student Brian flee from mafiosos while accompanied by a voluptuous stripper. What? As if that never happened to you? Like LucasArts' lost classics, this curious offering treats players to 100 attractive settings featuring bizarre NPCs, voodoo rituals, and murder most foul in stunning 1024x768—"the highest resolution ever used in an adventure game [*sic*]."
THE CATCH: GMX Media? Can't say they have a huge presence Stateside. Unfortunately, ditto goes for adventure gaming as a whole. What's more, the cartoonish style and adult subject matter might not be a perfect fit with the Wal-Mart crowd. Who cares about that, though? The game is already receiving rave reviews overseas. Word is that Tri-Synergy is bringing this out in the United States.

The ghosts in the machine, from left to right: Steve Powers, senior creative designer; Jay Lee, artist; Sarah Paetsch, writer; David Reese, programmer; Tara Thomas, associate producer; Steve Hartman, artist; Greg Callahan, artist; Clay Hoffman, designer; Joey Santori, artist; Sam Yeates, artist. Oh yeah, and this guy up front is Warren.

In the future, bots are great at housecleaning!

One of the many slick cityscapes you'll be seeing in *DX2*.

ION STORM ON THE CHANGING NATURE OF GAMING...AND THE RESURGENT GENIUS BEHIND DEUS EX 2: INVISIBLE WAR

DEUS EX MACHINA

BY GEORGE JONES PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANDREW YATES

What is it about the future and creepy spider robots?

Playing it safe makes no sense to Warren Spector.

It's not his modus operandi. Candor and self-reflection, on the other hand, most certainly are. "I don't get enough credit for some things, and I get way too much credit for others." This is coming from the man behind such groundbreaking titles as *Ultima Underworld*, *System Shock*, *Thief*, and *Deus Ex*. However, he doesn't want credit for his newest creation.

One of your nanotech mods allows you to download your essence into this little fella here.

"Harvey Smith is a better designer than I am. Denise Fulton, who we just hired, is a better producer than I am." He's trying to explain himself in one sentence—no easy task for such a verbose personality. "But I do know this," Spector asserts. "I don't know anyone who can pull it all together—personnel, design, and production—like I can. I make everyone better. That's my talent."

Dressed casually in a collared shirt and blue jeans, Spector lets his design team do most of the talking. "There's this constant urge in game design to rely heavily on scripted sequences to advance gameplay," first-time lead designer Ricardo Bare is thinking out loud. "We have to fight that. We want a player-driven experience." Bare succinctly explains the significance of a game where the player instigates the events and action: "It's way more rewarding."

Deus Ex director Harvey Smith jumps in. "What we get off on," he interjects, "is people online talking about all the different ways they played our game." He takes a deep breath and the look on his face is transparent. Smith knows first-hand. The original *Deus Ex* posed so great a challenge when it was released, he and Spector were worried it would ruin their reputations.

"You need to be able to handle people disagreeing with you." Bare makes an interesting point. He explains that the design team does design jams and map reviews in the theater room each week where they each give and receive details on one another's work. "It can get pretty heated," Smith admits. It's clear from the way these guys finish each other's sentences that the *DX2* team can handle it.

"Respectful argumentation," Spector chimes in from the back, sounding like a wizened scholar. "You have to be able to disagree and still respect each other's viewpoints." Not coincidentally, this is how Spector has shaped Ion Storm's new culture, one that embraces the individual ego but does not elevate it above the group. "Without the disagreeing," he elaborates, "you end up making the same thing over and over again. And that's pathetic."

Like the last game, you can come in gung-ho or skulk in the shadows.

OPEN-ENDED GAMING

The lights dim. Lead programmer Bill Money takes the helm, launching the game's mocked-up opening movie. The horrifying scenario: Chicago gets flattened by a nanotech terrorist. Leading man/woman Alex D. and several top members of TARSUS, the organization responsible for your biomod potential, barely escape via helicopter to Seattle.

Money loads a level set in an Antarctic base. It looks amazing. In the game, he approaches a hanging lamp and nudges it. Shadows in the room move appropriately. "This is the future of games," he whispers. Spector echoes Money: "This is the future of games right here," he gushes. "Now, it's fairly unique, but every game will have lighting like this in three years."

Smith, Money, and Spector start to riff on all the different gadgets and tactics in the *Deus Ex 2* arsenal. The new biomod system, for instance, allows you to replace biomodifications—various enhancements for your character—with new ones.

"WE GET OFF ON PEOPLE TALKING ABOUT ALL THE DIFFERENT WAYS THEY PLAYED OUR GAME."

That is, if you don't mind permanently relinquishing a highly developed enhancement for a basic one. Then there are the game's bots, which are everywhere. Hunter-seeker bots fire smoke canisters and look to escape when losing; repair bots will fix your items, and so on. With the bot-domination mods, you'll be able to download your essence into them.

In Spector's mind, the customizable biomods and seemingly wide-open gaming possibilities are his signature, a personal style the designer has been sharpening since his years at Origin in the early '90s under the tutelage of legendary designers Richard Garriot ("I'm 10 years older than him, and he's a mentor.") and Chris Roberts ("He taught me how to manage a big project.").

There's more than one way to get around this door.

A taste of the future of virtual porn: This hologram was downloaded off Kazaa.

REALISM AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Off to Cairo. Money demonstrates the first glimpse of another exciting technology: rag-dolling, the way a body behaves when shot. Take out an enemy—the body falls and the limbs realistically splay against a wall. Money shoots several enemies, and each falls to the floor differently.

Everyone laughs—a typical reaction to your typical level of gaming violence. Warren picks up on the vibe and chooses to make a strong point about why his team is so enamored with rag-doll death effects. "We want this to look as realistic as possible, not because of the gore factor, but because we want gamers to see the consequences of their actions."

Spector pauses. "I was just talking to John Carmack the other day," he continues, "and I realized that we were both doing the same thing technologically, but for different reasons. [Rag-dolling] is important in *Doom III* because Id is trying to

In your globetrotting, you'll have lots of side quests and find plenty of people to interact with.

"WE WANT THIS TO LOOK REALISTIC BECAUSE WE WANT GAMERS TO SEE THE CONSEQUENCES OF THEIR ACTIONS."

make a horror game." He pauses again. "It's important for us because we want as realistic an environment as possible. That makes the experience itself more realistic." Still, he acknowledges this is but a baby step in the right direction.

"Violence is an important topic for me." He's almost preaching now, and his own team members sit up a bit. "You'll be able to go through *DX2* killing everything that moves...but there will be heavy consequences."

Now, we're checking out a level involving a lawyer who can be approached in a variety of ways—by dealing directly with his bodyguard (either physically or diplomatically) or by climbing onto the roof and coming in through the windows. Observant gamers will see that the glass is rigged to the alarm system and use the glass destabilizer modification for their pistol. Even smarter gamers will find a way to disable the building's power, which will disable the alarms.

"There are about a half-dozen problems in gaming we can't solve," Spector urges. This guy is excited—his leg and foot are twitching. "The big challenge I want to tackle is how to create meaningful nonviolent interaction that's just as significant as the violence."

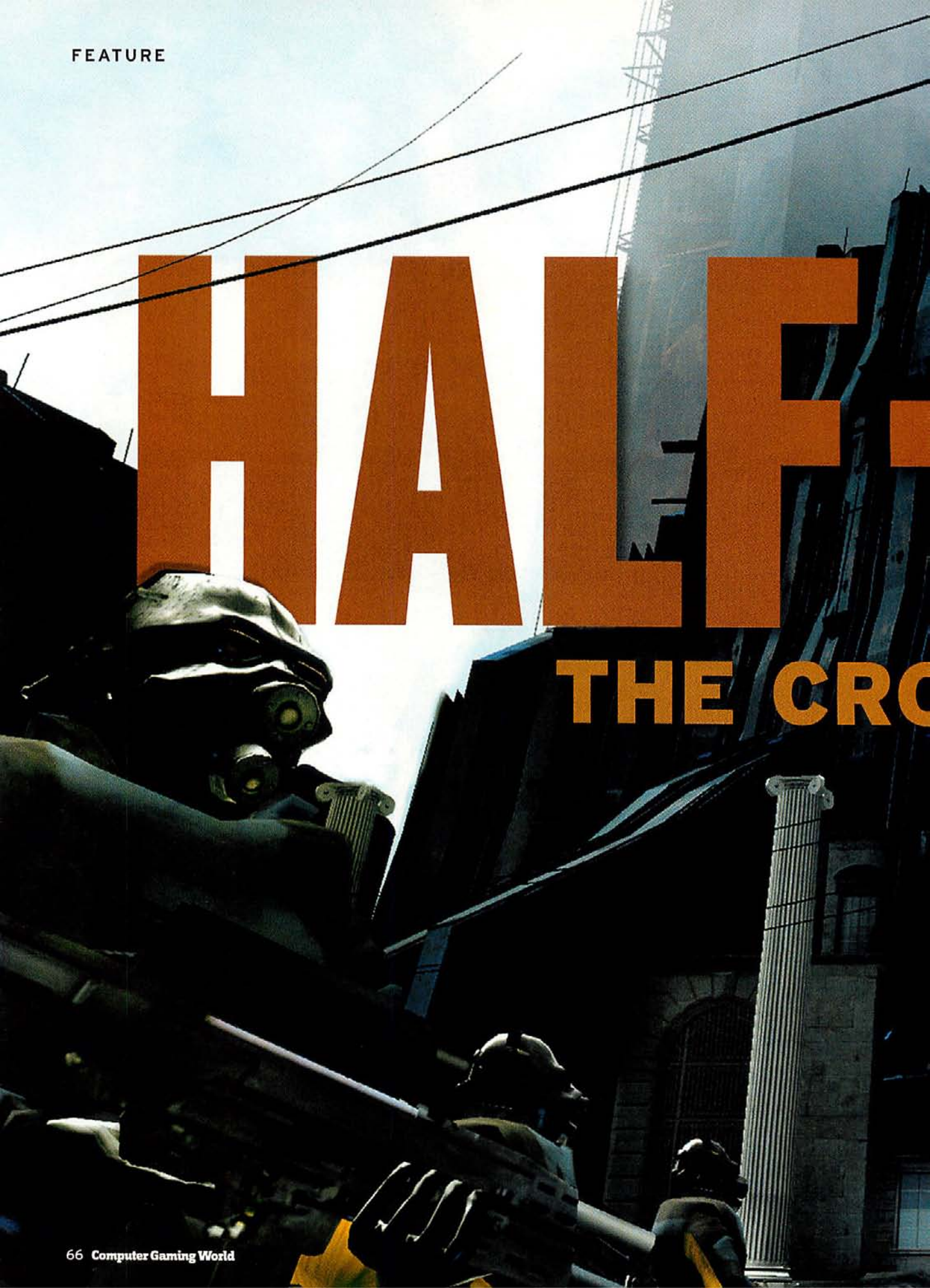
It's an interesting problem that, until recently, Spector has largely avoided. "In *System Shock 2*, I asked myself how I could get around having people interact, because the technology just wasn't there." He laughs loudly. "So we killed everybody on the station. That solved that problem!" He offers up *Thief*—the whole point was to avoid people—as another example of avoiding the issue. But by *Deus Ex*, he decided to stop dodging the issue and give it a shot. "If we don't ask the questions," he explains, "we'll never get the answers."

"We're beginning to see emotions in multiplayer games, but they seem like chat rooms. Still, though, you have to give those games props for getting people to interact. Someone is going to figure it out eventually. I hope it's us." Spector reverses himself. "Heck, I don't care who it is—I hope someone finally figures this out."

He always felt funny using the shower in the robot's locker room.

Ion Storm's loitering simulator is almost complete.

When not designing games, the Ion Storm team stands outside waiting to have their picture taken.



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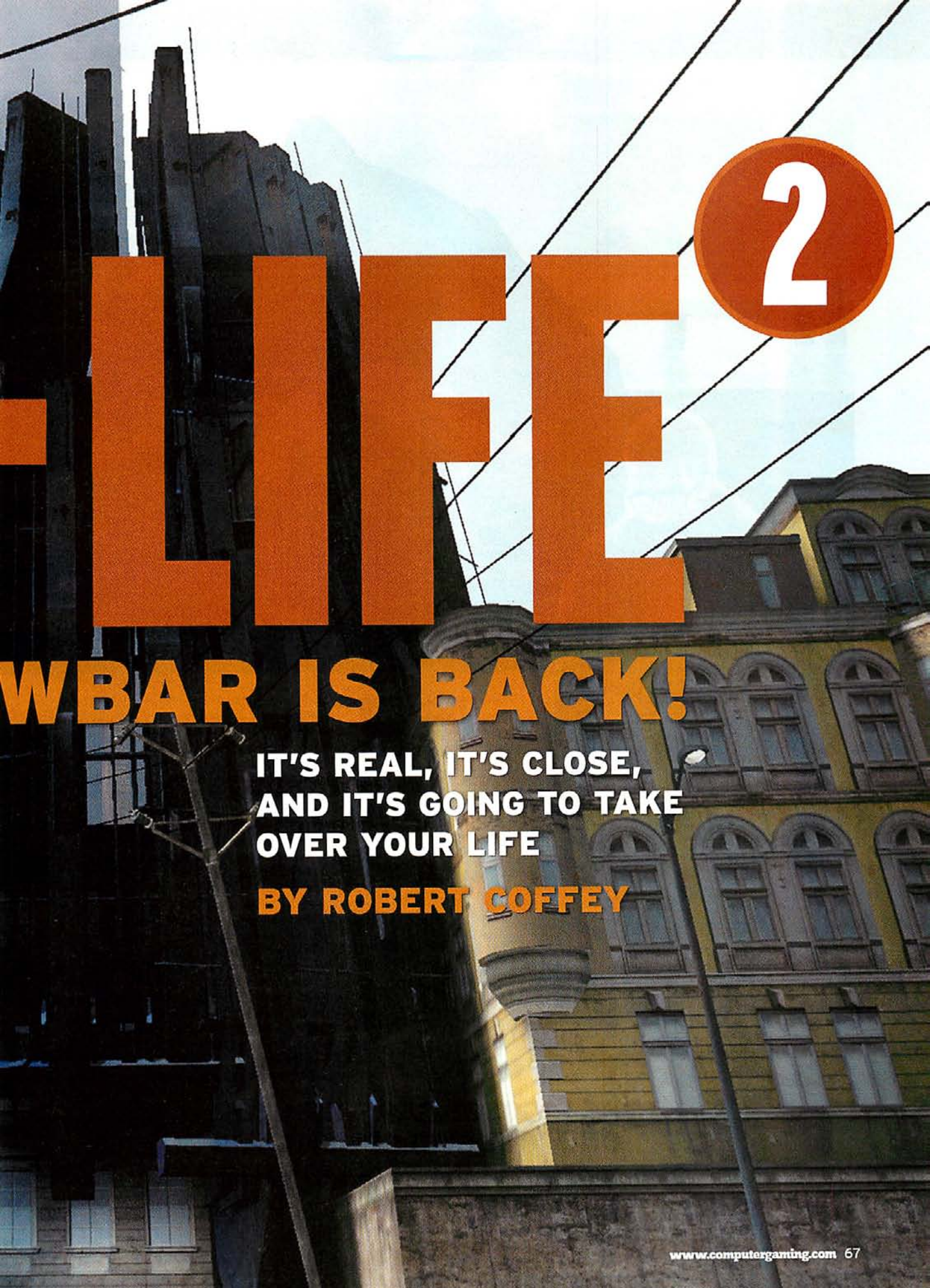


-LIFE 2

WBAR IS BACK!

IT'S REAL, IT'S CLOSE, AND IT'S GOING TO TAKE OVER YOUR LIFE

BY ROBERT COFFEY

PUBLISHER: SIERRA STUDIOS
DEVELOPER: VALVE SOFTWARE
GENRE: SHOOTER
RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER 2003

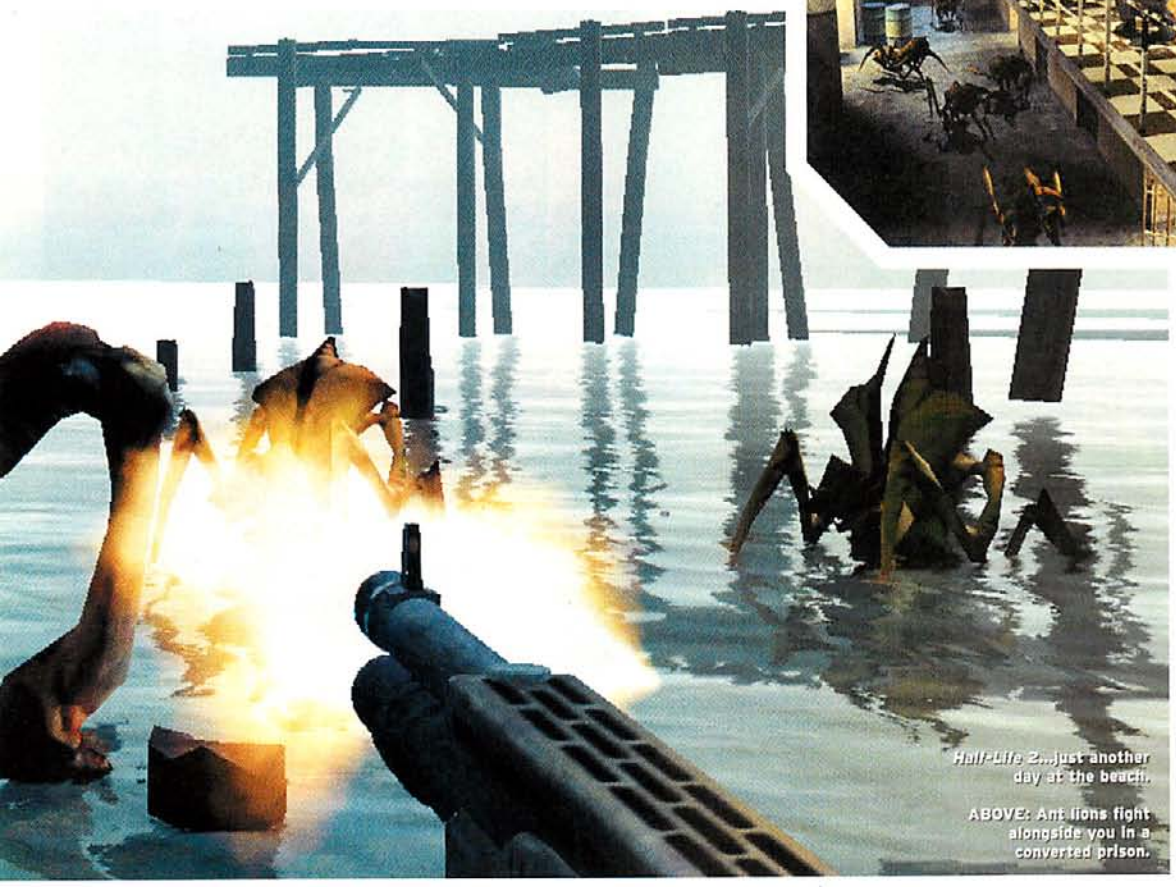
There's no carpeting on the floors of Valve's brand-new offices. There are three teeny fish and a serious algae bloom starting in the fish tank in the reception area. Addresses on everyone's business cards are wrong, knots of wires and exposed pipes run across the unfinished ceiling, and there's a seriously weird thrumming sound echoing in the men's room. But you know what? This is all OK. No one there can be bothered, and as hardcore gamers, we should rejoice—because where other game companies would be having designer cubicles crafted out of steel, burlap, and mahogany, Valve has spent the last five years focusing on what really matters: *Half-Life 2*.

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 THINGS FIRST

All you really need to know is this: You're Gordon Freeman again, you've got your crowbar and your MP5, 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 media. Much of our time at Valve was spent discussing the game engine (which, by the way, seems primed to trump *Doom III* in terms of graphical wonder), but between nuggets like "explosions now fill

THE BIGGEST GAME OF YOUR LIFE IS NOT ONLY IN DEVELOPMENT, IT'S JUST FOUR OR FIVE MONTHS AWAY FROM CONSUMING YOU.



Half-Life 2...just another day at the beach.

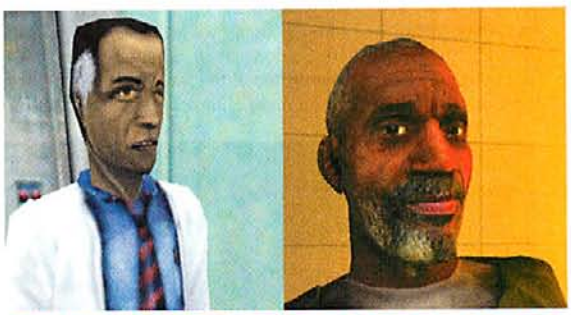
ABOVE: Ant lions fight alongside you in a converted prison.

volumes" and a bunch of stuff about physics, we saw just enough gameplay to get our thready pulses racing.

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 monitoring entire cities, creepy masked combine soldiers wielding nasty guns, and a skeleton-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 his head 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. Watching the strider in action is amazing: It picks its way through the cluttered city landscape with both delicacy and a brutal relentlessness. Confronted with an obstacle like a pedestrian bridge, the strider either bends its enormous legs to limbo under the obstruction or just blows the damn thing apart with its giant goo-gun and keeps going.

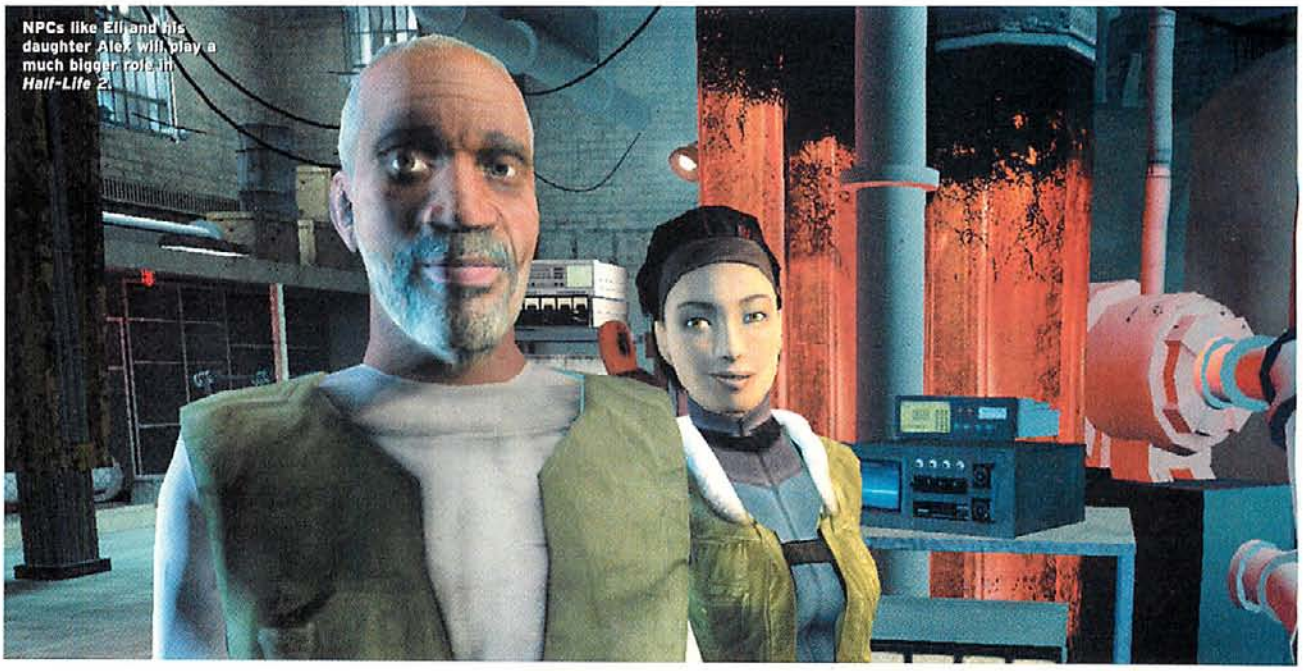
All the monsters in *Half-Life 2* will display a similar environmental awareness. Valve has put an incredible amount of work into the game's physics and A.I., so the enemies in the game will behave much more intelligently. Head-crab zombies won't just swat away barrels, they'll hurl them at you. They'll also tear through flimsy wooden obstructions. Yeah, we know, a few zombies busted out of closets and the like in the first game, but this time around, such behavior isn't scripted, it's tactical, with the zombies chasing you through things. Armed enemies



THE TIGER OR THE LADY?

Game journalism is a fairly new career opportunity, a lifestyle and job still relatively in its infancy. Similarly in its infancy is the brain of one Jeff Green, our astute editor-in-chief, who earnestly asked Valve if, by making *Half-Life 2*, the developers were committing to one of the two endings of the original game as the "right" ending. On this subject, Valve was atypically not coy—yes, there is a right ending. Of course there is. It's the one where you don't die, meathead, thus making a sequel logically possible.

Keep saving those Cap'n Crunch box tops, kids, and someday soon, you can trade them in for an exciting, responsible job in game journalism! Just like Mr. Big-Shot EIC Jeff Green!



NPCs like Eli and his daughter Alex will play a much bigger role in *Half-Life 2*.

QUESTIONS VALVE JUST ISN'T ANSWERING

1. Do you go back to Xen?
2. What new weapons are there?
3. Will you get to use vehicles?
4. What sort of multiplayer features can we expect?
5. What's the deal with these new aliens?
6. Why are the Vortigons on your side?
7. Will you have to fight other humans, à la the Marines in the first game?
8. What plot devices are going to make us care about our allies and hate our enemies in the game?
9. How many new monsters are there, and what do they do?
10. What's up with *Team Fortress 2*?

will similarly interact with the environment, destroying or otherwise removing any cover you might take. Ducking behind barrels is no longer a sure thing.

In fact, nothing is a sure thing. During our demo of the game, one thing hammered home was just how relentless all the monsters will be. In part, this is courtesy of the game engine–inverse kinematics doesn't just let the many-legged creatures touch different levels of the ground correctly, it also grants them access to the most uneven paths of escape. We watched a horde of six-legged ant lions pursue Gordon across the jagged beams of a rusted-out submarine aground in a dry seabed. No matter where Gordon leaped, dropped, or ran, the ant lions matched him every step of the way. Another time, Gordon took refuge under a rocky outcropping, and a towering ant lion guard sniffed around for him and looked for other avenues of access through the rock pile.

DEVILISH DETAILS

While the *Half-Life 2* engine does about a hundred things incredibly well, most impressive is the look of characters' eyes. Valve modeled the actual shape of a human eye in order to create the sense that NPCs are looking at you, not just in your general direction. When characters in *Half-Life 2* look at you, their eyes focus, and the glint of light on the eye subtly changes to reflect this. You can tell when they change their focus to something behind you; when characters look away, you can not only tell what direction they're looking, but also how far away they're looking. It sounds like a little thing, but the effect is

FEELINGS, NOTHING MORE THAN FEELINGS

Consulting with psychologists and autism researchers may not sound like something you'd need to do to build a game engine, but it's something Valve did–and did a lot of. The result is an amazing facial animation system that reflects emotional states right down to the slightest flare of a nostril, and it allows the developers to script responses at a lower cost. It's a weird distinction to draw, but instead of discretely animating facial movement for moments in the game, Valve animated facial movements that could be combined and triggered in scripts that could be called up whenever appropriate. For example, if a monster chased a civilian down a street, the situation would trigger a script that would reflect the character's terror and, potentially, even their pain when attacked. In the end, it does the programmers the enormous favor of not having to painstakingly write out every emotional moment. And a very happy side effect of the system comes into play during characters' lip-syncing–with every phoneme scripted, all they have to do is run a WAV file through the game and the corresponding lip, mouth, tooth, and facial features are automatically generated. It sure makes localizing for Korea a whole lot easier.

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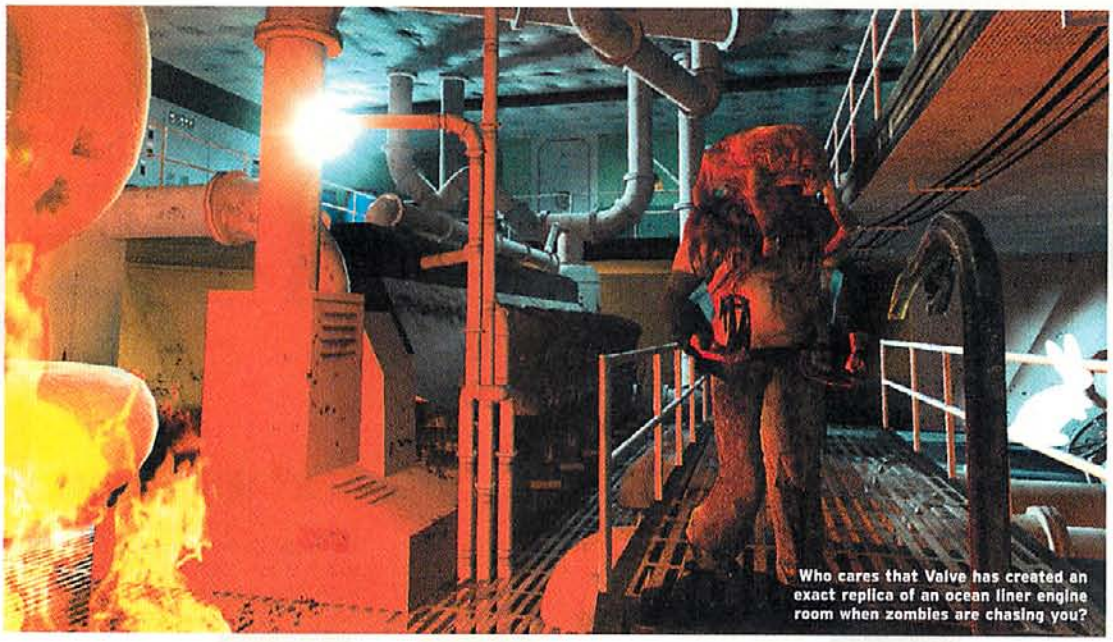
10 THINGS WE KNOW FOR SURE

1. The head crabs are back.
2. Valve isn't forgetting its mod community–a modular system will make building new levels for the new, more-complicated game engine a snap.
3. Barney plays a bigger role and will fight on your side.
4. As rich as the game engine is visually, it can be scaled down to run well on a 733MHz system with a TNT or Rage 128 3D card.
5. Action will take place in a wider variety of environments than *Half-Life*, including wide-open outdoor spaces, cities, an ocean liner, a decrepit prison, and a dried-out seabed.
6. Every character in the game will have a slightly unique face, so say good-bye to the five scientists scattered all over Black Mesa in the first game.
7. There will be 12 game chapters, each with several levels, all using the miniloading system from the first game.
8. A wider variety of decals will be used, reflecting varying degrees of damage across different surfaces.
9. Everything in the game will happen to you; as in *Half-Life*, there won't be any cut-scenes.
10. You'll hit the ground running–there won't be a long introductory sequence when you start the game.

The very mean streets of City 17.



Who cares that Valve has created an exact replica of an ocean liner engine room when zombies are chasing you?

astounding and uncannily lifelike. Taken together with the great work the developers have done scripting facial emotional states, you've got the most realistic NPCs in any game, ever.

Every aspect of the game is being suffused with the same attention to detail. The physics systems are amazing, going so far as to synthesize sound–the sounds of bullets change depending on what surfaces they strike and the type of space they're fired into (open air, metal rooms, tight hallways, etc.), and you'll be treated to the whine of a ricochet only when a bullet hits something just right. Valve is so (justifiably) proud of the game's physics, it's even including a physics-based weapon: a giant electromagnet kind of deal that can grab and hurl barrels, security monitors, and more.

But all of these technical things are just icing on the cake. These are the things that make the game world more alive, the things that make the action more gripping. Riveting gameplay is the *Half-Life* trademark, and one sequence we saw at Valve really summed it up. Gordon had infiltrated a dilapidated prison being used as a base by the new alien threat. Possessed of an item that made him smell like an ant lion, Gordon was ignored by a teeming horde of the insectoid aliens as they swarmed through the cramped halls and cells of the jailhouse, fighting alongside him. Masked alien guards dodged Gordon's gunfire, darting from cell to cell, ducking into open rooms, and dropping behind barrels for cover. The rattling echo of far-off gunfire rang in the brick corridors as Gordon relentlessly popped off grenades from his MP5, the lifeless bodies of the guards flying through the air or slowly slipping off the edge of a catwalk. Out of ammo, Gordon whipped out his crowbar, the reflection of flames dancing off the metal as he rounded the corner to cave in some alien skull.

We can't wait.

WIRELESS GAMING REVIEW

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EVERQUEST: HERO'S CALL
PUYO PUYO
LEMONADE TYCOON

REVIEWED!

TOM CLANCY GOES MOBILE

SPLINTER CELL
INVADES WIRELESS PHONES

FEATURE

5 GREAT GAMES FROM YOUR CARRIER

LOOKING FORWARD

RED FACTION
ON N-GAGE

NEVERWINTER
ON SMARTPHONE ▶

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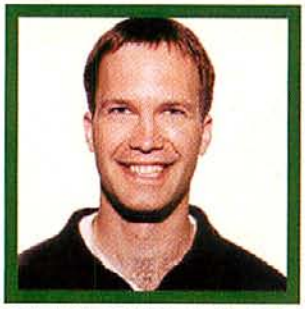

THE BIRTH OF **WIRELESS GAMES**

This has been a long time coming. Since *Snake* snuck onto Nokia phones in 1997, gamers have been staring into their fuzzy phone screens, mashing tiny keys, and hoping. When we started *Wireless Gaming Review* in 2001, WAP games like *DataClash* and *Gladiator* were attracting gamers—but not many, and not for very long.

And then, the innovations of Japan and Korea came to the States. We got phones with color screens. Developers started getting paid for making wireless games. Last summer, as Sprint, Verizon, and AT&T rolled out mobile game services, gamers across the United States began to see the phone as a videogame platform worth watching.

They were right. Although most of the newest U.S. phones support only Game Boy Color–level experiences, the mobile medium is improving with blinding speed. Great companies are making games for phones: publishers like THQ, Sega, JAMDAT, Sorrent, Airborne, and Tira, and developers like Nuvo, Centerscore, Monkeystone, Blue Heat, and Blue Lava. The handset folks—Motorola, Siemens, Samsung, and LG—are innovating on the hardware side. And everyone is waiting for Nokia's N-Gage gaming deck. For now, most of the content available to mobile gamers in the United States is ported from other platforms—but that will change. Companies like Cybiko, West of Pluto, and First Star are all producing great games developed exclusively for the mobile platform.

This section, brought to you by *Wireless Gaming Review* and Ziff-Davis, will let you know what's best right now in mobile games. Our approach is simple: We're here to cover the best of the best. There's a lot of junk out there, and we don't want you to buy any of it.

We're so pumped to be talking with the hardest-core gamers in the world, and we're hoping you talk back. Check out the next eight pages of this magazine. Check out wireless games like *EverQuest: Hero's Call*, *Splinter Cell*, and John Romero's new mobile first-person shooter. Check out the coolest phones. Then, let us know what you think.

Here's to the birth of a new videogame platform.

MATTHEW BELLOWS
PUBLISHER,
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The Wireless Gaming Review supplement to Electronic Gaming Monthly and Computer Gaming World is published four times per year (March, June, September, and December). For advertising information, please contact matthew@wgamer.com

LOOKING FORWARD...
THE LATEST IN **WIRELESS GAMING**

This fall, Nokia promises its N-Gage handset will be everywhere. The first phone available in the United States that's been designed from the ground up for games, the N-Gage "game deck" will launch with games from Sega, Taito, and Eidos. The best-looking launch title so far is THQ's *Red Faction*. Developed by John Romero and his team at Monkeystone, it features two vehicles and destructible environments.

Speaking of new games, JAMDAT Mobile has promised 12 titles for Microsoft's Smartphone. The one we're really waiting for? *Neverwinter Nights*, which looked amazing when we saw it in March.

NEC's new 515 phone runs NTT DoCoMo's DoJa programming language. If it catches on, hundreds of games written for Japanese DoJa will move quickly onto U.S. screens. Look for the 515 to ship on AT&T later this year with a pre-installed version of Dwango's *Star Diversion*.

N-GAGE ▶

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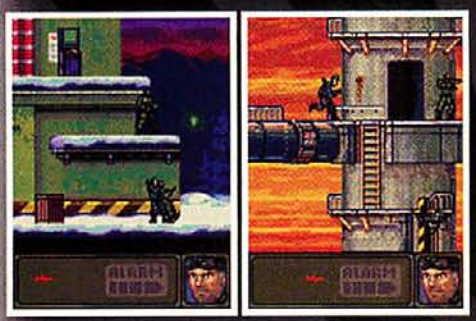

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"Gameloft somehow seems to squeeze more out of a mobile phone than most other developers. Splinter Cell for the Motorola T720 is the best console-to-mobile port yet."
Rating: 9/10

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WIRELESS GAMING REVIEW

TOP FIVE GAMES FOR YOUR CARRIER

SPRINT

GUNDAM SPACE ASSAULT This space shooter based on the anime series lets you fight off hordes of alien ships using your gundam suit and, occasionally, a cool helper drone.

KI-TAI The best side-scrolling fighter on mobiles right now, *Ki-Tai* takes you through four levels of ninja-fighting ak-shun. Breakable objects and defeated enemies you have to fight again in Hell set this game apart.

JAMDAT BOWLING This influential, addictive bowl-a-rama is an acknowledged mobile classic. Its simple, entertaining, meter-based gameplay never seems to get old.

TOP GUN Take on the role of Maverick or Iceman in this airborne shooter based on the 1986 film. You must defeat hordes of enemy fighters using a combination of machine guns and missiles.

SEGA MONKEY BALL Do you dream of shoving primates into little plastic globes and pushing them around obstacle courses? *Sega Monkey Ball* offers a healthy outlet for these impulses.

VERIZON

FIGHT HARD 3D In this cool action RPG, you must dispatch numerous opponents in a 3D fighting arena.

EVERQUEST: HERO'S CALL The successful MMORPG franchise comes to mobile in non-multiplayer form. The result is a solid single-player experience (see our review in this issue).

TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX: BROKEN WING A challenging strategic shooter based on Red Storm's popular franchise, *Rainbow Six* tests your wits as well as your trigger finger.

SNOWBALL FIGHT Recapture the childhood pastime of hurling snowy projectiles at unsuspecting passersby.

FAMILY FEUD Compete against players the world over in this mobile version of the TV game show classic.

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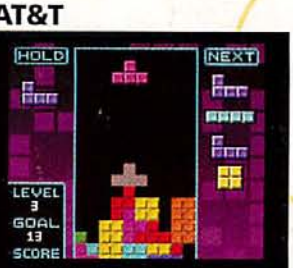

TETRIS Mobile *Tetris* brings one great new feature to the series: Each falling piece casts a shadow showing where the piece would fall if you click the drop key...right...now.

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 4 A huge hit on consoles and PCs alike, Tony Hawk is now doing his tricks on mobile. The action takes place in different half-pipe environments, including one on the deck of a cruise ship. If you own the console version, you'll find some useful cheats here, too.

BEJEWELED You know this classic puzzle game: You swap gems until you make 'em disappear. The mobile port is more addictive than the PC version because it's always with you. You can't escape.

SNOOD In this PC shareware favorite, you launch a series of faces at the top of the screen and try to make them disappear. Clear the pieces at the top to unleash a rain of Snoods.

B-MAN A thinly veiled *Bomberman* clone, *B-Man* has you blasting your way through enemies and obstacles alike using bombs that detonate after a few seconds.

BEST OF THE REST

NHL POWERSHOT HOCKEY (NEXTEL) This two-on-two hockey game re-creates the excitement of our favorite game on ice, complete with an NHL license.

SIBERIAN STRIKE (NEXTEL) The first mobile shooter with cut-scenes, it's also got a sense of humor—as you'd expect from a game that sends you to destroy the evil Stalinbot's hallucinogenic vodka factory.

NAVAL FLEET (BUILT INTO THE SONY ERICSSON T68I HANDSET) If you've got a buddy with the same phone, this Bluetooth version of *Battleship* gives you a peek into the upcoming multiplayer mobile world.

BOULDER DASH-M.E. (MOPHUN) Take on the role of Rockford in this classic puzzler in which you dig your way through a series of caves, avoiding obstacles and seeking power-ups all the while. One even lets you rotate the stage, setting off a landslide of rocks and diamonds.

XFINITY (MOPHUN) A fast-paced side-scrolling shooter with a cool weapon-upgrade system, *Xfinity* is as challenging as it is rewarding.

THE NEXT GREAT GAMES

The future of mobile games is all about multiplayer. Single-player games are fine on mobiles, but these are *phones*, connected devices: They're made for people to talk—and play—together. The next wave of games will let you play against other gamers, across the room and around the world, in head-to-head competitions and persistent multiplayer worlds. *SMS Chess*, *Botfighters*, and *Astronaut* led the way first. In the next couple months, multiplayer games like JAMDAT's *Fudomyo*, Tira's *Mobile Chess*, and a two-player version of Sorrent's *Fox Sports On-Field Live* will all be available in the United States. The excitement about Nokia's N-Gage centers as much on its wireless connectivity (through a Bluetooth connection) as its launch titles. In addition to real-time frag-fests in Monkeystone's *Red Faction*, Taito's *Puzzle Bobble VS* and Nokia's own *Kart Racing* will support multiplayer. Within a year, expect to see mobile MMORPGs (Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games). The ability for you to play anywhere, anytime, with anyone will totally change the idea of what makes a great mobile game.

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RATINGS REFLECT THE COOLNESS, QUALITY, AND PLAYABILITY OF THE GAME, RELATIVE TO OTHERS ON A COMPARABLE PLATFORM. WE'RE FOCUSING ON THE BEST OF THE BEST HERE. TO GET A WIDER PICTURE OF THE MOBILE-GAMES LANDSCAPE, VISIT **WWW.WGAMER.COM/**

TOM CLANCY'S SPLINTER CELL

■ **PLATFORM:** Java ■ **PUBLISHER/DEVELOPER:** Gameloft
HTTP://WGAMER.COM/GAME-1126

With *Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell*, Gameloft presents the most impressive console-to-mobile port we've seen. As in the console version, you're recruited by the National Security Agency to carry out secret missions. Unlike the console version, you're playing on a tiny little screen—but you'll still get sucked in.

Each mission takes between two and 20 minutes to complete on the easiest setting; harder levels give guards more body armor, let them call in alarms, and allow them to crouch as they fire at you.

It's one of those rare titles in which the developers considered everything.

IT'S ONE OF THOSE RARE TITLES IN WHICH THE DEVELOPERS CONSIDERED EVERYTHING.

Through six levels and three difficulty settings, you've got to avoid mines, swing over pits, climb and jump over obstacles, dodge lasers, and sneak past guards. The mobile version isn't as complex as the original, but Gameloft has packed the most important stuff into it. Your movement—whether crouching, swinging, or drawing your gun—is smooth and detailed.

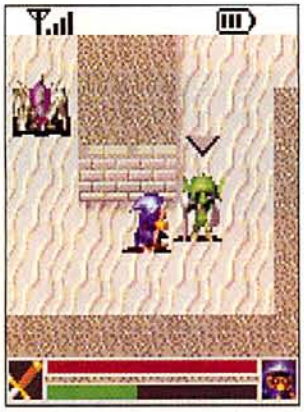
WGAMER RATING:
9/10

PUYO PUYO

■ **PLATFORM:** Java ■ **PUBLISHER/DEVELOPER:** Sega Mobile
HTTP://WGAMER.COM/GAME-1215

Among the most blissful puzzle experiences ever created, *Puyo Puyo* combines elements of Sega's classic puzzle game *Columns* with the cute anime characters of the old RPG *Madou Monogatari*. *Puyo*'s premise is, at a glance, nothing special: You must arrange items in a particular manner. But don't think this is just another *Tetris* knockoff—*Puyo* pits you against six personable A.I. opponents, adding a new dimension to a familiar mechanic. The depth of this unique system will keep you feverishly tapping away at your phone, week after week. The only noticeable thing missing is sound; versions for other platforms have decent-quality MIDI background music, and it's disappointing to play this version in complete silence. In the next version, let's hope Sega turns up the volume.

WGAMER RATING:
8/10



EVERQUEST: HERO'S CALL

■ **PLATFORM:** Verizon's Get It Now ■ **PUBLISHER/DEVELOPER:** Sony Online Entertainment
HTTP://WGAMER.COM/GAME-925

EverQuest, Sony's MMORPG behemoth, is (for now) single-player only on mobile, but it's a top-notch phone RPG. You start the game humbly, with a rusty knife and torn shirt, humiliated by the owner of the local tavern. Equipped with some torn fabric and the ability to give your opponents tetanus, you enter the first of 32 (!) dungeons. The game offers a series of long, involving quests that provide almost 60 hours (!!) of gameplay. *EverQuest* includes a number of features not generally seen in a mobile game, such as a matching function that alerts you to the challenges you're about to face. If you remember *Rogue* or yearn for *Edible Goo* while you're away from your PC, *EverQuest: Hero's Call* is the fix you need.

WGAMER RATING: 9/10

LEMONADE TYCOON

■ **PLATFORM:** Verizon's Get It Now ■ **PUBLISHER:** Hexacto ■ **DEVELOPER:** Airborne Entertainment
HTTP://WGAMER.COM/GAME-1145

Start small and focus on the fundamentals: *Lemonade Tycoon* is a business sim for our uncertain times. Beginning with a tiny stand on a street corner, you buy supplies, mix up a batch of lemonade, and hustle your drinks. If your price is too high, the line is too long, or your recipe stinks, your customers will disappear and you'll be stuck with melted ice and spoiled lemons. The animations of customers ambling by and issuing thought balloons are quite hypnotic (though you'll probably want to turn off the sound). As mobile games go, this sim is quite deep. Not only must you set the right price and buy appropriate supplies, you've also got weather, market awareness, demographics, and advertising issues to contend with if you want to get listed on LSX—the Lemonade Stock Exchange.

WGAMER RATING: 8/10

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WIRELESS GAMING REVIEW

TOP **PHONES** TO **GAME ON** AND **HOW TO GET GAMES** ON THEM

AT&T **WIRELESS**

■ **BEST PHONE:** MOTOROLA T720 ■ **HTTP://WGAMER.COM/PHONE-55**

This phone isn't perfect—the keypad is a bit slow—but it offers a large screen, polyphonic sounds, and a slew of games. AT&T's version runs Java games on a new GSM network.

HOW TO GET GAMES: AT&T's game catalogue is browser-based and very simple to use, so start by clicking the mMode soft key. From there, navigate to Entertainment, and then to Games. Then, look through the categories (Editor's Pick, Action, Most Popular, etc.) to find what you'd like to play (like *Tony Hawk*). On the individual game page, click Buy and follow the instructions.

WWW.WGAMER.COM/HOWTO/ATT

SPRINT **PCS**

■ **BEST PHONE:** SAMSUNG N400

Like Sprint's other Vision phones, the N400 sports a color screen, polyphonic ringtones, and high-speed data rates. Remember: Though most Vision games are available on all Vision color phones, some of the best run only on the N400.

WWW.WGAMER.COM/PHONE-26

HOW TO GET GAMES: To find Sprint's game catalogue, choose Downloads, then Games, then Get New. The games are sorted into categories, so start with What's New. Once you've found a title to try, click Buy It. The game will get added to your Vault (an online repository for your games) and to your bill. Once the game is in your Vault, you can download it to your phone. Watch out: Most Sprint games expire after 30 or 60 days, so play while you can. You can also access the catalogue and your Vault on the web at http://sprintpcs.com.

WWW.WGAMER.COM/HOWTO/SPRINT

CINGULAR

■ **BEST PHONE:** NOKIA 3650

With a huge color screen, a camera, and built-in cutting-edge software, the 3650 is by far the most powerful phone in this roundup, and Cingular is selling it at a bargain price. Lots of games have been published for this phone and its Europe-only predecessor, the 7650, though the 3650's funky keypad layout may make it tough to play some of them.

WWW.WGAMER.COM/PHONE-52

HOW TO GET GAMES: The 3650 can run two different kinds of software: J2ME and Symbian. Cingular will soon launch phones with a J2ME download service, which you'll access through the phone's browser. Symbian games are bigger and usually need to be downloaded to your PC and then synched to your phone. Try our online store **(www.handango.com/wgr/)** for Symbian games.

WWW.WGAMER.COM/HOWTO/CINGULAR

VERIZON **WIRELESS**

■ **BEST PHONE:** LGLX4400

One of the newest phones featuring Verizon's Get It Now service, the LX4400 is fast, stable, and shaping up to be a favorite of game developers.

HOW TO GET GAMES: From your phone's Home screen, press the down arrow to get to the Get It Now menu. Click on the Shopping Cart icon, select Shop, and then select Get Games. Most games have several pricing options (such as free demo, monthly, and one-time purchase) that will be added directly to your bill. Choose your price and select Buy. In a minute or two, the game will download. Choose Play Now and you're set.

WWW.WGAMER.COM/HOWTO/VERIZON

T-MOBILE

■ **BEST PHONE:** SONYERICSSON T300

Sony Ericsson's T300 squeezes maximum game performance from its hardware with the Mophun game engine. The smallish screen and low-powered processor mean the battery lasts almost forever.

WWW.WGAMER.COM/PHONE-22

HOW TO GET GAMES: As we go to press this issue, T-Mobile hasn't launched its own download service yet, though we expect it to be activated soon. You can buy games for the T300 via the Web, though. Go to **WWW.MOPHUNGAMES.COM** for a broad selection and complete instructions.

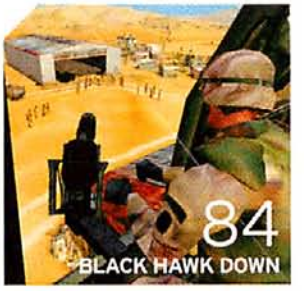
WWW.WGAMER.COM/HOWTO/TMOBILE

Wireless Gaming Review
www.wGamer.com

WARNING: CARRIER MENUS CAN CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE. CHECK **WWW.WGAMER.COM/** FOR THE LATEST.

Reviews

We love games, we hate games Edited by Robert Coffey



"This game is about as innocuous as the Ebola virus."

BOOKWORM DELUXE 101

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Sharper graphics make for far tenser missions.

Rainbow Six 3: Raven Shield

Your own personal war on terror BY RAPHAEL LIBERATORE

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD EDITORS' CHOICE

GAME STATS

PUBLISHER: UBI SOFT

DEVELOPER: RED STORM ENTERTAINMENT

GENRE: TACTICAL SIM

ESRB RATING: MATURE; BLOOD AND GORE, VIOLENCE

PRICE: $49.00 REQUIREMENTS: PENTIUM III 800, 128MB RAM, 2GB HARD DRIVE SPACE, 32MB 3D CARD

RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: PENTIUM 4 1.3GHZ, 256MB RAM, 128MB 3D CARD

MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: INTERNET, LAN (2-36 PLAYERS)

Whether freeing hostages from the diabolical clutches of ecoterrorists or keeping biochemical bombs from destroying the Earth, *Raven Shield* provides the same gut-wrenching tension you'd feel performing a real-world op. *Raven Shield* completely rebuilds the celebrated *Rainbow Six* series from the ground up, with a new graphics engine, streamlined interface, sharper A.I., better ballistic models, enhanced multiplayer support, and a plethora of high octane missions.

Best-laid plans

Like the original *Rainbow Six* and its awesome successor, *Rogue Spear*, *Raven Shield* is two games rolled into one. First, it's a highly detailed strategy game in which planning the perfect operation for mission success is your primary directive. Second, it's a realistic action game in which you execute said plan as a member of a small commando team. One slip-up in either phase and you'll discover how quickly hostages get waxed and your operatives get blown away.

Fans of the series know the blood and guts of the *Rainbow Six* games reside in a detailed planning phase that has now been modified for enhanced efficiency. The Briefing and Intel screens are basically the same, but are now rolled into one screen. The same goes for the Gear Room.

After your mission debriefing, you form and equip your team in the Team Room, where you'll find a roster of familiar commandos along with a heavy assortment of weapons, gear, kits, uniforms, and tactical vests. The *Raven Shield* armory now includes a huge assortment of submachine guns like the MTAR-21 and P90, assault rifles like the FAMAS-G2 and Type 97, light machine guns like the M60E4 and M23, shotguns, and sniper rifles. Add more heartbeat sensors, special weapon attachments, gas masks, and more, and *Raven Shield* provides real bang for the buck.

The Planning screen's revamped interface completely streamlines planning as you map out your team's every move using waypoints, rules of engagement, special actions, and Go codes. *Raven Shield* provides a 3D map overlay of the area, where you plan everything from breaching doors and disarming bombs to downloading secret computer information and rescuing hostages. It's a tricky and time-consuming operation, but thankfully, Red Storm provides excellent default plans for every mission to help out gamers too intimidated or impatient to create their own operation. On the other hand, if you're more interested in planning a

Some of the game's tactical realism is questionable, but it doesn't hinder gameplay–not one bit.

good operation without actually controlling your operatives, the Observation mode allows you to test your plans without actually participating in the action. Here, you can watch your entire mission unfold in all of its cinematic glory.

Banging doors and bustin' caps

When the planning's done, it's time to execute your mission in one of 15 beautifully rendered global areas of operation—from Brazil and Argentina to the Swiss Alps and London, where you feel like you're actually performing CT ops in real-world environments. Thanks to the current Unreal engine, *Raven Shield* is one of the best-looking tactical shooters on the market. A vastly improved HUD means no more getting mired in mini-windows and team RoE screens.

Ops are varied and challenging; action is quick and deadly, and a vastly improved A.I. means you'll need every possible operative for every mission. No more dumb terrorists blindly walking past their fallen comrades; terrorists are smarter here, quickly reacting to noises by opening doors, and ducking for cover when fired upon. And they're accurate shooters; screw up and your teammates are going home in body bags.

The improved A.I. extends to your team as well. Commandos are more proactive, and react to situations so quickly, they dispatch terrorists before you even see them. Although some of the game's tactical realism is questionable, it doesn't hinder gameplay—not one bit.

Once you're done with the well-scripted campaign (former Nazis attempt to terrorize the world), you can play Lone Wolf, Hostage Rescue, Terrorist Hunt, or Practice Missions with any of the 15 campaign maps or six new multiplayer maps, with up to 35 terrorists. Not only is this a great way to hone your tactical skills, but it's also a great way to gain proficiency for commanding teams. Think of it as a real-world extension of *Raven Shield*'s excellent tutorial.

With a slew of multiplayer options to choose from, *Raven Shield* possesses improved features and online options for COB combat against live opponents. There are a dozen game types for either co-op or adversarial play. The only thing missing is a mission editor.

The deadliest foe

The sad cost of *Raven Shield*'s visual splendor is a framerate that often drops. Even when the game is running on the fastest PCs with the newest 3D cards, night-vision optics can bring your computer to its knees. And, as in its predecessors, there are game-crashing bugs. Add an "Invalid CD Key" bug and it seems that Red Storm will never overcome the sorry tradition of bugginess.

Take away the bugs, though, and *Raven Shield* stands right beside *SWAT3* as the ultimate tactical simulation. A host of revisions and improvements propel *Raven Shield* way past the original *R6* games in design and playability, making *Rainbow Six 3: Raven Shield* the new benchmark in tac sims.

VERDICT ★★★★½

Third time's the charm: *Raven Shield* streamlines the *R6* series and surpasses the earlier games in every way possible.

Handcuffing bad guys is a new option. Maybe the dead guy slumped against the wall should've just surrendered.

Night-vision optics are cool but can bring your computer to its knees if there are lots of bad guys.

A talented sniper can clear a pretty nice—and pretty bloody—path for your team.

Revised and simplified Briefing, Gear Room, and Planning screens make *Raven Shield* superior to earlier games when it comes to planning and executing mission objectives.

Delta Force 3: Black Hawk Down

Less depressing than the movie **BY RAPHAEL LIBERATORE**

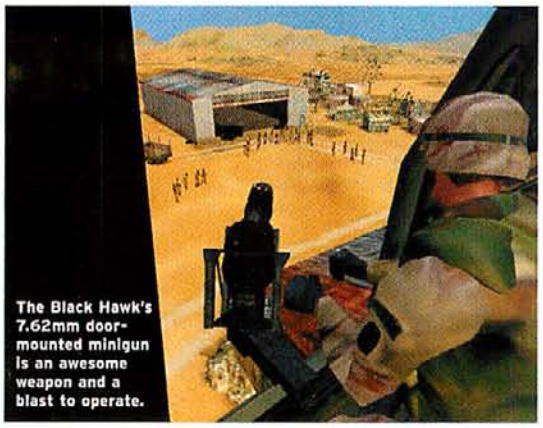
GAME STATS

PUBLISHER: **NOVALOGIC**
DEVELOPER: **NOVALOGIC**
ESRB RATING: **MATURE; BLOOD AND GORE, VIOLENCE**
GENRE: **FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER** PRICE: **$39.99**
REQUIREMENTS: **PENTIUM III 733, 256MB RAM, 750MB HARD DRIVE SPACE, 32MB 3D CARD** RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: **PENTIUM 4 1.4GHZ, 64MB+ 3D CARD** MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: **NOVAWORLD (2-32 PLAYERS), LAN (2-16 PLAYERS), IP LAN DEDICATED SERVER (2-50 PLAYERS)**

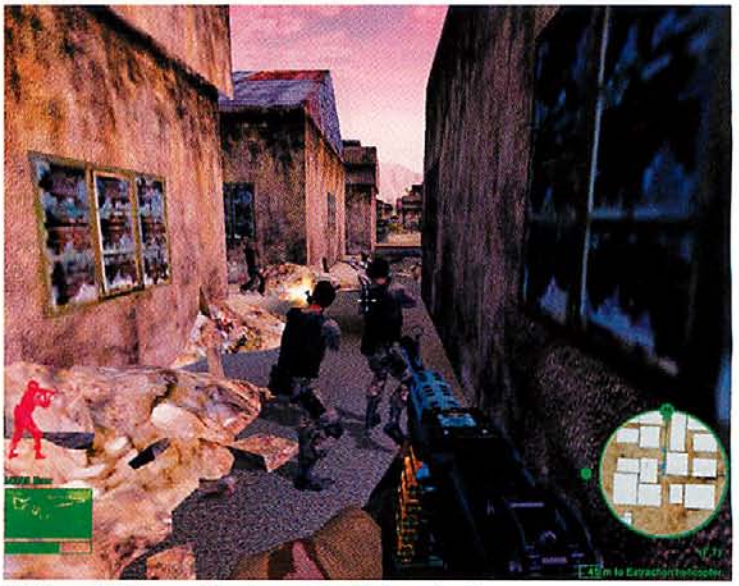
NovaLogic took one of the more controversial low-intensity American conflict episodes of the 20th century and made it into a *Delta Force* game. For some, this subject matter has the bad taste of an American intervention gone sour. For others, it's a medium for vengeance. However, unlike the real Somali operation, *Delta Force 3: Black Hawk Down* lacks the mission intensity and tempo of Task Force Ranger. Rather, *DF3* plays more like a cinematic arcade game, where the primary focus lies in a player's shooter skills and less on the strategy and tactics of a tactical sim. This is the legacy of the *Delta Force* series—twitch skills overpowering mental prowess. But it can be lots of fun.

Black Hawk Down is loosely based on the exploits of the highly covert Army Special Forces counterterrorist unit during operations in and around Mogadishu. In certain missions, players can also play as Rangers and soldiers from the 10th Mountain Division. NovaLogic tries to capture some of the gritty third-world environments of Somalia and does a decent job with its vastly improved graphics engine. Gone are the voxel space engine shortcomings of *Delta Force*, and the performance issues that marred *Delta Force 2* and *Land Warrior*. Not only do the expansive maps look much sharper and clearer, the engine also provides more texture and object detail. Sill, night-vision optics leave something to be desired.

The single-player game is varied and interesting, even tackling some of the actual missions performed by Task Force Ranger: direct action raids against a mob, security ops protecting a Pakistani convoy, or snatching bad guys from a hostile compound in the middle of town. Of course, it wouldn't be *Black Hawk Down* without battling Aidid's forces in the infamous "Sweet Irene" engagement (which the movie focused on), which gets parceled out across several smaller missions. Huge maps give players room to maneuver, whether racing across arid wastelands in a HMMW, or flying past rooftops as a Black Hawk door gunner searching for Habr Gedir militia.



The Black Hawk's 7.62mm door-mounted minigun is an awesome weapon and a blast to operate.

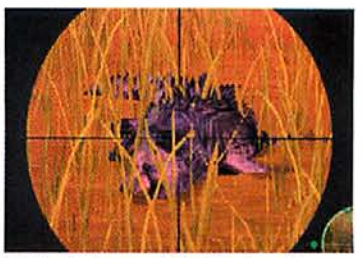


Fighting amidst the crumbling slums of Somalia is rough going.

The primary focus lies in a player's shooter skills, and less on the strategy and tactics of a tactical sim.

Operatives are selected from a pool of four different character types (sniper, close-quarters battle, medic, and gunner), each with its own special weapon loadouts, and each using a limited selection of real-world U.S. weapons. It would have been nice if the classes had been better thought out—why play a medic when health power-ups are littered across the map? And while the sniper class benefits greatly from the game's outstanding sniper system, the gunner and CQB classes are virtually indistinguishable.

As in previous NovaLogic games, the Multiplayer mode is where the game shines. There are a variety of game types for the wide open maps, from Deathmatch, Team Deathmatch, and Capture the Flag to Search and Destroy, Attack and Defend, and Flagball, with up to 32 players on NovaLogic's own NovaWorld servers. If you're willing to dedicate a computer via LAN, then *Black Hawk Down* allows for up to 50 players in a match. The game's only multiplayer blemish is the limited selection of available weapons.



Sniping is the game's best feature. Here, this menacing crocodile eats 7.62mm lead bullets instead of the operative he thought he'd have for lunch.

Given this game's abundant supply of action along with its improved graphics engine, *Delta Force 3: Black Hawk Down* is the best of the NovaLogic series. If you're a military sim gamer who's looking for endless hours of action devoid of strategy or tactics, then this is your game.

VERDICT ★★★★☆

The non-thinking man's *Raven Shield* emphasizes action over tactics.

Get rid of those evil chain restaurants so we can set up a classy place like this with a guitar on the roof.

Restaurant Empire

Stick a fork in it—it's done **BY DANA JONGEWAARD**

GAME STATS

PUBLISHER: **ENLIGHT SOFTWARE**
DEVELOPER: **ENLIGHT SOFTWARE**
GENRE: **BUSINESS SIMULATION**
ESRB RATING: **EVERYONE**
PRICE: **$20**
REQUIREMENTS: **PENTIUM III 500, 128MB RAM, 700MB HARD DRIVE SPACE**
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: **PENTIUM III 1GHZ**
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: **NONE**

Trevor Chan, of the *Capitalism* series renown, has now applied his attention to eating establishments. His latest effort, *Restaurant Empire*, explores the world of restaurants and celebrity chefs—much like you'd imagine. What you might not imagine is a game that doesn't quite live up to its designer's tony pedigree.

An 18-mission story campaign allows you and your uncle to try and compete against the resident evil restaurant corporation; also available is a Sandbox mode of gameplay. Through the process of the game, you can open restaurants in three different cities, hire staff, select menus, upgrade interiors, and enter your chefs in celebrity cook-offs reminiscent of television's *Iron Chef*.

Once things are set in motion, there's not much to do aside from the occasional tweak.

"Hi, I'm Mary, and I'll be your whiny customer this evening."

The tutorial, which is incorporated into the story campaign, is very thorough and well set up. However, nitpicky issues make the game less than fun to play. You can't rearrange items within the restaurants without having a window open which covers half of the screen, making it difficult to maneuver and see what you're doing; the tools are often unresponsive as well, making redecorating an often painful and lengthy process.

The main problem with the game, however, is the preprogrammed difficulties. I played through the first three missions of the story scenario twice. Knowing the issues that I ran into the first time around, I did everything that could be done to fix those issues before they happened the second time around. However, the same complaints still popped up with the same frequency. Being presented with issues that ultimately weren't things that you could fix grew quickly tiresome; you could only endure the complaints and wait for the scenario to end. Also, most gameplay takes place before the mission actually starts; once things are set in motion, there's usually not much for you to do aside from the occasional tweak.

As business management sims go, this one isn't terrible, but neither is it compelling. You're better off checking the local discount bin for one of Trevor Chan's earlier efforts.

VERDICT ★★★★★

Forget those champagne wishes and caviar dreams—this is closer to Denny's.

The Gladiators: Galactic Circus Games

And they say the French don't like violence **BY DI LUO**

GAME STATS

PUBLISHER: **ARXEL TRIBE**
DEVELOPER: **EUGEN SYSTEMS**
GENRE: **REAL-TIME STRATEGY**
ESRB RATING: **TEEN; BLOOD, VIOLENCE**
PRICE: **$39.99**
REQUIREMENTS: **PENTIUM III 500, 128MB RAM, 1GB HARD DRIVE SPACE, 32MB 3D CARD**
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: **PENTIUM III 800, 64MB VIDEOCARD**
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: **INTERNET, LAN (2-16 PLAYERS)**

Like a product being peddled on late-night infomercials, *Gladiators: Galactic Circus Games* was probably the result of an idea with a modicum of originality and a decent idea behind it. Arxel Tribe, the company behind *Gladiators*, combined the action and aesthetics of games like *Smash TV* with real-time strategy and almost created a game that had both depth and glitz. Almost.

The story begins when a human military convict is volunteered to take a ship into a black hole and ends up a captive of the Galactic Empire. In the Galactic Empire, gladiatorial games are so popular that they're used to determine the succession of the Imperial throne. Our hero champions a princess in distress and fights against impossible odds. Playing him, you strive to conquer all that's before you, and when you're finished, you can do it all over again (twice) as the other two sides.

The pulp story is consistent with the game's irreverent tone. The units are silly caricatures, dialogue is worthy of any B movie, and the fighting is just as cartoonish. The setting and colorful presentation make the game initially enjoyable, at least for novelty value if nothing else.

A flight of choppers brings the smell of napalm to the alien scum.

Human troopers make a last stand against the hordes.

A jungle ambush. There are around 20 units in that mess.

Only when you delve deeper into the game do you see the rot beneath the chrome.

Gameplay is relatively simplistic. Units are selected and moved in traditional RTS style, and can be deployed in either line or square formation. Some units have special commands such as sneaking or troop transport. Resource management is reduced to picking up power ups that give your troops temporary boosts or allow you to spawn more units. Nothing spectacular, but everything works.

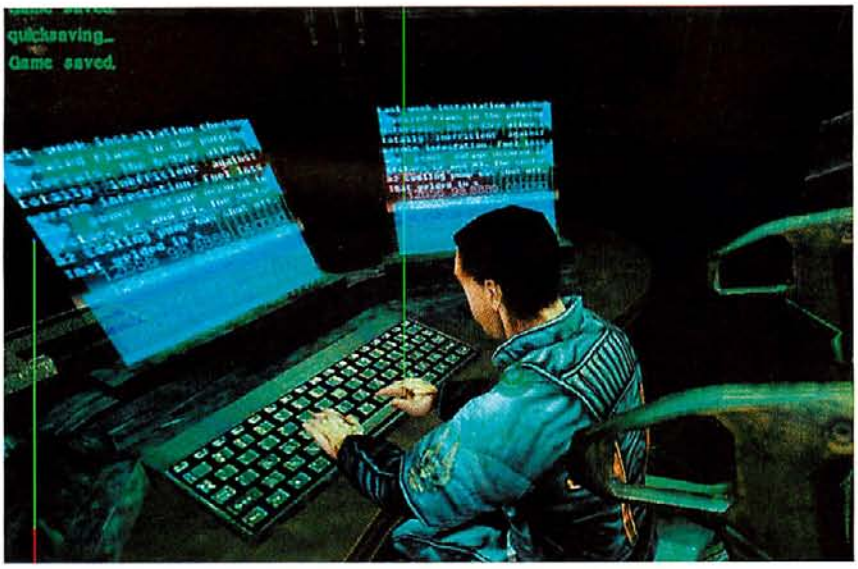
Only when you delve deeper into the game do you see the rot beneath the chrome. The heavily scripted missions compensate for simplistic A.I. by throwing hordes of enemies at you. In most scenarios, you'll probably kill five or six times more enemies than you'll lose troops. Multiplayer would probably be more interesting, if you could find anyone to play with, and the game unfortunately doesn't come with any Skirmish mode.

Most scenarios are linear. You must traverse from one side of the arena to the other, and going off the set path is usually an invitation to failure. Along the way, you'll suffer repeated ambushes and other scripted unfortunate events. When combat occurs, things usually happen so quickly that you can't give coherent orders to your troops. Since resources are very limited, one bad encounter could doom you for the rest of the scenario. Beating most of the levels will probably require a lot of reloads and memorizing the enemy's location. The only tactic that seems to work is to set up your troops in a safe spot, send a fast unit forward to spring the inevitable ambush, then lead the marauding enemy into your waiting guns. Repeat ad nauseum and you'll win the game.

This tiresome gameplay quickly erases any goodwill created by the game's novelty. Any excitement that might have been generated by the explosions and mayhem cannot hope to compete with the boredom of constant reloads, or the aggravation of hearing the same "witty" banter for the fifth time. In the end, playing through *Gladiators* is like a bad Wagnerian opera: lots of sound and fury without much substance.

VERDICT ★★★★★

These *Gladiators* are nothing more than your run-of-the-mill blood sport.



Revolution

You get what you pay for—and less BY ROB SMOLKA

GAME STATS

PUBLISHER: ACTIVISION VALUE
DEVELOPER: FUN LABS
GENRE: FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER ESRB RATING: MATURE
PRICE: $19.99 REQUIREMENTS: PENTIUM II 500, 128MB RAM, 700MB HARD DRIVE SPACE RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: PENTIUM III 1GHZ, 256MB RAM, 32MB 3D CARD MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: LAN, INTERNET (2-16 PLAYERS)

Revolution, a first-person shooter from Activision's budget line of software, has a few redeeming qualities, but could never be recommended if it were a full-price product. Does the fact that it goes for only $20 excuse its shortcomings enough to make it worth purchasing? I guess it all depends on how forgiving you are.

Aesthetically, *Revolution* fares pretty well. No, it's not going to make anyone forget *Unreal II*, but the environments have some decent detail, competent lighting, and well-rendered models. The sounds are about average, with voice acting ranging from pretty good to obviously untalented. Sadly, it all starts to go downhill from here.

First, there's the story. You start off working as a janitor for a corporation called the, er, Corporation. Most of the early game finds you wandering aimlessly through the building, killing vermin and trying to figure out what you need to do next. Eventually, you stumble onto the right areas and the plot picks up. After learning that the Corporation is evil (you'd think the scary music and the ominous logo on the building would've tipped you off, but you're not that clever), you join a resistance group called the, er, Resistance. More killing ensues. Lather, rinse, repeat.

While it's true that a thin veneer of a story is a treasured (or not) tradition in the world of first-person shooters, this is taking things too far. What's worse is that everything is *so* illogical; you never have much of an idea of what you're supposed to be doing or where you need to go next. The text (and much of the dialogue) is so poorly written that you need a Dick Tracy decoder ring to get the meaning half the time. Confusion and frustration are your only companions in *Revolution*.

Top this all off with a healthy dose of shoddy controls (strafing moves you in large steps that make aiming a challenge), enemies that move way too quickly (exacerbating the problem), a bug that makes finishing one of the levels impossible (a patch was released, but it hoses your previous saved games), and multiplayer features that will go unused (go ahead—try and find a server for *Revolution*...I dare you!), and you have a game that fails to live up to even the generally un-lofty standards that budget software normally aspires to.

VERDICT ★☆☆☆☆

You say you want a revolution? Not this one you don't.

Confusion and frustration are your only companions in *Revolution*.

STAR WARS GALAXIES
AN EMPIRE DIVIDED
Boba Fett has the right equipment to play this game.
Do you?

LUCAS Arts
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Laser Squad Nemesis

X-Com's legitimate heir BY DI LUO

GAME STATS

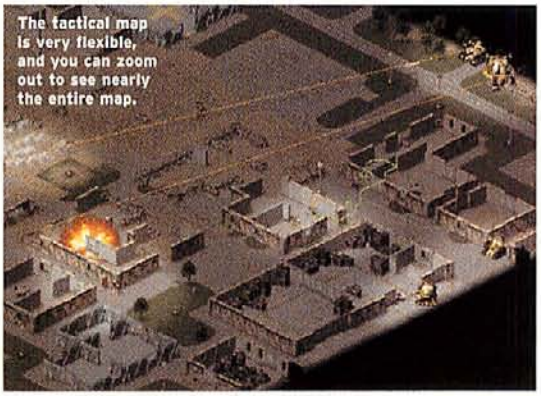
PUBLISHER: CODO TECHNOLOGIES
DEVELOPER: CODO TECHNOLOGIES
GENRE: TURN-BASED STRATEGY
ESRB RATING: NOT RATED
PRICE: $25 REQUIREMENTS: PENTIUM II 200, 64MB RAM, 20MB HARD DRIVE SPACE
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: 3D CARD MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: E-MAIL, HOT SEAT (2 PLAYERS)

My troops advanced cautiously on the objective, a large bunker complex of twisting hallways. Leapfrogging in the center was a pair of lowly grunts, with two grenadiers behind them. On the flanks were elite fire teams with medics. The plan was to feint with the grenadiers in the center while the real assault closed in from the sides. The first 20 seconds was uneventful—not a single enemy spotted or a single shot fired.

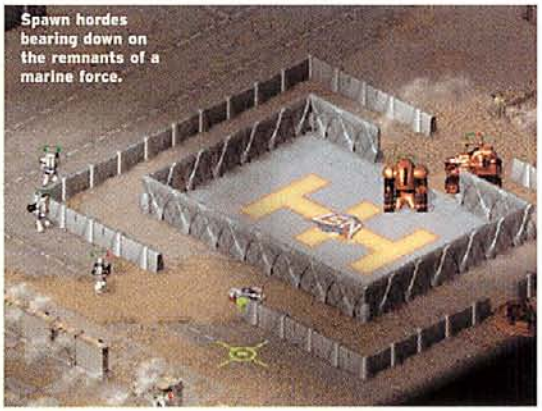
The grenadiers reached the bunker entrance and began bouncing grenades down the hallways while the grunts stood guard. Another 10 seconds passed before I heard the first scream. While my right flank was racing toward a side entrance, a horde of Buzzers erupted from hiding. My men didn't even get a shot off before being swarmed and shredded. In the center, a Splatter unit emerged from a cloud of smoke, charged, and detonated itself in the middle of my men. Half my force was gone before I could issue new orders, and by the end of the first minute, they were alien food.

This little slaughter is typical of *Laser Squad Nemesis*, a turn-based tactical game of stalking, feinting, and engaging in vicious fire fights. Played over e-mail, the game proceeds in a "we-go" fashion, with each side issuing orders and the computer executing them simultaneously. Everything depends on planning and outguessing the enemy. Once the orders for the 10-second turns are sent, you can only watch and pray. Orders are assigned in phases that are tenths of a second long, and they involve commands, like moving and firing, and rules of engagement, such as running or standing upon contact.

Fast-moving marine grenadiers attempt to outflank the Machina tanks.



The tactical map is very flexible, and you can zoom out to see nearly the entire map.



Spawn hordes bearing down on the remnants of a marine force.

Unlike games involving predictable A.I., you'll rarely feel a sense of repetition in *Laser Squad Nemesis*.

Your forces may be from one of three sides: the flexible Human marines, the sturdy Machina, or the vicious alien Spawn. Each side has six superbly balanced units with their share of strengths and weaknesses. Since every battle on the dozens of available maps begins with blind troop-purchases and deployment, real tactical surprise can be achieved. Unlike games involving predictable A.I., you'll rarely feel a sense of repetition in *LSN*, even if you're fighting your 20th battle on the same map.

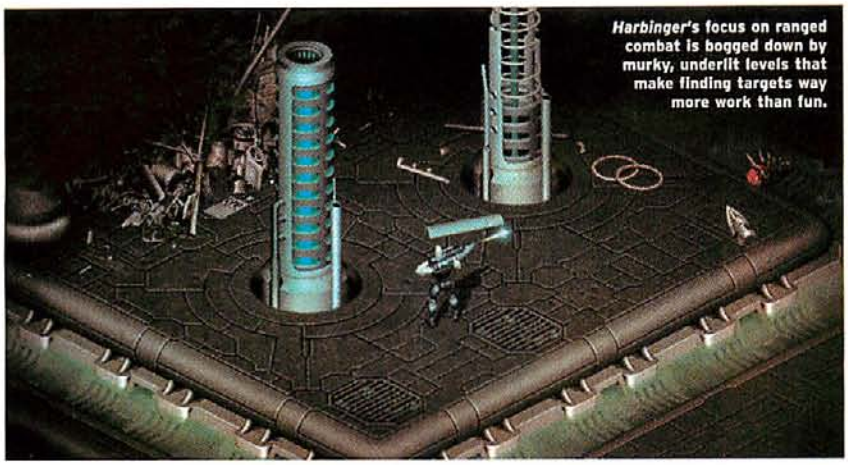
LSN hasn't quite reached perfection, though. There are some bugs, occasional server problems pop up, and the learning curve can be steep. The tutorial and help texts aren't very thorough, and there's no practice mode against an A.I. opponent. There are also only two game modes, and both of them involve meeting engagements with equal points on both sides. It would be great to see maps involving more than two players or different styles of gameplay.

Luckily, *LSN* seems to be an endless work in progress. Its designers (the Gollop brothers, who created *X-Com*) work closely with the game's fanatical community and offer continual updates, including new textures, fixes, and even new races.

With the depth and variety of gameplay it offers, *LSN* is well worth the $25 subscription fee (purchased directly from www.lasersquadnemesis.com), which allows unlimited games for six months. It has the same kind of addictive magic, suspense, and excitement that the *X-Com* games had, with the bonus of devious human minds in place of stilted A.I.

VERDICT ★★★★½

An addictive game that'll have you pining for your next e-mail.



Harbinger's focus on ranged combat is bogged down by murky, underlit levels that make finding targets way more work than fun.

Harbinger

No, not of *Doom*—of *Diablo* **BY CHARLES ARDAI**

GAME STATS

PUBLISHER: **DREAMCATCHER**
DEVELOPER: **SILVERBACK ENTERTAINMENT**
GENRE: **ACTION-RPG**
ESRB RATING: **TEEN; BLOOD, USE OF DRUGS, VIOLENCE**
PRICE: **$29.99**
REQUIREMENTS: **PENTIUM III 500, 128MB RAM, 650MB HARD DRIVE SPACE**
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: **PENTIUM III 700, 256MB RAM, 32MB 3D CARD**
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: **NONE**

The idea of making a science-fiction version of *Diablo* is not a bad one. All you need to do is take the original as a model, slap some new art and a new story on it, and presto, you've got a guaranteed success on your hands, right?

Well, here's the problem. You can replace *Diablo*'s demons and enchanted broadswords with robo-warriors and EMP guns, and you can swap dank caverns for the shadowy corridors of a giant spaceship, but if you don't hire designers who are the equal of the folks who work at Blizzard, your game won't be fit to shine *Diablo*'s hobnailed boots.

Which brings us to *Harbinger*, a game for which the adjective "tolerable" was invented. There's nothing terrible about *Harbinger*, but there's nothing much good, either. The graphics are monotonous and dim. The muted soundtrack is exciting only in comparison to the narcotized performances of the voice actors. The designers put some effort into inventing three unfamiliar character classes to replace the usual fighters and wizards, but it's wasted, since no matter which you choose, you quickly learn to ignore everything except how to fire your projectile weapon and stockpile health packs. Meanwhile, the game's balance is off—too hard when you're getting started, too easy once you've leveled up a little—and the quests are vague enough that you're often left wandering around huge, cleared-out levels wondering what to do next.

There are nice touches, such as a stash you can access from multiple locations in the game, rather than just your home base, and enemy A.I. that allows wounded aliens to run away before you kill them and blood-thirsty pursuers to re-open doors you close in their path. But these don't make up for all the ways in which the game falls short. Just to pick one, how can you make a game like this without any multiplayer?

In the end, what's wrong with *Harbinger* is not that it's too much like *Diablo*—it's that in the ways that count, it's not similar enough.

Harbinger, a game for which the adjective "tolerable" was invented.

VERDICT ★★☆☆☆
This sci-fi *Diablo* clone is tepid at best.

Post Mortem

A killer adventure in Paris **BY DENICE COOK**

GAME STATS

PUBLISHER: **THE ADVENTURE COMPANY/DREAMCATCHER**
DEVELOPER: **MICROIDS**
GENRE: **ADVENTURE**
ESRB RATING: **MATURE; BLOOD AND GORE, SEXUAL THEMES, VIOLENCE**
PRICE: **$29.99**
REQUIREMENTS: **PENTIUM II 350, 64MB RAM, 470MB HARD DRIVE SPACE**
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: **PENTIUM III 500, 128MB RAM, 32MB 3D CARD**
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: **NONE**

A sumptuous Parisian hotel suite is swathed in stormy darkness. Lightning flashes, exposing a young couple in the bedroom. But something is horribly wrong with their unified stance: They have both been decapitated—their severed heads laid in their laps, gold coins stuck in their mouths....Welcome to *Post Mortem*'s gothic tale of swank 1920s Paris, where you play the role of P.I.-turned-painter Gus MacPherson. Svelte heiress Sophia Blake will beg you to investigate the beheadings of her sister and brother-in-law, and because your wallet is emptier than a blank canvas, you'll take the case.

You track the killer's movements across dusky backdrops while psychic and paranormal events escalate around you; this is one complex, eerily evolving story, and the game's elements truly support it. There are several playable paths through each elegant location, too, and no matter which one you choose, you'll never hit a dead end. For instance, you can enter forbidden hotel and club chambers by lying to NPCs, sneaking by them, or even knocking them out. Different inventory items will then appear in bistros or offices, depending upon how you have played out previous scenes, but every path will eventually lead you to one of three possible endings. The puzzles you'll encounter during your investigation, although sometimes tedious, grow right out of the story line as well; challenges, like sketching a suspect and deciphering a fresco's hidden brushstrokes, lead to a climactic confrontation with the killer. The chilling musical score exquisitely propels this tale to its crescendo. So does anything prevent *Post Mortem* from being hailed as an adventure masterpiece?

Moonlit cut-scenes further advance *Post Mortem*'s already intricate story line.

Not quite the honeymoon suite.

This fresco is alluring or alarming, depending upon which facts come to light.

Unfortunately, many of *Post Mortem*'s conversations are as severed as its murder victims' heads.

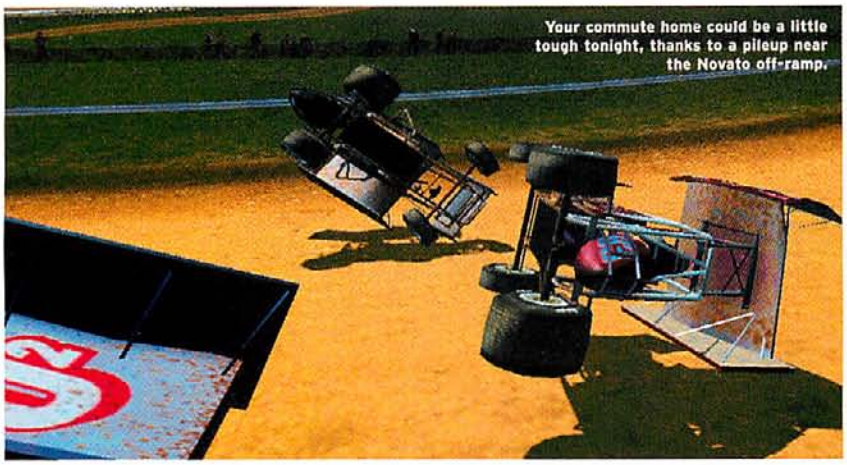
The answer is an unfortunate but resounding yes. Gumshoe Gus has quite an Achilles' heel in the form of *Post Mortem*'s dialogue system. As a detective, you expect to spend much of your time interrogating witnesses and cutting deals with shady characters as you make your way through the game. But you also expect discussions to make sense and flow naturally. Unfortunately, many of *Post Mortem*'s conversations are as severed as its murder victims' heads. You can choose a topic from conversation trees, but it will be derailed by odd, unrelated statements that you must make before you're allowed to finish the discussion. Sometimes, poor English mars discourse, and other times, preemptive statements run rampant. To really rub salt in the wound, MacPherson displays little emotion or personality during dialogues, and characters bob with annoying tics the whole time they're talking.

Microids put a lot of effort into this absorbing murder mystery, and it really does show in other facets of the game. Unfortunately, though, the aggravating and lame discussions are enough to make you lose your head.

A quaint bistro conceals questionable characters and underworld art dealers. Unfortunately, you have to talk to them.

VERDICT ★★★★★

A five-star story decapitated by criminal conversations.



Your commute home could be a little tough tonight, thanks to a pileup near the Novato off-ramp.

World of Outlaws: Sprint Cars

Getting mud in your eye, one pixel at a time BY DARREN GLADSTONE

GAME STATS

PUBLISHER: **INFOGRAMES**
DEVELOPER: **RATBAG**
GENRE: **RACING**
ESRB RATING: **EVERYONE**
PRICE: **$29.99**
REQUIREMENTS: **PENTIUM III 600MHZ, 128MB RAM, 1.6GB HARD DRIVE SPACE**
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: **PENTIUM III 800MHZ, 256MB RAM, 32MB 3D CARD**
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: **LAN, INTERNET (2-10 PLAYERS)**

While Bobby Labonte and his NASCAR ilk race around with well-polished stock cars, the Sprint driver's racer consists of an engine, roll cage, wings, and little else. If driving around in a circle for a couple hundred laps makes your eyes glaze over, the down-and-dirty *World of Outlaws: Sprint Cars* could be the cure.

Right off the starting line, you'll realize that the dirt tracks, not speed, constitute the game's greatest challenge. The tight courses rarely allow for the breakneck speeds you'd find in more conventional racers like *NASCAR Thunder* or *NASCAR 2003*, but then again, the whole point here is to hold your car together until you reach the finish line.

The whole point here is to hold your car together until you reach the finish line.

The 12 courses have some fantastically realistic dirt-road physics. When rounding corners—especially in mud—this game takes on a whole new dimension. Deformable tracks force you to keep on top of the race lines; going over dried mud or grooves the wrong way results in careening into an embankment. When you aren't contending with the track, the vicious A.I. is trying to knock you off the road. The overall difficulty is especially pronounced when going through a full season and money is on the line. All repair costs come out of your pocket, so sometimes it seems better to accept a midpack finish and remain intact than to come in first and have to rebuild your ride from scratch.

There are some finer points that keep *Outlaws* from the winner's circle. The graphics, while nice, don't stand up to the polish of a Papyrus or EA Sports racer. Also, you'll notice some wing damage, but the lack of full collision damage pulls you a little further out of the experience. One final bit that might be more of a personal pet peeve: the clumps of dirt that splatter on the screen. Two races in, you'll be reaching for a Kleenex to wipe the crud off your monitor. All told, while the Career mode is a little too steep for beginners, it's still a good day at the races.

VERDICT ★★★½☆

There's a whole lot more to this racer than "rednecks turning left."

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Do you?

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"It's time for a little introduction. Knee, meet nuts. Nuts, this is my knee."

Indiana Jones and the Emperor's Tomb

Raiders of the lost franchise **BY DARREN GLADSTONE**

GAME STATS

PUBLISHER: **LUCASARTS**
DEVELOPER: **THE COLLECTIVE**
GENRE: **THIRD-PERSON INDY ACTION** ESRB RATING: **TEEN; VIOLENCE** PRICE: **$39.99**
REQUIREMENTS: **PENTIUM III 733, 128MB RAM, 1.3GB HARD DRIVE SPACE, GEFORCE 256 3D CARD OR HIGHER**
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: **PENTIUM III 1.3GHZ, 256MB RAM, 32MB 3D CARD**
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: **NONE**

Giddy fanboys will feel their excitement build from the very first notes of the John Williams score. The rest of us, however, have been waiting for a good exploration/adventure game since the original *Tomb Raider* came out in 1996, and we can't accept everything at face value. So, is this newest attempt a *Temple of Doom*? No, but *Indiana Jones and the Emperor's Tomb* provides solid 3D platforming action with some panache—and the occasional little graphics glitch.

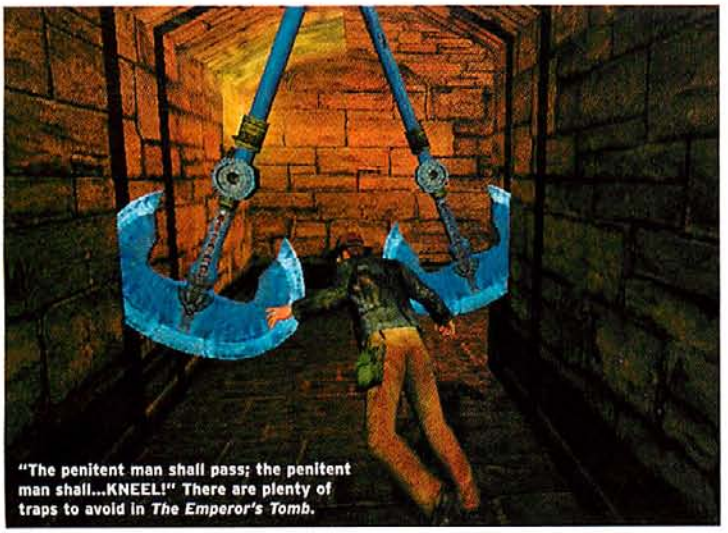
Since his last crusade

In a direct tribute to the Spielberg films, you start off deep in heart of a jungle in Ceylon, gazing at a treasure map. This training level unfolds as an introduction to a larger quest: Find an ancient Chinese artifact and keep it from falling into the wrong hands. It's 1935 and you'll be fighting off Nazis, Chinese gangsters, turbaned henchmen, sharks, ghosts, statues...wait, we don't want to blow the predictable (but entertaining) story just yet. Let's just say this: The plot is hardly new by Indy standards (or by most other adventure game standards, for that matter). But what the heck, you still get to saddle up and travel to exotic locales, including Hong Kong, Istanbul, Prague, and a secluded island fortress.

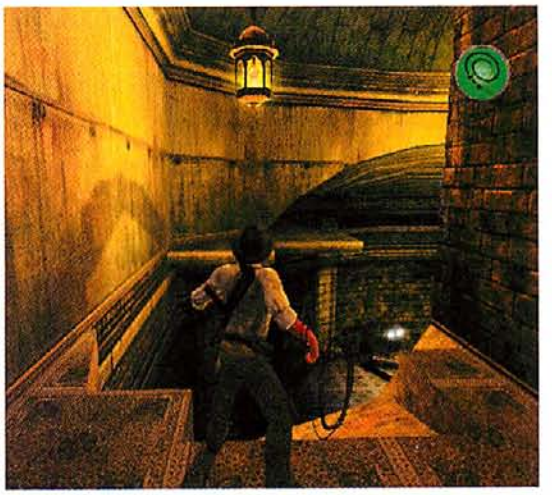
One of the key ingredients of any tomb-spelunking title is plenty of platforming and puzzle solving—and there's an arkful here. About two-thirds of the game relies upon you pulling levers, finding hidden alcoves, finding/putting item A into slot B, and so on. Early in the game, you think Indy must've gotten smacked by one too many boulders, because you're given a visual cue every time you need to interact with the world. Standing near a hard-to-spot lever? Don't worry, a big, colorful icon pops onscreen to tell you what to do. Can you do something with that extruding pole? Look for the whip icon to see if you can swing off it. In this respect, *Indy* spoon-feeds you too many clues, and pushes you through the game rather than letting you explore. Then, just as you get into the swing of looking for these icons, you find yourself occasionally stuck looking for a tiny hotspot with no help at all. In one case, it took 20 minutes of swimming around a statue of Poseidon to find the one spot near the ankle where I had to place explosives. To the game's credit, though, there is often more than one way out of each jam, whether you're rappelling down a zip line or sneaking around enemies to attack from behind.

This leads me to the game's most satisfying feature: dealing out two-fisted justice and giving Klaus Van Baddie what for. In this regard, The Collective reused and refined the fighting engine from its

The game's most satisfying feature: dealing out two-fisted justice.



"The penitent man shall pass; the penitent man shall...KNEEL!" There are plenty of traps to avoid in *The Emperor's Tomb*.



"Hmmm...that magical green icon tells me I've got to do something. I wonder what...?"

Why are all Nazi stooges such sharp dressers?

Eat lead, Klaus! In this Prague castle's courtyard, Indy has to hold back a troop of Nazis with an MP-40.

Xbox title *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* to near perfection. Different levels are populated with characters using various combat styles; some are grapplers, some try to keep a distance, and a couple martial arts maestros want to kick-start your face. The clever combo system makes you feel like Indiana Jones, dirtiest street fighter around. In one instance, I threw a punch and caught the thug on my fist in mid-air. I then hit a combo to kick him square in the unmentionables. It's those little touches that egg you on. Of course, no Indiana Jones game would be complete without the whip. The ever-versatile rawhide can be used to shimmy down powerlines, swing across chasms, or disarm and choke enemies from afar.

One part that gets a partial black eye is the sometimes spotty A.I. On more than one occasion, I'd cap villains with a gun and nearby hoods wouldn't react. The lack of reaction got a little distracting at times. Beyond the slugfests, there are a variety of chairs, bottles, guns, wood planks—you get the idea—to do battle with.

Bugs. Why'd it have to be bugs?

I was doing so well up to this point, and despite a few minor quibbles, I was really enjoying the experience. But then a number of small snags yanked me straight out of my fedora.

The graphics are, for the most part, fairly polished. Nice design, colorful at times, but some of the textures fall flat. One too many times in a bland underground cavern, you look at the same wall graphic you've seen a thousand times before while playing. A touch-up here and there would have worked wonders. Next up: collision detection. Now, I will give credit to LucasArts here. In the delay between the release of the Xbox and PC versions, The Collective managed to clean up most of the nasty collision issues that plagued the console version—dispatched enemies would land halfway through walls, and Indy could become Christ-like by walking on water. Most of those problems have been licked, but every so often, a stray limb manages to phase through a brick wall.

One homunculus BBQ, comin' right up. This is only one of the mythological baddies you'll square off against.

There's a decent game here, no doubt. In spite of a few blemishes, Dr. Jones did good—real good. If you number among those who've worn through countless videotape versions of his adventures, *The Emperor's Tomb* is worth exploring.

VERDICT ★★★★½

Like that squat golden Incan idol, this game may look a little funky, but it's definitely worth the effort.

IL-2 Sturmovik: Forgotten Battles

Back in the USSR BY TOM CHICK

GAME STATS

PUBLISHER: **UBI SOFT**
DEVELOPER: **MADDOX GAMES**
ESRB RATING: **TEEN; VIOLENCE**
GENRE: **FLIGHT SIMULATION**
PRICE: **$39.99**
REQUIREMENTS: **PENTIUM III 800, 256MB RAM, 1.1GB HARD DRIVE SPACE, 32MB 3D CARD** RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: **PENTIUM 4, 512MB RAM, 64MB 3D CARD**
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: **LAN, INTERNET (2-32 PLAYERS)**

Maddox Games' *IL-2 Sturmovik* was quite a surprise. Suddenly, out of a corner of the former Soviet Union came a complex and sophisticated sim that looked amazing. Unfortunately, flight sims were on the decline in terms of mass appeal. It didn't help that the Sturmovik was a Russian airplane no one had heard of, flying over a battlefield that was all but forgotten in the shadow of *Saving Private Ryan's* Normandy revival.

Now, *Forgotten Battles*, which is either a great standalone expansion pack or a slightly underachieving sequel, tries to infuse the sim with wider appeal. It does this partly by tossing in extra planes that range from the familiar to the funky. But more importantly, it fleshes out the bone-dry skeletal campaign that shipped with the original game.

The new planes include the sturdy but pokey P-47 Thunderbolt, a nice counterpart to the eponymous IL-2 tactical bomber. You'll also find American P-40s, British Hurricanes, and German He-111 bombers and Me-262 jets (ah, the sweet whine of those twin Jumo engines!). The less-familiar additions at least have character, including the snub-nosed little Brewster Buffalo, and the quaint I-153 and utterly weird TB-3 biplanes. There are also more variations of aircraft from later in the war.

Although the "make stuff go boom" crowd will enjoy the show, and the hardcore simmers will certainly appreciate the painstaking historical fidelity, many people in between will be scratching their heads. One of *IL-2*'s persistent shortcomings is the lack of information it provides for its lovingly modeled aircraft. Why would you ever want to fly one of those stubby Brewsters? What good is that La-7? And what on earth are those huge, honkin' guns up under that Stuka? You'll have to do your own homework, because *Forgotten Battles* is clearly targeted at people who already know this stuff. Another persistent shortcoming is the lack of situational awareness for mere mortals who rely on a useful padlock system to keep track of enemy airplanes. For all the difficulty toggles, there's still no concession to those who need a little help keeping track of what the other plane is doing in a dogfight.

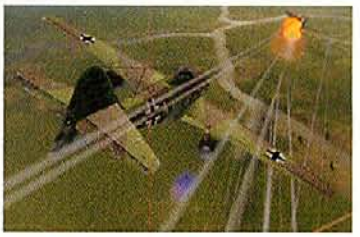
But *Forgotten Battles* really earns its wings in the new single-player campaigns, which are a damn sight better than the first game's linear canned missions. Now, you can play a dynamic career as a German, Russian, Hungarian, or Finnish pilot, flying a series of missions that track you and your squadron's progress over the course of the war. While it's not a full strategic campaign like those in *Red Baron* or *Falcon 4.0*, and it doesn't offer the strong sense of continuity Microsoft has put forth in its *Combat Flight Simulators*, it will keep you coming back for just one more mission.

And what missions they are. The terrain and plane models look better than ever, the flight physics are top notch, and the whole thing is tied together with a visceral "you are there!" grittiness. *IL-2* raised the bar for World War II flight sims, and *Forgotten Battles* nudges it up a little higher.

A new P-40 with cannons blazing.

This is either a great standalone expansion pack or a slightly underachieving sequel.

A Thunderbolt from the clear blue sky.



Achtung! Me-262!

Excuse me, can you direct us to World War I?

VERDICT ★★★★☆

***Forgotten Battles* is the paragon of WWII flight sims.**

EverQuest: The Legacy of Ykesha

Ribbit BY JEFF GREEN

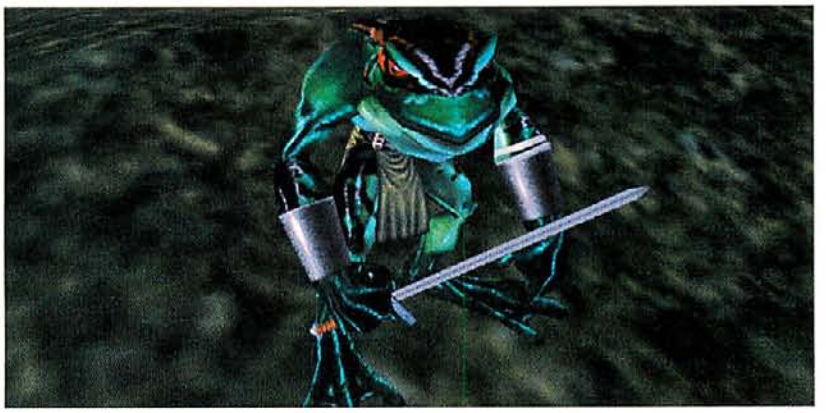
GAME STATS

PUBLISHER: SONY ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT
DEVELOPER: SONY ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT
GENRE: MASSIVE-MULTIPLAYER LIFE-SUCKING ONLINE RPG
ESRB RATING: TEEN; BLOOD AND GORE, VIOLENCE, SUGGESTIVE THEMES
PRICE: $21.99
REQUIREMENTS: PENTIUM II 400, 256MB RAM, 450MB HARD DRIVE SPACE, 28.8K INTERNET CONNECTION
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: PENTIUM III, 512MB RAM, 1.5GB HARD DRIVE SPACE, 56.6K INTERNET CONNECTION
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: YA THINK?

I love *EverQuest* as much as the next dork, but even I wish Sony would ease up on the expansions a bit. When the most noteworthy feature of your new expansion is the ability to role-play a frog, maybe that's a sign you're running low on ideas. I'm just sayin'.

The new playable Froglok race is the big new hook of *The Legacy of Ykesha*, which Sony is offering as a $21.99 download, but it's not really the coolest feature, except maybe for French (err, I mean, "Freedom") people. For me, the saving grace here is the continued refinement of the basic *EQ* interface and gameplay. Most notably, all players now have immediate access to an automap, which not only marks your location, but also notes all major NPC vendors (and what they sell), significantly reducing the "Where the hell am I?" factor. A new journal keeps track of all NPC conversations, theoretically making it easier to track quests, but it would've been infinitely better with more automation—right now it takes a lot of hands-on maintenance to prevent it from getting overloaded with every useless thing every NPC says to you.

Some of the other additions include five new zones and new spells for high-level players, a Looking For Group tool, a new inventory slot for charms—but as I think about these and everything else here, I just can't help but wonder: Why wasn't this a free download?



My new *EverQuest* character loves Jerry Lewis movies!

Even I wish Sony would ease up on the expansions a bit.

VERDICT ★★½☆☆

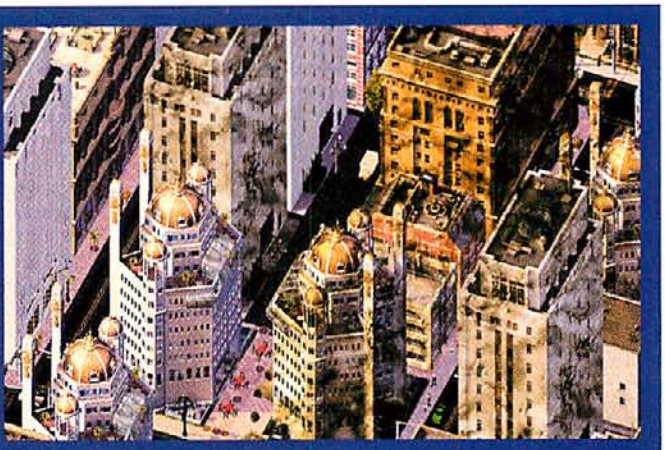
If you've always wanted to role-play a frog, this is the expansion for you.

GAME PATCHES

Revisionist History

SimCity 4, Destroyer Command, Silent Hunter 2

By Thomas L. McDonald



SimCity 4 is a worthy continuation of the series aside from one small hitch: It runs about as well as an old man on the 25th mile of an uphill marathon. The newest patch—available only through a fairly annoying autoinstall process—doesn't do anything to improve performance, but it does correct several minor and major annoyances. The best news is the feature that lets you turn off the autoroad layout during zoning by simply holding down the Shift key. Since autoroads only work occasionally, this on-the-fly solution is the best approach. Another welcome zoning option is the ability to change the orientation of lots by holding down the Alt key. New zone graphics have been added to better indicate the lot fronts.

On the bug-squishing front, the most important fixes are for glitches that let industry develop in areas inaccessible to commuters, kept freight trains from dropping off cargo at ports, and prevented airports from upgrading correctly. More minor changes include the return of airport and seaport pollution values, the addition of whales, and better support for SiS chipsets and the ATI Radeon R300 series cards.

Now, if only it would let me change zoom levels without taking more time to redraw the screen than Picasso took to paint *Guernica*....

***

Subsim Review (www.subsim.com) is the premier resource for submarine and nautical sim junkies. Its latest, quite ambitious project is a full conversion of *Silent Hunter 2* and *Destroyer Command* from flawed rTime multiplayer engines to full DirectPlay. The resulting downloadable patch radically improves online stability of these games while increasing the maximum number of players to 10. Other new fixes and new features include larger A.I. convoys, a working resupply element, and more realism and playability enhancements. Neal Stevens and Duane Doutel are doing fine work on these projects, so stop by and give your support.

1503 A.D.: The New World

1602 A.D. gets a face-lift and tummy tuck BY JOHN FLETCHER

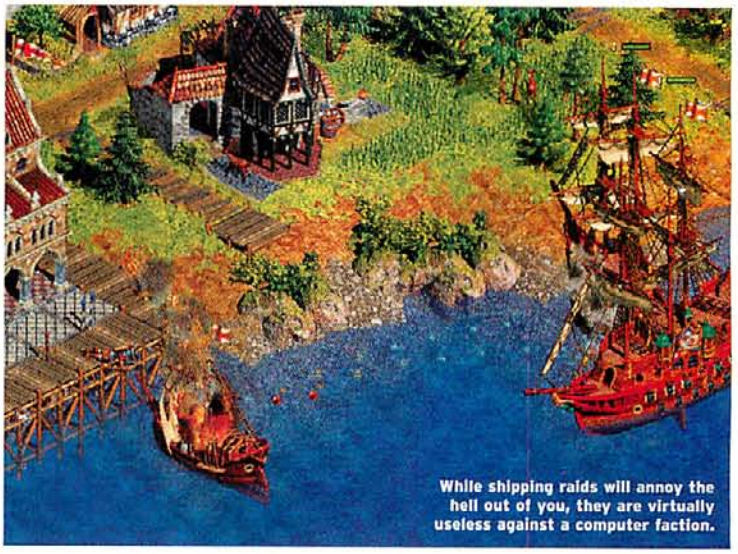
GAME STATS

PUBLISHER: ELECTRONIC ARTS
DEVELOPER: SUNFLOWER INTERACTIVE
GENRE: HISTORICAL STRATEGY
ESRB RATING: TEEN; VIOLENCE
PRICE: $39.99 REQUIREMENTS: PENTIUM II 500, 128MB RAM, 930MB HARD DRIVE SPACE
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: PENTIUM III 1GHZ, 256MB RAM
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: NONE

Hmmm, a strategy game where you don't have to smash, burn, and eradicate every last trace of your opponent to win—must come from Europe. Kill if you must, but *1503 AD: The New World* is an RTS that's more than content to let you build a peaceful colony and focus on economic viability.

The game begins with you scouting a promising location amid an island chain. *1503* has some nice 3D terrain, especially the island shorelines, but 2D units do some funny things, especially the ships, which go all *Philadelphia Experiment* when bunched too close together. The game's overall look is nice in a two-or-three-years ago kind of way.

Once you've found your slice of paradise, it's time to build your settlement. The city-building elements are far and away *1503*'s most compelling feature. There are five settlement levels, each expanding an incredibly deep palette of build choices and production possibilities. You'll need to leave space in your towns so you can strategically place advanced buildings later in the game.



While shipping raids will annoy the hell out of you, they are virtually useless against a computer faction.

The city-building elements are far and away *1503*'s most compelling feature.

As you build houses, the population increases. The citizenry's happiness depends on your ability to provide a range of staple and luxury goods. If the people get really unhappy, their houses crumble as they abandon your settlement, costing tax revenue and delaying advancement. Their ever-expanding appetites inevitably led me to establish colonies on other islands and begin trading with other cultures. *1503* does a good job assigning hot-button toggles for your towns and ships, and if you set up automated trade routes to keep things flowing, you can develop some pretty efficient supply routes. Still, especially early in the game, it seemed I always needed something, usually salt or building tools. Fortunately, trade ships show up quickly, and you'll soon find passive trading proves much more effective than active trading. Just offer a slightly higher than market price, and supplies will soon appear.

Build a strong economy and your settlements will thrive, allowing you to revel in the, um, graphical splendor of a vibrant city.

Compared to its economic side, *1503*'s military aspects are somewhat limited. The 13 ground units are matched up in rock/paper/scissors fashion, so it pays to have a balanced army. While combat itself is scrum-like, I enjoyed *1503*'s solution to conquering enemy territory: damage an enemy warehouse (which also doubles as a development hub) and then repair it. Voila! Every building in its control radius becomes yours.

But be warned: Military units are expensive to research, build, and equip. If your game economy is anything less than stellar, your conquering hordes will quickly run you to bankruptcy. This makes military expeditions a serious commitment. Harassment raids don't bother the computer much at all, so don't even bother to try.

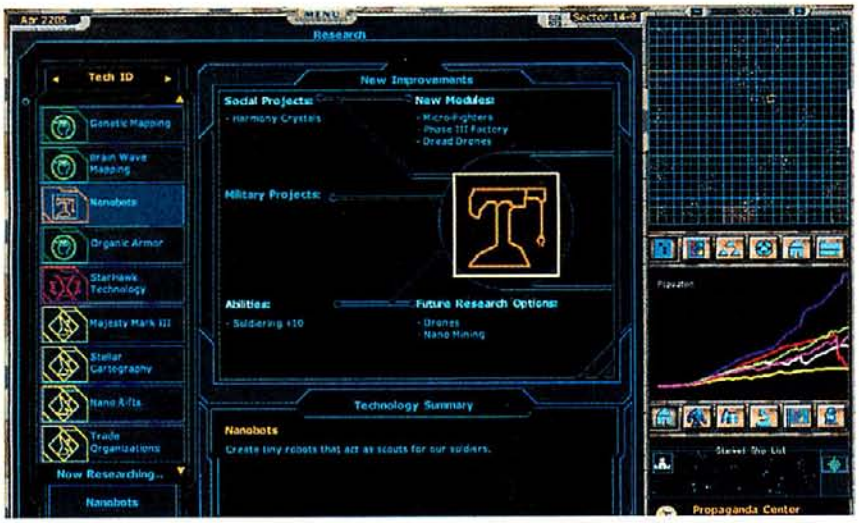
1503 has other problems. It's far too difficult to get a positive balance sheet going. I quit several games because I fell into negative income; it could be far more kind with trade. Also, I had trouble with any resolution but 1024x780. While *1503* won't rock your world, it won't be necessary to put a bag over your head in order to enjoy it.

Group 'em and go. Once the fighting starts, about the only real tactic is when to feed in reinforcements.

1503 A.D. offers colonization without the mess of famine, disease, genocide, and exploitation. Now, put on an Enya CD and enjoy the daily routine!

VERDICT ★★★★★

The dated visuals won't grab you, but the game's depth keeps things interesting if not addicting.



The tech tree is partially hidden, allowing you to view upcoming advances, but not those further off.

Galactic Civilizations

Meat and potatoes galaxy conquest **BY BRUCE GERYK**

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD EDITORS' CHOICE

GAME STATS

PUBLISHER: **STRATEGY FIRST**
DEVELOPER: **STARDOCK**
GENRE: **GALACTIC EMPIRE-BUILDING**
ESRB RATING: **EVERYONE**
PRICE: **$40**
REQUIREMENTS: **PENTIUM II 300, 128MB RAM, 600MB HARD DRIVE SPACE,**
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: **NONE**
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: **NONE**

Games are often faulted for failing to introduce new ideas, when their real failing is that the ideas they do use aren't put together well. *Galactic Civilizations* is the epitome of good design: You have to step back from the game to look at what you're playing, since it flows so well and you may miss the individual parts. You only notice they fit together perfectly.

You've seen this kind of planetary development, trade, diplomacy, technology research, and simplified starship combat in countless other space-empire games over the years. What isn't immediately obvious is how perfectly the game puts these concepts together. Whereas most such games are "conquer the universe" contests where everything eventually becomes secondary to building a giant fleet and island-hopping, Admiral Nimitz-style, across the map, *Galactic Civilizations* makes playing a trade-oriented civilization not only feasible, but fun.

Much of this has to do with the diplomacy system. Rather than the standard balancing tool of having other empires dislike you more and more as your empire expands, the A.I. in this game is capable of some remarkably human-like behavior. If you treat another civilization well, it may remain loyal to you. Likewise, it's possible to stay on the good side of a large competitor. Players will also face a series of moral dilemmas that directly affect gameplay and determine whether the player's civilization is good or evil. There's a lot more here than just building starships.

Strategy game veterans and novices alike will find *Galactic Civilizations* easy to get into: find planets, build improvements, discover new technologies. The game clearly spells out each tech's effects, which allow for new ships and projects, improve your abilities, or permit the building of new starship modules.

Some players might consider the lack of detailed ship designs and tactical combat a shortcoming. While it's true the simple combat and fixed ship classes won't satisfy some, it's all part of the balanced design that makes this such a superb game.

While the game has no multiplayer, it does have outstanding A.I., and the Metaverse feature allows players to upload completed games to a database the A.I. can use to improve its play. Even straight out of the box, though, *Galactic Civilizations* is essential for any real strategy game fan.

VERDICT ★★★★½

Forget the stinging disappointment of *MOO3*—this is the best space 4X game in years.

The A.I. in this game is capable of some remarkably human-like behavior.

Jurassic Park: Operation Genesis

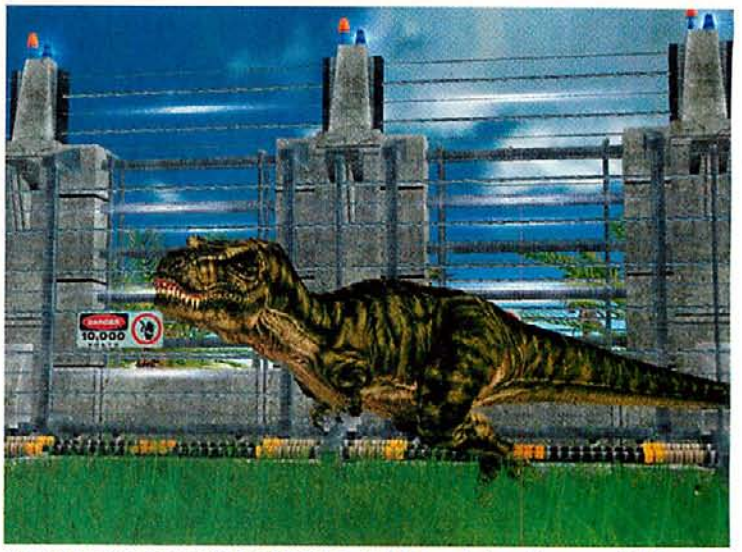
Tyrannosaurus tycoon **BY THIERRY NGUYEN**

GAME STATS

PUBLISHER: **UNIVERSAL INTERACTIVE**
DEVELOPER: **BLUE TONGUE**
SOFTWARE GENRE: **JURASSIC PARK MANAGING SIM**
ESRB RATING: **TEEN; VIOLENCE**
PRICE: **$29.99** REQUIREMENTS: **PENTIUM III 400, 128MB RAM, 700MB HARD DRIVE SPACE** RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: **PENTIUM III 800, 256MB RAM**
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: **NONE**

Not many games have given as pitiful a first impression as *Jurassic Park: Operation Genesis*. It's 10 years too late (based solely on the original 1993 movie) and at first glance, it appears to be a desperate mishmash of the ever-popular tycoon genre with dinosaurs, shooting action, and bad celebrity imitators. But, once you get past such silliness as looking at imperfect portraits of Richard Attenborough, Samuel L. Jackson, Laura Dern, and B.D. Wong (Sam Neill's portrait is actually quite accurate), you'll see that *Jurassic Park: Operation Genesis* isn't as bad as you might think.

The basic concept for the core game is that the movie never happened; you're put in place to be the new manager of Jurassic Park. Bundle of cash in hand, you lay down structures and enclosures, breed and hatch dinosaurs, and hope that your customers don't get eaten. As you attract and impress more visitors, you earn star ratings, ultimately working toward being a five-star park.



Yes, you can invest money to breed T-Rexes. Just be sure to have the appropriate fences and gun turrets in case they start eating everyone.

You can highlight each individual person to see what they like and dislike about the park, and what kind of dino action they wanna see.

You can hop in the helicopter when you need to rescue people or shoot dinos in the head for "retirement."

Jurassic Park: Operation Genesis isn't as bad as you might think.

The actual park administration is pretty easy to grasp, letting both newbies and tycoon-fans dive easily into dino management. Besides laying down buildings to bilk money out of people, you also have to assign dig sites to your fossil excavation teams (more sites are unlocked as you increase the star rating), and then use the genetics lab to extract the DNA used to hatch the dinosaurs themselves.

Enhancing the tycoon aspect of the game is the option of letting you experience the park firsthand. Not only can you track individual visitors throughout their stay, but you can also look through all of your attractions, drive a land speeder on safari, or pilot a helicopter when "retiring" rampaging tyrannosauruses.

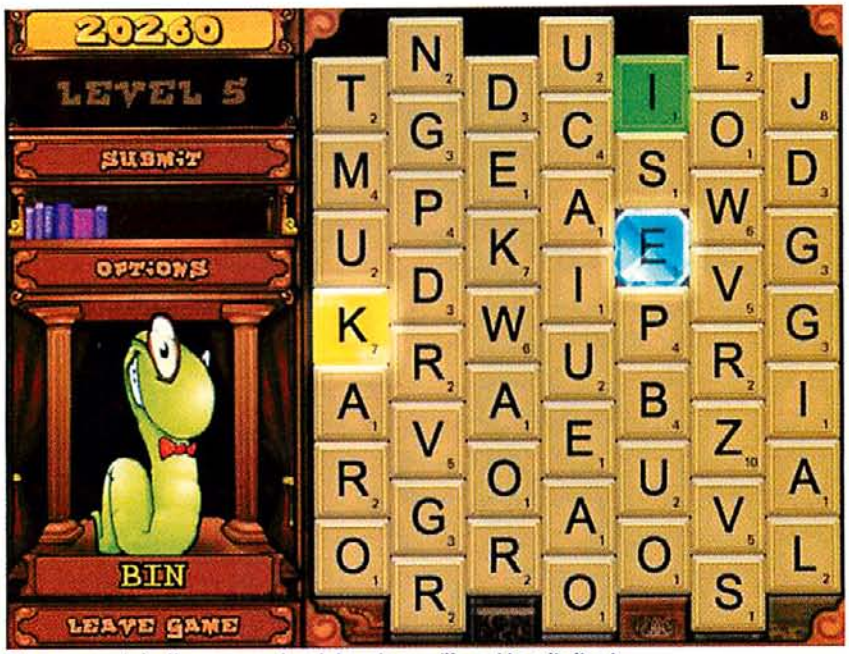
There are also numerous minigames and scenarios, such as "take photos of dinosaurs" or "rescue the president," in case you want to stop being a park manager altogether. They're entertaining enough distractions, but no real substitute for the *Jurassic Park* tycoon mode. There's also the Site B mode, which is essentially a sandbox in which you can mess around all you like with dinosaurs, without worrying about money or visitors.

Despite the amount of stuff to do, *JPOG* isn't particularly deep. For example, there aren't that many structures available, so your park tends to have a whole lot of the same buildings scattered all over the place. Though there are 25 different dinosaurs, there are only five dinosaur-centric buildings to charge visitors for. None of the dinosaurs swim or fly; they're all landbound. On the whole, while the dinosaurs do act "realistic" in terms of herding together or being territorial, they can also be pretty dumb, often getting caught in clipping errors, or ignoring a huge lake while complaining of thirst. The reports aren't helpful enough, focusing on crises-of-the-moment rather than overall progress.

For casual gamers and dinosaur nuts, it's an entertaining enough romp into the *Jurassic Park* universe. More hardcore players will want for more, and even the diversionary minigames aren't quite enough to cover up the lack of depth. It's like either the second or third *Jurassic Park* movie (whichever you prefer): It's not nearly as good as the first, but it's not as bad as the whichever-you-feel-is-inferior one.

VERDICT ★★★½☆

A decent take on the tycoon genre, with the extra bonus of seeing people get chewed up by a T-Rex.



The worm crawls in, the worm crawls out, he eats your life, and he spits it out.

Bookworm Deluxe

All you need is "qua" BY DANA JONGEWAARD

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD EDITORS' CHOICE

GAME STATS

PUBLISHER: POPCAP GAMES
DEVELOPER: POPCAP GAMES
GENRE: PUZZLE GAME
ESRB RATING: NOT RATED
PRICE: $24.95
REQUIREMENTS: PENTIUM II 300, 64MB RAM, 10MB HARD DRIVE SPACE, INTERNET CONNECTION
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: PENTIUM II 500, 128MB RAM
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: NONE

At first glance, it looks like a children's game. And the premise is very simple: String letters together to make words and eliminate those tiles from the board. If tiles that are on fire sink to the bottom of the board, the game is over.

It seems harmless, but this game is about as innocuous as the Ebola virus. You start off playing a few short rounds, learning key words for getting rid of tough tiles ("qua" is the shortest word using the letter-pair Qu). And then, suddenly you discover that you just spent 18 hours glued to your computer screen and the board is imprinted on your brain when you close your eyes. People in our office have actually gone home and fought with family members about whose turn it is to play.

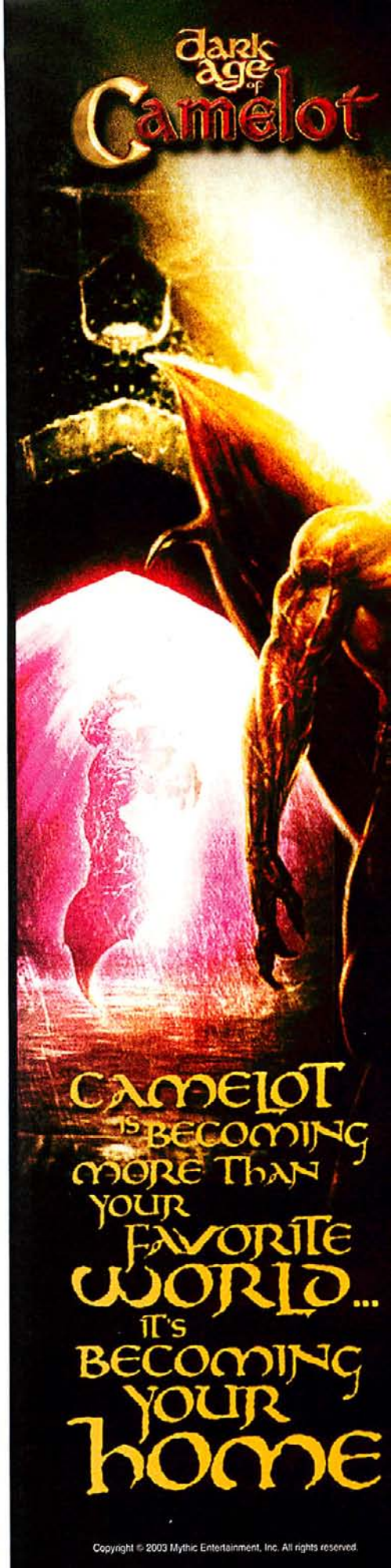
Technically, you could classify *Bookworm* as an educational game, since you expand your vocabulary through your desperate attempts to create words to get rid of those flaming tiles–and it often works, introducing you to new words like "pashes," "taxa," and "frena." After a while, though, you'll find yourself getting angry when combinations that seem like they should be words aren't. I'm still not convinced that "glox" and "sein" weren't just accidentally left off the list of acceptable words.

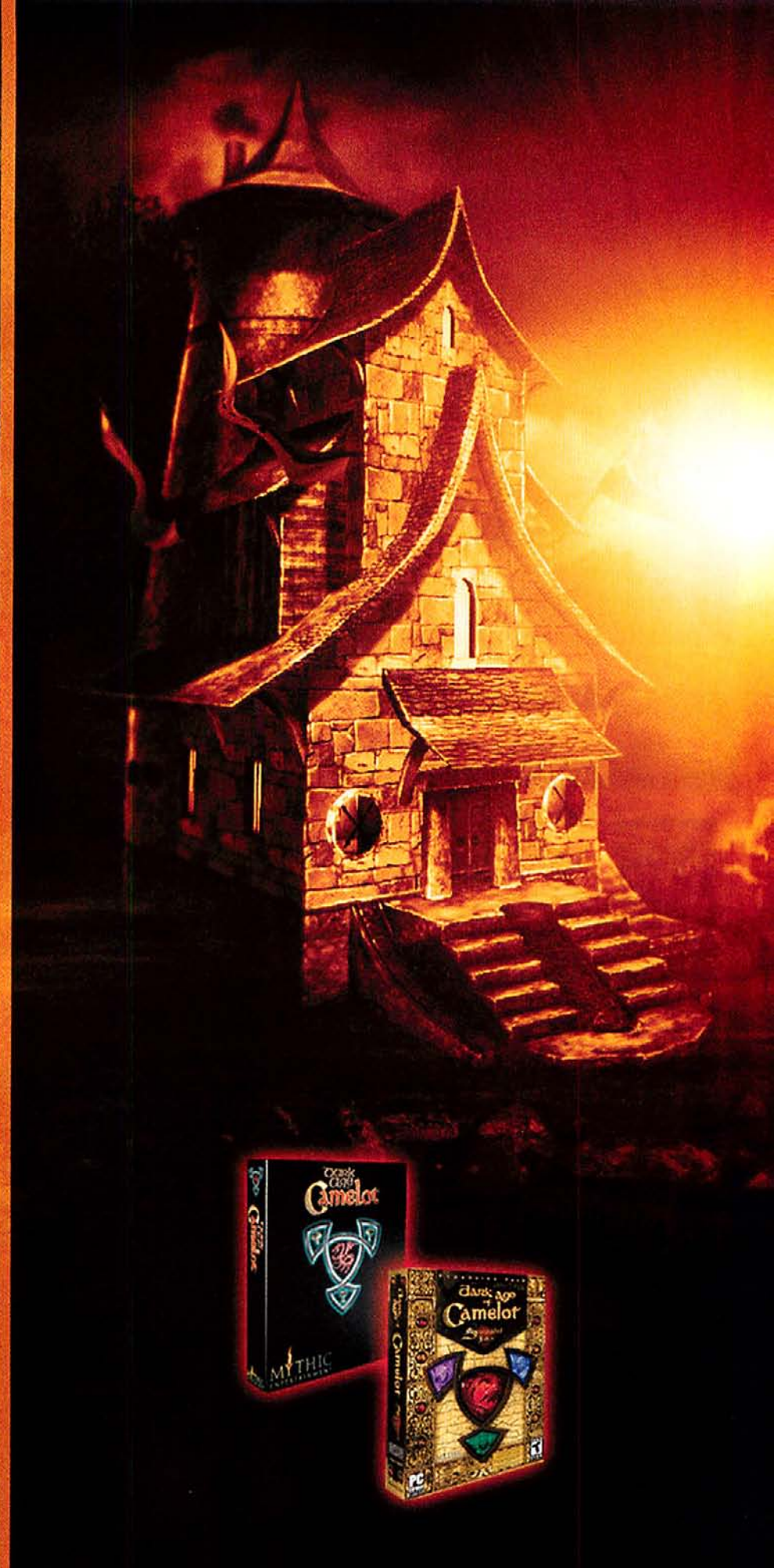
Two modes of play are available. For those who like to mull their options (or who don't want to be penalized when they have to quickly minimize the game when the boss walks in), there is the untimed Classic game. For those who like to have a little extra wake-up jolt in addition to that triple espresso, the Action game provides flaming letters that ignite the surrounding tiles, making speed of the essence.

Since *Bookworm* has been introduced at *CGW*, productivity on work-related matters has plummeted to new lows. However, the staff has been extremely productive in its attempts to get on *Bookworm*'s online daily high-score board. I'd love to recommend this game, but before I can wholeheartedly endorse it, the Surgeon General should probably put some sort of warning label on the box so you're fully informed about what you're getting yourself into.

This game is about as innocuous as the Ebola virus.

VERDICT ★★★★★
More addictive than crack, and better for your brain, too!

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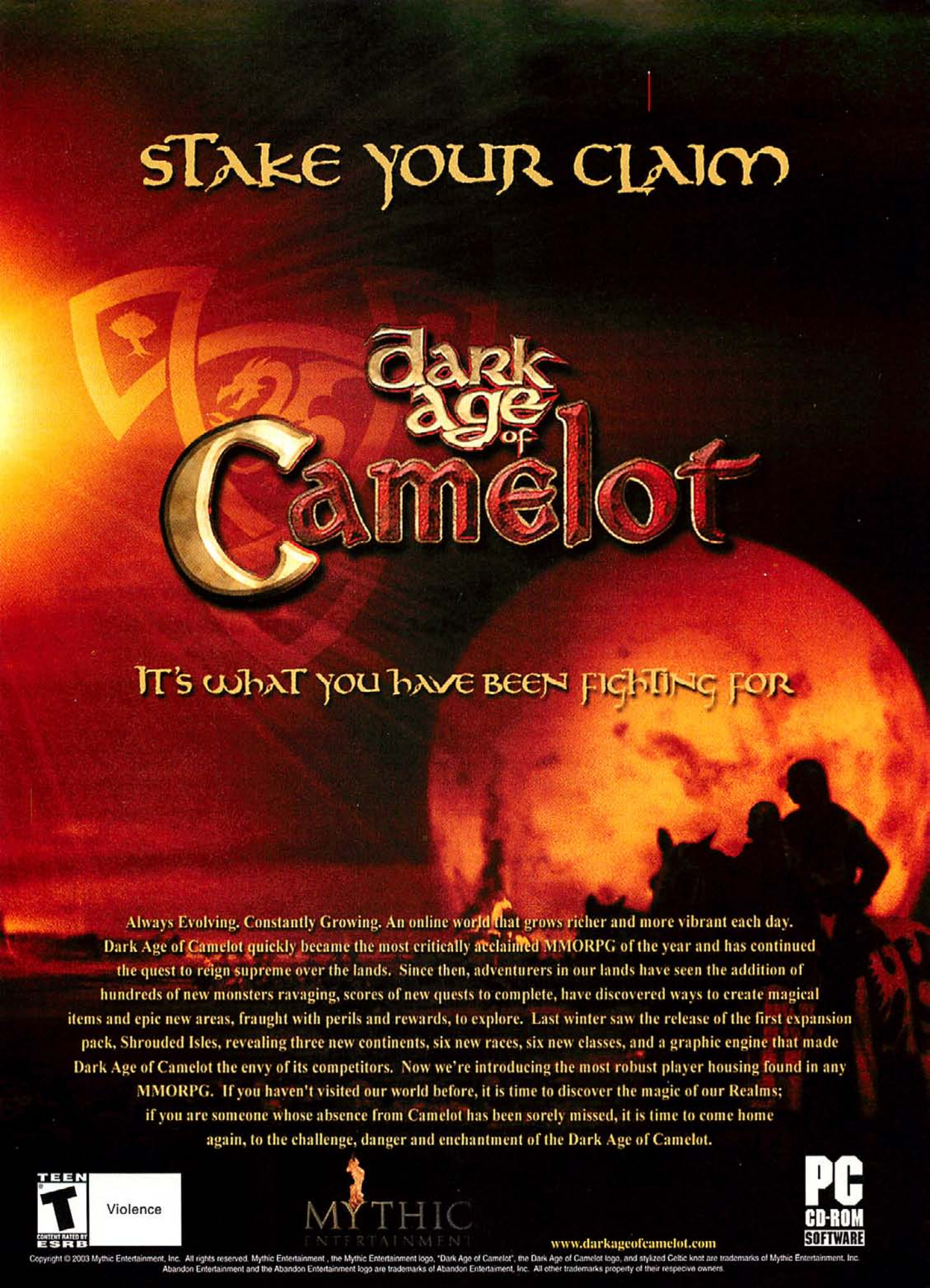

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High Heat 2004

Firesale! BY GEORGE JONES

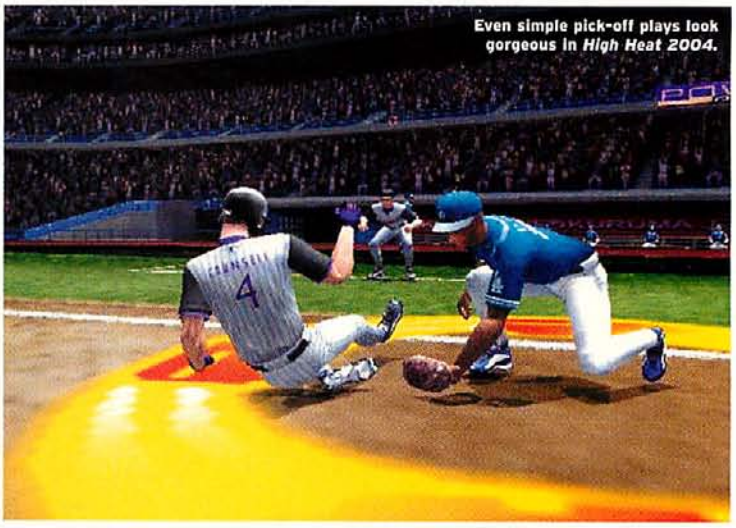
GAME STATS
PUBLISHER: 3DO
DEVELOPER: 3DO
GENRE: SPORTS
ESRB RATING: EVERYONE
PRICE: $49.99
REQUIREMENTS: PENTIUM II 400, 32MB RAM, 300MB HARD DRIVE SPACE
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: PENTIUM III 800, 128MB RAM
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: ONLINE ONLY

And you thought Kirby Puckett going O.J. was bad. Apparently in the cash-starved world of 3DO, drastic times call for drastic measures. Like abandoning the gamers who catapulted your title to prominence. *High Heat 2004*, 3DO's sure-shot Hall of Fame baseball sim has become a Venice Beach bodybuilder of a game: strong, buff, good-looking on the outside, and flaccid under the belt.

It's shocking, disappointing, and puzzling. *High Heat 2004* boasts a new look that could have—no, should have—made it an instant classic, had the game stayed on its original course. The fields appear more attractively massive than any baseball game to date. Players' animations at the plate and on the field look so smoothly fluid and realistic, you'll find yourself replaying even the simplest of plays. Unfortunately, 3DO's blatant attempt at 1) cutting costs and 2) appealing to a broader PS2-based audience might just flush four years' worth of excellence down the drain.

A complete lack of mouse support is the painful tip of this iceberg. You can't use your mouse anywhere in the game...not on menus, not to substitute players. It's like the 20-year-old peripheral never existed. Further, there's no easy way to view and filter statistics, no way to see who's batting next when you make a pitching change, no way to quickly determine whether your bullpen pitchers have warmed up. Did we mention no mouse support?

These days, it would be easy to ball up all this regression and deem it yet another slap in the face of the PC gamer. But in *High Heat*'s case, it's much more than a dissing. It's careless and possibly even negligent design. Computer baseball means match-ups, statistics, and pitchers in the bullpen. Disregarding these integral notions of strategy is akin to eliminating the audible or the back-up quarterback in football.


Even simple pick-off plays look gorgeous in *High Heat 2004*.

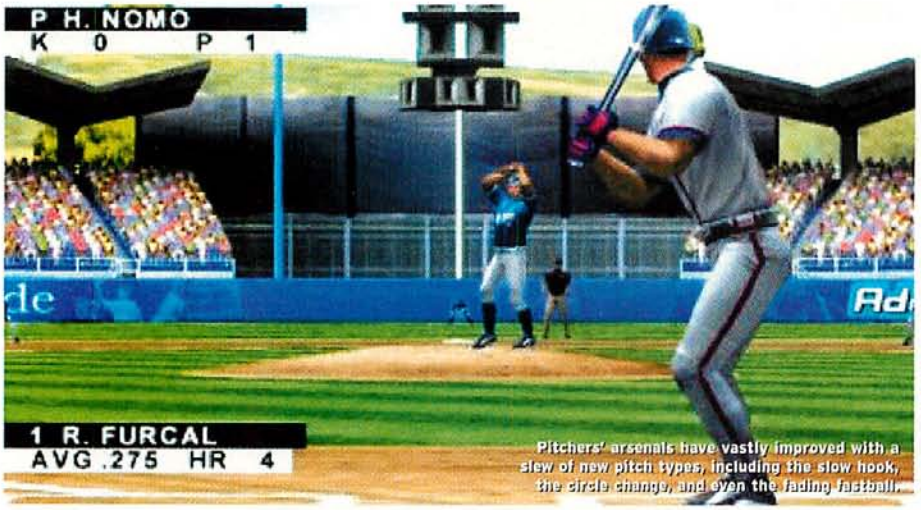
A complete lack of mouse support is the painful tip of this iceberg.

And consider this: for three years running, the *High Heat* series has featured all these options. But no more. Some how, some way, console gaming has become synonymous with more shallow statistical and strategic options. Have PS2 gamers become dumber or less worthy? It sure seems that way.

The irony is that, despite all this, *High Heat 2004* remains a fine baseball game. On the field, at least. The batter-pitcher match-up remains the most enjoyable duel ever in a baseball game; pitches move realistically coming to the plate, and the velocity of the fastball versus the change-up feels perfect.

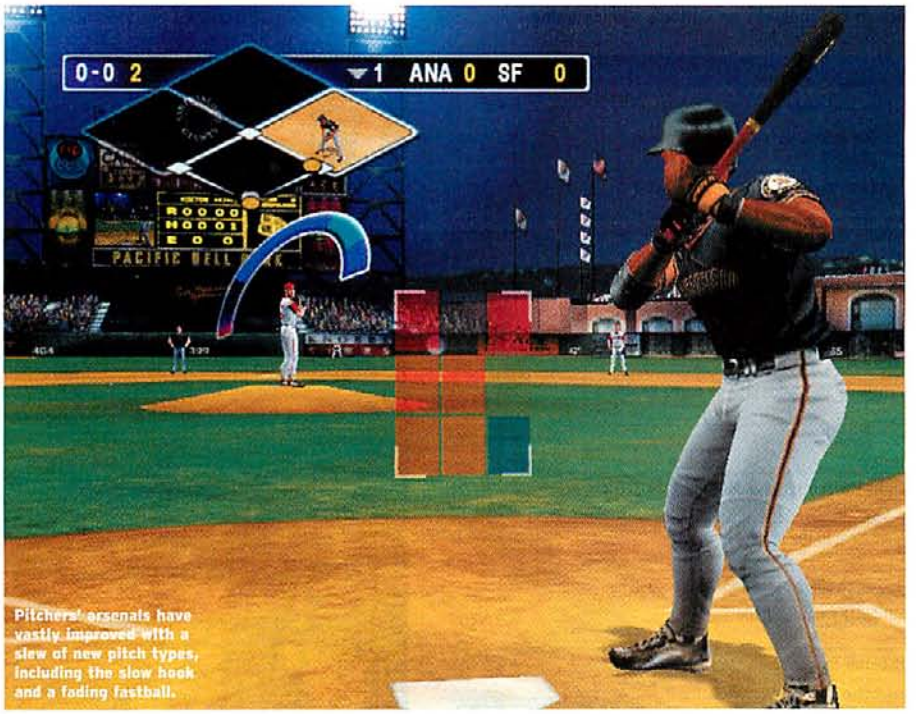
Unfortunately, compared to the amazing way *High Heat 2004* looks, the whole experience sounds under-sampled and flat. This is because the series has used the same sound effects for the last few years. Still though, the thwack when Barry Bonds connects squarely with a fastball produces one of the more satisfying sound effects in all of gaming.

But—and long-time PC sports fans have witnessed as much with such franchises as Sierra's *Front Page Sports Football* and even EA Sports' late *Triple Play* series—sports games can only coast in one direction: downhill. With EA Sports getting serious about baseball again, *High Heat*'s days might be numbered. Like a once-great franchise shedding high-priced free agents, this may be *High Heat*'s last winning season before an ignominious plummeting to irrelevance.



Pitchers' arsenals have vastly improved with a slew of new pitch types, including the slow hook, the circle change, and even the fading fastball.

VERDICT ★★★★★
A great franchise goes in the wrong direction.



Pitchers' arsenals have vastly improved with a slew of new pitch types, including the slow hook and a fading fastball.

MVP Baseball 2003

EA Sports rethinks PC baseball **BY GEORGE JONES**

GAME STATS

PUBLISHER: **ELECTRONIC ARTS**
DEVELOPER: **EA SPORTS**
GENRE: **SPORTS**
ESRB RATING: **EVERYONE**
PRICE: **$39.99**
REQUIREMENTS: **PENTIUM III 500, 64MB RAM (128MB FOR WINDOWS 2000/XP), 1.25GB HARD DRIVE SPACE**
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: **PENTIUM III 700, 256MB RAM**
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: **HOTSEAT, LAN, INTERNET (2 PLAYERS)**

MVP Baseball should be called *Barry Bonds Baseball*. Or *Dusty Baker Baseball*. Or maybe even *John Madden Baseball*. After playing this sim for 10 minutes, it becomes apparent that this brand-new EA Sports series owes more to the Madden legacy and model than anything else. The alt- and indie-rock soundtracks are just the first sign. Visually, *MVP Baseball* will blow your mind. And the gameplay, which incorporates an unprecedented level of control on the field, represents a significant advance in the PC baseball category...even if it does feel frustrating and limiting at times.

For the first time ever in a baseball game, individual batters' strengths and weaknesses within the strike zone are displayed in what has just become the most innovative representation of the pitcher-batter match-up seen to date. Finally, a game that recognizes what fans of real-life baseball have known for years: Some players can't hit balls high in the strike zone, only connecting with the low-and-away pitch. It's not perfect, but this new outlook on hitting makes *MVP Baseball* more personal, more realistic, and more fun. It's also indicative of a concerted effort by EA Sports to increase the amount of interaction and control to previously unimaginable levels.

This emphasis on control doesn't always work as effectively as it does at the plate. The pitching model, for example, forces you to make pitches using a Pitch meter similar to PC golf's tri-click interface. You hold down the corresponding Pitch button on your controller while the Pitch meter fills up, then press the button again as the meter swings back through a green "control zone."

Unfortunately, this innovative pitching interface proves far too easy to master, to the point that the ratio of strikes to balls becomes obscenely unrealistic. Human-controlled pitchers will possess super-human control for the first four or five innings, until fatigue makes the timing more difficult. Because unpredictability—will my starting pitcher have his good stuff today?—is so integral to the real-life sport, *MVP Baseball* loses substantial points because of that. Games like 3DO's *High Heat* generate much more tension on the mound through much less control.

Along similar lines, the base-running feels more complicated and frustrating than it should. Still, the novelty and promise of these distinguishing characteristics more than makes up for the initially flawed implementation. Variation and innovation are positive, particularly in sports games that can become overly dependent on convention.

While EA Sports' initial offering lacks the capacity of games like *High Heat* in terms of managing the bullpen or your minor league rosters, it does imbue the Franchise mode with an interesting set of short- and long-term goals, as well as a visceral sense of momentum from series to series via the game's Momentum meter.

Flawed in some areas and strong in others, *MVP Baseball* remains a promising new start for EA Sports in the realm of digital baseball. The unbelievable look combined with the courageous rethinking of the pitcher-batter showdown elevates it to the previous level of 3DO's *High Heat* series. With the right tweaks, you can expect a true fall classic from next year's version.

VERDICT ★★★★½
EA Sports delivers an unprecedented level of control and innovation to PC baseball.

It's not perfect, but this new outlook on hitting makes *MVP Baseball* more personal, more realistic, and more fun.

Fielders have throwing meters, too—hold down the Throw button for too long and you might make an error.

REVIEWINDEX

CGW capsules of recent reviews. Game names in red indicate an Editor's Choice game.

GAME	ISSUE	VERDICT	SCORE
American Conquest	05/03	Impossible to control, impossible to play	★★½☆☆
Archangel	04/03	All that's missing is fun and competent game design—an action-adventure nightmare	★★☆☆☆
Arx Fatalis	03/03	A little rough around the edges, this *Ultima Underworld* wannabe is good fun	★★★★☆
Asheron's Call 2: Fallen Kings	03/03	This next-gen MMORPG is going to need killer monthly episodes to justify the fees	★★★★☆
Astonia III	03/03	Deeper and better thought-out than many of the prettier MMORPGs	★★★½☆
Battlefield 1942	01/03	The Multiplayer Game of the Year is a complete blast	★★★★½
Battlefield 1942: Road to Rome	04/03	Great new maps and weapons enhance an already-classic multiplayer shooter	★★★★½
Battle Realms: Winter of the Wolf	03/03	Often dull and unchallenging, it adds little to *Battle Realms*	★★☆☆☆
Chemicus: Journey to the Other Side	05/03	Puts the "bore" in "boron"	★★☆☆☆
Civilization III: Play the World	02/03	Inexcusably buggy as shipped; unplayable without the patch	★☆☆☆☆
Combat Mission: Barbarossa to Berlin	02/03	The closest thing we have to the perfect wargame	★★★★½
Cossacks: Back to War	04/03	Too many units, too much micromangement, not enough fun	★★☆☆☆
Dark Age of Camelot: Shrouded Isles	04/03	Plenty of new stuff for the serious *DAOC* addict	★★★½☆
Deadly Dozen: Pacific Theater	03/03	Budget price with better-than-average gameplay	★★★½☆
Dragon's Lair 3D: Return to the Lair	03/03	Buggy, poorly designed, and disappointing, it's still better than the arcade version	★★☆☆☆
The Elder Scrolls III: Tribunal	03/03	This expansion hits on both the strengths and weaknesses of *Morrowind*	★★★½☆
Europa 1400: The Guild	05/03	There are three or four games lurking here, all of them enjoyable	★★★★☆
Ghost Recon: Island Thunder	01/03	Top-notch mission pack makes a good game into an outstanding one	★★★★½
G.I. Combat	03/03	It's *Close Combat* gone 3D and gone bad	★☆☆☆☆
Hearts of Iron	02/03	An enormously ambitious WWII strategy game with a lot of flaws	★★★½☆
Hegemonia: Legions of Iron	03/03	Not enough strategy, not enough game	★★☆☆☆
Highland Warriors	05/03	Better than haggis, but not by very much	★★☆☆☆
Impossible Creatures	04/03	All style, no substance, this routine RTS is a huge missed opportunity	★★½☆☆
James Bond 007: NIghtFire	03/03	Almost got the first-ever half-star rating in *CGW*	★☆☆☆☆
Master of Orion 3	05/03	This disappointment demands too much and provides far too little	★★★☆☆
MechWarrior 4: Mercenaries	02/03	The best *MechWarrior* yet	★★★★½
Medal of Honor Allied Assault: Spearhead	02/03	Taut, well-scripted add-on that's just too short	★★★½☆
Medieval: Total War	12/02	The ultimate historical strategy game	★★★★★
NASCAR Racing 2003 Season	05/03	Papyrus' last NASCAR game goes out with a whimper	★★★½☆
NHL 2003	02/03	The same old arcade hockey game, with updated rosters and downgraded A.I.	★★★½☆
O.R.B.	03/03	This *Homeworld* clone abandons much of what that game did well	★★½☆☆
Platoon	03/03	Every bit as bad as you'd expect it to be	★☆☆☆☆
PureSim Baseball 2003	05/03	If you're looking for a good text-based baseball GM sim, this is the game for you	★★★½☆
RalliSport Challenge	03/03	The fun of the Xbox version doesn't quite make the jump to PC	★★★☆☆
Robin Hood: The Legend of Sherwood	03/03	A updated, deep squad-based game in the *Commandos* vein	★★★★☆
SimCity4	03/03	A fresh, gorgeous take on a classic, but you'll need a beefy computer to run it	★★★★☆
The Sims Online	04/03	More chat room than game, this is the first blemish on the *Sims* empire	★★★☆☆
Soldiers of Anarchy	03/03	Save time and money and pull *Fallout Tactics* from your local bargain bin	★★½☆☆
Splinter Cell	03/03	One of the best stealth-action games ever comes to PC	★★★★½
Star Trek: Starfleet Command III	03/03	The Next Gen license is wasted in a game that's a few big patches away from being good	★★★☆☆
Strike Fighters: Project 1	03/03	Months of bug fixes, polish, and user-mods away from being worth your money	★★☆☆☆
Unreal II: The Awakening	04/03	Only the early parts of this FPS match the outstanding graphics—sagginess ensues	★★★★☆
Unreal Tournament 2003	01/03	Gorgeous and polished up, but lacking revitalized gameplay	★★★★☆

CGW RECOMMENDS

Freelancer

★★★★★

Mods have started popping up online for this addictive space sim, but who cares? We're busier exploring this beautiful sprawling universe now than we were back when we played the story. Intense action, constant upgrading, great multiplayer—*Freelancer* is the best space sim since *Privateer.*

No One Lives Forever 2

★★★★½

We weren't as blown away by Cate Archer's second adventure, and the reason is clear: The first game set the bar incredibly high. But how can we not love Cate? This is the rare shooter that has to be savored to be fully enjoyed. The ingenious sense of humor suffusing every aspect of gameplay makes the *NOLF* franchise a favorite.

Praetorians

★★★★★

When we saw *Praetorians* at last year's E3, we couldn't have been more underwhelmed. Not anymore. This historical strategy game dodges the map-puzzle curse that damns so many other titles and delivers a solid series of tactical challenges where effective exploitation of terrain is crucial. It won't make you forget *Medieval: Total War,* but it will make you forget you've got a year until *Rome: Total War.*

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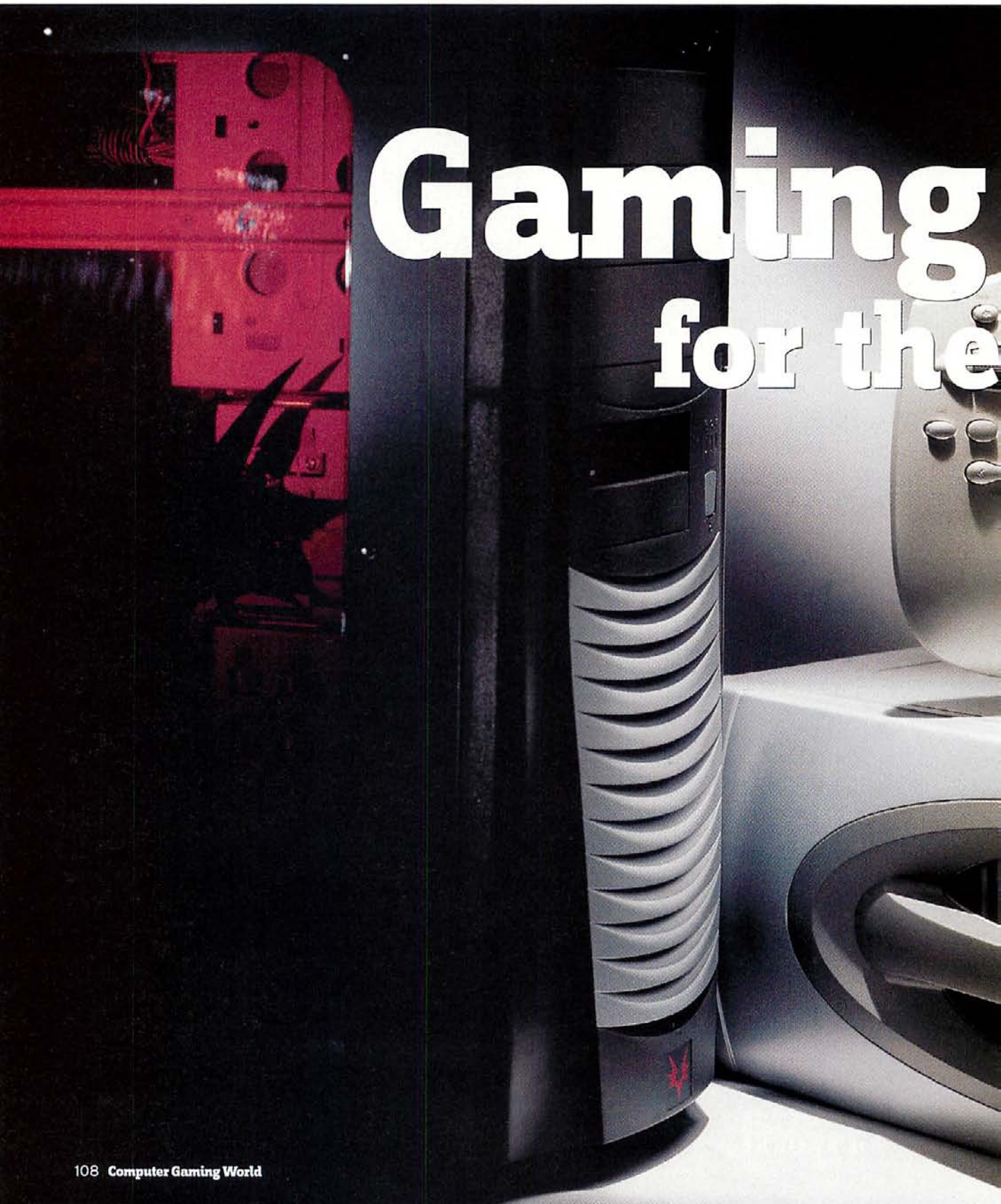
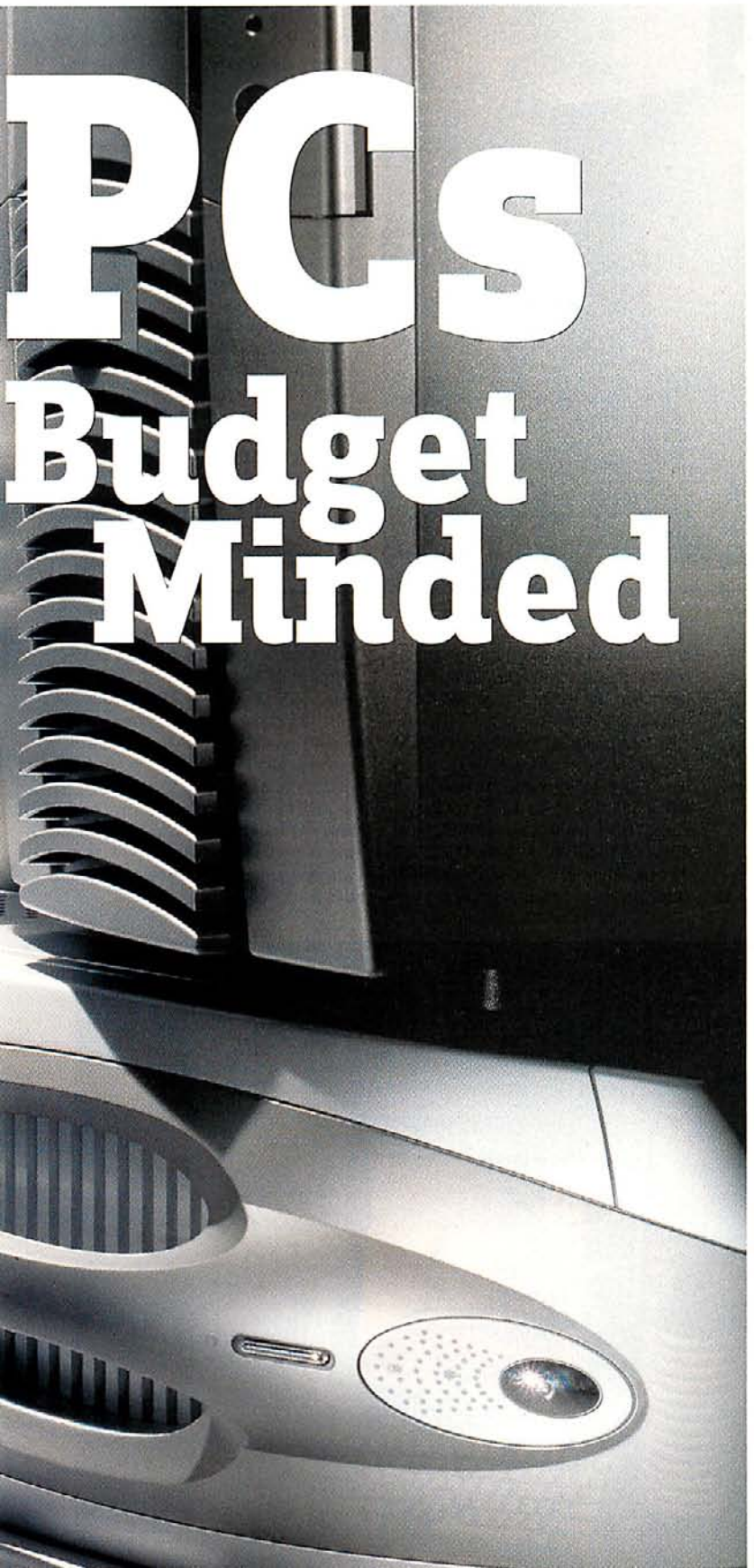
Tech

The best ways to part with your hard-earned money Edited by William O'Neal



Gaming for the



PCs Budget Minded

Full-fledged gaming rigs for under $1,500? You betcha!

I'm always reviewing top-of-the-line rigs—you know, those $4,000 screamers from outfits like Voodoo, Falcon, and Alienware. The thing is, not everyone (myself included) has four large to drop on a computer. With that in mind, I decided to do a mini roundup of "budget-minded" rigs. I rated the three machines in the roundup on five criteria: speed, price, stability, support, and upgradeability.

Because of the open-ended nature of this piece, I expected some variety in the rigs' components, so I was decidedly shocked when three nearly identical machines showed up in my office. All of them were equipped with 80GB Western Digital hard drives, Radeon 9700 Pros, 512MB of RAM, and nForce2-based motherboards; the CPUs were also similar, ranging from an Athlon XP 2700+ in the Vicious rig to an XP 3000+ in the ABS machine. But enough about that, to the reviews!

By William O'Neal

Photography by Arnold Tiosejo

Extreme Velocity

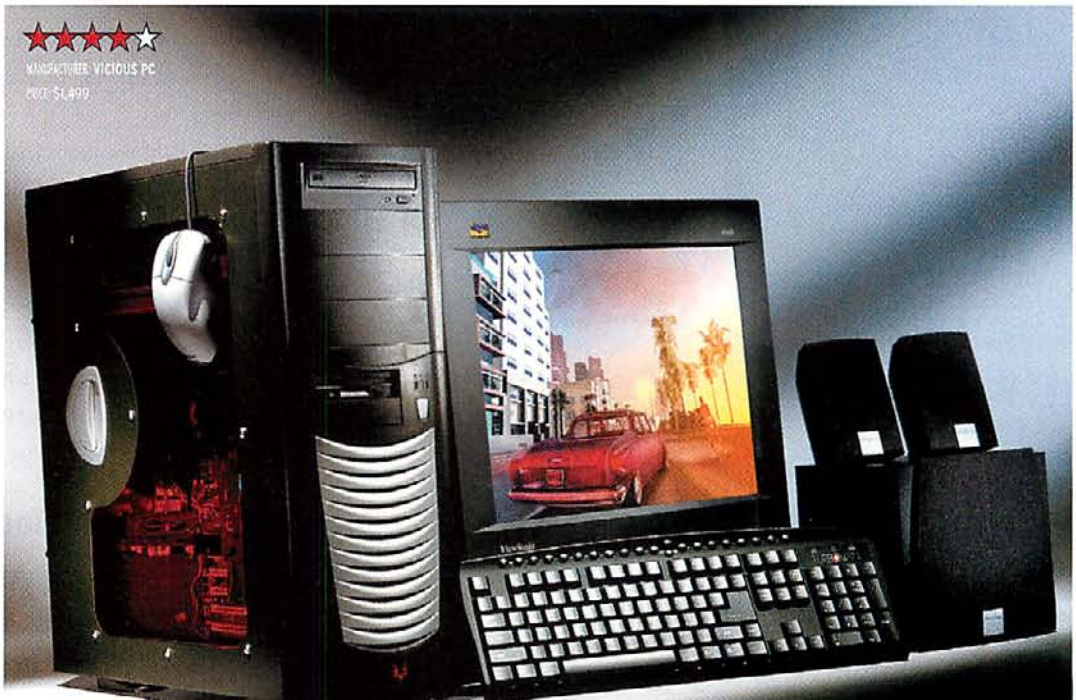
The Vector VX is a testament to Velocity Micro's ability to put together a quality rig; this machine is not only the fastest of the three tested, it's also the most stable. Velocity Micro's rig ships with an Athlon XP 2800+ and Asus' A7N8X Deluxe (nForce2). Rounding out the list of components is 512MB of Kingston HyperX DDR memory and ViewSonic's E90 19-inch monitor. The Vector VX is the most solid rig in this roundup, performing every test flawlessly. While the other machines look cool, Velocity Micro opts for stability and raw speed.

This machine's got a 3DMark2001 SE Pro score of 16429 at 1024x768x32 with AA and AF turned off. The Vector VX again kicked serious ass in the individual game tests. Its *Serious Sam: TSE* score of 59fps at 1600x1200x32 with 4x AA turned on clearly shows this rig's OpenGL performance, and its *Unreal Tournament 2003* Botmatch score of 44fps at 1600x1200x32 with 4x AA turned on proves the machine's Direct3D abilities.

Vicious Newcomer

Rocking AMD's Athlon XP 2700+ CPU, the Vicious PC Phantom 2 isn't the fastest rig in this story; that said, aside from some artifacts in *IL-2: Sturmovik*, the thing is rock solid. Like the other machines in this story, the Phantom 2 comes equipped with 512MB of memory, Western Digital's 80GB hard drive, and a Radeon 9700 Pro. In addition to its components, I also really like this rig's snazzy case design. Vicious is a relative newcomer, but it's quickly getting the hang of this business.

Performancewise, the Vicious Phantom 2 is the slowest machine in this roundup; however, its superior stability (compared to the ABS rig) helped it earn second place. The Phantom 2 scored 15230 at 3DMark2001 SE Pro at 1024x768x32 with AA and AF turned off. However, artificial benchmarks tell only part of the story—the Phantom 2 fares much better in actual game tests. This machine scores 55fps in *Serious Sam: TSE* at 1600x1200x32 with 4x AA turned on, only four frames per second slower than the first place Velocity Micro. Similarly, the Phantom 2's *Unreal Tournament 2003* Botmatch score of 43fps at 1600x1200x32 with 4x AA turned on is only one frame per second slower than the Velocity Micro. There's no reason why any gamer wouldn't be pleased with this machine.



"Where's My Walker?"

In the past, machines from ABS Computers have been dependable—which is why I am surprised that the Ultimate M8 submitted for this piece has so many stability issues. The Velocity Micro machine not only bested it in nearly every game test, that machine didn't repeatedly crash in *Dungeon Siege* and *Serious Sam: TSE* (as the ABS machine did). Since these rigs are basically the same, I could chalk up the ABS' stability issues only to the motherboard or the CPU. ABS did ship the Ultimate M8 with a good list of components, and I love the case. While the ABS rig is the second-fastest in this story, I have to knock it for stability issues.

The Ultimate M8's 3DMark2001 SE Pro score of 15691 at 1024x768x32 with AA and AF turned off lands it squarely between the Velocity Micro and the Vicious machines. The Ultimate M8 tied the Velocity Micro machine in *Unreal Tournament 2003* with a Botmatch score of 73fps at 1024x768x32 with AA and AF turned off.

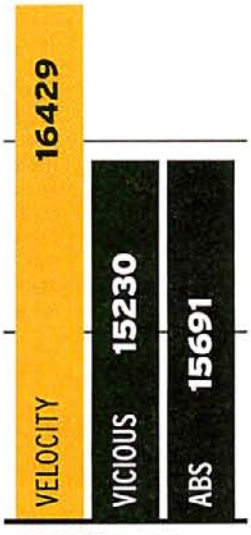
I really like the Phantom 2's snazzy case design.

BY THE NUMBERS

MODEL	Velocity Micro Vector VX	Vicious PC Phantom 2	ABS Ultimate M8
Operating system	Windows XP Home Edition	Windows XP Home Edition	Windows XP Home Edition
Processor (CPU)	AMD Athlon XP 2800+	AMD Athlon XP 2700+	AMD Athlon XP 3000+
Memory	512MB PC-2700 Kingston HyperX DDR333	512MB PC-3200 Corsair DDR-Memory	512MB PC-3200 GEIL DDR-Memory
Hard drive	80GB Western Digital 7200 rpm	80GB Western Digital 7200 rpm	80GB Western Digital 7200 rpm
Graphics processor	128MB ATI Radeon 9700 Pro	128MB ATI Radeon 9700 Pro	128MB ATI Radeon 9700 Pro
Soundcard	On-Board nForce2 Audio	On-Board nForce2 Audio	On-Board nForce2 Audio
Optical drive	Lite On 52/24/52 CD-RW	Toshiba 16x DVD-ROM drive	16x DVD-ROM drive
Monitor	ViewSonic E90 19"	ViewSonic E90fb 19"	None
Speakers	Creative Inspire 5.1 5100	Creative Inspire 2.1 2500	Logitech Z-640 5.1 Surround Sound
Keyboard	Microsoft Multimedia keyboard	Multimedia keyboard	Microsoft Office keyboard
Speed (Performance)	4.50	3.50	4.00
Price	5.00	5.00	3.00
Stability	5.00	4.00	2.50
Support	4.00	4.00	4.00
Upgradeability	5.00	5.00	5.00
Score	4.68	4.26	3.70
3DMark2001 SE Pro*	12166	11424	11433
3DGameGauge 3.0**	84	73	82
3DGameGauge 3.0*	79	71	76
Serious Sam: TSE*	96	87	90
Dungeon Siege*	84	74	82
UT2003 Botmatch*	73	67	70

*(1024x768x32; 4x FSAA) **(1024x768x32; No FSAA)

3DMark2001 Pro*



*1024x768x32, No AA, AF

A Quiet PC Case for the Do-It-Yourself Crowd

Antec's Sonata PC Chassis is not only quiet, it's also roomy and has plenty of power **BY LOYD CASE**

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD EDITORS' CHOICE

TECH STATS

MANUFACTURER: **ANTEC**
PRICE: **$130**

A gamer's PC, under full load, can generate *a lot* of fan noise. While we love having a high-performance PC, we can also appreciate PCs that deliver performance without the turbojet noise that seems to be a required component of today's personal computers.

Enter Antec's new Sonata, a case designed to minimize the noise inherent in most PCs. The Sonata's 380-watt power supply has just a single 12-centimeter temperature-controlled cooling fan. Because it's larger than most case fans by 3 or 4 centimeters, it can rotate more slowly and, hence, perform more quietly but just as effectively as a group of smaller fans.

Good looks and quiet performance join together in a way that's music to my ears.

The case is also very easy to work with. The hard drives mount sideways, with the connectors facing the side panel. And the 3.5-inch drive bays are cushioned with rubber grommets, minimizing hard-drive whine.

On top of all that, the Sonata is a glossy black, with front-panel USB and FireWire connectors. All in all, good looks and quiet performance join together in this case in a way that's music to my ears. The Sonata is aptly named indeed.

VERDICT ★★★★½

A great case that looks good and won't bug your neighbors.

Attention, LANboys!

Antec's Lanboy case is cool and light **BY WILLIAM O'NEAL**

TECH STATS

MANUFACTURER: **ANTEC**
PRICE: **$99**

Loyd Case isn't terribly fond of Antec's Lanboy case. In fact, his exact words were, "The aluminum feels kind of flimsy to me." My response: What does he know? This is a guy who, up until about a week ago, thought a top-notch rig had to have SCSII drives. Hello, Loyd! Welcome to 2003!

Needless to say, I like the Lanboy. No, the aluminum panels don't feel as sturdy as enclosures made by folks like Cooler Master, but the Lanboy is designed to be carried, and with that in mind, it's hella light. It accepts motherboards up to Standard ATX and has eight drive bays (six external and two internal) in addition to a pair of front-mounted USB ports. The Lanboy gets its power from Antec's SmartBlue 350W ATX12V power supply, so it's got the juice to run even high-end rigs.

This is a guy who thought a top-notch rig had to have SCSII drives. Welcome to 2003, Loyd!

Adding to the Lanboy's LAN-party pedigree is a cutout panel illuminated from the inside by the power supply's blue light. And, it comes standard with a carrying case.

If you're in the market for an easy-to-use, stylish case that's light enough to tote around, then you can't go wrong with the Lanboy—unless you, like Loyd, are just plain crazy.

VERDICT ★★★★☆

A superlight case that's perfect for the LAN-party crowd.

Radeon 9800 Pro

ATI's flagship competes quietly with Nvidia's 5800 Ultra **BY LOYD CASE**

TECH STATS

MANUFACTURER: **ATI TECHNOLOGIES**
PRICE: **$300**

Just before the first shipments of Nvidia's GeForce FX 5800 Ultra hit store shelves, ATI announced the Radeon 9800 Pro, an incremental advancement over the 9700 that may not show its true mettle until titles like *Doom III* ship.

ATI optimized the internal circuit paths to allow higher clock rates, though it's still manufactured on the same 0.15 micron process as the 9700. The card still requires an external power connector—something we'll see more of going forward. ATI also improved its SmartShader technology with the F-Buffer. The F-Buffer gets around limitations in shader program length by processing pixels that need only one pass. Only pixels that need to be run through the shader engine multiple times are processed multiple times. It's also something that won't show much impact until we see more games that make heavy use of programmable shaders. ATI also made tweaks to its SmoothVision antialiasing technology and Hyper Z III intelligent z-buffer processing. The net result is a more forward-looking graphics chip than the 9700 Pro.

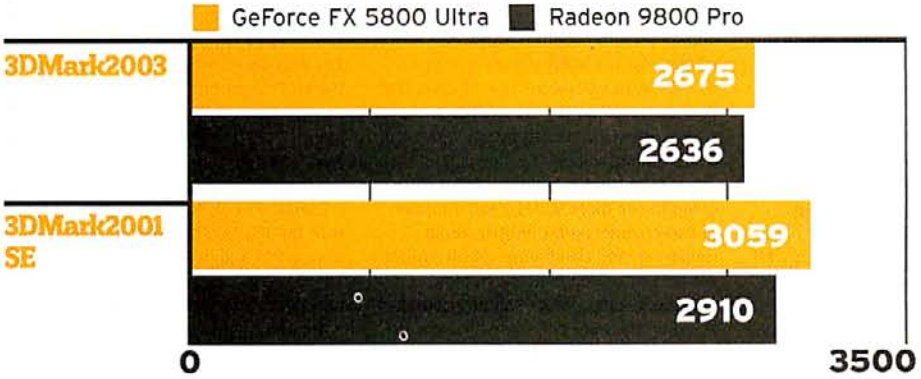
Unfortunately, these improvements don't help tremendously in today's games. We ran GameGauge 3.0 at 1280x960 (1280x1024 on a couple of titles), with 4x AA and 8x AF turned on. The 9800 Pro holds its own against the GeForce FX 5800 Ultra, especially when you juice up the antialiasing. The 5800 does do a bit better in OpenGL, but the 9800 is substantially better in some Direct3D games. Oh, and did we mention that it's a lot quieter than the GeForce FX 5800 Ultra? The cooling system is pretty much on par with standard graphics card heat sinks—no leaf blower needed here.

We ran the 9800 Pro on a number of different game titles and noticed no issues, but we have heard that *Splinter Cell*'s use of Nvidia's shadow buffers affects image quality and performance when running on ATI hardware.

If you have the budget and a high-powered system, but your graphics card is pre-DirectX 9, then the Radeon 9800 Pro will be a welcome upgrade. If you've already got a 9700 Pro, it may not be worthwhile.

VERDICT ★★★★☆

Wide availability and solid performance make it a solid contender.



WIL POWER

By William O'Neal

The graphics-card war takes a turn

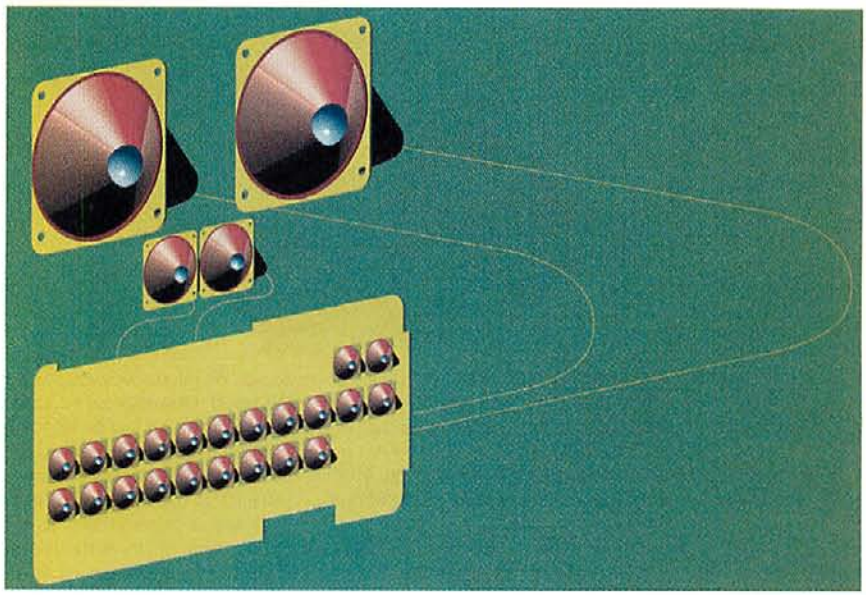
As you all know, I've been obsessing over the current state of the graphics card industry. Both Nvidia's top-of-the-line GeForce FX 5800 Ultra and ATI's Radeon 9800 Pro represent serious overkill when it comes to playing currently available games. I mean, how fast do you need *Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast* to run? But for some reason, geeks like me continue to sing the praises of these cards. I suppose it's all about bragging rights: You want to be able to say you're rocking the dopest card around. And like some of us, ATI and Nvidia have spent a lot of energy trying to achieve the bragging rights for having the most powerful card.

Well, it appears that ATI and Nvidia now realize that the key to graphics-card supremacy isn't having the fastest $400 card, but rather, having the fastest $200 and $100 cards. Nvidia's GeForce FX 5200 Ultra (NV34) should be the only DirectX 9.0 capable card in the $100 price range, and its GeForce FX 5600 Ultra (NV31), at around $200, should be more than enough graphics processing power for anything you want to do. Similarly, ATI's Radeon 9600 Pro and 9200 will be $200 and $100 options that shouldn't have any problems handling the games we're playing, although the 9200 is only DirectX 8.0 capable.

The latest graphics cards represent serious overkill when it comes to playing currently available games.

Loyd's Cracked Case

The sound and the fury By Loyd Case



Those of you who've read my stuff in the past may recall that I'm something of an audio nut. I hesitate to use the word "audiophile," because it doesn't really apply here—I have a good ear, but I'm perfectly happy listening to high-res MP3 files, and I don't have to sit in the sweet spot when listening to my home audio system.

But I do care about how things sound, at least on a basic level. *CGW* has covered speakers and soundcards fairly well over the years, but it's time to sort through the plethora of standards and systems out there. Today, figuring out PC audio is almost as confusing as figuring out 3D graphics.

Let's begin with motherboard audio. Not long ago, the thought of using the sound hardware embedded in the chipset of your PC was anathema. For one thing, it was pretty crappy at handling anything more than stereo. It was also noisy at times, with snaps and crackles audible during playback, and noticeable hiss when no sound was playing.

That's no longer the case. On one hand, you have the high-performance nForce2 audio embedded in Nvidia's MCP southbridge, complete with programmable and fixed-function digital signal processors capable of generating Dolby Digital on the fly. But even the lowly ICH4 I/O controller hub used in many Pentium 4 motherboards is a clean pipe for multi-channel audio. Some of Intel's own retail motherboards even have stereo microphone inputs. Those aren't for creating studio music—they're for plugging in stereo microphone arrays for noise cancellation and voice recognition.

As processors have become more powerful, they've grown able to handle more audio chores. Via Technologies, another purveyor of chipsets, has licensed Sensaura's audio technology for its 8237 southbridge, which handles 3D gaming audio, provided you have a processor powerful enough to handle it and play your games.

Just how much processor do you need? Rough estimates (based on 32 streams of audio) show that a P4/2.53GHz needs to allocate only between 2 and 4 percent of its CPU for most chores. Of course, if a game uses more-sophisticated features, such as sound occlusion, CPU utilization goes up—but it still stays under 8 percent.

Does that mean you should throw away your PCI soundcard?

I hesitate to use the word "audiophile," because I'm perfectly happy listening to high-res MP3 files.

Well, no. The latest PCI soundcards offload the CPU but also offer other amenities, such as 6.1-channel sound and DVD-Audio playback. Creative Labs is adding value through its software efforts. We saw early results from EAX 4.0, Creative's latest version of EAX, that demonstrated on-the-fly, multidirectional reverb effects in a customized version of a *Jedi Knight II* level.

Audio on the PC is still evolving. We're going to see more widespread adoption of two-channel 24-bit 192KHz audio rendering—and six-channel 24-bit 96KHz will become commonplace. Intel is offering its latest proposal for integrated audio on the PC, code-named Azalia, in hopes of cleaning up many of the AC97's current problems. And Microsoft is hard at work improving audio in Windows.

The sound capability of your PC is still evolving, but it's already come a long way. Whether you want all the bells and whistles of an Audigy 2 or simple stereo sound coming out the back of your motherboard, today's PC audio solutions work better than ever before.

So what do you choose? If you're a serious gamer, a good PCI audiocard is a must. PC games are increasingly making more use of 3D audio effects. Some effects can be quite sophisticated, and if the host CPU has to get involved, you'll see a pretty serious performance hit. The exception, for Athlon XP users, is the MCP-D southbridge audio. Be careful, though, when buying an nForce2 board. Some nForce2 boards use only the MCP-T southbridge, which does use the host CPU for audio processing.

Even if you do have an nForce2 board with the MCP-D chip, you still might want a PCI audiocard like an Audigy 2. These advanced cards have features that are pretty slick, even when you're not gaming. After all, you do use your PC for things other than gaming, right?

ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN HERSEY

Tech Medics

You've got questions...and Dana's mad at me! By William O'Neal

CPU fans go "Woooo-WOOOOOOOOOOO!"

My CPU runs at 134 degrees. Is this too high? What is the recommended temp, and what's the best CPU fan?

Chowderninja

I have no idea what CPU you're running. That said, your best bet is to check for recommendations on your CPU manufacturer's website. I like Antec fans for AMD chips and Intel fans for that company's CPUs.

Are you looking to start another flame war?

I was wondering if you're going to review the new 1GHz Apple laptop with the 17-inch screen.

Vacuum

I haven't decided. If you want me to review more Apple stuff, send an e-mail to my boss, Dana, at dana_jongewaard @ziffdavis.com with Review More Apple Stuff in the subject line. If you would rather I didn't review more Apple stuff, send her an e-mail with To Hell With Apple in the subject line. The group that sends the most e-mail wins.

Like a baby's arm holding an apple

I don't want to sound like a moron, but hey, you are who you are, right? I was wondering about these new small PCs—they are about half the size of a regular PC. Can you upgrade them like a regular PC? Does smaller size hurt performance?

Lazarus

While I haven't tested any of the new PCs, I can't wait to get my hands on one. You can go to Shuttle.com to check them out. If you buy the case with the motherboard and provide everything else yourself, it'll run you about $300. Or you can go to Alienware.com and buy a complete system. As for performance, Shuttle makes good motherboards, so you wouldn't necessarily be compromising any speed.

Which videocard should I buy?

I need your help. I have a Hewlett-Packard PC with a 1.1GHz Athlon 384MB, 60GB hard drive; an Nvidia 64MB GeForce 2 Ultra; and Sound Blaster Live. I'm not sure what type of motherboard I have. (How do I find this out?) Anyway, I'm experiencing chugging during gameplay at 1024x768 and even at 800x600 in newer games like *Morrowind* and *UT 2003*. Considering what's in my system, is the slowdown due to the videocard or the processor? If it's the videocard, will I be able to put a Radeon 9700 into this HP?

Jorge

What's up, Jorge? You seem to have enough memory to play those games, and I imagine your CPU is powerful enough. The culprit is your graphics card. I'd suggest getting something slightly less powerful than the 9700. Either ATI's Radeon 9600 Pro or Nvidia's GeForce FX 5600 Pro would improve your rig dramatically. You should be able to find a good deal on one of those cards at pricegrabber.com. As for what kind of motherboard you have, the only thing I can think of is opening the case and looking at it. Once you've figured out what kind of mobo you have, you may want to consider upgrading your CPU. Who knows, with a BIOS upgrade, your mobo may support a slightly faster CPU as well. I think the Athlon XP 2000+ is going for about $100 these days. Also, before you buy anything, make sure your motherboard has an available AGP slot for the faster graphics card.

Time to pony up, kid!

I bought a computer three months ago. It's a 2GHz Pentium 4, with an 80GB hard drive, 512 DDR, and a 32MB videocard. My problem is that when I first started playing *WarCraft III*, it worked perfectly, but now it freezes up on me. When I restart my computer, it returns an error report that says the problem was caused by a graphics device driver not being able "to finish a drawing operation." I have already tried the Blizzard support site, and I have tested DirectDraw and Direct3D, and they work fine. My videocard is from Silicon Integrated Systems. I need your help. Should I just buy a new videocard?

anime_fann

You don't need my help; you need a new videocard. If money is an issue, you can pick up something like Nvidia's GeForce FX 5200 Ultra. It'll set you back about $100, and it's even DirectX 9.0 capable. You could also get ATI's Radeon 9200 Pro for around $100, but it's only DirectX 8.0 capable.

ILLUSTRATION BY MITCH GREENBLATT

Killer Rigs

Look, I finally upgraded both systems!

By William O'Neal

People have been hounding me to update my Killer Rigs. The thing is, I was waiting for ATI and Nvidia to come out with some new graphics cards before I embarked on that endeavor. Well, the new batch of cards is here and I'm stoked—they're all pretty dope.

Lean Machine

My Lean Machine got a facelift in the form of Antec's Lanboy case, ViewSonic's E90fb 19-inch monitor, and Nvidia's GeForce FX 5200 Ultra graphics card. The awesome thing about the GeForce FX 5200 is that it's the least expensive DirectX 9-compliant board out there. The Lean Machine scored 9944 in 3DMark2001 SE Pro at 1024x768x32 with AA and AF turned off, and its 3DMark2993 Pro score of 1720 at 1024x768x32 with 4x AA and 4x AF turned on is most definitely respectable. In game tests, the Lean Machine's *Jedi Knight II* score of 71fps at 1600x1200x32 with 4x AA and 4x AF is awesome for a budget rig.

The new batch of graphics cards is here, and I'm stoked.

Power Rig

I built my Power Rig around Via's latest motherboard, the P4PB Ultra. While older Via Pentium boards didn't perform well, the P4PB Ultra has not only been kicking ass in game tests, its drivers also seem to be more stable than previous Via software. Some people will wonder why I took out the Audigy 2 card, but I'm pretty pleased with Via's onboard 5.1 audio. In terms of performance, the Power Rig scored 2525 in 3DMark2003 Pro at 1024x768x32 with 4x AA and 4x AF turned on, and 102fps in *Jedi Knight II* at 1600x1200x32 with 4x AA and 4x AF turned on—truly impressive.

3GHZ PENTIUM 4 POWER RIG

COMPONENT	MANUFACTURER	PRICE
Operating system	Windows XP Home Edition	$100
Processor (CPU)	3.06GHz Pentium 4 (533MHz FSB)	$600
Motherboard	VIA P4PB Ultra	$150
Case	Antec PlusView 1000AMG	$100
Memory	1GB Corsair XMS PC-3200 DDR-RAM	$300
Hard drive	120GB IBM DeskStar 7200 rpm	$150
Graphics processor	ATI Radeon 9800 Pro	$300
Soundcard	Onboard Via 5.1 Audio	N/A
DVD-ROM/ CD-RW drive	Plextor PlexCombo 20/10/40-12A DVD/CD-RW combo drive	$150
Monitor	22" MultiSync FE2111SB	$600
Speakers	Cambridge MegaWorks 510D	$300
Keyboard	Microsoft Internet Keyboard Pro	$30
Mouse	Microsoft Intellimouse Explorer 3.0	$55
TOTAL		$2,835

*1024x768x32, No AA, AF

ATHLON XP 2200+ LEAN MACHINE

COMPONENT	MANUFACTURER	PRICE
Operating system	Windows XP Home Edition	$100
Processor (CPU)	AMD Athlon XP 2200+	$100
Motherboard	ASUS A7N8X-Deluxe	$150
Case	Antec Lanboy	$100
Memory	512MB Corsair XMS PC-3200 DDR-RAM	$150
Hard drive	40GB IBM DeskStar 7200 rpm	$80
Graphics processor	128MB Nvidia GeForce FX 5200 Ultra	$300
Soundcard	Onboard nForce2 5.1 Audio	N/A
DVD-ROM/ CD-RW drive	16x Sony DVD-ROM Drive	$40
Monitor	19" ViewSonic E90fb	$225
Speakers	Creative Inspire 2.1 2500	$45
Keyboard	Microsoft Internet Keyboard Pro	$30
Mouse	Microsoft Intellimouse Explorer 3.0	$55
TOTAL		$1,375

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ARNOLD TIOSEJO

FIND NEAT LOOT IN FREELANCER

Too lazy to work for your reward? **By Thierry "Scooter" Nguyen**

Even after you've vanquished the main menace in *Freelancer*, there are still a lot of systems to find and loot to dig up. Secret pirate bases, hidden jump holes, and ships filled with valuable cargo and even experimental weapons are the kinds of things to uncover in *Freelancer*. While there's decent stuff to find in the main House sectors (Liberty, Bretonia, Kusari, and Rheinland), the best loot is almost always in either the Border Worlds or the Edgeworlds—try these tips in any system named either "Sigma" or "Omega."

READ YOUR MAP

If you're a space narc and want to find a pirate base, hit enemy patrol paths. If you're looking for a friendly place to land, select friendly paths, and if nobody likes or hates you, choose neutral. If paths are converging, it's usually either a base or a jump hole.

GO WHERE NO MAN HAS GONE BEFORE

Don't just stick to trade lanes. Most hidden things, whether they are derelict ships or hidden bases, are right in the middle of nebulae and fields of ice/asteroid debris. Stock up on nanobots, as many places are radioactive and will damage your hull.

X MARKS THE SPOT

When flying into spooky, dangerous areas, your scanners will automatically highlight nearby secrets and put them on your nav map. Big red Xs mark locations of lost ships, and jump holes and hidden bases just pop up on your map like any normal jump gate or base. When you've flown to the derelict ship, target and shoot it to cause the loot to spill out for you to tractor beam.

HOOK UP WITH A CREW

Make use of your hailing command, and ask other ships what's going on. If they're on a patrol or heading to a specific place, join formation with them. Bounty hunters do a pretty good sweep of the system, in case you want to find any criminal haunts. If you're at least neutral (not necessarily friendly) with a pirate faction, such as the Outcasts or the Corsairs, following a pirate patrol could lead you right to their base.

LISTEN TO LOCAL DRUNKARDS

It can be worth it to talk to people in the bar. Sometimes, they'll either demand money for a base's location, or they'll talk about a lost fighter patrol. Take note of any weird urban legends floating around, as they're likely to be about real derelict ships.

MAKE BIG BANGS IN

And the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air **By Di Luo**

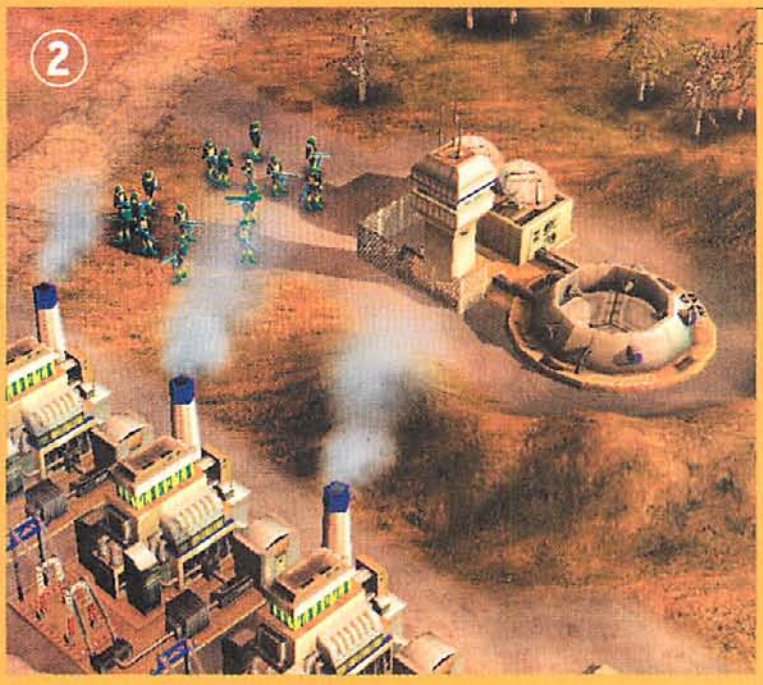
Ever fire off your particle cannon and wonder why you only took down a couple of tanks, or why your Scud storm hardly damaged the enemy? For the clueless and newbies, here are some how-to guidelines for using the big nasties in *C&C: Generals*.

COMMON DENOMINATORS:

Though the superweapons in *C&C* differ wildly from faction to faction, all generals should consider the following before using them:

INTELLIGENCE

You should always have good intelligence on the enemy, since shooting your superweapon without good information is a waste of time and resources. Use satellites, planes, stealth units, or fast scouts to find an optimal target for your weapon before firing it. Make sure the target contains a large concentration of enemy units or critical structures. There is no sense in wasting a nuke to take out a couple of suicide bombers.



SECURITY

All three weapons require several minutes to charge up. During this time, everyone in the game can see your timer, and opponents will often make desperate attempts to stop you from firing the weapon. To prevent this, make sure you have adequate protection around your base before you build the costly superweapons. Be especially wary of paratroopers or rebels that appear behind your lines. Other attacks, such as fuel air-bombs and artillery strikes, can't be prevented, so make sure you've got units nearby to repair the damaged weapons.

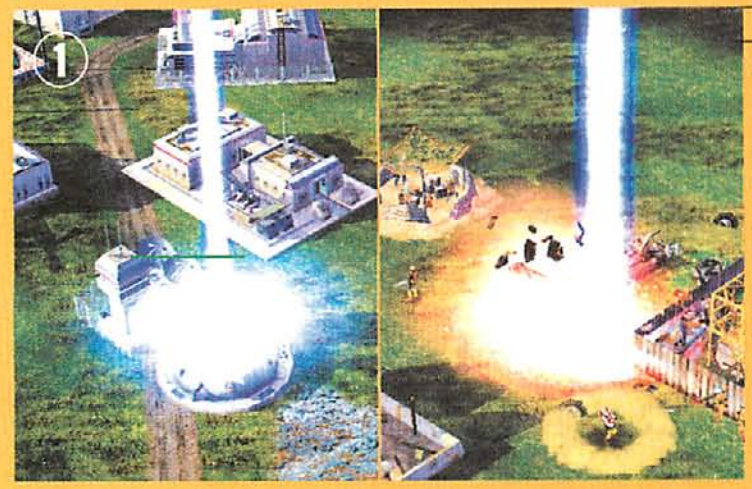
TIMING

If your choice in targets was wise, you should have dealt your enemy a crippling blow. Unless you are still weaker than the enemy, you should always follow up your superweapon attack with a massed assault to finish him off. Often, it's a good idea to get your tanks moving before the weapon hits so that they arrive right after impact in order to minimize the amount of time your enemy has to recover.

C&C: GENERALS

INDIVIDUAL FACTIONS:

Now that you know some basic rules for using these weapons, here are some how to's for each faction.



PARTICLE CANNON

The American particle cannon is the most bewildering of the three superweapons. It does not have the shoot-and-forget capabilities of its brethren and must be closely monitored to be used effectively. Instead of a large area effect, the particle cannon shoots a concentrated beam of intense energy at a small spot. After shooting the beam, you may direct it to move along straight lines by left-clicking toward the direction of your choice. Though powerful, the lack of area effect means that you must choose between enemy units or structures as your target. If you choose the former, find a large group and toast them by directing the beam to the center of their formation and moving the beam around before they can scatter. If there are no dense formations to destroy, concentrate instead on essential buildings, like your opponent's superweapon or palace. In this case, don't move the beam around too much or it won't have the time to destroy the enemy structure. For the tougher structures, you might need to follow up with an air strike to finish them off.

SCUD STORM

The GLA weapon fires off a barrage of anthrax-laced missiles. The Scud storm has a large area effect, damages the enemy with the initial explosion, and leaves behind a cloud of toxin that'll kill anything inside the contaminated area. Since the explosion is not particularly powerful, you can't rely on it to take down too many of the enemy's buildings. The anthrax cloud is useful, however, for interdicting enemy units, especially organic ones. If you fire off the storm in an area with a lot of factories and barracks, you can guarantee that any new unit your opponent produces will be damaged as it appears. If you're playing against another GLA opponent, this can seriously hamper his resource collecting or building capabilities, as the peasants will die almost instantly inside the anthrax cloud.

NUCLEAR MISSILE

Continuing the ponderous but powerful theme of the other Chinese units, the nuclear missile does the most damage of all the special weapons. It damages a large area and creates a radioactive area for a short time. Since it's so powerful, there aren't many factors you need to consider when using it. Simply pick a target area rich in essential structures like power plants and factories, launch your nuke, and sit back to enjoy the fireworks.

PLAY GAMES ON A

Just because you're visiting the in-laws doesn't mean gaming is on hold **By Joel Durham**

We won't for a minute suggest that you scrap your main gaming PC for a laptop, but when you don't have access to your gaming machine, a laptop can be a worthy substitute. If your laptop has a current mobile CPU and a decent graphics solution, it's possible for you to bring your gaming hobby on the road with you.

THE COMPUTER

The type of games you'll be able to play depends a lot on the capabilities of your laptop PC. Your laptop's hardware will directly affect the types of games you'll be able to play. An older model with a 4MB graphics adapter and a 400MHz processor will not be able to run the same games that a new 2.8GHz monster with a current 3D processor can.

If you're in the market for a new laptop, go large. Get the fastest CPU you can afford. If it comes down to a modest price difference between, say, a Pentium 4 2.53 and a Pentium 4 2.8, get the latter. While all laptop computers come with 3D graphics hardware, they're not all created equal. For memory, 256MB of DDR-RAM is a minimum; 512MB is ideal.

EQUIPMENT

The most successful road warriors come prepared. The things you carry in your laptop bag will make a difference when it comes time to play. The computer itself is the most important piece of equipment, of course, but other equipment can mean the difference between a night of *Unreal Tournament 2003* or *FreeCell*.

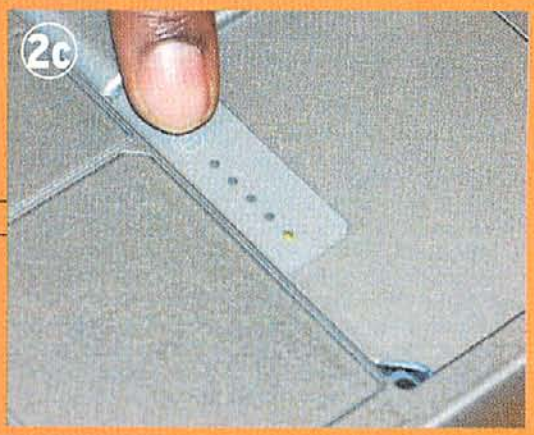
GAME CONTROL

If you insist on playing FPS titles, you'll want a mouse. Using mouse-look with a touchpad is as intuitive as reading Shakespeare when you're drunk. It just doesn't work. Logitech has a terrific portable mouse called the MouseMan Traveler. This USB mouse is tiny enough to use on an airplane tray table, and it's full featured and ambidextrous. In a bind, however, any mouse will do.

One small item you can bring along that enables you to play sports games and arcade-style twitch games is a gamepad. They're not very big, and they open the door for a whole genre of games that you otherwise wouldn't be able to play.

SOUND

One thing you might want to consider is a small, portable speaker system. You won't be able to use it on a plane, but once you arrive at your destination, you'll be able to set it up. You might also want a pair of headphones. That way, when you're playing something in close quarters (say, on a plane), you won't treat your fellow passengers to the background noise of explosions, expletives, and other sound effects. Like portable speakers, a headset will sound a heck of a lot better than the weak excuse for speakers that laptop PCs have to offer.



CHARGE UP

Battery life is a big issue when it comes to gaming. During a hardcore session of *Quake III* and *Counter-Strike*, my laptop's battery gave up after only 90 minutes. Cross-country plane trips can take four or five hours, and unless you're flying first class, there's nowhere to recharge. Consider carrying an extra battery for marathon trips during which you won't be able to charge up.

LAPTOP

GAMES ON THE GO

The games you bring along will have a direct effect on your success as a laptop gamer. Some games lend themselves to the limited nature of laptops, while others just don't work. Racing games, for instance, aren't the best games to play on laptops. First-person shooters are playable if you have a mouse, but don't bother trying to play them without one.

ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

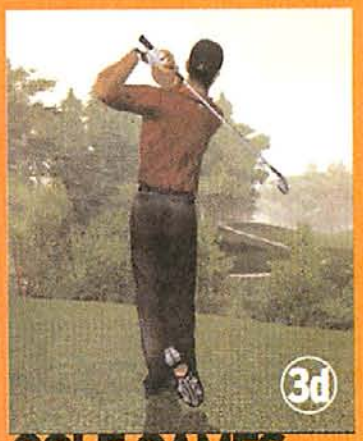
If you're an RPG fan, you probably won't miss your desktop PC when you go on a journey. Games like the *Baldur's Gate* series, *Neverwinter Nights*, and *Planescape: Torment*, with their slow pacing and plethora of keyboard shortcuts, are perfect for laptop gaming. If you're quick with a touchpad or if you bring a mouse along, twitch RPGs like *Diablo II*, *Dungeon Siege*, and *Nox* are also decent traveling games. Beware of FPS/RPG hybrid games like *Deux Ex* and *System Shock II*; without a mouse, they're almost impossible to play.

STRATEGY GAMES

Though they're much easier to play with a mouse, real-time strategy titles like the *WarCraft* series, the *Command & Conquer* series, *Homeworld*, and other such titles can be intuitively controlled with a touchpad after a modest amount of practice. You'd do well to learn the keyboard shortcuts for such titles; it makes navigation much easier. Squad-based strategy games like *Freedom Force* are also ideal for laptop gaming, especially when they allow you to pause the action to issue orders.

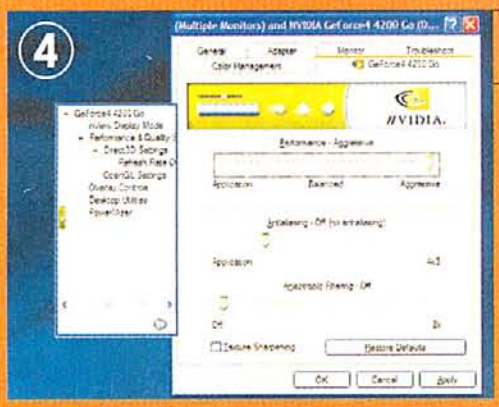
SPORTS GAMES

If you bring a gamepad along, you're set to play games like *Madden, NFL Blitz*, and *NHL 2003*. Sports games and gamepads go together like bratwurst and heartburn. It's tough to play a sports game with the keyboard alone, although it can be done. For the most enjoyment, however, stash a gamepad, such as a Logitech Rumblepad, in your luggage.



GOLF GAMES

Love them or hate them, games such as *Links* and *Tiger Woods* series are fantastic for laptop gaming. The click swing, with which you click twice to determine the accuracy and power of your swing, is simple with the laptop touchpad buttons, and the newer mouse swing, in which you move your mouse to simulate a golf swing, translates nicely to the touchpad.



GRAPHICS SETTINGS

Depending on the power of your laptop, you may have to dumb down the graphical settings of your games. Consider playing at a modest resolution like 800x600 and leave antialiasing and anisotropic filtering off. Turn on vsync, which synchronizes your game's maximum framerate to the refresh rate of your display. You can control vsync, also called vertical sync, in the Driver Setup menu—accessed by right-clicking on the desktop, selecting properties, choosing the Settings tab and clicking Advanced. Select the tab for your processor and look for the vsync option.

SNEAK INTO E3

So you wanna hang with the geeks **By Darren Gladstone**

E3 means many things to many people. Ask anyone on staff, and they'll regale you with stories of drunken revelry—oh, and a couple cool games that they saw between parties. So how are you supposed to break into the hallowed halls of Gamingdom's premier event? Go covert. Here are some suggestions that may get you in the door.

BE A MARKETING EXEC

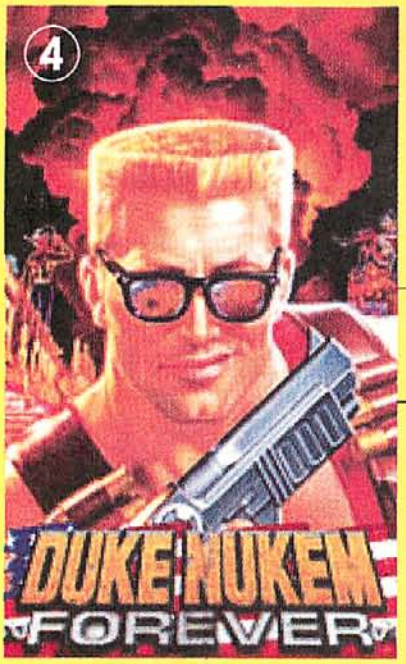
This one shouldn't be too hard. Just dress up in the sharpest, most conservative suit you've got and talk out of your ass for the next four days. If someone confronts you about your credentials, mention budget software, brand positioning, and licensing rights. As eyes glaze over, you can slink on by.

GO METAL GEAR SOLID STYLE

It won't look too suspicious if someone in a cardboard box is found sneaking through the entrance to the show, will it? Best advice: Diaper boxes should be just big enough to hide under. Besides, who is sick enough to want to look underneath?

BE A BOOTH BABE

Grab your sexiest outfit and head for the show bright and early. This approach will only work one of two ways: 1) You're so hot that you look like you belong in a booth at E3. 2) You're so ridiculously fugly that you look like you belong in a booth at E3. Just remember: Spandex is a privilege, not a right.



SAY YOU'RE GEORGE BROUSSARD

What the hell, this one's worth a try. After all, *Duke Nukem Forever* and George haven't been seen in about five years. If someone asks you to prove that you're really working on a game, give them a copy of the *Duke* trailer from E3 2000.

PRETEND YOU WORK AT CGW

Gaming journalists are a surly bunch, so you'll have to play the part. Don't show up for meetings on time (if at all!), wear sunglasses all day, nurse a perpetual hangover, and bitch about deadlines for *Game Daily* during the show. If this doesn't work, just tell the guy at the front door that Scooter sent you.

Gamer's Edge

Helping you suck less Edited by Dana Jongewaard

Battlefield 1942: Road to Rome

Get out of the trenches and fight like a man

PAGE 124

DIRTIEST TRICK OF THE MONTH

This month's dirty trick is for *SimCity 4*.

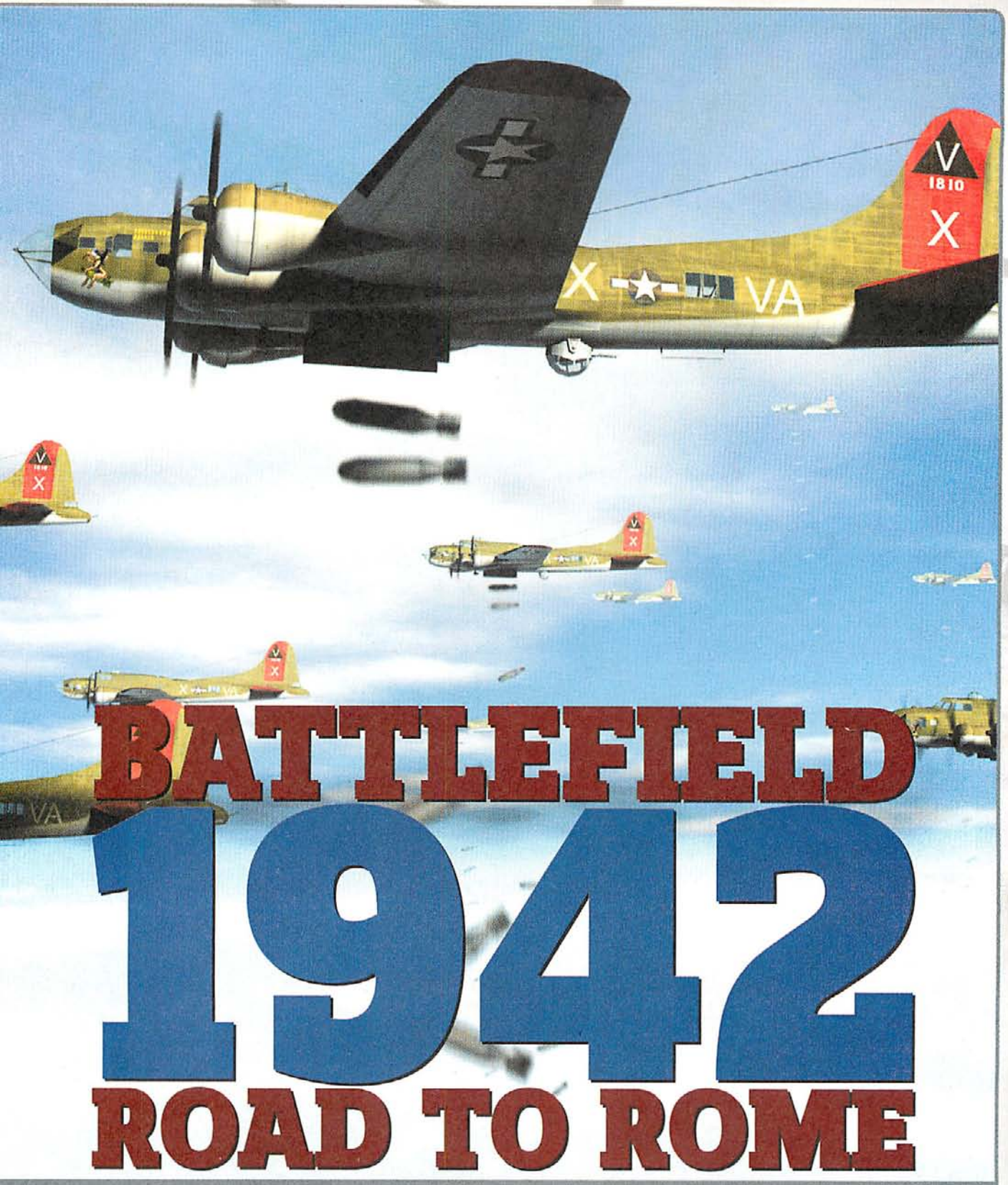
Wait until you have earned a private school. Then select the private school from the educational buildings. Before planting the building onto your city, go back to the menu and open the Educational Buildings menu. Place the first private school onto your city, then select the private school from the currently open Educational Buildings menu again.

Place the second school in your city. This trick also works for other reward buildings such as the federal prison and the university. The extra income from the federal prisons will keep your city going, and extra EQ from the private schools and universities can replace your normal schools and community colleges.

–Brian Witt

WIN

Congratulations, Brian, you've earned a copy of *Hitman 2*. If you'd like to win a copy of *Freelancer*, send your dirtiest tricks for recent games to cgwletters@ziffdavis.com with a subject line "Dirty Trick."



BATTLEFIELD 1942
ROAD TO ROME

Monty and Ike wished for fine-tuned strategies like these **By Raphael Liberatore**

Battlefield 1942: Road to Rome features the brutal Italian campaign of World War II, where Axis forces clashed against the unrelenting Allied army. *Road to Rome* adds more to *Battlefield*, with six new conquest type maps, new vehicles, new weapons, and a few tweaks. This primer will get you up to speed on some of the new equipment and hopefully teach you a few new tactics in the process.

Move heavy armor along the riverbanks in order to support recently acquired control points. Expect heavy resistance.

Fire, cover, and movement

Unless your goal is to get picked off by an enemy shot, avoid standing at all costs. Never run while shooting at mid- to long-range targets. Recoil and lack of weapon stability will quickly diminish your accuracy. Try a more cautious approach by crouching and firing, then shuffle left or right after a few shots. Another tactic: Lie prone, then move a few feet to a new position and fire again. Always assume you are being targeted during a firefight, so never remain stationary for more than five seconds.

Never run in a straight path. Always use cover, and kneel or go prone when coming to a standstill. Bullets are lethal, and even a graze in the right area can incapacitate your soldiers. As players become more adept at shooting, they can drop soldiers in a single shot while they're on the run. Try to shoot from a prone or kneeling position. It helps accuracy.

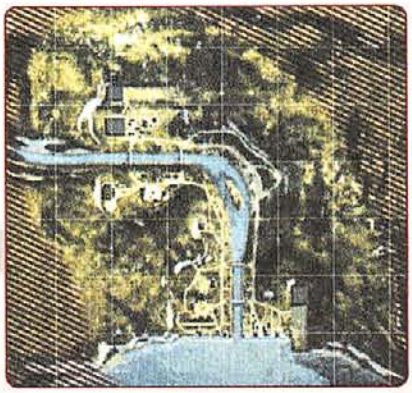
A big key to victory is outthinking your opponent and utilizing teamwork. There's nothing more frustrating than constantly retaking flags by yourself while your entire team is getting hosed because they're all sitting in one location. If everyone is swarming toward one flag, try sneaking around the back or opposite side. Most often, the enemy is stacked defending the flag you're swarming. Tanks are also a key to conquering a map. They're potent, and the team that controls the most tanks will often be victorious.

Basic land navigation

One of the best overall tactics in *BF1942* is map familiarization. *Road to Rome* comes with six new conquest type maps, and they're full of choke points, hills, waterways, and ambush points. Knowing the terrain is advantageous. It gives players an opportunity to avoid enemy positions, while making it easier to capture enemy or neutral flags. If you're playing on a map for the first time, hit the M key in order to access the expanded minimap view. It'll provide you with a detailed overhead image of the battlefield. You'll be able to see all control points and friendly unit positions. Unmanned friendly vehicles and antiaircraft guns will appear gray. Because of fog of war, you won't see the enemy. You'll have to do this visually, in first person.

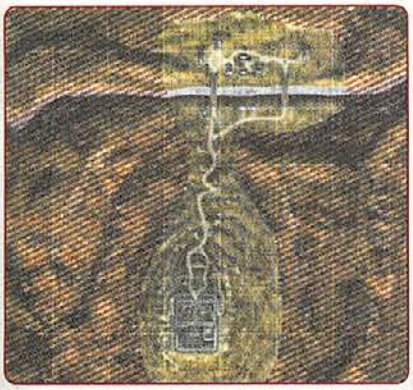
Navigate around the map if you're unfamiliar with certain terrain features. Sometimes, just moving across the map provides a sense of scope and terrain features. Another option for understanding the terrain is to make a direct bead toward the enemy flag. This will get you more familiar with the map and undoubtedly get you into the thick of things. Beware. It'll surely increase your chances of returning in a body bag.

Familiarize yourself with the different routes to enemy flags. Sometimes, knowing the path of least resistance can be the difference between victory and defeat. As the battle rages, keep a constant vigil on the minimap. Know the various F-key radio commands and what they mean. For instance, pressing F4 means Defend or Attack, depending on whether your forces control the control point or not.



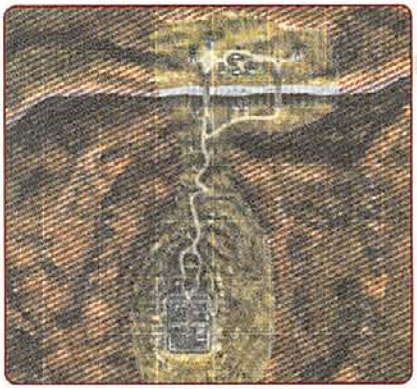
The Battle of Anzio is a hybrid conquest map. Maintain control of more than half of the control points to win by decreasing enemy ticket count.

The Battle of Salerno is a conquest head-on map. Gain control of the middle hill between both forces to win.



Monte Cassino is a conquest assault map. The team taking control of all control points is victorious.

Operation Baytown is a hybrid conquest map. Gain control of all control points or drop the enemies' tickets to zero in order to gain victory.



Operation Husky is a conquest assault map. The Allies must gain transportation at the beach; the Axis must defend five control points inland.

Scout class

The scout is one of the more popular classes in *Road to Rome*. It takes practice to become a good sniper and a good artillery spotter. Oftentimes, players tend to forget all about the artillery spotter aspect of the scout. Depending on the map, a scout acting as an artillery spotter can be much more effective on the battlefield than as a sniper. Make sure your scout moves into a concealed position and lies prone before spotting for naval or ground artillery. Use the binoculars by hitting the 5 key, and zoom in with your right mouse button until your target comes into view. Hit the left mouse button when the target of opportunity is in sight. Then take cover. Try not to target enemy positions too close to your own. The first few salvos are often erratic and may hit your position. Targeting areas near the enemy instead of specific enemy soldiers or vehicles is ideal.

Towers and tall buildings offer distinct vantage points for sniping.

Sniping requires skill and experience. The best snipers know this. Until sniping is mastered, get used to frustration. It will be common to sight the enemy in your crosshairs and fire, only to score a half hit or even to miss, while the enemy returns fire and takes you down from across the map. Accuracy can be a problem in this game. But you can compensate with a couple of surefire tactics. Always aim for the head. Sniping also works best when tapping the mouse's fire button instead of slowly and deliberately pressing the fire button. The zoomed scope view remains if you continue to hold the right mouse button down after taking the shot. This helps you determine whether or not you hit the target.

First, practice sniping from the prone position. Get comfortable with the way the gun fires and its accuracy. Being able to snipe on the run is a very difficult maneuver. When sniping at someone while you're on the run, take the shot by leading them by two bodies. It's hard to give an exact leading distance, but imagine two soldiers stacked in front of your target. Once you've got this move down, you will have demonstrated complete mastery of the sniping art.

The idea behind sniping is to be neither seen nor heard. Snipers should start the mission by locating terrain that offers good cover from a decent vantage point overlooking enemy positions. Usually, the side of a hill, behind a tree, rock, or bush is sufficient. Often, you can get three or four kills in before relocating for another volley. Shift locations as often as possible. Sticking around the same area for too long will allow the enemy to get a bead on you and end your killing spree.

The scout also has grenades, and they do come in handy. If you're familiar with crowded enemy chokepoints and you need the kills, toss a grenade and score some quick points. Hint: If you jump right before you're about to release the grenade, you'll throw it four times farther than normal. In addition to the grenade, the handgun can be a handy weapon. If you have to fight up close and personal, quickly switch to your handgun. The handgun is more effective at close range. Remember the number 2 and 3 hotkeys. The handgun is the 2 key, and the 3 key is your primary weapon.

Scouts accent a squad's firepower. Covering for teammates makes the team more effective. Scouts should follow behind an assault to the flag and lay down cover fire for the advancing troops. It's a sure way to increase your team's ticket total. Going solo is fun but doesn't win the match. Tactics all boil down to the team playing best as a unit.

NEW VEHICLES AND EQUIPMENT

Allied M3 GMC

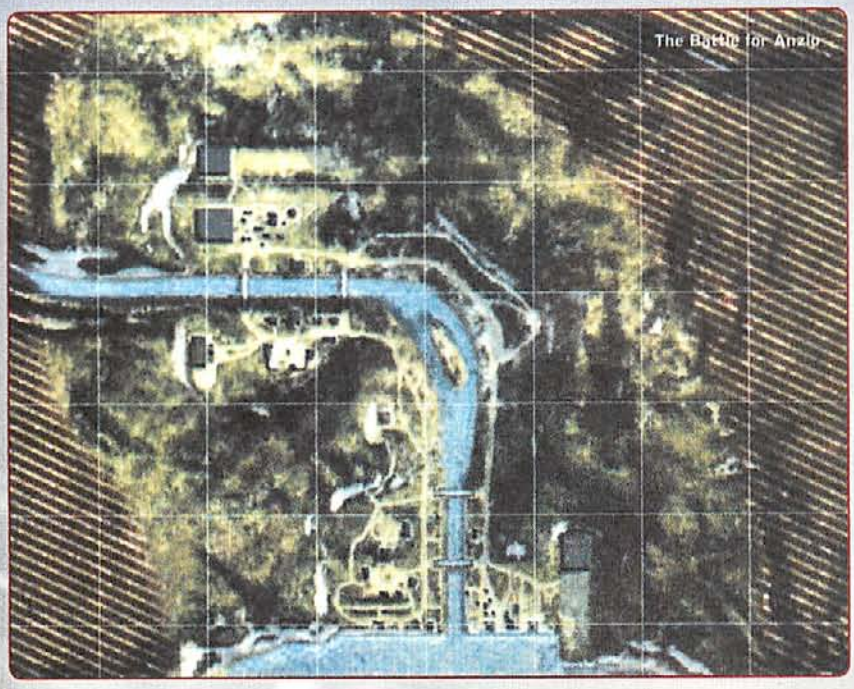
The M3 GMC is a versatile armored vehicle. It serves as both an antitank and troop transport vehicle (up to three soldiers). The driver controls the M3's main 75mm antitank gun. It packs decent power for taking out enemy vehicles, but its left-to-right pivot is extremely limited. It's also vulnerable to machine gun fire. The vehicle's rear-mounted machine gun can fire only toward the rear, but it serves as a decent antiaircraft weapon. Coordinating the 75mm weapon during a tank-busting operation requires decent driving skills.

Axis Italian M11-39 Carro Armato

The Carro Armato holds two soldiers: a driver and main battle-gun operator, and a 37mm gun operator. The main gun is somewhat clunky and can be fired only in a forward arc. However, the real gem is the completely encased turret of the 37mm gun. It rotates 360 degrees and doesn't suffer from overheating like some other main battle tank guns. The best tactic is to position the Carro Armato behind cover to the flank of the main fight and take full advantage of the machine gun's effectiveness.

Axis Sturmgeschutz tank

This is one of the better tanks in the game. Its turretless low-profile 75mm cannon allows it to hide behind rocks and other forms of cover. However, the 75mm gun is more difficult to pivot. The best feature, other than being invulnerable to machine gun fire, is the 360-degree rotating armor-plated heavy machine gun turret. The Sturmgeschutz has a capacity of two.



The key for the Allies is to grab the two neutral points first. Send jeeps or airdrop to the control points as soon as the game begins.

The Battle for Anzio

Historical Overview: The Battle for Anzio was a bit of a cluster for the Allied forces. The Allies landed at Anzio on January 22, 1944, in order to cut the Axis communication lines south of Rome, while supporting Allied forces attempting to move past the Gustav Line. However, the operation got bogged down. Rather than taking the initiative by pushing past the beachhead and securing the Alban hills, the Allied commander waited for reinforcements. This tactical blunder proved costly. Soon, the Axis defenders took the hills and surrounded the Allied forces on the beachhead. Their effort forced the Allied army into a stalemate until it broke through the Axis defensive positions some four months later with a series of bloody frontal assaults.

Objectives: Control more than half of the control points on the map. Contesting the two neutral control points in the middle of the map (the bunker, map grid D5, and the radar bunker, map grid E4), should be the immediate objective.

Overview: The battle consists of armor and infantry engagements along narrow roads that flank the river valley. Each side of the river has three control points, for a total of six. An island in the center of the map hosts two antiair guns.

Map Type: Hybrid assault map

Allied Base of Operations: Control-point flags consist of the Allied base, map grid D6, and the Allied harbor, map grid E6. Both offer spawn points, several vehicles, defensive emplacements, and ammo and first-aid dumps. The Allied base is positioned west of the Allied harbor in the southern portion of the map. It's difficult to defend due to the many roads and bridges leading to it. When using vehicles, pay particular attention when driving down the narrow roads leading out of the town. An attack from the east is cause for concern due to a lack of emplaced defensive guns. The Allied harbor offers both Higgins boats and one fighter-bomber. Two heavy cranes are positioned to the far south and make great vantage points for sniping scouts. The west crane has an ammo crate on the top.

Axis Base of Operations: Control-point flags consist of the Axis base, map grid C4, and the Axis train station, map grid C3. Both offer spawn points, several vehicles, defensive emplacements, and ammo and first-aid dumps. The Axis base is a small villa and provides good ambush points. Target enemy vehicles with antitank troops and armor near the southeast of the machine gun nest, and target enemy vehicles negotiating the narrow road to the south. The Axis train station has the better vehicle spawns of the two bases. Like the Allied harbor, the Axis train base provides two LCVPs and one fighter-bomber. Defending the Axis train station is key to the battle. The bases have the advantage of supporting each other since they're so close together.

Mosquito

This lightweight aircraft has excellent speed, altitude, and range. It can drop bombs on enemy tanks and artillery with relative ease (up to four per drop). There is no rear gunner. The Mosquito has a capacity of one. Use it to take out high concentrations of the enemy.

Antitank guns

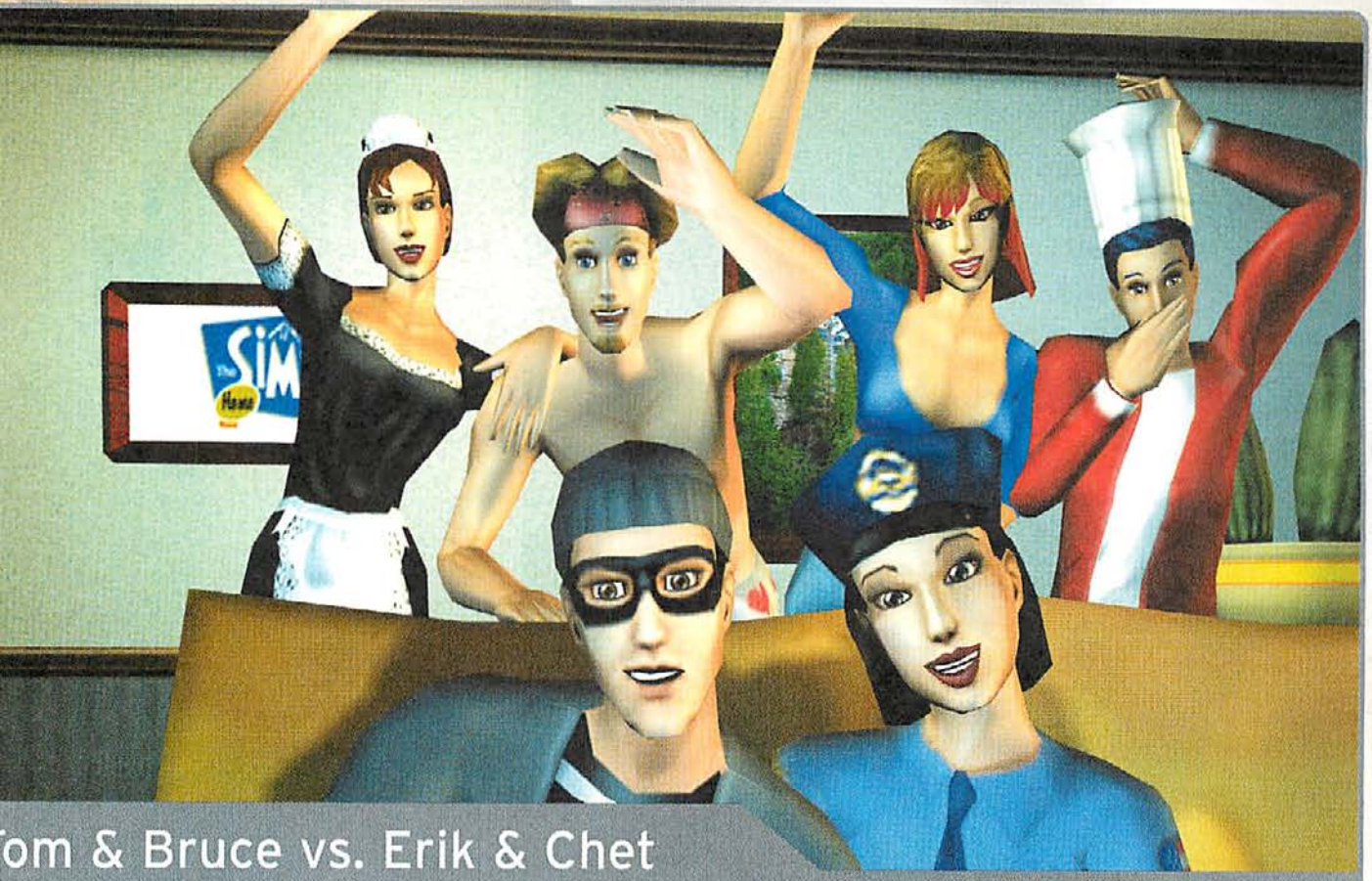
Road to Rome introduces two antitank weapons, the Axis German PAK 75 and the Allied British 25 Pounder. Both guns are effective against tanks, armor vehicles, and infantry. AT guns are stationary and cannot pivot, making them vulnerable to enemy fire. The front plate offers some protection, but the enemy can flank to either side and kill the AT operator. AT guns supported by infantry and armor can offer a formidable defense. Due to the AT's limited blast radius, it's best to select armor vehicle and tank targets over infantry. Bye-bye, German tank.

Bayonet

Engineers now have bayonets for their weapons, providing an extra punch in hand-to-hand situations. The bayonet thrust is more effective than the standard knife thrust. This soldier came to the fight with only a knife and got the raw end of the deal.

Axis BF-110

Unlike the Mosquito, the German BF-110 adds a rear gunner for close air support. An interesting tactic is to parachute your rear gunner behind enemy lines in order to take out enemy snipers or capture a neutral control point.



Tom & Bruce vs. Erik & Chet

THE SIMS ONLINE

BY Tom Chick, Bruce Geryk, Erik Wolpaw, Chet Faliszek

When we first started out, we pooled all our money to make our house. We quickly learned that letting four people simultaneously buy things and drop them into the house isn't good for color coordination. But we did agree that Tom's last name would be most likely to attract guests, so we dubbed our property Chick Manor. Eventually, we realized exactly what kind of guest would be attracted. After the 20th guy dropped in and asked where all the chicks were, we changed the name to Don't Come In Here.

For our competition, we agreed to meet for four successive evenings. Each evening, one of us would propose a challenge to the other three. The first person to meet the challenge would be awarded three points, the second person would receive two points, and the loser would get one point. After all four challenges, the scores would be tallied, and the winner...well, we didn't quite know what to give the winner.

Day One: Tom's challenge

After promising to give it back, I make each of the guys hand over all their money (none of them seem to have much left after our house-building a few days earlier). Then I give each guy 100 simoleons. The challenge is for them to increase it tenfold any way they can. The first person to come back with 1,000 simoleons wins. In the meantime, I invite Lolene and Sally69 over to play pool and hang out in the hot tub, where we play "I Never" until the guys start coming back.

First place, Erik: The easiest way to make money fast is to hold someone's starting cash for him while he deletes his current character, then creates a new one with a new stake. You give him his money back, he acts as the bagman while you start a new character, and you both end up with 20,000 simoleons. It's an almost-perfect plan. Unfortunately, one of Tom's crazy rules is that we have to keep the same character throughout the entire competition, which means I can't delete mine.

So, I'm stumped until it occurs to me that any promise I make inside the game is actually a simulated promise, and therefore completely nonbinding in both real and pretend courts of law. With this in mind, my strategy is the old bait and switch: I'll promise to make someone rich and then I'll switch back to the desktop and hopefully never see that person again. Because the stake swap is a well-known cheat and because the game's noncompetitive atmosphere turns everyone into trusting idiots, it takes me about 14 seconds plus seven minutes of lag to secure someone's entire fortune with a promise to double it—a promise that's worth about as much as the paper I tell him it's printed on, which I also tell him I've signed. I make $10,000.

Second place, Bruce: Being a brilliant scientist in real life has its advantages. Unfortunately, being able to solve make-believe astrophysics problems on virtual chalkboards in someone's frighteningly named House of Logic is not one of them. There are a lot of ways to make money in *The Sims Online*. Offering conclusive proof that the game is actually based on medieval fantasy times, a good way to make money is to find a house with a lot of chalkboards where people are solving problems (the more the better), and then to solve some yourself and sell the solutions. Monks then copy these solutions to parchment and hide them from barbarians. The higher your Logic score, the more your solutions are worth, and a really good way to raise your Logic score is to play a game called Maze, where you and a partner have to find your way through a labyrinth before you are killed by Theseus. Nobody will play Maze with me, though, so I stand at the blackboard like an idiot and listen to nonsense chat until I get fed up and quit. I make $155.

Third place, Chet: Because playing the guitar is something you can do forever with one initial keystroke, my strategy is to press that one key and then to go do something else in my actual house in the actual world. My game plan set, I start playing the guitar and then take a long shower. When I come back, my guitar rating is rising, but I haven't made any money. Evidently, playing the guitar is not a for-pay activity. Somebody tells me that you can build gnomes for money. Luckily, the skill that governs playing an instrument also covers gnome building, so while my guitar playing hasn't earned me any cash, it has made me better at manufacturing lawn ornaments. Plan B falls apart, however, when I realize that you can't just click one button, walk away from the keyboard for a while, and return to find a few hundred gnomes built, packaged, and distributed. In order to make money this way, you have to build and sell the items one lousy gnome at a time. I forfeit this round.

THE SCORE

DAY 1	
Erik	3
Bruce	2
Chet	1
Tom	-

Day Two: Bruce's challenge

I know these guys are really good at deciding which weapon in *Unreal II* is the best for blowing up people, but blowing in *The Sims Online* is a different story. Since all activities in *TSO* eventually devolve into sexual innuendo and flagrant virtual sexual intercourse, I might as well get the party started. The challenge is to be the first one to be "Kissed Hotly" by someone with a Body rating of 8 or higher. Fortunately, no one who is playing a hot chick online looks anything like her avatar, so the pressure is off for my dork roommates.

First place, Tom: This one's easy, assuming I can find KristyBisty online. She's one of the four girls I'm dating and since she hangs out at the Charismatic Body Shop all the time, I'm pretty sure her body rating is up there. Checking my bookmarks, I see she's a 10. However, she's not online. Time for a booty call. I Alt-Tab out and ICQ her. No luck. However, Brigettina is online and I see her body rating is 8, so I page her and we chat a bit. I ask her what she's doing, and she says she's painting. I tell her to come over and visit me at my new house. She says OK and comes right over. I introduce her to Bruce and tell him we're going back into my room. Which we do. Total elapsed time since Bruce laid down the challenge? Four minutes.

Second place, Erik: My free time is mostly spent watching films about women who meet, talk for a minute, and then have sex. This diet of images leads me to believe that it'll be easy to convince a woman to make out with my female character, just like in the real world of my imagination. I head to a house encouragingly called Gisele's Porn Studio. I'm in luck! There's a half-dressed blonde named Rhianna standing at the entrance. I decide to skip the formalities and simply tell her, "I've got a mind for business and a body for **SIM**!" I expect that I'll have to spend the next few precious minutes typing "LOL" back and forth with her and also making it clear that I meant "monkey business." But before I can do any of this, we're hugging with our tongues. I win! My celebratory second make-out session is cut short, however, when I discover to my horror that even though Rhianna's body is super hot on the outside, it's apparently fat and hairy on the inside because its rating is zero. She's like the portrait of Dorian Gray. Thinking fast, I decide to once again fall back on my safety strategy: cheating. I use the paint program Chet and I got for free with our scanner to move her perfect Cooking rating into Body. Unfortunately, it takes me eight minutes to doctor the screenshot, and then I forget to lie about how long it took.

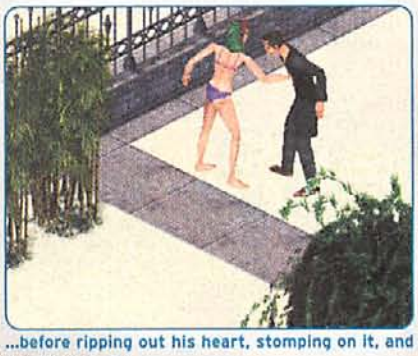
CHET AND ERIK'S OPENING STATEMENT

When Bruce and Tom first approached us, we were excited about this opportunity to become better friends in an entirely noncompetitive environment. Chet and I consider ourselves citizens of the world. We're convinced that competition is unnecessary in a world where yesterday's science fiction is tomorrow's science fact. So, in the spirit of our homeland—the entire planet—we accepted their "challenge." *The Sims Online* is all about cooperation—not cooperative competition, such as teaming up to kill an Orc, but cooperation for the pure, theoretical joy of cooperating. It quickly became apparent, though, that Bruce, and especially Tom, had other ideas. Sadly, Tom's pathological drive to feel better about himself by inflicting humiliating defeats on other people inspired him to construct an elaborate ancillary rules system, which he then dropped on top of the game as a way of proving to people like his never-satisfied father that he could beat us.

Scare players by climbing into the pool with them while the toilet bubble is floating above your head. Sadly, you can't actually pee in the pool.

Erik nearly wins the makeout competition in front of a porn studio apparently endorsed by the McDonald's Corporation.

Erik (codename: Aerika) compliments a homeowner on his nice house...



...before ripping out his heart, stomping on it, and laughing madly.

Third place, Chet: I have no idea how to find someone's Body rating, and everyone looks pretty hot to me. *The Sims Online* designers wisely avoided the body type most likely found within their buying demographic. This is annoying, but not nearly as annoying as the fact that college-boy Bruce already has such an in-depth knowledge of the game's interface that he knows where to find everybody's Body score. Then Tom declares himself the winner. I point out that anyone who uses the phrase "booty call" is the real loser here, but somehow, I still come in last.

THE SCORE — DAY 2

Tom	3
Erik	2
Chet	1
Bruce	-

Day Three: Erik's challenge

For most normal players, the appeal of these massively multiplayer online games is the opportunity they provide to act like a sociopath in front of more-or-less real people without any more-or-less real consequences. Try as they apparently did, *The Sims Online* designers couldn't eliminate all of the features that make online games as sort-of-fun as they are. As a result, the ability to be a jerk remains, but it's offset by the game's only real weapon—the ability to kick someone out of your house. My challenge: Be the first person to get bounced.

First place, Chet: I first try to ban myself by upgrading from Win98 to WinXP. Sadly, this has no effect on my ability to play *The Sims Online*. I discover that the game is nothing like real life: I ignore people, I'm rude, I eat food without being invited to, and I leave messes wherever I go. Still, nobody will kick me out. Because you earn income when other players use your house, nobody wants to kick anyone out. I play on Bruce and Tom's expectations of me and, during the judging, make up a story about causing havoc in someone's house before getting banned from it. In reality, after 30 seconds of honest effort, I find it impossible to get booted out of anything.

Second place, Bruce: On Alphaville, there's a place called the Francophone Community where everyone speaks French. Since my character is named after famous German panzer commander Michael Wittman, I figure just showing up on the premises will cause them to ban me, or maybe they'll just surrender altogether. When that doesn't work, I point out my cool all-black panzer commander uniform and Bavarian hat, and explain that "I am der über German panzerfuhrer Michael Wittman!" Unfortunately, everyone thinks this is great, and that I am the best. They also stop speaking French, maybe so they can join the Nazi side. Not only do I not get banned, I make three friends. As long as you act goofy but not abusive, I guess everyone wants to play. Although you can't discount the possibility that they were scared. After all, they're French.

Third place, Tom: I guess my best chance at getting kicked out is to use the scorn of a woman. Hell hath no fury and all that. So, I go to the Sim Sorority House and tell Melita that we can't see each other anymore, that I don't like her and was never really attracted to her, that I don't even like her friends and I haven't really enjoyed the pool parties and the making out on the love seat, that I was just using her to meet other girls, and that I'm already married to someone else. She thinks I'm teasing and she does the Cry and Bawl animation before doing the Laugh animation. So, I do the Throw Up, Burp, and Drunk animation and tell her she's a cheap hussy and that it's over, all over. She tells me to quit goofing around and that the buffet will be ready "in just a sex." I tell her I always hated it when she made that joke/typo. I finally break out the Fart animation directly at her. She laughs some more and calls everyone over to look at me. At this point, Erik messages me that the challenge is over, so I excuse myself to leave while everyone else is pointing at me and laughing.

THE SCORE — DAY 3

Chet	3
Tom	0
Bruce	0
Erik	-

Day Four: Chet's challenge

My challenge is to be the first person to empty his bladder onto someone's floor. I'll admit that I'm not even sure if this is possible, but I figure that'll just make it more challenging—although it is something I know Erik's good at.

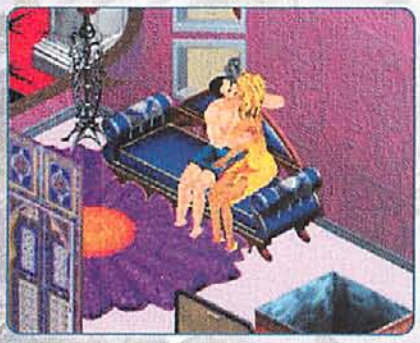
First place, Bruce: I have the advantage because, unknown to these guys, I haven't been drinking anything in this game due to a little-known bladder condition that didn't make the latest patch. I'm already 95 percent of the way to the urine nation when Chet makes this challenge; a few minutes later, it's all over. The game, that is. I'm so happy, I piss myself in real life. Pissing yourself takes your hygiene bar to zero, by the way. Time for a nice hot shower. After I log out, I mean.

Second place, Tom: By the time I get to the kitchen to start sucking down coffee, Bruce has already won. So, I go to LovelyLisa's house, where we change into different costumes and make out with each other.

Third place, Erik: For some reason, Bruce and Tom immediately decide to pee on the floor of our own house. One of the many things this tells me about them is that they have no idea that peeing on the floor is not actually possible. My strategy, or maybe it's a tactic, is to purchase a water tile and place it under my feet, creating the fabulous illusion that I've made water down my leg. The plan goes well until rampant lag causes me to accidentally place the water under Bruce's feet. That sweet smell isn't urine but, unfortunately, an undeserved victory for Bruce.

THE SCORE — DAY 4

Bruce	3
Tom	2
Erik	1
Chet	-



THE FINAL SCORE

Erik–6 Bruce, Chet, and Tom–5

One thing that wasn't completely clear at the beginning of the events is just how poor a loser Chet is. When it became apparent to him—incorrectly—that Bruce had won the competition, Chet offered to have his foot sort the problem out in Bruce's ass at this year's E3. After Chet was informed that Erik had actually won, he told the group that his offer still stood, but that it had expanded to now include Chet's other foot and Tom's ass. In the end, there really were no winners or losers. Unless you're asking within leg reach of Chet, in which case, Chet clearly won.

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Prize list	Retail Value	Number	Total Value
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PlayStation 2	$200	5	$1,000
GameCube	$150	5	$750
Xbox	$200	5	$1,000
FIRST PRIZES			
Enter the Matrix (PS2)	$50	10	$500
Enter the Matrix (GC)	$50	10	$500
Enter the Matrix (Xbox)	$50	10	$500
Enter the Matrix (PC)	$50	10	$500
SECOND PRIZES			
Animatrix DVD	$25	30	$750
Matrix Special Edition DVD	$28	20	$560
Matrix DVD (regular)	$20	10	$200
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1-year EGM subscription	$19.97	20	$399.40

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Scorched Earth

The Gong Show

So much for the lighthearted take on gaming...

By Robert Coffey robert_coffey@ziffdavis.com

Here's an idea for a game: It's an RTS called *Race War*. What really sets it apart is that the resources are different for every side. The Koreans have only two food sources: dogs and tree bark. The African-American forces have to steal all their vehicles and create new units at the Baby-Momma's House, where they can thankfully churn out loads of superpredator babies—good thing, because they tend to die real young. I still haven't quite worked out what the Jewish, Polish, and Italian factions will be doing, but you can bet it'll be some kind of crazy funny thing. It's just a game, right? It doesn't mean anything, right?

OK, so, if you're nodding right now, then you are two things: wrong and an idiot. Odds are, you're also composing an e-mail in your head, in which you tell me you're tired of me being so super-sensitive and tree-huggy about everything. That I should stop feeling the gong-banging Chinese armies in *C&C: Generals* are ignorant, reductive cultural stereotypes. That I and the rest of *CGW* need to relax and understand it's all just a joke. Surprise—I understand it's a joke, the same way I understand "What do you get when you cross a porch monkey and a Jap?" is a joke.

The fact is, there are good ideas, bad ideas, and wrong ideas. And while the majority of our readers are smart enough to write us letters intelligently wrestling with the good ideas in gaming, a surprising number defend the wrong ideas—most recently, the grade school-level racial caricatures shot through *C&C: Generals*. I am constantly stunned and infuriated by the number of people willing to zealously defend such crap. And I'm not talking about defending *Generals* as a game (one more *C&C* inflicted upon humanity is merely a bad idea). I'm talking about the supergenius that wrote "To be totally honest, I'm tired of all the panzy-assed [sic], whiney, liberal pussies that get offended every time someone mentions ANYTHING controversial or even hinting at ethnic or racial differences." You sir, are a troglodyte. To suggest that Di Luo's apparent Asian-ness makes him maybe a little too sensitive to Chinese stereotyping and therefore ill-suited to review a game that sports such great Chinkinese buffoonery, let me tell you this: Until racial background is listed on the side of the box along with RAM requirements, we'll just keep assuming any games released in this country are meant for Americans in general and assign reviews accordingly.

I'm about two pink eyes short of albinism and I was offended by *Generals*. Offended that the idea of playing as obviously real-world-based terrorists was somehow supposed to be fun. Put off by the splash art that featured shadowy, menacing A-rabs and "We Breed 'Em By The Litter" Chinese. (Why didn't they just get an intern to pull up the corner of his eyes with his fingers and stick his upper teeth out?) As for the American? Stalwart, square-jawed, and so right, good, and true that I wanted to puke. If it's all such an elaborate joke, then why isn't it taken all the way? Let's take away the American vehicles and instead drop their fat asses on riding lawnmowers, slap a beer helmet onto their head, and—yee-haw!—let 'em go! Let the other sides stage tractor pulls to distract and trap the Americans—we'll strike back by dropping McDonald's restaurants into their cities so they get too fat and full of heart disease to fight.

Drop their fat asses onto riding lawnmowers.

To be fair, I don't think *C&C: Generals* is the most racially insensitive game ever mad—for that, you need to pluck *Shadow Warrior* out of the bargain bin. And I don't think the designers of either of those games, or of the original *Soldier of Fortune* or *Daikatana* (Superfly Johnson is about one "Feets, do yo' duty!" away from burnt-cork minstrel capering) were motivated by malice in making the decisions they did when building their games. I honestly think they just didn't understand, that they sincerely thought they were being funny or clever. But ignorance is an excuse that rings as hollow as, "I didn't know not paying income tax was against the law."

Stupidity is one thing, defending it another, and to suggest that we as journalists are somehow amiss by calling attention to objectionable material in games is ludicrous. Games shouldn't get a free pass any more than movies, music, or television. Just because something is allegedly done in the name of fun doesn't make it right—otherwise, we'd be seeing all those WWII-era *Popeye* and *Bugs Bunny* cartoons on Nickelodeon in between episodes of *SpongeBob SquarePants*. Want the government to stop treating games and gamers as a potential antichrist? Then grow the hell up and act like adults.

ILLUSTRATION BY JACK HORNADY

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