HANDS ON: TOM vs. BRUCE vs. WORLD OF WARCRAFT!

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

Earth's Best PC Gaming Magazine

ead To Head

ATI vs. NVIDIA

HE LATEST GRAPHICS
ARDS FACE OFF—
E PICK THE WINNER

CALL OF DUTY: UNITED OFFENSIVE PREVIEWED!

XPLOSIVE SEQUEL TO THE
CTION GAME OF THE YEAR

FIRST SCREENS! UNREAL 3 ENGINE REVEALED!

Exclusive World Premiere!

BATTLEFIELD 2

*HE FUTURE OF ONLINE WARFARE IS HERE—**NOW!***

PAINKILLER / BREED / MANHUNT

JULY 2004 ISSUE 240
$7.99 U.S. $8.99 Canada
ZIFF DAVIS MEDIA
07>
0 70992 06950 7
Display Until June 29
WWW.COMPUTERGAMING.COM

EXPLORE THE UNCHARTED REALMS OF ADVENTURE.

RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Visit www.esrb.org or call 1-800-771-3772 for more ratings information.

SOE
SONY ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT

The way it's meant to be played
NVIDIA.

www.everquest2.com

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

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

COMING SOON

EverQuest II

WHERE ADVENTURE COMES ALIVE™

Years of peace have ended, as the brutal Terran Empire seeks to claim Morningstar Prime, the last colony of the Northern Star *Alliance*. Surrender is not an option for Captain Jacob Angelus and his brave colonists who battle for the fate of their home and their lives. To survive, they'll have to outmaneuver superior Empire weaponry and the vicious alien race allied with the Terrans. The forces are assembled; the soldiers stand ready. Let the battle begin.

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Blood and Gore
Language
Violence

VIVENDI UNIVERSAL games

POWERED BY gamespy

MASSIVE ENTERTAINMENT

The way it's meant to be played NVIDIA

Tactics.

Combat.

Survival.

GROUND CONTROL II

OPERATION EXODUS

www.groundcontrol2.com

PC CD-ROM SOFTWARE

SIERRA

© 2004 Massive Entertainment. All rights reserved. Ground Control, Massive Entertainment and the Massive Entertainment logo are registered trademarks of Massive Entertainment AB in the U.S. and/or other countries. Published by Vivendi Universal Games International. Sierra and the Sierra logo are registered trademarks or trademarks of Sierra Entertainment, Inc. in the U.S. and/or other countries. GameSpy and the "Powered by GameSpy" design are trademarks of GameSpy Industries, Inc. The NVIDIA logo and "The Way It's Meant to be Played" logo are registered trademarks or trademarks of NVIDIA Corporation in the United States and/or other countries. All other trademarks are property of their respective owners.

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

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

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

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

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

SOME UNINVITED GUESTS.

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

Dark Age of Camelot™ NEW FRONTIERS™

Never Played?
Download 7 Day Free Trial
www.darkageofcamelot.com/cgw
fileplanet nZone

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB — Violence

MYTHIC ENTERTAINMENT

PC CD-ROM SOFTWARE

The way it's meant to be played — nVIDIA.

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

Contents

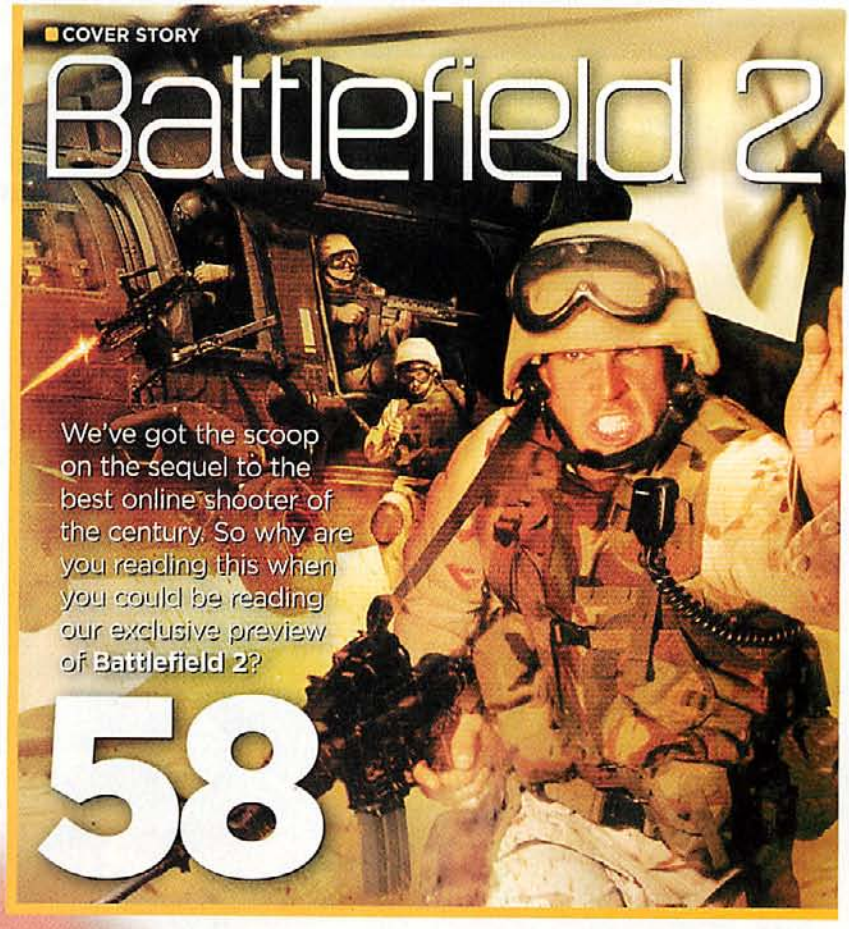
July 2004 Issue #240

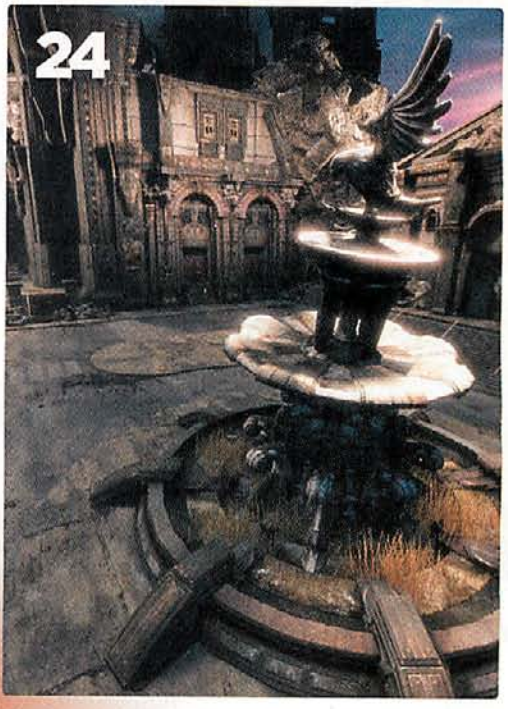
12 Editorial
What does Jeff do when he's not wandering the *CGW* hallways, muttering to himself? He writes incoherent editorials. Tough life, huh?

16 Letters
In which we hear from our first Elizabethan psychopath, another Tracy Espeleta stalker, a bunch of **Zuma** junkies, and a guy who calls Robert Coffey an idiot. Feel the love.

24 Radar
Holy hardware, Batman! This month we sit your ass in the demo room to see the **Unreal 3** engine demo in action. Next, we put you ringside as **ATI** and **Nvidia** square off for the title of baddest graphics on the block. Last but not least, watch as Darren gets his ass kicked by **Tiger Woods**. Check it out—and a whole lot more—in this month's Radar.

44 Previews
The phone rings. Answer the call...**Call of Duty: United Offensive**, that is. Afterward, check your watch for the **Dawn of War** (set in the **Warhammer 40,000** universe). And with so much **Advent Rising**, you'll need a vacation in **RollerCoaster Tycoon 3.**





REVIEWS

68 Painkiller
70 Breed
71 Desert Rats: Afrika Corps
72 Lords of the Realm III
73 Sacred
75 Judge Dredd: Dredd Versus Death
75 Warhammer 40,000: Fire Warrior
74 Nemesis of the Roman Empire
76 Manhunt
77 Rise of Nations: Thrones & Patriots

PREVIEWS

44 Call of Duty: United Offensive
46 Warhammer 40,000: Dawn of War
49 Armies of Exigo
50 RollerCoaster Tycoon 3
52 Advent Rising
54 Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth
55 SuperPower 2
55 Dungeon Lords

68 Reviews

Zombies, witches, goblins, Nazis, convicts, Romans, and more get killed off in the games we review this month! Oh, the lineup may be slim, but the body count, she is huge!

80 Tech

Wil beats up on BOXX Technology's **GameBOXX FX** and an **ABS Athlon 64 FX-53** based desktop. Also, has Logitech built the ultimate gaming mouse? Check out Joel's 2.1 speaker head-to-head, as well as his graphics card installation How To. And, of course, there's a new Wil Power, Cracked Case, and Tech Medics.

99 Check Out

Once again, we've got all the top-of-the-line hardware recommendations you need in **A-List** and a look back at some of our recent favorites (and utter nonfavorites) in the **Rewind 100**.

110 Tom vs. Bruce

This month, Tom and Bruce get all medieval on each other in **World of WarCraft.**

114 Scorched Earth

Another temperate, well-reasoned thought provoker...ah, who are we kidding. Mr. Sunshine's coughed up another page of rant.

Meet UP @ 1UP.com

The all-new 1UP is here, and it's exploding with new features! We've still got all of that great daily content you've come to know and love, but we're now the first-ever destination for gamers to meet, play, get informed, and show off.

Check out the **cool new stuff** you can do!

If you have a GameFace, we have a place for you to put it.

YOUR GAMEFACE

Show off your game collection and trade games with others!

YOUR GAMES

Get YOUR GameFace on.

1UP.com™

Get clubbing! Join clubs or create your own and invite all of your friends.

YOUR CLUBS

Make friends with other gamers - including us editors.

YOUR FRIENDS

You've got a voice, let it be heard! Tell everyone what you're playing or doing.

YOUR JOURNAL

We're all here. Join us at 1UP.com.

T3h Int3r3t Ownz j00!

Get online with Grampa McDumbass

JEFF GREEN EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Recently, I did something I try to avoid as much as possible: I went outside, on a camping trip, far away from all electrical outlets and Wi-Fi hot spots. It was an outing for my daughter's 4th grade class, and as I sweated my lazy, pasty ass up a hill on one of the hikes, I was smoldering with resentment that it was not my Tauren druid, Bofus, clamoring up the hill in *World of WarCraft*, the game I was unable to play because of this stupid camping trip. Who needs the real outdoors when I have online digital worlds to explore? It is, in fact, all about online now, ya know. When we said that years ago, it turned out not to be true. Now it is. If you don't have a broadband connection yet...well, if you can afford the outrageous amount of money we charge for this magazine, you can afford a monthly broadband connection. And once you get one, you will be opened up to an entirely new world of gaming. On the day I am writing this, two highly anticipated MMORPGs—*City of Heroes* and *Lineage II*—went live (we'll review them next month), while elsewhere in the online world, there are fragfests galore in stellar games such as *Unreal Tournament 2004* and *Battlefield Vietnam*. And check out the future of online shooters in our exclusive preview of *Battlefield 2* in this issue. You won't believe your eyes.

KRISTEN SALVATORE
MANAGING EDITOR

Do not cross Lt. Col. Salvatore. She will throw your sorry butt all the way back to boot camp if you don't make your deadlines. You got it? Now drop and do 10, ya freakin' pansy. The very sight of you makes us sick!

ROBERT COFFEY
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Col. Coffey is currently undergoing serious debriefing after returning from a mission in an unnamed Latin American country with a burlap bag full of human skulls. No one knows whose skulls they are. And no one knows why Robert won't stop laughing.

DARREN GLADSTONE
SENIOR EDITOR

Boy, does Lt. Gladstone have a deal for you. You want engine parts? He's got engine parts. You need camouflage gear? He's got camouflage gear. And for you? Dirt cheap! What's war good for? We'll tell you what it's good for—Darren's pocketbook!

WILLIAM O'NEAL
TECH EDITOR

Capt. O'Neal has not been seen on base now for a number of weeks. He might have gone AWOL. Or he might just be traipsing around town again with one of the Ziff Game Group sales girls. What can he say? He's a lover, not a fighter.

JOHNNY LIU
PREVIEWS EDITOR

Cpl. Liu was recently discovered handing out autographed photos of himself to the local villagers. That alone is a violation of military code. But what was worse was that he was actually charging them in American dollars. Please, folks, stop enabling the boy. He has work to do.

RYAN SCOTT
CD-ROM EDITOR

Pvt. Scott was unanimously voted as Most Likely to Blow Himself Up with His Own Grenade. And if that doesn't work, we'll blow him up ourselves. Not that we don't like the guy. It's just that someone has to be hazed, and until a newer recruit shows up, it's this clown.

ROB SCHULTZ
ART DIRECTOR

Sgt. Schultz is embarrassed to be in the same army with the girls on this page. Bunch of sissies! No wonder we're losing this war! Maybe a little less time with the whole "game playing" thing and a little more time fighting the bad guys, and we could all go home!

MICHAEL JENNINGS
ASSOCIATE ART DIRECTOR

Cpl. Jennings loves the smell of napalm in the morning. In fact, a quick inspection through Jennings' backpack revealed quite the demolitions gold mine. That's one way to make it through this nightmare.

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

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

DESIGN
Art Director Rob Schultz
Associate Art Director Michael Jennings

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
Charles Ardai, T. Byrl Baker, Loyd Case, Tom Chick, Bruce Geryk, Jeff Lackey, Raphael Liberatore, Thomas L. McDonald, Erik Wolpaw

Founder Russell Sipe

ZIFF DAVIS GAME GROUP
Senior VP Dale Strang
Editorial Director John Davison
Creative Director Simon Cox
Business Director Cathy Bendoff

SALES
Group Publisher Lee Uniacke
Assoc. Group Publisher Stan Taigen
Advertising Director Marci Yamaguchi

Sales Territory Managers and Acct. Execs. (listed geographically from West to East)

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

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

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

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

CONSUMER ACCOUNTS
Consumer-West
Marc Callison **Consumer Accounts Manager**
Candace Droz **Account Executive**
Consumer- East
Ian Sinclair **Regional Sales Manager**
Candace Droz **Account Executive**

1UP.COM
General Manager Tom Jessiman
Internet Sales Account Manager Bill Young
Editor in Chief Sam Kennedy

Senior Advertising Coordinator Tipler Ubbelohde

Sales Assistants
Alison Rubino
Lynn Fortunato
Simone Deocares-Lengyel

MARKETING
Marketing Director Rey Ledda
Assoc. Research Director May Tong
Marketing Coordinator Wayne Shiu

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

TOURNAMENTS 24/7
NEW SETS RELEASED
1000's of Cards
Wizards OF THE COAST
CUSTOMIZABLE AVATARS !
LIVE CHAT !
MAGIC The Gathering ONLINE
ALL LEVELS OF PLAY
Prizes
ALL MAGIC, ALL THE TIME – UNLIMITED STRATEGIES
BEST REWARDS
HALL OF CHAMPIONS
THOUSANDS OF CREATURES
MOST COMPETITION
DEADLIEST STRATEGIES
THIS IS THE PLACE TO PLAY: WWW.MAGICTHEGATHERING.COM
THIS IS THE PLACE TO PLAY: WWW.MAGICTHEGATHERING.COM
THIS IS THE PLACE TO PLAY: WWW.MAGICTHEGATHERING.COM

THE NEW DELL XPS GAMING PCs. SIDE EFFECTS MAY INCLUDE FRIED BRAIN, SLEEP DEPRIVATION AND WALLET OBESITY.

Inspiron XPS Notebook shown with Skullz design option.

***Pricing/Availability:** Prices, specifications, availability and terms of offers may change without notice. Taxes and shipping charges are extra, and vary. Valid for U.S. Dell Home Systems Co. new purchases only. Dell cannot be responsible for pricing or other errors, and reserves the right to cancel orders arising from such errors. **Limited Warranty:** You can get a copy of our limited warranties and guarantees by writing Dell USA LP, Attn: Warranties, One Dell Way, Round Rock, TX 78682. To purchase warranty only or for information on other service options please call 1-800-915-3355 or visit www.dell4me.com/termsandconditions. **At Home Service:** At-Home service provided via third-party contract with customer. Technician will be dispatched, if necessary, following phone-based troubleshooting. Availability varies. Other conditions apply. **DVD+RW and DVD+RW/+R Drives:** Discs burned with this drive may not be compatible with some existing drives and players; using DVD+R media provides maximum compatibility. **Purchase Plan: Dell Preferred Account:** Offered by CIT Bank to qualified U.S. residents with approved credit. Taxes and shipping charges are extra and vary. **Gigabit Ethernet:** This term does not connote actual operating speed of 1 GB/sec. For high speed transmission connection to a Gigabit Ethernet server and network infrastructure is required. **Trademarks/Copyright Notices:** Intel, Intel Inside, Intel Inside logo, Intel Centrino, Intel Centrino logo, Celeron, Intel Xeon, Intel SpeedStep, Itanium, Pentium, and Pentium III Xeon are trademarks or registered trademarks of Intel Corporation or its subsidiaries in the United States and other countries. Microsoft and Windows are registered trademarks of Microsoft Corporation. ©2004 Dell Inc. All rights reserved.

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

>>> Bottom line, you win.

DELL™ DIMENSION™ XPS ULTIMATE GAMING DESKTOP

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

- **Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology at 3.20GHz with 800MHz Front Side Bus**
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- 1GB Dual Channel DDR SDRAM at 400MHz
- 120GB SATA Hard Drive (7200 RPM)
- 19" (18.0" v.i.s., .24dp) M992 Monitor
- NEW 256MB DDR ATI's RADEON™ 9800 XT Graphics Card
- 16X DVD-ROM Drive
- 8X CD/DVD Burner (DVD+RW /+R*)
- Sound Blaster® Audigy™2 (D) Sound Card
- Dell 5650 5.1 Surround Sound Speaker System with Subwoofer
- Integrated Intel® PRO/1000 MT Gigabit Ethernet*
- 1-Yr Limited Warranty*, 1-Yr At-Home Service*

WANT EVEN MORE JUICE?

- 80GB 2nd Hard Drive, add $120
- 19" Dell™ UltraSharp™ Digital Flat Panel Display (1901FP), add $490
- 3-Yr Limited Warranty*, 3-Yr At-Home Service*, add $169

$2599 or as low as **$78**/mo.*
E-VALUE Code: 00201-D50525m

Dell recommends Microsoft® Windows® XP

NEW DELL™ INSPIRON™ XPS ULTIMATE GAMING NOTEBOOK

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

- **Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology at 3.40GHz with 800MHz Front Side Bus**
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- 15.4" UltraSharp™ Wide Screen UXGA TFT Display
- 512MB DDR SDRAM at 400MHz
- 60GB Hard Drive (7200 RPM)
- 24X CD Burner/DVD Combo Drive
- 128MB DDR ATI's MOBILITY™ RADEON™ 9700 AGP 8X Graphics
- 12 Cell Lithium Ion Battery (96Whr)
- 10/100/1000 Gigabit NIC Included
- 1-Yr Limited Warranty*, 1-Yr Mail-in Service

WANT EVEN MORE JUICE?

- 1GB DDR SDRAM at 400MHz, add $350
- 4X CD/DVD Burner (DVD+RW/+R*), add $149
- 100GB Hard Drive, add $100
- 3-Yr Limited Warranty*, 3-Yr At-Home Service*, add $279

$2699 or as low as **$81**/mo.*
E-VALUE Code: 00201-D80526m

XPS Metallic | Skullz | Plasma | Cipher

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

Intense Gaming. Easy as DELL™

Click www.dell.com/cgw Call 1-800-247-5531

Letters

Staff changes

Subject: Tracy Espeleta, your new editor-in-chief.

She is one mighty sexy nerd! I demand you to make Tracy Espeleta your new editor-in-chief (shove the Green man, old Jeff, back to his old cubicle so he could produce more Greenspeak and be useful again) and have a 50-page swimsuit exclusive of her in swimsuits in every issue from now on.

Dana who? Dana Moveover is what your readers will be calling that traitor from now on. And Tracy is the only solution to recovering the readers you've lost from losing Scooter.

Now, I demand you to do as I say. Or I will not read any ads in your magazine to protest!

DK

Try as we might, we couldn't get Tracy to agree to the layout. Or the job. Or to answer our phone calls. But, in an effort to soothe your troubled, stalking soul, another Nerd Herder has nobly pitched in to help you out. Enjoy!

Beats being raised by wolves, but not by much

Now gather round, boys (Robert, Darren, Wil, Ryan, Ken, Rob, Michael) and girls (Kristen and Jeff), as I tell the story of my humble upbringing.

It all began one fateful day at the Milwaukee airport. Being a giddy young boy, I needed something to occupy me during the flight. I begged my mom for some money, so she forked over 10 dollars. That 10-dollar bill burned a hole in my pocket within seconds, so I needed to find something to waste it on. I ran into the closest shop, a little magazine store. I began scanning the shelves for something that looked interesting, but I couldn't seem to find anything. Nothing seemed to catch my eye until I spotted a *CGW* resting on the far side of the bottom shelf. On the cover was a picture of a Nazi from *RTCW* spraying fire from his flamethrower. I instantly snatched up that magazine and bought it.

And so began my second life as a gamer, born and raised by the editors of *CGW*. Soon after buying my first *CGW*, I got a subscription. I was too young to understand your jokes back then, but I still loved your magazine. I grew up reading your magazine, so my life was profoundly affected when the magazine would change. When Jeff Green took the spot of George Jones as editor-in-chief, it was like having my father move away and get replaced by my new stepdad. Whenever you would change the look of the magazine, it was like moving into a new house. In the times of Canadian Corner, it was like having my parents constantly insulting Jean-Louis, the new foreign exchange student from Quebec. When new people joined the staff at *CGW*, it was like having little brothers and sisters being born. And life, of course, must always end in death. So the night I learned Scooter was leaving *CGW*, I cried myself to sleep and fell into a deep depression. It was like having a brother die. I just wanted to let you know the impact you've had on my life and the way you've seemed to shape me into a funnier, geekier, more secluded man than I ever could have dreamed of. And to this day, I have a hole in my heart where Scooter once was that no person can ever fill.

Brett Alexander Smith

Your letter has touched and moved us, Brett. Welcome to the family. And as for that hole in your heart, we recommend stuffing it with a fistful of bacon.

Questionable Decision Exploited By Publication

I find the selection of nerds in the herd you've rustled to generally be pathetic wannabes. I would consider very few of them to actually be considered gaming geeks when the first game they played was Quake. The only one I've seen so far worthy of the title is the Ultima on Apple II player.

I've been PC gaming since before TRS-80 Mod I and Commodore Pet 2001 when you had to type the source code and sometimes hex from magazines. As for MORPG, I bet none of your readers has ever played Oubliette on PLATO way back in the late 70's (complete with first person graphics). Ahh, the late nights and missed morning classes.

Whomever truly considers themselves a Nerd or Geek should be able to back-up that claim. How far would you go to show your colors? I would like to be the first submission in a CGW Nerd Tattoo contest. I am proud to wear this as a testament to my hard-core geekness. Any other contestants out there?

Ęord Çhariot

Mail Bites

The descent of Valve from a respected and competent developer into a squalid mess of ineptitude is a sad event indeed. It can be likened to the fall of the Roman Empire or the collapse of the Soviet Union.

—Cory "I Lack Perspective" Potts

Do you want bigger boobs?

—Natasha Fair

Forget Medals. Forget Honor. Just Survive.

It's 1967. You've been drafted to fight in the most controversial conflict of modern times. Prepare to experience the fear, chaos and atrocities of the Vietnam War. From napalm bombardments of civilian villages to deadly VC booby traps, can you survive your first tour of duty?

Unnerving realism. A graphically harrowing depiction of the terror of war.

Powered by Guerrilla's groundbreaking technology.

Develop from a fresh rookie to a hard-edged Special Forces operative.

COMING JUNE 2004

SHELLSHOCK™

NAM '67

RATING PENDING RP CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Visit www.esrb.org or call 1-800-771-3772 for more info.

PC CD-ROM SOFTWARE

GUERRILLA

ShellShockGame.com

eidos

©2004 Eidos. Developed by Guerrilla BV. Published by Eidos, Inc. ShellShock, ShellShock: Nam '67, the ShellShock logo, Eidos and the Eidos logo are trademarks of the Eidos Group of Companies. Guerrilla and the Guerrilla logo are trademarks of Guerrilla BV. All Rights Reserved. The rating icon is a registered trademark of the Entertainment Software Association. All rights reserved. All other trademarks and registrations are property of their respective owners.

Zuma—getting wives off gamers' backs for almost a year

My husband subscribes to *Computer Gaming World*. He readily admits that he is an überdork! I have to say that I enjoy the magazine because I live and die by sarcasm's razor's edge, but I am not a big gamer. My 5-year-old son is more knowledgeable. You could only imagine my surprise when my husband handed me this month's issue and told me I had to read this article, "C'mon and Zuma, Zuma, Zoom!" (*CGW*, April 2004). He went to bed, and I read while watching *Queer Eye*. I got a couple of paragraphs in and just about died. This article was about me. I am totally addicted to this game. It is horrible. I have considered having my husband remove it from our system. But, I am stuck on level eight. If I could just get to level nine...maybe then I could walk away. Even worse is that there IS an article in *CGW* about me. I am a stay-at-home, PTA, soccer-mom type; for God's sake, I was a cheerleader in high school. My burning passions should be something else...not a frog and bocce balls!

Thanks for your time! Again, I must say that while I'm not a gamer, I still appreciate the humor of *CGW* and how perfectly it reflects my husband.

Nicki

I went home and had my wife get on this game last night. She neglected our daughter and myself for about two hours, highly uncharacteristic of her. Being an avid gamer myself, married to a woman who pretty much turns her nose up at the pastime...it was refreshing and a relief to have her get sucked in. Thanks.

Ron Goodrich

Now we can die happy

Just a note to say that I have enjoyed your mag the last several months. I had written a lengthy e-mail complaining about long previews raving about a game, which are later contradicted by a review giving a game 60-70 percent because of flaws or bugs or whatever. I like the shorter previews and more full-page reviews. Previews should be short and to the point. Reviews should be detailed and lengthy. I also enjoy the letters and hardware sections, but the reviews are the main attraction.

Just my opinion, but I thought you might like to hear good news for once or just know that I am still reading.

Darth Null

What a tremendous, tremendous relief. Thank you, Darth, thank you so very very much. You complete me.

Girl gamer types with hammers!

LET ME JUST SAY FIRST THAT I LOVE YOUR ARTICLES. MY HUSBAND SUBSCRIBES TO YOUR MAGAZINE. HE IS A COMPUTER GAMING JUNKY! HE CANT GET ENOUGH, AND $50 FOR A NEW GAME SEEMS FINE TO HIM. HE READS YOUR MAGAZINE METICULOUSLY, MAKING SURE HE MARKS HIS PAGE AND NO ONE BETTER LOSE IT. I, ON THE OTHER HAND, LOVE MY LAPTOP, AND THE ONLY GAME THAT I REALLY LOVE IS *OUTPOST* AND *OUTPOST 2*. UNFORTUNATELY, WHEN MY HUSBAND STEPPED ON MY OLD LAPTOP AND CRACKED THE SCREEN, I HAD TO GET ANOTHER LAPTOP, MUCH TO HIS DELIGHT. I WAS EXCITED TO PLAY *OUTPOST* AT LIGHT SPEED, AND MY HUSBAND ASSURED ME OVER AND OVER THAT SINCE MY COMPUTER IS NOW THE FASTEST IN THE HOUSE, HE WILL NOT HAVE TO UPGRADE. HAH!!! COMPUTER ENVY IS NOT A PRETTY THING, AND NOT ONLY DID MY HUSBAND HAVE IT, BUT SO DID MY TWO SONS, AND SO THE UPGRADES BEGAN. MUCH TO MY DISMAY, I COULDN'T PLAY OUTPOST ON MY NEW FAST LAPTOP—IT WOULDN'T PLAY MY GAME...BUT I DIGRESS. I WANTED TO TELL YOU THAT WHEN HE GETS HIS MAGAZINE, I GO STRAIGHT FOR THE BACK PAGE TO HEAR ABOUT YOUR MINDLESS ANTICS, AND I LOVE TO HEAR HOW YOUR WIFE RESPONDS AND I KNOW I AM NOT ALONE IN THE WORLD. THANK YOU.

WENDY MEYER

Thanks for writing, Wendy. Now, in the name of all that is holy, will you please hit your Caps Lock key? Criminy.

Mail Bites

Once I graduate this crappy college with a B.S. in programming, I'm making a pornographic RPG.... I hope *CGW* reviews it.

—William Hollar

Robert Coffey is an idiot.

—Dan K

ZIFF DAVIS MEDIA

Chairman & CEO
Robert F. Callahan

Chief Operating Officer
Bart W. Catalane

Chief Financial Officer
Derek Irwin

Senior Executive Vice President, Publishing Operations
Tom McGrade

Executive Vice President & Editorial Director
Michael J. Miller

Executive Vice President, General Counsel & Secretary
Gregory Barton

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENTS

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

VICE PRESIDENTS

Ken Beach (Corporate Sales)
Sara DeCarlo (Database Marketing)
Aaron Goldberg (Market Experts)
Jim Hasl (Event Marketing Group)
Julie Herness (Event Marketing Group)
Tom Jessiman (VP and General Manager, 1UP.com)
Michael Krieger (Market Experts)
Charles Lee (Integrated Media)
Jim Louderback (Editor-in-Chief, Internet)
Eric Lundquist (Editor-in-Chief, *eWEEK*)
Chris Maginn (Internet)
Melinda Maginn Reilly (Integrated Media & Corporate Sales)
Angelo Mandarano (Internet)
Paul O'Reilly (Event Marketing Group)
Ellen Pearlman (Editor-in-Chief, *CIO Insight*)
Beth Repeta (Human Resources)
Martha Schwartz (Custom/Conference Group)
Pam Spector (Business Development and International Licensing)
Tom Steinert-Threlkeld (Editor-in-Chief, *Baseline*)
Stephen Sutton (Internet Audience Development)
Elda Vale (Research & Market Intelligence)
Stephen Veith (Publisher, *CIO Insight*)
Monica Vila (Event Marketing Group)

Senior Director, Manufacturing Carlos Lugo
Director of Corporate Communications Randy Zane
Enterprise Group Circulation Director Carmel McGuinness

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

PERMISSIONS

Copyright © 2004 Ziff Davis Media. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without permission is prohibited. For permission to reuse material in this publication (or on this website) or to use our logo, e-mail permissions@ziffdavis.com. For reprints, contact FosteReprints at 866-879-9144.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

For service questions, address changes, or to order, please call 800-827-4450 or e-mail cgw@neodata.com

Audit Bureau of Circulations Member ABC AUDITED

CROSSING THEM IS
EVERY VILLAIN'S NIGHTMARE.

AVAILABLE NOW!

NCSOFT

CRYPTIC STUDIOS

PlayNC
WWW.PLAYNC.COM

BEST OF E3 2003

The way it's meant to be played
NVIDIA

PC CD ROM ONLINE

TEEN
T
Violence
Suggestive Themes
ESRB CONTENT RATING
www.esrb.org

PROTECT THE STREETS

SOAR THE SKIES

JOIN OTHER HEROES

City of Heroes brings alive the world of comic books in the first massively multi-player game of its kind. A sprawling city. Hundreds of super powers. Millions of costumes. Endless villains to thwart. Non-stop action. Play as a lone vigilante or join a Super Group - the choice is yours! Everything you've ever wanted - and this is only the beginning. Play and See...at www.plaync.com.

CITY OF HEROES™

© 2004 Cryptic Studios, Inc and NCsoft Corporation. All rights reserved. City of Heroes® is a trademark of Cryptic Studios, Inc. and NCsoft Corporation. NCsoft® is a trademark of NCsoft Corporation. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.

"★★★★★"
—Maxim

"Best Action Game"
—Spike TV Video Game Awards

RELOADED FOR PC.

TRUE CRIME™

STREETS OF LA™

The streets of Los Angeles are being terrorized by vicious gangs and it's going to take a renegade ex-cop like you to clean them up. Drive, fight and shoot your way through 240 square miles of recreated LA. And now, the deepest console game ever just got deeper on PC. Battle friends in PC-exclusive multiplayer modes. Draw from an arsenal of new weapons like rocket launchers and crossbows. This is True Crime for the PC.

Visit truecrimela.com for exclusive game clips and soundtrack samples.

Luxoflux

ACTIVISION

activision.com

PlayStation.2

XBOX

GAMECUBE

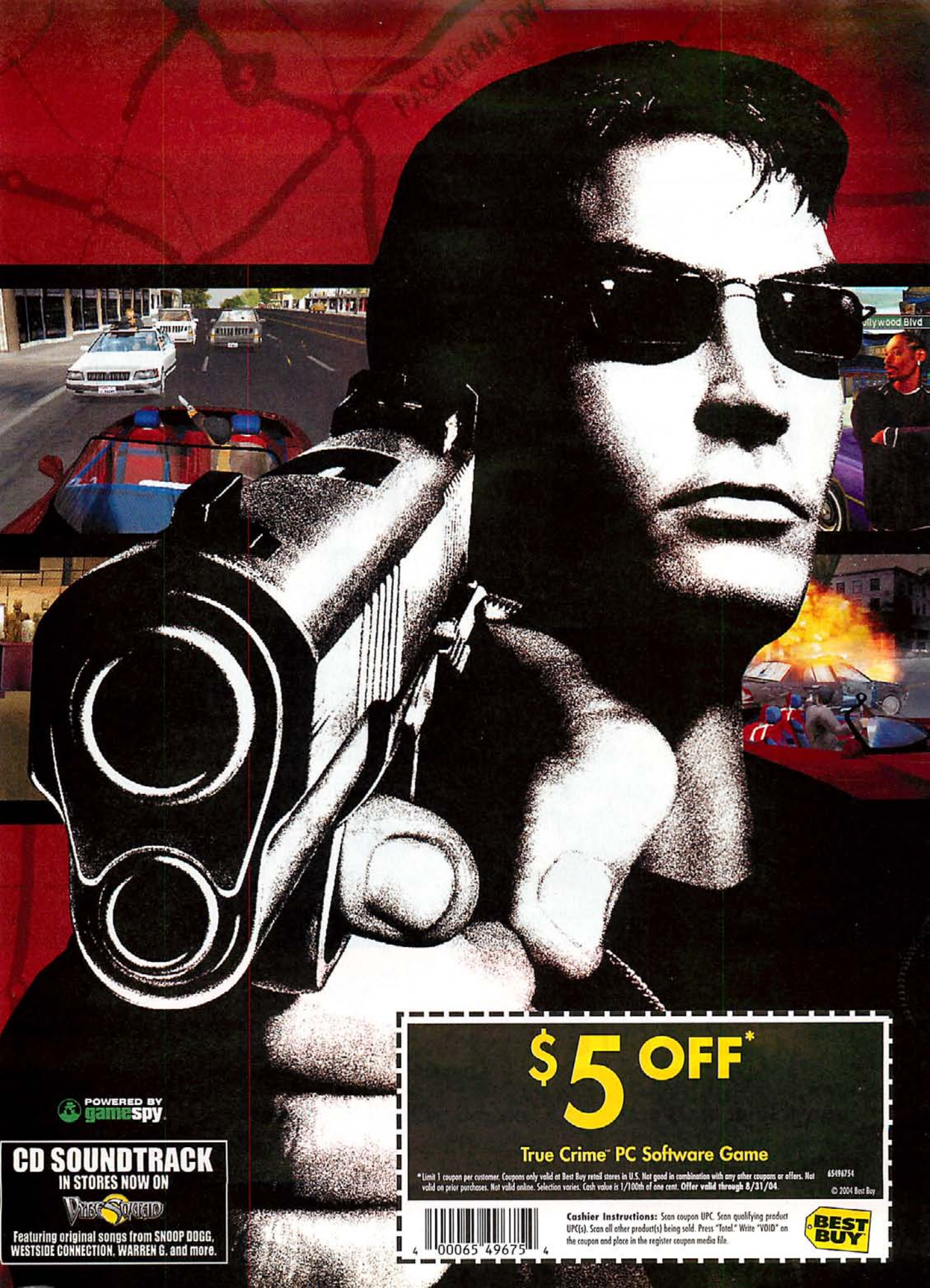
The way it's meant to be played

PC CD-ROM SOFTWARE

MATURE 17+ M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Blood and Gore
Mature Sexual Themes
Strong Language
Violence

© 2003-2004 Activision, Inc. and its affiliates. Published and distributed by Activision Publishing, Inc. Activision is a registered trademark and True Crime and Streets of LA are trademarks of Activision, Inc. and its affiliates. All rights reserved. Developed by Luxoflux. Microsoft, Xbox and the Xbox logos are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the U.S. and/or other countries and are used under license from Microsoft. TM, ® and the Nintendo GameCube logo are trademarks of Nintendo. © 2001 Nintendo. All rights reserved. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. The NVIDIA logo and the "The way it's meant to be played" logo are registered trademarks or trademarks of NVIDIA Corporation. The ratings icon is a registered trademark of the Entertainment Software Association. PC CD-ROM logo TM and © IEMA 2003. All other trademarks and trade names are the properties of their respective owners. Screenshots taken from PC gameplay.


POWERED BY gamespy
CD SOUNDTRACK
IN STORES NOW ON
VIBE SQUAD
Featuring original songs from SNOOP DOGG, WESTSIDE CONNECTION, WARREN G. and more.
$5 OFF*
True Crime™ PC Software Game
* Limit 1 coupon per customer. Coupons only valid at Best Buy retail stores in U.S. Not good in combination with any other coupons or offers. Not valid on prior purchases. Not valid online. Selection varies. Cash value is 1/100th of one cent. Offer valid through 8/31/04.
65498754
© 2004 Best Buy
4 00065 49675 4
Cashier Instructions: Scan coupon UPC. Scan qualifying product UPC(s). Scan all other product(s) being sold. Press "Total." Write "VOID" on the coupon and place in the register coupon media file.
BEST BUY

Check out the crazy amount of detail and lighting here. Now, imagine that this is in a game you're playing!

EXCLUSIVE PIX!

Reality Bites

Unreal Engine 3 converts a console editor into a believer

28 **Fore!** Digital duffers may dig this new virtual golf tee. Or maybe they won't

30 **Muscle cards** Who will win the next round in the graphics wars—ATI or Nvidia?

34 **Phone-y** Can cell phones finally get their game on? We make the call

Shockingly, the most-talked-about event of 2004's Game Developers Conference wasn't John Carmack's inspiring keynote address on "Entropy in the Development Process." Hell, it wasn't even when *American Idol* reject William Hung butchered "YMCA" at a Sony presentation. In the nerd-packed halls of the San Jose McEnery Convention Center, one question was repeated over and over: "Have you seen the Unreal Engine 3 demo?" Opinions ranged from "It looks better than *Half-Life 2*" to "It looks like *Lord of the Rings*...as in, the movies." So I, a humble console magazine editor, simply had to see it firsthand.

Now bear in mind, I'm not exactly a tech-savvy PC user (spec-heads, scope the sidebar for the jargon you crave), but seeing both *Doom 3* and *Half-Life 2* in action gave me hope for the future of all gaming. They're proof that the graphical ceiling isn't even close to being reached.

In the packed halls of the Game Developers Conference there was one question repeated over and over: "Have you seen the Unreal Engine 3 demo?"

After I'd been ushered into the behind-closed-doors tech demo, Epic Games' outspoken wunderkind Cliff Bleszinski prefaced the showing by saying, "This takes a big ol' dump on *Doom*!" Turns out that was a fairly prophetic statement—in terms of raw graphical brilliance, Unreal Engine 3 (set to debut with a new product in early 2006) completely blows away anything previously seen.

As expected, the engine (running on Nvidia's new GeForce 6800 cards at the demo) excels at rendering environments. The two shown—a gothic town square and an idyllic, windswept field complete with individual blades of swaying grass—both revealed what millions of polygons and talented artists can achieve. The stunning level of detail seriously blurred the line between what you'd expect from CG cut-scenes and in-game visuals. The character models shown were similarly impressive. Normal mapping has allowed for incredibly complex-looking creatures originally composed of 8.5 million polygons to be constructed using far fewer polygons—just 8,000, to be precise—and the resulting monstrosities still look breathtakingly realistic. Or would that make them unrealistic?

Blinded by the light

Even more impressive, however, are the engine's fantastic lighting capabilities and groundbreaking visual-displacement effects. A lantern was thrown around a dank, cavelike room, casting utterly realistic diffuse shadows on surfaces and through permeable textures. This area also utilized a new graphical technique that allows completely flat polygons to appear, instead of being comprised of wildly complex structures combining normal mapping and crazy texture tricks. Seriously, a wall constructed of only one piece of geometry looked exactly like a rough-hewn stone wall that you can view in three dimensions from any angle.

"Graphics have been awful until just last year," says the ever-so-timid Cliffy B. "When you look at a brick wall in Unreal Engine 3, it really looks like you can reach your hand in the cracks and climb up it, slip, and feel the mortar scraping against the underside of your chin as gravity has its way with you and drags you back to reality." The mind boggles. **Shane Bettenhausen**

Engine Highlights

- **Realistic per-pixel lighting**
- **Soft, dynamic shadows**
- **Robust physics system with IK**
- **Holographic texture mapping**
- **Spherical harmonic lighting**
- **High-dynamic-range lighting**
- **Visual-displacement normal mapping**

NERD-A-PALOOZA

Viva Las EQ!

The oldest MMO turns five

What better way to celebrate five years of hoarding platinum pieces than trying to cash them in for chips at The Palms casino? We crept out to Las Vegas to see if *EverQuest* addicts party like its 1399. All we've got to say, folks, is that if a picture is worth a thousand words, brace yourself for a mouthful. Darren Gladstone

Tagging EQ players before releasing them into the wild.

OK, we've gotta confess: In a really nerdy way, this is funny.

Those level 30 paladins sure know how to party.

Where do a bunch of *EQ*-ers go in Vegas? A big, empty room—of course!

Friends, these are the lords...the lords of *EverQuest*.

The jury is still out on who walked away with the title of Mr./Ms. Norrath 2004.

PLUGGED IN

LOL in MMO

***The Matrix Online* goes beyond the game with AIM**

Whether you opt for the red pill or the blue pill, you know that when the MMO game is over, you're offline. Or are you? Word has it that *The Matrix Online* will keep you constantly jacked in, thanks to AOL Instant Messenger.

Unlike EA Games' aborted *Majestic*, which had computerized conversation 'bots intruding on your personal life, AIM's incorporation here works. That's mostly 'cause it's with real, live people—your friends. Your character account is linked to your AIM (as well as ICQ, AOL, or Apple iChat) account, making for an interesting convergence between the game and the outside world. This allows players to coordinate when to meet up and play, solve puzzles midgame, or just try to pick up people in chat rooms.

Geek hearts are likely racing with the possibility of constantly being connected, but we fear it means this game is one less place where we can hide from the real world. Darren Gladstone

Take on your rivals with the new N-Gage QD

Take on your rivals with wireless multiplayer game play on the new N-Gage™ QD

Quick and easy game changing
Pocket-sized
Exclusive and top publisher game titles
Connect, compete and conquer in the N-Gage™ Arena
Games compatible with the original N-Gage™ game deck
PDA
Mobile phone

n-gage.com/qd

Preorder now at EBGAMES GameStop

N·GAGE NOKIA

anyone anywhere

Copyright © 2004 Nokia. All rights reserved. Nokia, N-Gage, N-Gage Arena and N-Gage QD are trademarks or registered trademarks of Nokia Corporation. Other product or company names mentioned herein may be trademarks of their respective owners.

FORE!

Teed off

Showing Tiger Woods who's boss: Tiger Woods

Screw Tiger Woods! The guy has it all: the looks, the fame, the gold-plated golf carts full of cash, and the best golf videogame named after him. But not today, friends. Thanks to the QMotions-Golf controller (www.qmotions.com), I'm gonna try and take this fool down a few pegs.

Just plug in this virtual tee, grab your Titleist, and you're as good as on the green. It's a simulator, a swing trainer, and, more important, it replaces a mouse in golf games. Smack the swing arm with your own club and watch the ball fly in EA Sports' *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004*, which ships with the controller. Digital duffers used to snooty country clubs probably won't mind shelling out $249 for the experience, but it isn't for everyone. You see, there's no miniature windmills to hit the virtual ball through. Well, that, and the golf clubs aren't included. **Darren Gladstone**

Just plug in this virtual tee, grab your Titleist, and you're as good as on the green.

Kapalua

	Par	Tiger	Darren
Hole 1	4	3	5
Hole 2	3	3	6
Hole 3	4	4	5
Hole 4	4	4	4
Hole 5	5	4	4
Hole 6	4	4	4
Hole 7	4	3	6
Hole 8	3	3	4
Hole 9	5	6	5
Hole 10	4	4	10
Hole 11	3	3	6
Hole 12	4	3	4
Hole 13	4	4	5
Hole 14	4	4	5
Hole 15	5	5	3
Hole 16	4	4	3
Hole 17	4	4	4
Hole 18	5	5	5
TOTAL	73	70	88

The problem: I only play miniature golf.

Top 5 Downloads

The best money you'll never spend

Some of the best games of all time were never available for PC, at least until Retrospec (http://retrospec.sgn.net) started offering conversions of classic Spectrum (and other) games. Help the site celebrate its fifth anniversary by checking out these five superb modernizations.

1 Head Over Heels
Equal parts puzzle and action game, this is arguably the best Spectrum title ever released. It's also one of the first games to let players control two characters who work cooperatively to accomplish goals.

2 Highway Pursuit
Spy Hunter meets the third dimension. This freebie is actually more fun than recent console incarnations of this timeless franchise.

3 Cybernoid 2
Remember *H.E.R.O.* for the Atari 2600? This is a little like that, but a lot better. Guide a spaceship through multiple levels that offer little in the way of elbow room and much in the way of bullet-spewing opponents.

4 Quazatron
Outrun, outmaneuver, and outshoot dozens of robot opponents in this 3D shooter that's much deeper than you'd think.

5 Skool Daze: Klass of '99
Go to school and break the rules—just don't get caught in the act.

Inside the Head of...

Peter Molyneux, Lionhead Studios

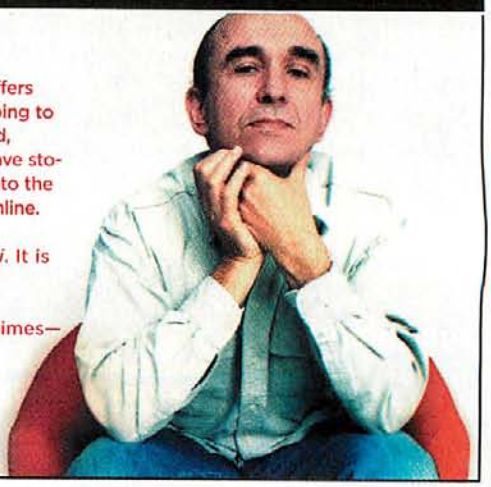
Favorite creation: *Populous*, because it was the first and the simplest.

On the future of gaming: To evolve, there are several challenges—first, gaming still suffers from variable quality in things like gameplay, visuals, and sound. Fact is, we're soon going to be making games that will have to have the same production qualities as films. Second, games need to be very intuitive and simple to play, but also be incredibly deep and have stories that are as compelling as any Hollywood script—that is, fit believable characters into the gameplay. Finally, we need to make games that will encourage more people to play online.

Dream project: I'd have to reveal everything about a secret project called *Dimitri*. It is incredibly ambitious and is very much a lifelong dream of mine.

Inspiration: It comes to me in the strangest of places and most inconvenient of times—without revealing too much more of intimate situations.

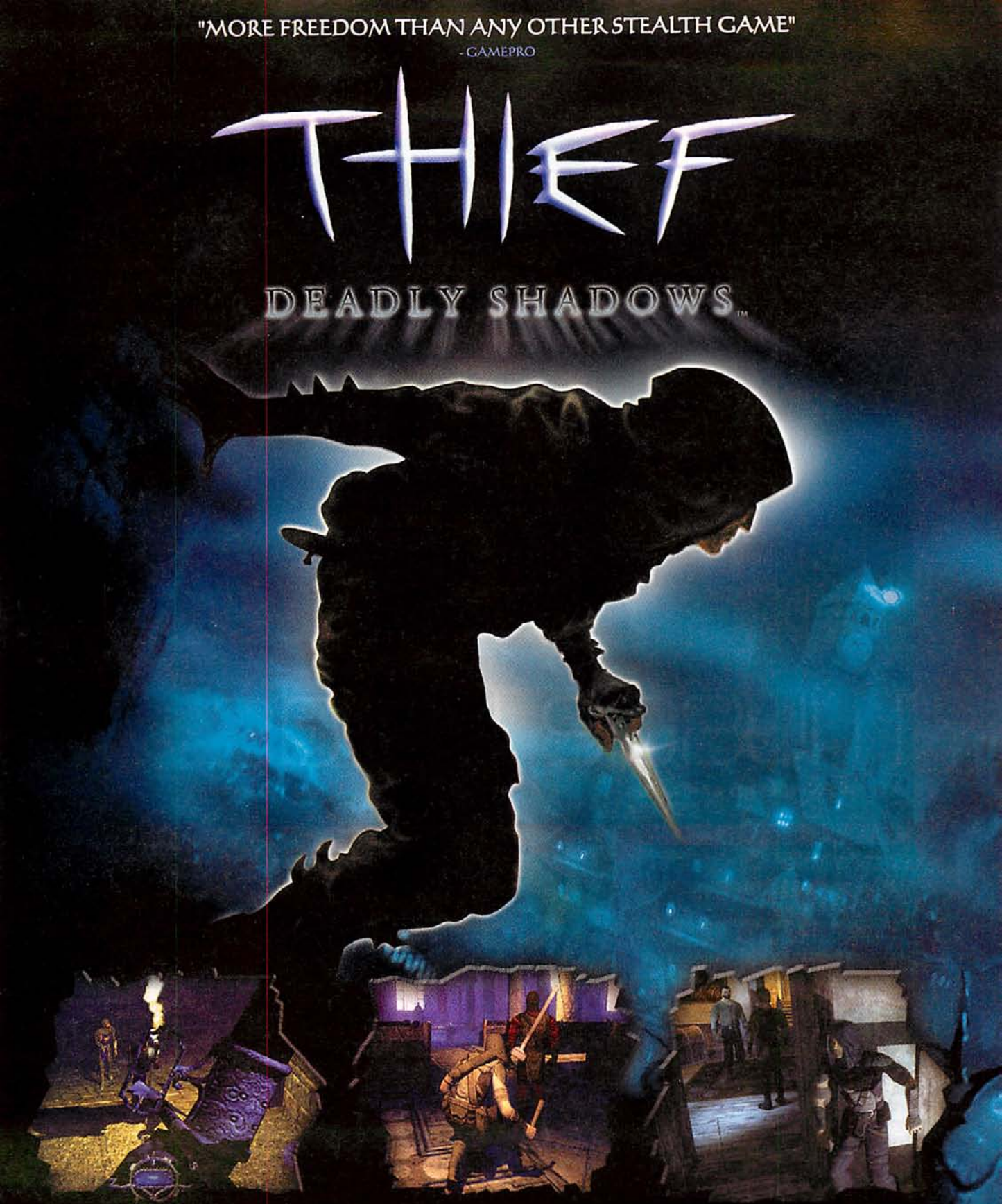
Biggest obsession: I'm slightly ashamed to admit that my biggest obsession is playing games. It takes over my life, and although I play games at work every day, I'll invariably stay up till 3 or 4 a.m. to play some more.



"MORE FREEDOM THAN ANY OTHER STEALTH GAME"
- GAMEPRO

THIEF

DEADLY SHADOWS™



OUT NOW

MATURE 17+ M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Blood
Violence

PC CD-ROM SOFTWARE

THE WAY IT'S MEANT TO BE PLAYED NVIDIA

SOUNDS BEST ON SOUND BLASTER 24-bit

ION STORM

eidos

Thief: Deadly Shadows © Eidos 2004. Developed by Ion Storm, L.P. Published by Eidos, Inc. Thief: Deadly Shadows, the Thief: Deadly Shadows logo, Eidos and the Eidos logo, Ion Storm and the Ion Storm logo are all trademarks of the Eidos Group of Companies. NVIDIA, the NVIDIA logo, NVIDIA The Way Its Meant to be Played logo and other NVIDIA marks are trademarks of the NVIDIA Corporation. © 2004 Creative Technology Ltd. The Creative logo, Sound Blaster, the Sound Blaster logo, and EAX are registered trademarks and the EAX logo, ADVANCED HD, and Audigy are trademarks of Creative Technology Ltd. in the United States and/or other countries. The rating icon is a registered trademark of the Entertainment Software Association.

Representing ATI, Ruby here strikes a pose. Now check out the detail and reflections on the floor.

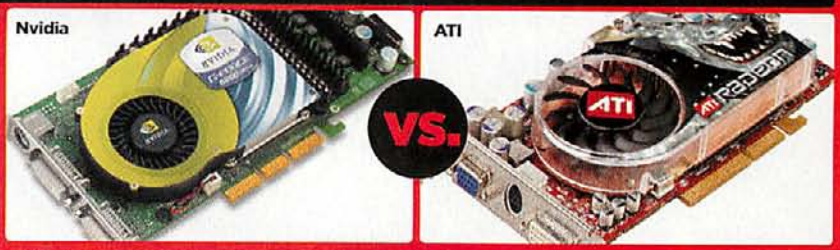
ROUND 8

Muscle Cards

ATI and Nvidia go at it again

Editor's Note:

Just before press time we had the opportunity to get our hands on the newest cards from both ATI and Nvidia for this fight. Come back next month for a more detailed analysis in Tech.



Welcome, friends, to the Battle of the Boards. Tuning in late? Here's how the throwdown usually goes: Nvidia releases a top-of-the-line part, and then a few months later, ATI leapfrogs it. Well, the ongoing feud has taken an interesting turn as these titans traded blows by releasing their latest parts within weeks of each other.

The contenders

In the green corner is Nvidia's 256MB GeForce 6800 Ultra. Going beyond the NV3x series debacle (the 6800 line's notorious predecessor), Nvidia dropped the "FX" from its naming scheme and delivered a $500 part with a megaton punch. Running at a core clock speed of 400MHz, the GeForce 6800 also boasts 16 pixel pipes and, depending on which tests you're running, is sometimes twice as fast as Nvidia's previous card, the 256MB GeForceFX 5950 Ultra.

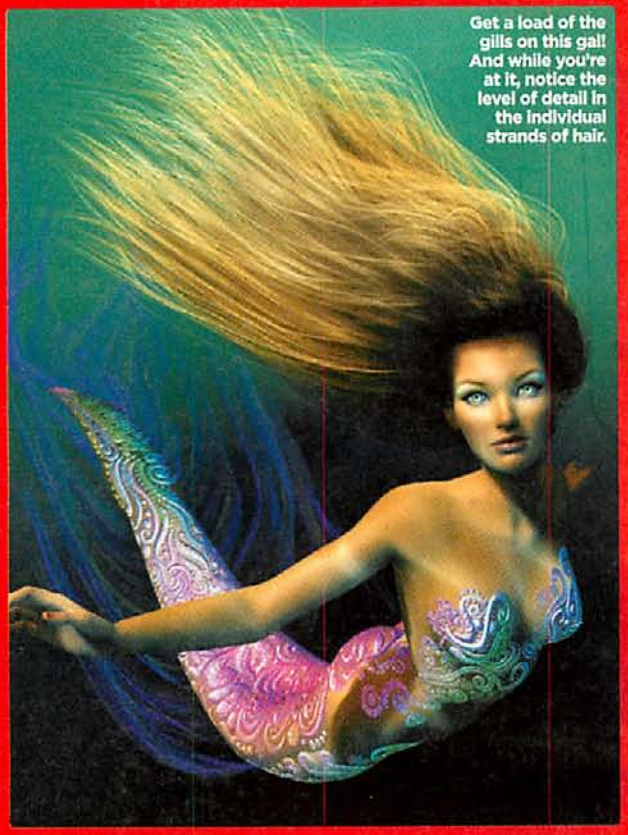
In the red corner is ATI's 256MB x800 XT. It also has all the right moves—it packs 16 pixel pipes and runs at 520MHz—and is twice as fast as its little brother, the Radeon 9800 XT. Oh, and the card has one more thing in common with Nvidia's latest release: a heavyweight price ($500).

Tale of the tape

While the judges continue to bicker about the validity of synthetic benchmarks, the fact remains that we're still using them as measuring sticks. To ensure a fair fight, we ran all our tests with 4x AA (antialiasing) and 8x AF (anisotropic filtering) enabled (when possible) and at both 1280x960 (1280x1024 when applicable) and 1600x1200. We also ran the same tests on each company's previous part: ATI's 256MB Radeon 9800 XT and Nvidia's 256MB GeForceFX 5950 Ultra. (For complete blow-by-blow results, check out the scorecard.)

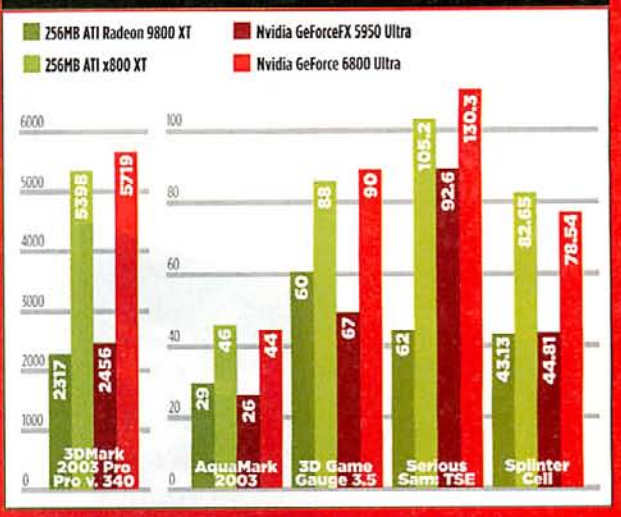
Let's get it on!

In synthetic benchmarks, each company's claims held up. Newer cards ran twice as *fast as their predecessors* in 3DMark2003 and nearly so in AquaMark 2003—the cards also displayed incredible speed gains in actual game tests. Of course, this creates an interesting situation. Just as



Get a load of the gills on this gal! And while you're at it, notice the level of detail in the individual strands of hair.

The Scorecard



Our Test PC

OPERATING SYSTEM	Windows XP Home Edition
PROCESSOR (CPU)	AMD Athlon 64 FX-51
MOTHERBOARD	ASUS SK8N (nForce 3 Pro 150)
MEMORY	1GB PC-3200 DDR400
HARD DRIVE	72GB RAID 0 Config

the two companies' previous parts were pretty much identical, their newer ones are likewise incredibly similar. OK, so the synthetic benchmarks aren't telling us much, except that both of the new cards are pretty damn fast. Skeet skeet!

We also threw both cards at our 3D GameGauge 3.5, which averages the framerates of our test games: *Comanche 4, Dungeon Siege, UT 2003, Halo, Serious Sam: The Second Encounter,* and *Splinter Cell.*

Again, the cards' scores were pretty much identical. The GeForce 6800 Ultra scored an average of 90 frames per second at 1280x960 and 83 frames per second at 1600x1200, while the x800 XT scored 88 and 80 frames per second, respectively. In other words, the cards were essentially equal for most games. But then something happened. The GeForce card delivered a haymaker to the x800 in *Serious Sam: TSE* while the x800 rocked *Splinter Cell.*

Win by decision...

Based on its faster clock speed, we expected the x800 to test the GeForce 6800 a little more than it did, but you're gonna have to go by more than crunching benchmark numbers here. Factors like availability, driver support, and software bundles help determine which one wins. If you don't have the stakes for this prizefight, there's also a welterweight division. Nvidia will sell a 128MB "non-Ultra" GeForce 6800 for about $300, and ATI will sell a "Pro" version of the x800 for the same price. Right now, we have to call this one a draw. The fact remains, though, that they're both plenty fast. **William O'Neal**

Reality Check

How the ratings stack up among the gaming press

GAME	CGW	CGM	GameSpot	IGN.com	GameSpy	1UP.com	GameRankings.com
Battlefield Vietnam	B+	A	A-	B+	B+	B-	B+
Far Cry	B-	B+	A	A	B+	A	A
MVP Baseball 2004	B-	C	B+	A-	C	A	B+
Rainbow Six 3: Athena Sword	C	B-	B	B	C	C+	C+
Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow	B-	C	A	A+	B+	A+	A
Unreal Tournament 2004	A+	A	A	A	A+	A	A

AHEAD OF THE GAME

AURORA™

Aurora™ Desktop Gaming

AMD 64 Athlon FX

Custom built and optimized for high-performance PC gaming, the Alienware Aurora delivers maximum detail, speed, and power for immersive game-play and amazing digital media editing. Capable of handling the most extreme demands of 32-bit software applications today, Aurora systems also deliver seamless integration into the 64-bit computing experience of tomorrow.

AURORA™ PERFORMANCE OPTION[1]

Exclusive Alienware® Chassis
High-Performance 420-Watt Max PSU
AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor with HyperTransport™ Technology
Advanced 1600MHz System Bus and 1MB High-Performance On-Chip Cache
512MB PC-3200 DDR SDRAM at 400MHz
NVIDIA® GeForce™ FX 5200 Ultra 128MB 8X AGP with DVI & S-Video
80GB 7200RPM Serial ATA-150 Hard Drive 8MB Cache
Creative Sound Blaster® Audigy 2™ ZS 7.1 Advanced 24-bit Audio
Optimized & Configured for High Performance

$1,569.00 or as low as **$48**/mo.[2]
After $80.00 rebate.

ACCESSID: CGW0704SR1

AURORA™ EXTREME OPTION

Exclusive Alienware® Chassis
NEW! High-Performance 650-Watt Max PSU
NEW! AMD Athlon™ 64 FX-53 Processor with HyperTransport™ Technology
Advanced 1600MHz System Bus and 1MB High-Performance On-Chip Cache
High-Performance Heatsink-Cooling System
VIA K8T800 Chipset-Based Motherboard
1024MB Dual-Channel PC-3200 DDR SDRAM at 400MHz
NEW! Next Generation NVIDIA® GeForce™ 6800 Ultra 256MB 8X AGP
Astral Blue Alientce™ Video Cooling System
240GB 7200RPM Serial ATA-150 RAID 0 Array 16MB Cache
Creative Sound Blaster® Audigy 2™ ZS 7.1 Advanced 24-bit Audio
Integrated Gigabit Ethernet Controller
Black 16X DVD-ROM Drive
Black 52X/32X/52X CD-RW Drive
Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
Optimized & Configured for High Performance
AlienCare: Advanced Gaming Technical Support including:
1-Year Personalized Online Support Portal with Chat and Forums
1-Year Toll-Free 24/7 Phone Support by Alienware Technicians
1-Year On-Site Home Service

$3,349.00 or as low as **$101**/mo.[2]
After $80.00 rebate.

ACCESSID: CGW0704SR3

Pricing: Prices, configurations, and availability may change without notice. Taxes and shipping charges not shown. **Warranty/Support:** For complete information on warranty, support, and on-site or depot service, visit www.alienware.com. **Drives:** For hard drives, GB means 1 billion bytes and accessible capacity may vary depending on configuration. For CD-ROM, DVD-ROM, CD-RW, and DVD+RW/+R drive(s), maximum data transfer rates may vary and discs created with these drives may not be compatible with all drives and players. **Modems/Networking:** For modems and network cards/hardware, maximum achievable data transfer rates may vary. **Gigabit Ethernet:** Term indicates compliance with IEEE standard 802.3ab for Gigabit Ethernet. Network and infrastructure required for high-speed transmission connection to Gigabit Ethernet server. **Trademarks/Copyright Notices:** Alienware, the Alienware logo, Aurora and Area-51m are registered trademarks or trademarks of Alienware Corporation. AMD, AMD Athlon, and the AMD Athlon logo are trademarks of Advanced Micro Devices, Inc. Computer Gaming World Editors' Choice Award Logo is a trademark of Ziff Davis Publishing Holdings Inc. and is used under license. Artwork shown above on LCD monitor is ©2003 2004 Crytek. All Rights Reserved. Published by Ubisoft Entertainment. Far Cry, Ubisoft, ubi.com, and the Ubisoft logo are trademarks of Ubisoft Entertainment in the U.S. and/or other countries. All other registered trademarks and trademarks are the property of their respective owners. **Awards/Quotes:** Award(s) and quote(s) listed may not pertain to a specific system or configuration. **Notes:** Alienware can not be held responsible for errors in photography or typography. Actual case may vary in design. (1) Same configuration as extreme option, but with the changes listed. (2) Subject to credit approval. Terms subject to change without notice. See Alienware credit card terms and conditions for complete information. Annual Percentage Rate: 21.90%. Minimum finance charge: $1.00. (3) Same configuration as extreme option, but with the changes listed. (4) Chassis refers to the internal chassis and not to the entire external case.

"Earns an Editors' Choice for its combination of speed, top-notch peripherals, and stability."

- Alienware Aurora. Computer Gaming World Editors' Choice Award, January 2004

AREA-51m™ ENTHUSIAST OPTION[1]

Exclusive Alienware® Case with Magnesium Alloy Chassis[3]
Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology 3.40GHz
Advanced 800MHz FSB and 512KB Advanced Transfer Cache
Next-Generation ATI® Mobility RADEON™ 9700 128MB DDR
512MB PC-3200 DDR SDRAM at 400MHz
HITACHI® 60GB 7200RPM Ultra ATA100 Hard Drive 8MB Cache
Removable 24X/8X CD-RW/DVD Combo Drive
Optimized & Configured for High Performance

$2,689.00 or as low as **$81**/mo.[2] After $90.00 rebate.

ACCESSID: CGW0704SM2

Area-51m™ Mobile Gaming

The Area-51m takes mobile gaming to the next level with innovative features such as Alienware Exclusive Do-It-Yourself Upgradeable Mobile Graphics Technology and 802.11g wireless networking. Performance is better than ever with the availability of processors up to 3.40GHz and the next generation of mobile graphics. Backed by award-winning customer support, the Area-51m delivers the ultimate mobile gaming experience.

AREA-51m™ EXTREME OPTION

Exclusive Alienware® Case with Magnesium Alloy Chassis[3]
Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology 3.40GHz
Advanced 800MHz FSB and 512KB Advanced Transfer Cache
High-Performance SiS® Chipset Motherboard with AGP 8X
Next-Generation ATI® Mobility RADEON™ 9700 128MB DDR
Exclusive Do-It-Yourself Upgradeable Mobile Video Card Design
1024MB PC-3200 DDR SDRAM at 400MHz
HITACHI® 60GB 7200RPM Ultra ATA100 Hard Drive 8MB Cache
Removable 16X/4X CD-RW/DVD+RW Combo Drive
Removable Wireless 802.11g PCMCIA Network Card
15.4" WideSXGA+ TFT Active Matrix LCD Cinema Display
5.1 3D Surround Sound with S/PDIF Digital Output
Built-In 10/100/1000Mb Ethernet LAN and 56K Modem
Infrared Wireless Multimedia Remote with Mouse Control
3-in-1 Built-In Media Card Reader
Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
Optimized & Configured for High Performance
AlienCare: Advanced Gaming Technical Support including:
1-Year Personalized Online Support Portal with Chat and Forums
1-Year Toll-Free 24/7 Phone Support by Alienware Technicians
1-Year On-site Service

$2,999.00 or as low as **$90**/mo.[2] After $90.00 rebate.

ACCESSID: CGW0704SM3

Exclusive Do-It-Yourself Upgradeable Mobile Graphics Technology

The innovative Area-51m overcomes the technology barrier that has faced mobile gamers for years: graphics upgradeability. The Area-51m now features Do-It-Yourself Upgradeable Mobile Graphics Technology, which extends the life of your mobile gaming system. The swappable video module functions like a desktop video card, allowing you to upgrade your system when new technology becomes available.

6 MONTHS SAME AS CASH FINANCING[2]
AND OTHER GREAT PROMOTIONS. APPLY ONLINE!

hard drive by HITACHI

To receive an Instant Rebate on an Aurora or Area-51m, enter an AccessID at:
WWW.ALIENWARE.COM/CGW

For the latest pricing and promotions go online or call:
1.800.ALIENWARE | 1.800.254.3692

ALIENWARE
THE ORIGINAL ULTIMATE GAMING MACHINE

5, 10, 15 Years Ago in *CGW*

What we said when you were nursing

5 Years Ago, July 1999

Quake III, Unreal Tournament, and the fiction that was *Team Fortress 2* dominated the cover five years back, but what dominated the *CGW* offices? Friggin' *Drakan: Order of the Flame,* subject of a two-page preview, that's what. We've always supported scantily clad chicks who ride dragons (and we challenge anyone to prove otherwise), but something about *Drakan* seized the brain stems of our intern and an assistant editor, and wouldn't let go. At all. When review time came, they launched a bitter argument based on how realistic the dragon flight physics were. If you ever find yourself making the "realistic dragon flight physics" argument, remember this: The classic noose has 13 rings above the loop.

10 Years Ago, July 1994

What a coincidence! *Doom II* on the cover five years before *Quake III!* It's like some kind of weird biorhythm or numerology deal at work, right? Or maybe it was in the stars, because the stars were sure in *CGW*—this marked the first time that star ratings were used in game reviews. No longer would readers have to actually comprehend our writing...they could just check out the stars! As any longtime subscriber can tell you, this marked the beginning of the end of civilization.

15 Years Ago, July 1989

Memo to the editor-in-chief: Hey, Jeff, the next time a disgruntled reader writes and bemoans the steady decline of *CGW,* let's send him a copy of this issue. Holy moley, did we really run headlines like "Man in the Grail Flannel Suit" for that *Indiana Jones* game? Headlines like these make Coffey seem semicoherent!

CALL IT

One in the

Are cell phones really ready to play?

Nokia has a different attitude since the original N-Gage launched—and flopped—last year. All the hype that promised N-Gage would be the next step in the convergence of consumer electronics isn't dead. Despite many lumps, the cell-phone giant isn't giving up on gaming.

"Nokia is a great design company," says Nokia spokesperson Steven Knuff. "We just didn't get it right [with N-Gage]." But a firsthand look at the device's next iteration, the N-Gage QD, shows that the cell-phone maker may finally be on the right track: Gone is the sidetalking (www.sidetalking.com), gone is the heft of a Batarang, and gone is the need to yank out the battery in order to change games.

Due out in early summer at a price "considerably less than [N-Gage's]," the QD is a slimmer, trimmer gaming machine. The gamepad feels more comfortable, the screen is brighter, and there's an external slot that allows for easy access to SD cards (which, when plugged in, instantly start games). Nokia couldn't reveal some details, such as the unit's battery life, at press time, but the new phone will apparently be offered by more major carriers in the States than its predecessor.

Of course, the hardware is only part of the equation—it needs good games to back it up. We've learned that Activision is making portable versions of *Call of Duty* and *Spider-Man 2,* while Sega is working on—get this—an MMORPG called *Pocket Kingdom.* If none of this works to win over the gaming crowd, Nokia already has plans to release another N-Gage early in 2005, according to Knuff. We'll make the call on how the QD pans out as soon as we get reviewable units.

Beating PSP to the punch

A lot of anticipation has built up around Sony's upcoming release of the PlayStation Portable (PSP), but now that it's been delayed until sometime in 2005, we hear that another company is attempting to beat Sony at its own game.

A wireless-device operating system called MXI promises the ability to enable "existing full-fledged Windows, Linux, Java-based desktop, and mobile-software 32-bit games normally played on consoles and full graphical versions of websites to look and feel exactly the same on a handheld device as they do on a PC." That's one hell of a claim Radixs CEO R. Chandrasekar is making, but it certainly teases us with an interesting possibility: playing basic Windows and PS1 games on a mobile device. Chandrasekar insists that it's not only possible, but that plans are already in place with major cell-phone carriers in the United States. The service could start as early as June 2004.

Radixs says the MXI operating system will work without limits on the size of data transfers, making it ideal for transferring music, video, and games between the server (the cell carriers) and the client (your cute little handhelds). So, here's how it could con-

This freaky prototype plays PS1 games.

Hand

Holy cow! Nokia actually listened to all our complaints.

ceivably work: You want to play *Madden* on your handheld. First, you order the game and download it from a software library. It streams only the bits of the game that you need on the fly and bang—you're ready to play. The OS is even carrier agnostic, so if your buddy on another network has an MXI-enabled device, you can still play against him. Not too shabby.

"Nokia is a great design company," says Knuff. "We just didn't get it right [with N-Gage]."

What kind of games will be available? Chandrasekar says no extra coding is required for PS1 games to work on MXI devices and that Radixs is already in talks with EA and Ubisoft, so you could have a wide array of games to choose from at launch time. However, we have to raise other questions. To wit: Sony is notoriously overprotective of its IP—you may recall it sued Bleem and Connectix into submission a few years back. Could Radixs suffer the same fate? And exactly what sort of PC games should we expect on these devices?

Carrier and device-maker details remain very hush-hush; Sprint PCS and Verizon Wireless declined to comment as to whether they would offer MXI-supported devices. Still, we can say that you can expect multimedia plans to start at about $30 a month. In-office oddsmakers say that if everything goes according to plan, we can expect notable devices from Samsung and Sanyo—these companies have taken some of the most daring design chances with cellular phones so far.

PC industry big guns take note

Never ones to miss out on an opportunity, graphics chipmakers Nvidia and ATI are also getting in on the cell-phone business by offering updated 3D graphics solutions for mobile devices. ATI's Imageon architecture will be used alongside Qualcomm's BREW technology to provide an improved 3D-gaming experience to Verizon Wireless customers.

Nvidia has recently announced that its upcoming GoForce line of media processors will dramatically improve the mobile experience in PDAs and cell phones by offering longer battery life and improved image quality. Having already inked deals with Dell, HP, Palm, Sony, and Toshiba, GoForce-enabled products will boast megapixel camera support, digital-zoom capabilities, and MPEG-4 support. Proper handheld 3D gaming from Nvidia, though, is still a little ways off. GoForce 3D technology is in development, but don't expect to see phones utilizing it until early 2005. This isn't even mentioning the rumors as we go to press that Intel has other plans in the works. Let's just say the next couple years will be interesting ones for mobile gaming.

Darren Gladstone and William O'Neal

The Good, the Bad & the Ugly

News and views from the Wild West

The Good
MMO revival

We've been bitching about the poor state of massively multiplayer games for so long now, we forgot we ever liked them in the first place. But now we remember, big time. Why? Because the long-awaited "next generation" of MMOs is finally arriving, like, for real, and there is some great stuff. The *CGW* staff has been gorging on both the *City of Heroes* and *World of WarCraft* betas, and loving both. Look for our *City of Heroes* review next month.

The Bad
E3 "awards"

We are sick of them. If you see us hand out any awards for this show, please shoot us. It's not a freakin' beauty contest. It's a trade show. Game companies should be focusing on finishing their games, not on "winning" "awards" for demos of their unfinished games. Media outlets like us have made it worse by encouraging this idiocy, but we're done. We may tell you about some of the coolest games we saw at the show, but as for specific awards? Bah. Don't believe in 'em.

The Ugly
Dumbass save systems

Why, why, why? Why do some designers insist on making the very decisions they should know by now are only going to incense gamers and guarantee hostile words from whiners like us? Yeah, that's right—we're still talking about *Far Cry's* unbelievably lame save system, which all but ruined an otherwise fantastic shooter. How about you just do what everyone else does and let us save anywhere, OK? We paid our money: Let us play the game the way we want.

THIS IS NOT A THIS

LARGER-SCALE MULTIPLAYER gaming, where you can battle online with **OVER 150* PLAYERS** in a single game. NovaLogic's breakthrough technology allows massive numbers of gamers to connect and play "as smooth as silk," even over a 56K modem!

BIGGER-ENVIRONMENTS, with battlefields of **OVER 50 SQUARE KM** and viewing distances of 1Km. With guns blazing and engines roaring you'll cover lush jungle terrain, winding muddy rivers, mountain regions, coastal villages, volcanoes and more!

BADDER-WAR MACHINES, steer the LCAC hovercraft loaded with mechanized troops, pilot a Chinook helicopter to transport your team & vehicles from one island to another or load up a team of Black Hawks & AH-6 Little Birds and **RAIN HELL FIRE** from above, delivering deadly blows to enemy bases. Cut through the water in a Mark V attack boat picking off anything that moves. **ROLL** over the enemy and **PULVERIZE** their defenses with the remote control cannon on your Stryker attack vehicle.

DON'T RELIVE HISTORY...MAKE IT!™

"Why I may never play Battlefield 1942 again"

– PC GAMER, March 2004

www.novalogic.com

NOVALOGIC®

RATING PENDING RP CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Visit www.esrb.org or call 1-800-771-3772 for Rating Information.

PC CD-ROM SOFTWARE

PLAYS BEST ON ALIENWARE

Klipsch

DOLBY DIGITAL

*Some game types and features may require premium subscription service.

NovaWorld

© 2004. NovaLogic Inc. NovaLogic, the NovaLogic logo, NovaWorld, Delta Force, Black Hawk Down and the Delta Force-Black Hawk Down logo are registered trademarks of NovaLogic, Inc. Joint Operations, Typhoon Rising, the Joint Operations: Typhoon Rising logo, Don't believe history, make it and the NovaWorld logo are trademarks of NovaLogic, Inc. in the US and all other countries. All rights reserved. The Way It's Meant to be Played Logo and other NVIDIA Marks are trademarks of NVIDIA Corporation. All other logos and trademarks are property of their respective owners.

BRING IT ONLINE

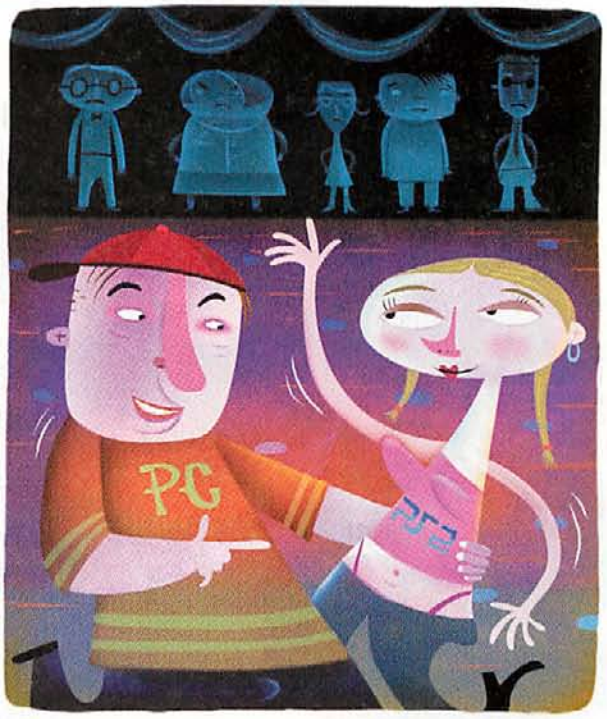
Come Together

PC, console gamers get a little more social

All those console gamers out there are slowly but surely joining the awkward high school dance that is Internet gaming. Guess that makes us PC players the wiseass seniors who have been doing it for a while (and, looking at some people in the crowd, a little *too* long). But as we sneer at these newbs, remember that this horde of console-playing twitch monkeys will soon be adding a whole lot more depth to MMOs, more challengers to compete against, and more teammates to rally.

As game publishers continue churning out games on multiple platforms, the reality is that sooner or later, we'll be playing alongside console gamers online more often. *Need for Speed Underground* did it, *Final Fantasy XI* is doing it right now, and so will others in the near future. But is that a good thing?

Ask Seth Welch. He plays games: console, PC, it doesn't matter. But when he first went online with his PS2, it was a culture shock. "Whenever I played a console game online, everybody was acting immature. They were cursing, saying dumb things, and not even really trying to play. Just being stupid," says Welch. "Personally," he continues, "I think that console gamers just have a whole different mentality." It could also be that this is a whole market of people who still aren't used to the notion of playing well with others over the Internet. Or, he could have just stumbled upon some bad game sessions.



Beyond borders

Billy Pidgeon, a game analyst with the Zelos Group, has been interested in what *Final Fantasy XI* is doing by bringing PC and PS2 gamers together. We decided to take another look for ourselves, now that the PS2 version has gone live. As we clumsily learned the ropes, other gamers (some on PS2s, some with PCs) helped, joined the party, gave tips, and kept us from the brink of death. Yasu Kurosawa, North American online producer for Square Enix U.S.A., explains that from the beginning, the company envisioned bringing together the PC and console markets, and it's already been a great success in Japan. "[Console gamers] already understand what to expect out of a *Final Fantasy* game—a deep and engaging story. Now PC gamers will be able to as well in a huge, open world."

Microsoft, though, has remained fairly tight-lipped about the great divide that separates PC and Xbox titles, but that also is mutating. As was revealed recently with the XNA initiative, there will be a lot more PC and Xbox cross-pollinating (read what Loyd Case has to say about that on page 96). Scott Henson, group manager of platform strategy at Microsoft, lays out the future of your MS home: "Microsoft XNA will offer gamers a better, more unified experience, and in the future, we envision a common online service that will allow Windows PC and Xbox gamers to play together." There are no official announcements about titles or how this will happen.

A word of advice from Pidgeon: "Publishers should focus on bringing great games that work on the console to the PC, then try to tie the two together. It's a whole lot riskier trying to do it the other way around." After all, we don't want you guys to be wallflowers forever.

Darren Gladstone

ILLUSTRATION BY MICHAEL SLACK

Console Corner

Games worth grabbing from your little brother

It may seem hard to believe, but not every good game comes out on PC. We know—it's a shock to us as well. So here's what you want to grab this month:

PLAYSTATION 2

Onimusha 3: Demon Siege (PS2)

What the hell is a French movie star doing in a sword-swingin', demon-slayin' adventure game? Damn good question. But those centuries-old samurai sure love them Jean "Léon: The Professional" Reno flicks. You get the opportunity to play not only as an ancient warrior who busts through a time warp, but also as Reno's modern whip-wielding alter ego. What makes this game worthy of your hard-earned cash is that it has the style, great graphics, and slice-em-up action that got you in the first two *Onimusha* titles. This one looks to wrap up the trilogy with a degree of panache. Oh, and if you have the extra cash, a freaky controller is yours for the asking. The Onimusha 3 Soul Controller is basically a giant plastic katana-shaped gamepad (game sword, in this case?) that could cost as much as $130 Stateside.

ALSO CHECK OUT: *EA Sports Fight Night 2004* (PS2, Xbox); *MTX: Mototrax* (GC, PS2, Xbox) **Darren Gladstone**

THE ONLY THING LEFT STANDING WILL BE YOUR MEN.

SOLDIERS

★ DESTRUCTIBLE ENVIRONMENTS: Take down houses, bridges, trees, and more
★ 30 MULTIPLE-SOLUTION MISSIONS: Blow up railroads, kidnap enemy officers
★ OVER 100 AUTHENTIC VEHICLES/WEAPONS: Get true "on the ground" experience
★ STEALTH OR DEMOLITION? Two levels of control—point and click formations or direct soldiers

WWW.CODEMASTERS.COM/SOLDIERS

TEEN T Blood and Violence
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

PC CD-ROM SOFTWARE

The way it's meant to be played NVIDIA

1C 1C COMPANY

BEST WAY

POWERED BY gameSpy

Codemasters
GENIUS AT PLAY

© 2004 1C Company and The Codemasters Software Company Limited ("Codemasters"). All rights reserved. "Codemasters"® and the Codemasters logo are registered trademarks owned by Codemasters. "GENIUS AT PLAY"™ is a trademark of Codemasters. All other copyrights or trademarks are the property of their respective owners. Published by Codemasters. The NVIDIA logo and the "The way it's meant to be played" logo are registered trademarks or trademarks of NVIDIA Corporation. GameSpy and the "Powered by GameSpy" design are trademarks of GameSpy Industries, Inc. All rights reserved

Get a Life

Find something else to amuse yourself with

DVD

Showgirls V.I.P.

If there ever there was proof that strippers need love, too, it's the Paul Verhoeven train wre—er, movie, *Showgirls*. Young Nomi has dreams of being a Vegas showgirl—problem is, the only job she can get involves lap dancing at a seedy club. What the movie devolves into is a topless catfight (or, for the classy folk out there, *All About Eve* with nudity). Hey, sounds good to us! Even Kristen was psyched to knock back a few drinks and view this V.I.P. edition.

So, what puts the V.I.P. in this party pack? Well, first, you've got your obligatory commentary tracks—only, instead of actresses and crew members answering for their cinematic crimes, you get a tongue-in-cheek "trivia track," words of wisdom from *Showgirls* expert (yeah, we don't wanna know how he earned that title) David Schmader, and a video commentary from the girls of Scores.

But best of all, this edition is a fully functional party in a box—and everyone's coming! Inside is the Pin the Pasties on the Stripper game, a deck of playing cards, and a pair of *Showgirls* shot glasses you can use when playing drinking games like Sip or Strip as you watch the movie. Don't have the moves? Don't worry, there's also a lap dance tutorial featurette in which "sitting in the perspective of a customer, viewers receive a lesson on how to give a lap dance from the Scores girls." We kid you not. We'll tell you how this is when Ryan finally "remembers" to bring the disc back in.

MUSIC

Black Eyed Peas – Elephunk

"The Peas have gone pop!" we cried when we sat down to listen to the newest CD from this awesome hip-hop group. That isn't to say the newest disc isn't good—it is. There are a bunch of songs with tight hooks, like "Let's Get Retarded," which seems especially appropriate for this office. This is also a great excuse to check out the Peas' last album, *Behind the Front*.

VACATION HOTSPOT

Mission: Space

Epcot Center in Orlando just, well, launched a really cool attraction. It simulates a mission to Mars—you strap yourself into a futuristic shuttle that simulates the G-forces you would feel as you take off, slingshot around the moon, and land. Also notice the barf bags included in each cockpit. Nice touch.

COMIC RELIEF

Common Grounds

Sometimes it's tough getting out of bed for yet another day of super-heroism. So head over to Common Grounds, get a cup of joe, and get going. This new comic series revolves around the comings and goings of people who show up at this superpowered Starbucks chain. Bad guys, good guys, no-names, everybody is an equal when they walk in these doors and order a latte.

"UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004 IS THE NEW KING OF ONLINE SHOOTERS."

GameSpot.com

94%
GameSpot.com

5/5
GameSpy.com

94%
IGN.com

IGN.COM EDITORS' CHOICE AWARD

92%
PC Gamer

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

5/5
CGW

EDITORS' CHOICE CGW GAMING

9/10
1up.com

9/10
YAHOO! GamesDomain.com

Unreal TOURNAMENT 2004

Download the demo at
www.unrealtournament.com

nVIDIA.
$1,000,000
MAKE SOMETHING Unreal CONTEST

MATURE 17+
M
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Blood and Gore
Intense Violence
Mild Language

DIGITAL EXTREMES

EPIC GAMES

ATARI

UNREAL® TOURNAMENT 2004 © 2004 Epic Games Inc. Unreal and the Unreal logo are registered trademarks of Epic Games Inc. All Rights Reserved.
All other trademarks and trade names are the property of their respective owners. Unreal Tournament 2004 was created by Epic Games Inc. and Digital Extremes.

CHALLENGE TODAY
SHAPE TOMORROW

Ryzom could be the answer to your massively multi-player prayers...

- PC Gamer

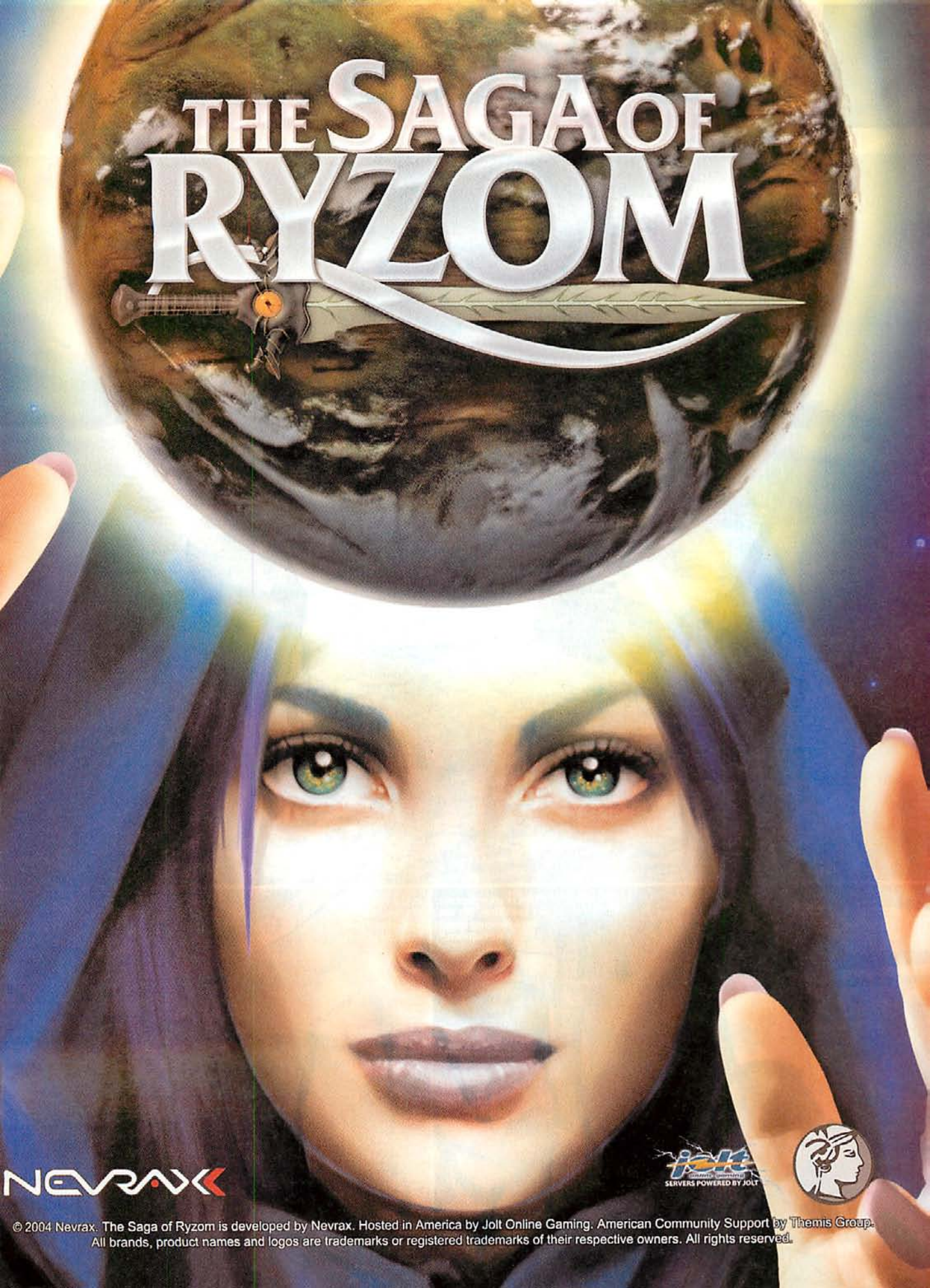
... It looks great, sounds compelling, and, perhaps more importantly, feels different from the raft of fantasy MMO's threatening to glut the market.

- ign.com

THE FIRST MULTI-GENRE MMORPG

• DISCOVER A STUNNING NEW WORLD • CRAFT AND ENCHANT UNIQUE ITEMS
• DESIGN YOUR OWN SKILLS AND SPELLS • ENGAGE HORDES OF ENEMIES IN EPIC INVASIONS
• SHAPE HISTORY WITH YOUR GUILD • BECOME A HERO

WWW.RYZOM.COM



© 2004 Nevrax. The Saga of Ryzom is developed by Nevrax. Hosted in America by Jolt Online Gaming. American Community Support by Themis Group.
All brands, product names and logos are trademarks or registered trademarks of their respective owners. All rights reserved.

Big, thundering explosions and dust storms shoot high into the sky.

"This is your captain speaking. We are experiencing some turbulence."

In the new bomber stages, you man one of multiple bomber planes.

Inside

47
Warhammer 40,000: Dawn of War
My-my-my-my this game is looking fly. Break it down.

50
RollerCoaster Tycoon 3
Raise your hands in the air if you are a true player...of amusement park hijinks.

54
Call of Cthulhu
Call? What about the pronunciation or spelling of Chuthulhulhu?

PUBLISHER: **Activision** DEVELOPER: **Gray Matter Interactive Studios** GENRE: **FPS** RELEASE DATE: **Q4 2004**

Call of Duty: United Offense

One draft you'll want to be in on

Heed the call. Gray Matter Studios did. But this developer isn't just playing the best action game of last year, Activision's WWII shooter *Call of Duty*. It's out to top it with its upcoming expansion, *Call of Duty: United Offense*. The studio is known for original games like *Return to Castle Wolfenstein* and *Kingpin*, so why an expansion? According to Gray Matter, good timing and a great challenge.

"The opportunity opened up. How can we turn that down?" asks Robb Alvey, senior producer. "The original game won so many awards. Therein lies the challenge, to raise a bar already set so high."

United Offense continues the exploits of Russian, British, and American divisions across more than 10 new levels. *Call of Duty*'s already stellar gameplay has been bolstered with new adjustments. There is now a jog option that allows you to move faster, although you can't shoot while running. One new strategy: Use a smoke grenade and sprint to make it past the heavy guns. Also, there are deployable stationary weapons; you can set down one of these heavies to mow enemies down. Among the new weapons are a flame torch and the ability to club someone to death with a pair of binoculars. Whee!

Spitfires overhead, explosions down below. A 50-foot-tall dust cloud shoots into the air.

You can now club someone to death with a pair of binoculars.

Level best

Gray Matter's biggest challenge will be to come up with levels as memorable as the original's. Remember the on-rail levels, like the manic jeep chase? *United Offense*'s bomber level already looks to up that ante considerably. You are stationed in one of many bomber planes flying in tight formation, with turrets mounted throughout the aircraft. You must periodically run to different stations to take down the enemy Spitfire planes. Your own bomber will take on heavy gunfire, splintering and tearing away at your plane, forcing you to stare through the Swiss cheese holes as you try to survive the onslaught.

On another level, you'll find yourself deep in the trenches at the Battle of Kursk, pelted with rain, courtesy of a revamped particle system. As you gaze up at the torrential downpour, you spot an aerial squad overhead. Suddenly, one catches fire; billows of powder-black smoke trace spirals in the sky as it spins downward. The crash is deafening. Past the wreckage, you make your way to some Elefant tanks and plant explosives under their noses (this offense was actually used against real Elefant tanks).

Finally, we had an exclusive look at part of the U.S. campaign—the Battle of the Bulge, based in the town of Foy. Some of the action includes dodging fire through haystacks, eliminating a distant enemy spotter, pushing back inclement tanks, and blowing the roof off of a church-turned-enemy-outpost.

In addition to the new single-player campaign, Gray Matter is also adding more multiplayer modes. Besides the original deathmatch, there are tank battles, domination stages, and capture-the-flag missions with assault-type elements worked in. A ranking system rewards teamwork-minded players with increased carrying capacity.

United Offense won't be released until the end of the year, but our expectations are built on how good the original was. These are big boots to fill, but the progress so far looks absolutely grand.

Johnny Liu

The Word: HISTORICAL

We're not sure what's scarier: the blood ravens with the guns, or the giant stone tablet with the skull head and the sword.

Big explosions, fire, and destruction are the name of this game.

"Hey, who invited this guy to our secret club meeting?"

PUBLISHER: THQ DEVELOPER: Relic Entertainment GENRE: RTS RELEASE DATE: Q4 2004

Warhammer 40,000: Dawn of War

Hammer time

On the bottom floors of Vancouver-based Relic Entertainment, a vision of the 41st millennium is being born. It's a gothic and terror-stricken world, filled with aliens, mutants, and vile heretics. It's also the setting for the popular *Warhammer 40,000* tabletop game.

This classic war game created by Games Workshop sees row after row of painted figures line up for massive battles. Even before the folks at Relic (of *Homeworld* fame) nabbed the *Warhammer* license, they were already fans of the game, often invading conference rooms to get their *Warhammer* fix. Now, Relic and Games Workshop have joined forces to create *Warhammer 40,000: Dawn of War*, an all-new real-time strategy game.

"For our first licensed project, we wanted something that we had a lot of passion for," says Jay Wilson, lead designer of *Dawn of War*. "For many of us, it has been our dream to do a *Warhammer* game."

To fulfill that dream, the goal has been not only to translate the rules set but also to fully recontextualize the *Warhammer* universe to an RTS-friendly setting. Through their mutual exchange of ideas, the two companies have sought to stay true to fans while still delivering enough action to hopefully pull in a few new ones.

Racial tension

In the tabletop game, there are a number of different races, four of which have been selected for *Dawn of War*: space marines, orcs, blood ravens, and the eldar.

The space marines are the game's heroes. The basic space marine troopers aren't just grunts—they've been battle-hardened through 12 years of training. The troopers are aided by dreadknoughts, rickety battle vehicles controlled by a long-dead, sarcophagus-bound war hero. Many aspects of the *Warhammer* universe center on death. "After we finish any one of our designs, it's time to throw on a big pile of skulls," Wilson jokes.

The space marines are led by a force commander unit who boosts troopers' morale, optimizing their combat prowess.

Unlike your typical resource-centric RTS, *Dawn of War* is much more action driven.

"Say, you wouldn't happen to have a bucket of water? No? Oh, OK."

Morale works like a squad-wide health meter; when it is completely depleted, your units lose some measure of combat efficiency. The force commander is also equipped with a magical "demon hammer," which he uses to turn pesky orcs into paste.

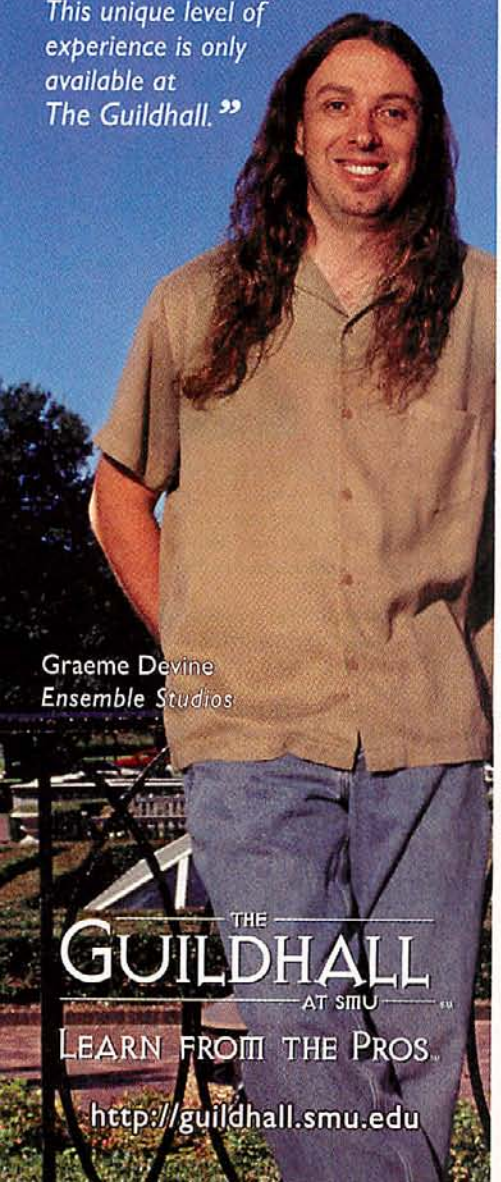
Speaking of which, orcs are war-driven creatures who wear their bloodlust on their sleeves...or they would, if they wore shirts. Orcs love to make noise, they're awful at ranged attacks, and they enjoy taking long walks on blood-drenched beaches. The development team initially had a bit of a problem deciding what the orcs should sound like, but they eventually settled on a Cockney accent. Wug!

Warhammer fans will certainly appreciate the ability to customize their units, choosing from a broad assortment of color schemes and custom logos as their troops prepare for battle in the attractive war-torn urban landscapes Relic has created. The high-poly character models are sharp as well, with highly detailed facial textures.

Why does
gaming professional
Graeme Devine
recommend
The Guildhall at SMU?

Simple. He helped design the curriculum.

"There are many education programs out there, and while some seem successful, the heavy involvement of professional game developers makes a huge difference in The Guildhall at SMU. After completing The Guildhall program, students have definite experience in making games – they actually graduate with four complete games in their portfolios. This unique level of experience is only available at The Guildhall."



Graeme Devine
Ensemble Studios

THE GUILDHALL AT SMU

LEARN FROM THE PROS.

http://guildhall.smu.edu

Ready, set, action!

Unlike your typical resource-centric RTS, *Dawn of War* is much more action driven, in an effort to stay in step with the nature of *Warhammer*—after all, taking the time to build a stable economy in the midst of a postapocalyptic invasion just wouldn't make a whole lot of sense.

Instead, *Dawn of War* takes a cue from *Battlefield 1942* by having players fight for control points on the map. When one of these control points is seized, your team accrues requisition points, *Dawn of War*'s accumulated resource. Losing one of the control points doesn't mean the war is over, although it does result in less efficient resource accumulation.

ence of watching an encampment slowly being built. "This will be a game of moments," says Jonathan Dowdeswell, producer of *Dawn of War*.

Standing out among these moments are the finishing moves. Even in the midst of heavy combat involving hundreds of units, these spectacular final blows will catch your eye. One particularly memorable animation sees the aforementioned force commander pitted against a hellishly gargantuan bloodthirster, who the force commander grabs by the horns, flips over, and proceeds to bludgeon to death with his trusty demon hammer.

Back on the ground floor of Relic's office, the final line of defense pounds away at the

"This will be a game of moments."
—producer Jonathan Dowdeswell

You march your units around in squads, overpowering your enemies not only with numbers, but also with tactical superiority. *Warhammer* focuses on frontline combat and rewards players who utilize good tactical strategies. For example, units that stay behind cover take less damage and recover morale more quickly.

From this moment...

Dawn of War promises plenty of instant gratification, bringing more to the table than the been-there-done-that RTS experi-

development team's efforts. This crack team of pro testers, made up of elite RTS fanatics—one of whom was Korea's top-rated *StarCraft* player—works to facilitate the game's final balance tweaks and gameplay details. Relic hopes the final product will be readily accessible to hardcore strategy fans and neophyte players alike, ushering in a new dawn for RTS action. Mark your calendars for the fourth quarter of 2004—it's hammer time. **Johnny Liu**

The Word: POUNDING

"Hey, who invited this guy?"

The most massive in-game character is the imperial demon. Really, now—does this guy even need an ax?

A big gun. And a big sword. What more do you need?

PUBLISHER: **Electronic Arts** DEVELOPER: **Black Hole Entertainment** GENRE: **RTS** RELEASE DATE: **October 2004**

Armies of Exigo

Lexigo my *Exigo*

On the crowded RTS market, naysayers point out that all latter-day mythical RTS games feel the same. That's where *Armies of Exigo* "digs itself a hole"...in a good way. Beneath the grassy battlefields are underground passages that allow for interaction with the surface—an entire second arena to wage war. Two stages of combat add up to a whole new dimension of RTS strategy.

Exigo stage left

The winding catacombs in the Hungarian castles of Budapest gave newcomer Black Hole Entertainment the initial inspiration for *Exigo*'s bidimensional world. Even though this offshoot of Cinergi (the special-effects company behind *Terminator 3*) is just getting off the ground, a little company known as Electronic Arts happens to be in its corner. EA is flexing its muscle to make sure *Armies of Exigo* is done right, with a driven effort to craft *Exigo*'s story and music in conjunction with the Budapest Philharmonic Orchestra (last used to great effect in EA's *Freedom Fighters*).

In the story, humans and beasts have long fought, but now a third force enters the picture. Keran, a malevolent alien being, has passed through a time portal. Shape-shifting his way into the council of man, Keran bides his time while amassing an army of giant insects, dark elves, and woebegone creatures known as the fallen. An alien thrown into the mythological realm of elves and orcs? Decidedly different, so don't expect a run-of-the-mill Tolkien-style world.

Be prepared to be paranoid

In the single-player campaign mode, each of the three races will have 12 individual stages, totaling 36 levels to fight through. Multiplayer will feature up to four players. Gameplay is geared toward classic, frantic *WarCraft 2*-style battles, with rolling armies of hundreds locked in bloody combat. Unlike a large-scale *Total War*-style game, though, you will still be able to control each battle unit individually.

These units gather three kinds of resources: gold, wood, and manna. Gold and wood are used to build up your territory, but manna becomes necessary to maximize spiritual units.

In addition, the second playing field promises a whole new range of interplay. For example, campers accustomed to slowly amassing their armies will be caught wholly unaware when the enemy sneaks his way under the base to let loose a poisonous gas cloud. Between the open plains and the subterranean realms below, attacks will come from all sides.

Spells like gas clouds can seep up to poison people above, while earthquake spells shake the world down below. If you want to plan ahead, you can bait the dark caverns with a number of traps, raining down gas, fire, and boulders. Caves and tunnels are used to move between realms, but it's not enough to wait next to a cave for easy prey. New transport points can be created, and offensive spells can be cast to keep enemies on their toes.

Environmentally, certain statues act as control points. On the surface, the statue's blue aura will heal weary fighters. Yet if you jack the statue's underground guardian, you can cast a spell to turn the helpful blue aura into a venomous green one.

Two stages of combat add up to a whole new dimension of RTS strategy.

One last detail worth noting is how good the CG work looks. SIGGRAPH (a consortium of CG experts) highlighted *Exigo*, along with *WarCraft 3*, among its 2003 annual collection of the best in computer animation.

Here's hoping this army can rally the troops where older titles like *Metal Fatigue* have failed. With the proper balance to the bi-level gameplay and graphical final touches, *Armies of Exigo* will be digging holes for those RTS naysayers this October. **Johnny Liu**

The Word: LAYERED

Cornered by the fallen with nowhere to turn.

PUBLISHER: **Atari** DEVELOPER: **Frontier Development** GENRE: **Simulation** RELEASE DATE: **Q4 2004**

RollerCoaster Tycoon 3

More twists and turns from the king of tycoon games

A wild wooden coaster for the Wild, Wild West.

Ride your own spiraling coasters in a full 3D first-person mode.

Thanks to the original *RollerCoaster Tycoon*, there's now a *Tycoon* game for everything under the sun...well, except for *Yo' Momma Tycoon* (not yet, at least). The previous entry in the series, *RollerCoaster Tycoon 2*, unfortunately fell prey to the same fallacies as its countless imitators—it offered up a heftier graphics engine but just wasn't able to capture the same addictive gameplay of the original. *RollerCoaster Tycoon 3* aims to fix this with a full 3D interface and plenty of new goodies.

RollerCoaster Tycoon creator Chris Sawyer is still involved in this third entry, offering input and advice; this time around, however, Sawyer's former boss and good friend Dan Breber is heading up the project. Breber, who is something of a British, soft-spoken Robert De Niro, promises "a game for everyone, light and hard players alike."

Beginning with a plot of land, you shape your personal wonderland as easily as you would mold clay. A full range of coasters, from rickety wooden clunkers to cutting-edge thrill rides, are available to construct on your fresh excavation. Breber's studio, U.K.-based Frontier Development, researched some of the best roller coasters across Europe during the game's preproduction phase, so expect some pretty wild designs. For the thrill seekers among you, you'll even have the opportunity to ride any of the roller coasters you design, enjoying an exhilarating sense of speed and a full three-dimensional view of your park.

There are plenty of other attractions available, too, such as a carousel and a rocket motion ride.

Themes like a lot

RollerCoaster Tycoon 3 includes a sandbox mode, giving you free reign to create your own personal dream park. Tons of different themes are included, from a Wild West–style town to a freaky demon world filled with animatronic ghoulies. Plenty of little bells and whistles are present to create the full theme-park experience, from costumed critters to impressive fireworks shows.

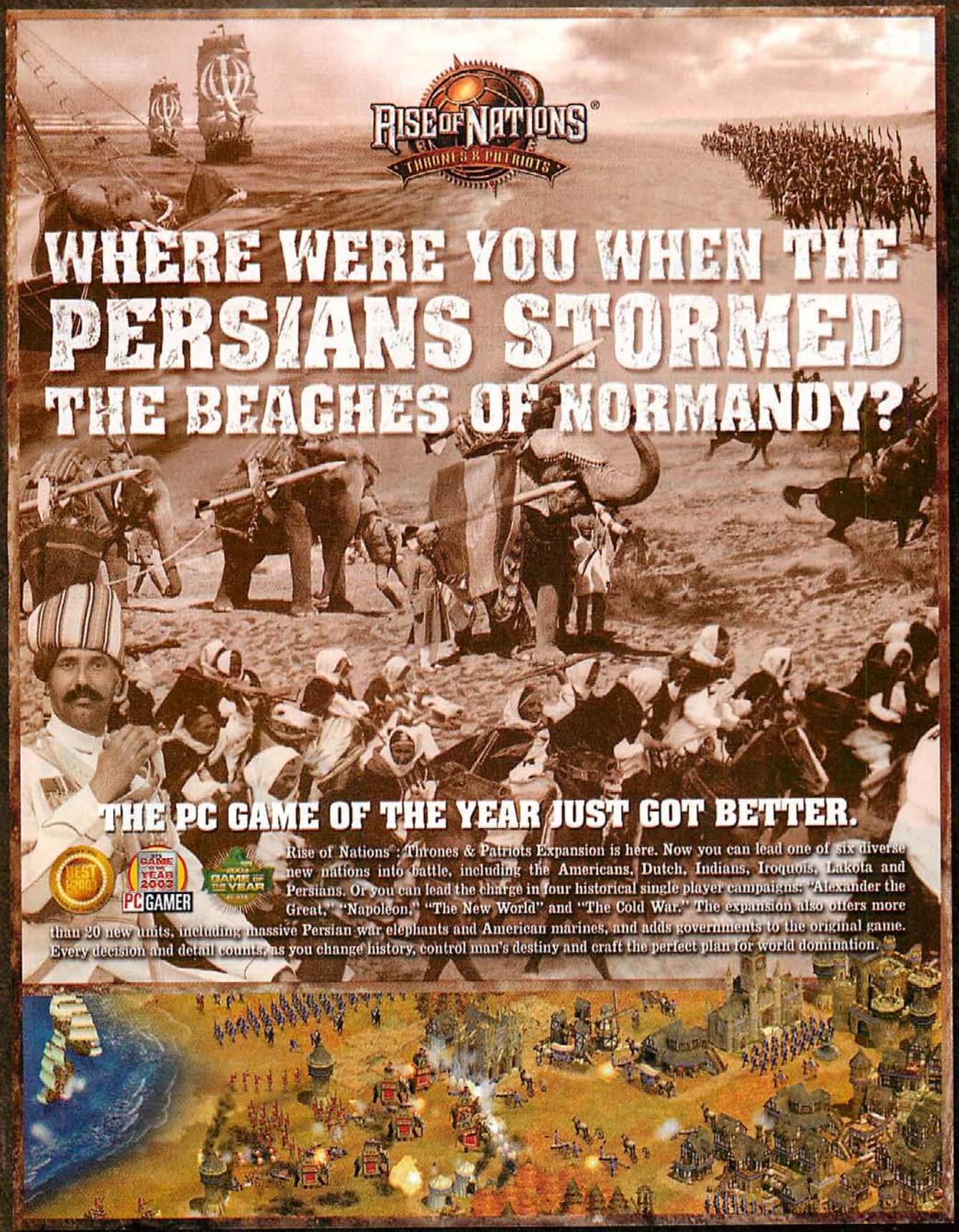
Just about every facet of this game has been upgraded from its predecessors, including a more streamlined interface that eliminates the deluge of windows littering the screen. The visuals show plenty of attention to detail, with a dynamic character-randomizing system that guarantees a diverse crowd of park attendees.

You can even skew your park to serve different demographics, from families to teenagers. Your economic success rides on finding that magic balance for making everyone happy. Whether you decide to fashion a kid-friendly Disneyland or a vomit-inducing collection of "you must be this tall to ride" twisters, *RollerCoaster Tycoon 3* probably has something for you to get excited about—so get in line for this imminent fourth-quarter 2004 release. No cutting!

Johnny Liu

A full range of coasters, from rickety wooden clunkers to cutting-edge thrill rides, is available.

The Word: **AMUSING**



BIG HUGE GAMES™

Microsoft game studios

POWERED BY gamespy

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Blood and Gore
Violence

MAKE HISTORY

www.riseofnations.com

©2004 Big Huge Games, Inc. All rights reserved. Portions ©2004 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved. Big Huge Games is the exclusive trademark of Big Huge Games, Inc. Microsoft, the Microsoft Game Studios logo and Rise of Nations are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the United States and/or other countries. The ratings icon is a trademark of the Interactive Digital Software Association. The names and logos of actual companies and products mentioned herein may be trademarks of their respective owners.

PUBLISHER: Majesco DEVELOPER: GlyphX Games GENRE: Action RELEASE DATE: September 2004

Advent Rising

Proof that there is intelligent life out there

It's been said that humans use only 10 percent of their brains. This sounds a little too generous an estimate, if you ask us. Still, what's done with the remaining 90 percent is up for speculation in *Advent Rising*. The first part of an ambitious sci-fi action-adventure trilogy is a labor of love for lead designer Donald Mustard, who excitedly talks about the story that famed science-fiction author Orson Scott Card (*Ender's Game*) helped create.

Throughout the universe, among countless alien species, it was foretold that one race—yep, humans—would lead the other species to salvation. As the story begins, you take on the role of Gideon Wyeth, a military academy grad on the cusp of realizing this prophesied potential. As you progress on your galaxy-spanning journey, tangential points in the game will arise, and your decisions carry over across the trilogy and affect the story's ultimate outcome. In the beginning, do you save your fiancée or your brother from the initial alien attack? In short, don't delete that save file!

The sincerest form of flattery

Mustard eagerly references other games. The plan: Meld together all the elements that work into one cohesive force. The result is a game that arms Gideon with everything from Max Payne–esque shooting and time-bending capabilities to the hand-holding gameplay elements of the PS2 sleeper *Ico*, not to mention a number of vehicles you can control à la *Halo*.

Gideon's considerable artillery includes pistols, shotguns, microwave rays, and melee attacks. He also possesses an arsenal of force-type powers with dizzying effects, which light the screen up in waves of flares and distortions as you push and pull your enemies. If that's not enough, Gideon's melee attacks can also be used to create combos—not to mention the fact that various attacks and weapons will gain experience during the game, making frequently used maneuvers even stronger. The library of flashy moves and techniques you've amassed will even carry over into future volumes, making for a progressive evolution throughout the trilogy.

While *Advent Rising* is planned for both consoles and PCs, rest assured that the PC controls will be *PC controls* and not a typical half-assed port. PC players will use a variation of standard FPS controls with a limited lock-on mechanism for the secondary weapons.

Advent Rising has great potential but still faces some wrap-up challenges. With so many different influences, this melting pot of ideas sounds mighty tasty. But with future volumes already in the pipeline, one can't help but worry if the game is getting a little ahead of itself. With any luck, *Advent Rising* will rise to meet our expectations. **Johnny Liu**

The Word: ADVENT-UROUS

Your decisions carry over across the trilogy and affect the story's ultimate outcome.

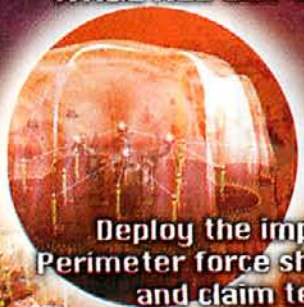
These are the alien seekers, who mean to extinguish the human race.

"THE BIGGEST LAND GRAB THIS SIDE OF THE MILKY WAY."
– Computer Gaming World

PERIMETER

REAL TIME STRATEGY REBORN

WAGE ALL-OUT WAR AS YOU TAKE COMMAND OF A CIVILIZATION IN SEARCH OF A FUTURE FOR HUMANITY.

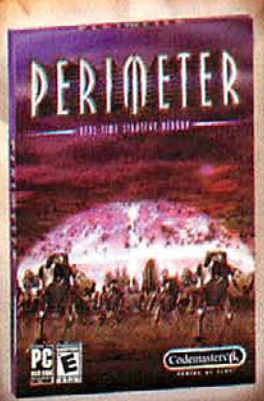


Deploy the impenetrable Perimeter force shield to defend and claim territory.

Transform a multitude of combat units with nanomorph technology to suit any scenario.

Command three warring factions, each with unique units, tactics and super-weapons.

Prepare for battlefields torn apart by volcanoes, earthquakes and subterranean weaponry.



Strategically terraform land to extract energy and create your base.

WWW.CODEMASTERS.COM/PERIMETER

1-4 PLAYER ONLINE AND LAN MULTIPLAY

EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Fantasy Violence

PC CD-ROM SOFTWARE

K-D LAB

1C COMPANY

POWERED BY gamespy

NVIDIA

Codemasters
GENIUS AT PLAY

© 2004 1C Company, K-D LAB Company and The Codemasters Software Company Limited ("Codemasters"). All rights reserved. "Codemasters"® and the Codemasters logo are registered trademarks owned by Codemasters. "GENIUS AT PLAY"™ is a trademark of Codemasters. "Perimeter"™ is a trademark of K-D LAB Company. All other copyrights or trademarks are the property of their respective owners. Developed by K-D LAB Company. Published by Codemasters. "GameSpy" and the "Powered by GameSpy" design are trademarks of GameSpy Industries, Inc. All rights reserved. The NVIDIA logo and the "The way it's meant to be played" logo are registered trademarks or trademarks of NVIDIA Corporation.

PIPELINE

Ship dates and slip dates for games in the stream

Game	Developer	Expected
Advent Rising	Majesco Games	September 2004
Anarchy Online: Alien Invasion	Funcom	June 2004
Armies of Exigo	Electronic Arts	Q4 2004
Atlantis Evolution	The Adventure Company	November 2004
Aura: Fate of the Ages	The Adventure Company	June 2004
Auto Assault	NCsoft	2004
The Bard's Tale	InXile Entertainment	2004
Battlefield 2	Electronic Arts	2004
Black & White II	Electronic Arts	October 2004
BloodRayne 2	Majesco Games	October 2004
Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth	Bethesda Softworks	August 2004
Call of Duty: United Offensive	Activision	Q4 2004
Catwoman	Electronic Arts	July 2004
Chessmaster X	Ubisoft	2004
Civilization IV	Atari	2005
Codename: Panzers	CDV Software	Q2 2004
Creature Conflict: The Clan Wars	Cenega Publishing	September 2004
Dark Fall II: Lights Out	The Adventure Company	2004
Doom 3	Activision	Q2 2004
Dragon Empires	Codemasters	Q3 2004
DRIV3R	Atari	June 2004
Dungeon Siege II	Microsoft	November 2004
Empire Earth 2	Sierra	2004
EverQuest II	SOE	September 2004
Evil Genius	Vivendi Universal	September 2004
The Fall: Last Days of Gaia	TBA	Q3 2004
Flat-Out	Empire Interactive	Q3 2004
Freedom Force vs. the Third Reich	TBA	2004
Full Spectrum Warrior	THQ	September 2004
Ground Control 2: Operation Exodus	Vivendi Universal	August 2004
Guild Wars	NCsoft	October 2004
Half-Life 2	Vivendi Universal	2004
I of the Enemy	Enemy Technology	Q2 2004
Juiced	Acclaim	Q3 2004
Leisure Suit Larry: Magna Cum Laude	Sierra	October 2004
LOTR: The Battle for Middle-earth	Electronic Arts	2004
Madden NFL 2005	Electronic Arts	August 2004
The Matrix Online	TBA	October 2004
Medal of Honor: Pacific Assault	Electronic Arts	June 2004
Men of Valor: Vietnam	Sierra	Q4 2004

New Update

PUBLISHER: **Bethesda Softworks** DEVELOPER: **Headfirst Productions** GENRE: **First-person Shocker**
RELEASE DATE: **September 2004**

Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth

Games that go bump in the night

Locked away in an asylum, ready to commit suicide—how did things get this bad? *Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth* starts on this dour note. The creepy works of HP Lovecraft form the foundation of this game, which aims to scare the living crap out of you, or at the very least, implant you directly inside the head of detective Jack Walters, who's being driven insane.

Playing as Jack, you get no HUD, no damage bars, nothing. If you get hit, you can only gauge how bad it is by the amount of blood clouding the screen. The tension really amps up when Jack gets scared—the world gets a little hazy, your heartbeat muffles out all other sounds, and your aim gets shaky. In a first-person shooting-type game, this quickly becomes unnerving—and possibly annoying. Still, what we've seen so far works. This intentional disability changes the game's pace and the way you play; if a monster surprises you, your first instinct will be to run, since it's tough to aim. As you get more accustomed to the monsters, you'll be better able to deal with the strangeness.

To ensure that you never leave the immersive experience, a journal tracks the important parts of your adventure. The only time you are truly pulled out of the veiled reality is in the unique inventory screen that shows everything you've stored and equipped. It also shows exactly where you've been hurt.

This guy must be dead tired—har, har. So much for being subtle.

Experiment No. 310: how to keep a body alive without any major organs inside.

You can gauge damage by the amount of blood clouding the screen.

The somewhat linear adventure leads you through New England, with the various levels offering a range of different goals. There are lots of survival-horror elements, hairy firefights with otherworldly "deep ones," and puzzle solving. Will this game be scary good, or just plain scary? Come September, we'll see. **Darren Gladstone**

The Word: **DISABLING**

PUBLISHER: DreamCatcher DEVELOPER: Heuristic Park GENRE: Action-RPG RELEASE DATE: Late 2004

Dungeon Lords

A chocolate peanut butter cup of an RPG

DW Bradley is not quite a household name, but any self-respecting RPG-head is at least familiar with his work—namely, Sirtech's classic *Wizardry* series. Given his legacy, Bradley's latest project isn't quite what you might expect. In a nutshell, *Dungeon Lords* is what you'd get if you took *Diablo* and *Die by the Sword* and tossed them in a blender set to frappé.

From the looks of our early preview, everything is "smoothie." Think *Diablo*-style randomized environments in beautiful 3D, with furious console-style combat and real-deal RPG-style character development. The story seems to follow fantasy conventions, with wizards, lords, and mages ensnared in a grab for power.

Movement is mapped to the WASD keys, so it's familiarly intuitive, and combat includes skill-based combination attacks if you're deft with the clicker finger.

Our preview build played well, so we have higher-than-expected hopes. The action is fast paced, the production is technically solid, and the RPG foundation is untouchable. Looks like DreamCatcher has all the right elements in this mix. **Miguel Lopez**

The Word: MIXIN'

PUBLISHER: DreamCatcher DEVELOPER: GolemLabs GENRE: Strategy RELEASE DATE: Q4 2004

SuperPower 2

War games

A nuclear warhead speeds through the sky, destined for a target halfway around the world. Emergency alarms blare as armies prepare for war. Every news channel carries the same gripping report: DEFCON 1. Fortunately, this isn't reality—it's DreamCatcher's upcoming global geopolitical simulation, *SuperPower 2*.

This sequel to the original *SuperPower* puts you in control of every aspect of a nation's political, military, and economic affairs, allowing you to set your own personalized goals for any given scenario. Whether you're looking to develop a prosperous country, rule a military state, or simply conquer the world, *SuperPower 2* has got it covered. Developer GolemLabs is aiming for a deep gameplay experience, with data culled from actual military records—so accurate, in fact, that we're told the company was contacted by "people" who had some "problems" with certain content. The game will also be fully moddable thanks to an out-of-the-box toolset and support for up to 32 players, promising plenty of late nights full of tense geopolitical intrigue. **Ryan Scott**

The Word: SUPREME

PIPELINE

Game	Developer	Expected
Micro Mayhem	Jaleco	June 2004
Middle-Earth Online	Vivendi Universal	October 2004
The Movies	Activision	October 2004
Myst IV: Revelation	Ubisoft	Q4 2004
Operation Flashpoint 2	Codemasters	Q4 2004
Pacific Fighters	Ubisoft	Q4 2004
Playboy: The Mansion	Arush Entertainment	2004
Priest	JC Entertainment	2004
Prince of Persia 2	Ubisoft	Q4 2004
Project Jane-J	The Adventure Company	Q4 2004
Psychotoxic	CDV Software	2004
Quake IV	Activision	2004
RollerCoaster Tycoon 3	Atari	Q4 2004
Rome: Total War	Activision	Q3 2004
Shade: Wrath of Angels	Cenega	2004
ShellShock: Nam '67	Eidos Interactive	June 2004
Sid Meier's Pirates!	Atari	October 2004
Silent Hunter III	Ubisoft	2004
Silent Storm: Sentinels	Encore Software	2004
The Sims 2	Electronic Arts	2004
Soldiers: Heroes of World War II	Codemasters	June 2004
S.T.A.L.K.E.R.: Shadow of Chernobyl	THQ	September 2004
Star Wars Battlefront	LucasArts	September 2004
Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic—The Sith Lords	LucasArts	2004
Star Wars Republic Commando	LucasArts	November 2004
State of Emergency 2	TBA	Q4 2004
Supremacy: Four Paths to Power	Strategy First	Q2 2004
Supreme Ruler 2010	Strategy First	Q2 2004
SWAT: Urban Justice	Sierra	2004
Tabula Rasa	NCsoft	August 2004
Team Fortress 2: Brotherhood of Arms	Sierra	December 2004
Thief: Deadly Shadows	Eidos Interactive	Q2 2004
Train Simulator 2	Microsoft	July 2004
Tribes: Vengeance	Sierra	Q4 2004
UEFA Euro 2004	Electronic Arts	Q2 2004
Ultima X: Odyssey	Electronic Arts	September 2004
Vampire: The Masquerade—Bloodlines	Activision	November 2004
Warhammer 40,000: Dawn of War	THQ	September 2004
Warhammer Online	THQ	2004
Warlords Battlecry III	Enlight Software	Q2 2004
Wartime Command: Battle for Europe 1939-1945	Codemasters	Q3 2004
World of WarCraft	Blizzard Entertainment	2004
Ys VI: The Ark of Napishtim	Konami	Q4 2004
Zoo Tycoon 2	Microsoft	Q4 2004

New Update

DIGITAL UNDERGROUND The best games you've never seen

FROM: **City Interactive** AVAILABILITY: **Q3 2004**

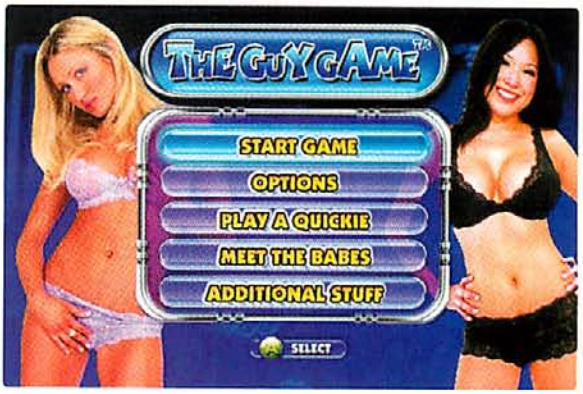
Project Freedom

Word on the street: In space, no one can hear you scream. But how about when you cackle with glee as a squadron of enemy starships "splode" beneath your upgradeable Epsilon fighter? Now that's a different story. Unlike *Project Freedom*'s predecessor, the real-time strategy sleeper *Project Earth*, this one's a pure action game with a 20-mission ode to galactic dogfights between rival megacorporations crammed with white-knuckle potential. Real-life solar system data complements an explosive audio-visual presentation that's less sci-fi than sci-fly, yo.
Sounds kinda beat: Raise your hand if you played the original. Splendid—that makes a whopping two of you. Polish software house City Interactive isn't known for being a refuge for quality artisans, either...see the recent bomb *Wings of Honor* for proof. Despite various mission flavors (escort, strike, rescue) and research and player-promotion features, the game's linear campaign doesn't promise much replay value. *Project Freedom* is mostly plausible as a budget title, presuming it can even pass customs inspections.

FROM: **Tilted Mill Entertainment** AVAILABILITY: **Q3 2004**

Children of the Nile

Word on the street: Founded by key members from the Impressions team, Tilted Mill Entertainment plans on having audiences walk like Egyptians in its first original property. *Children of the Nile* looks to fuse core concepts—such as social planning, construction, city development, and attractive 3D visuals—to create the promises of a seamless universe, complete with living, breathing inhabitants. Citizens are, in fact, a key resource; provide them with sustenance and care, and they'll form the cornerstone of a thriving civilization.
Sounds kinda beat: Is it just us, or is *Lords of the Realm III* selling at 20 clams for a reason? More pointedly, as commonplace as strategic simulations from independent shops are, few are any good. Assuming the same afflictions that plague other productions like *Chariots of War* and *Victoria* can be avoided, this upstart developer might just make a splash yet. Check back with us in the coming months for a full report.



FROM: **Topheavy Studios** AVAILABILITY: **July 2004**

The Guy Game

Word on the street: Topless co-eds...now there's a selling point any interactive diversion can be proud of. Swiping a page (you know, the centerfold) from *Playboy*, this bizarre trivia challenge for one to four players handles like *You Don't Know Jack* after a three-day bender. Contestants answer questions and participate in minigame challenges, and winners are rewarded with video footage that could double as outtakes from *Girls Gone Wild*. Sorry, ladies. And steady there, boys.
Sounds kinda beat: All right, deep down we appreciate the game for its intrinsic artistic value (and the boobies), but c'mon...what gives? With the game playing to the lowest common denominator, mature readers will find the product more repugnant than today's leading lad mags. As much as sex sells, the last thing an industry already under fire from the media needs is another footnote in Lieberman's campaign speech. Still, there may be merit in here yet...did we mention the half-naked women already?

Now there's a magazine that puts technology to the real test — life.

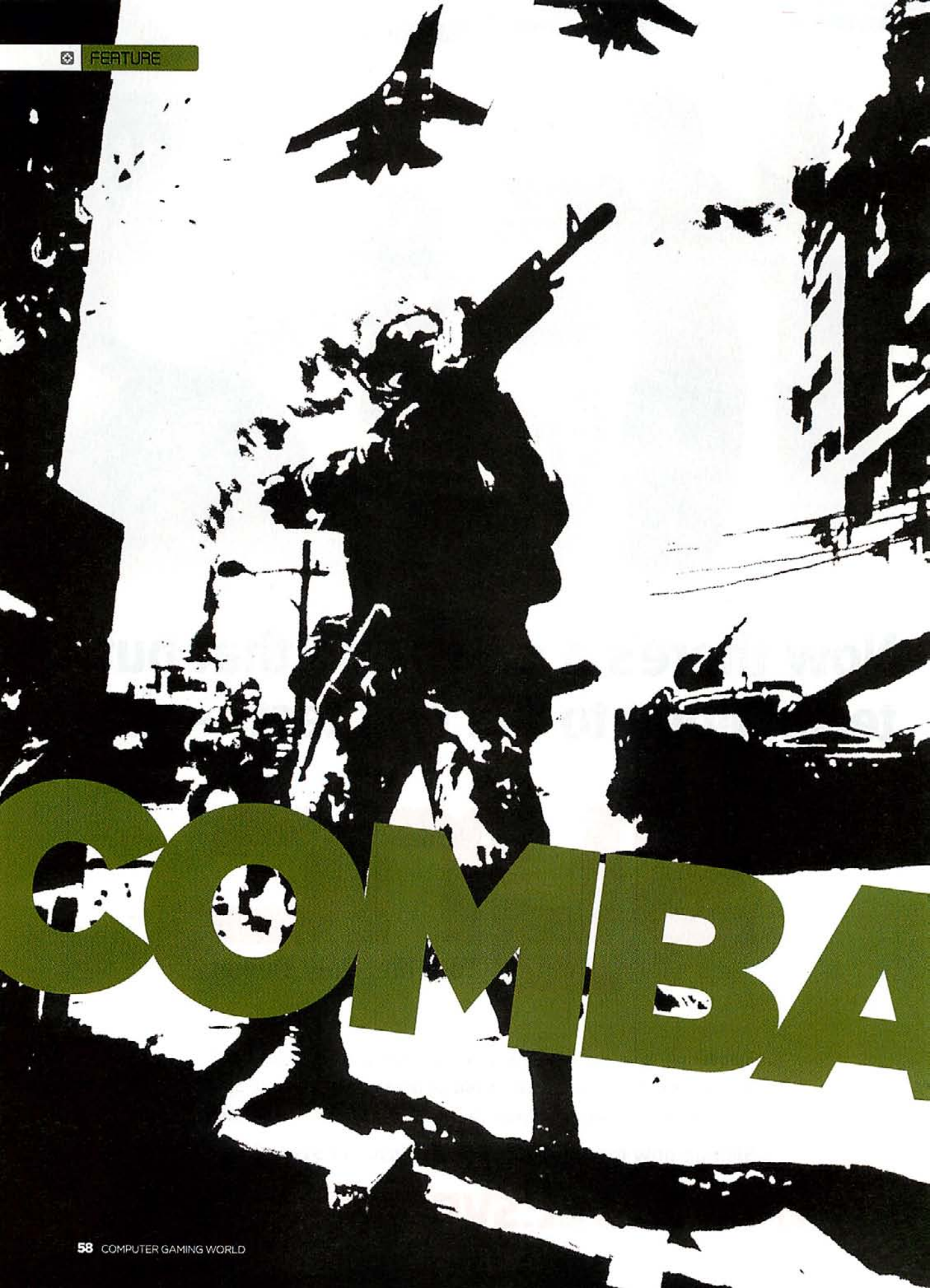
sync™

Your life. Only shinier

Introducing *Sync*, the new magazine that integrates technology with everyday life. Whether at home, at play, or anywhere in between, *Sync* is all you need to help make your life easier, more fun and entertaining.

Sign up now for your FREE Preview Issue of Sync. Go to:

http://checkout.syncmagazine.com



COMBA

BATTLEFIELD 2 WILL BRING WAR TO THE MASSES AND MASSES TO THE WAR

T ROCK

BY ROBERT COFFEY

Showdown at the Mideast corral.

Intricately constructed maps allow plenty of opportunity for ambushes.

MASSIVE.

It's a word that's overused these days, particularly in online gaming. Everything is massively multiplayer, with massive maps, massive game worlds, massive numbers of character classes, massive powers, massive arsenals—and massively boring and cookie-cutter.

But *Battlefield 2* may just live up to its "massive" billing—more than 100 players can compete on dynamically balancing maps with persistent characters and global leader boards, operating more than 30 land, air, and sea vehicles in a gritty, beautifully rendered battle zone that is almost frighteningly alive. DICE, the Stockholm-based team behind *Battlefield 1942* and *Battlefield Vietnam*, has made so many improvements and brilliant design decisions already, nearly a year from release, that we must, however begrudgingly, tell you this: *Battlefield 2* is going to be massive.

THE KILLING ZONE

The obvious upgrade to the *Battlefield* franchise is the game world. Graphics and sound work in tandem to create a modern-era war zone that is as alive as can be. Anything you would expect in real life is in place here: bullet spray pocks walls, destructible structures reflect the progressive carnage inflicted on incredibly detailed terrain, and light and shadow

HOW DO YOU KEEP 100 PLAYERS BATTLING ON A MAP FROM DEVOLVING INTO A CHAOTIC CLUSTER FRAG? BY BUILDING IN SQUAD SUPPORT, PERSISTENT CHARACTERS, AND PRIVILEGES AWARDED BY RANK.

occur realistically right down to muzzle flashes illuminating dark rooms and alleys.

Maybe the best example of the living battlefield comes in the form of the civilian vehicles lining city streets—they aren't just decoration, but are also fully operational for your commandeering pleasure. Drop a machine gunner in a truck bed and hit the road. Or you can just blow the vehicles up to take out opponents seeking cover behind them. Should you shoot the cars, you can marvel at the detailed physics engine behind the realistic way the autos rotate and bounce on their shocks when shot—right before you plug your ears from the ensuing, inevitable blaring car alarm. I could go on and on about the insane look of this game—or you could just look at the jaw-dropping shots we've got here and get the full story.

NOT AN ARMY OF ONE

So how do you keep 100 players battling on a map from devolving into a chaotic cluster frag? By building in squad support, persistent characters, and privileges awarded by rank. This time out, enlistment in the *Battlefield* army is practically a career. Once you pick a side (the U.S., China, or the fictional Middle East Coalition) and a class and name your character, he exists. Forever, basically. The game still compiles stats and scores your progress on a game-by-game basis, but now, global servers accrue each of your characters' stats and grant rank promotions, allowing even lousy but dedicated players to work their way up from buck private to sergeant.

Anything lieutenant or above, however, will have to be earned not just by dogged persistence, but also by being one of the top players across the entire *Battlefield 2* community. These ranks aren't point based, but relative. Online leader boards show where you rate and how far you need to go to gain another stripe or star on your insignia. Topping all this off are individual awards based on personal performance—each class has different distinctions, such as Sniper of the Month.

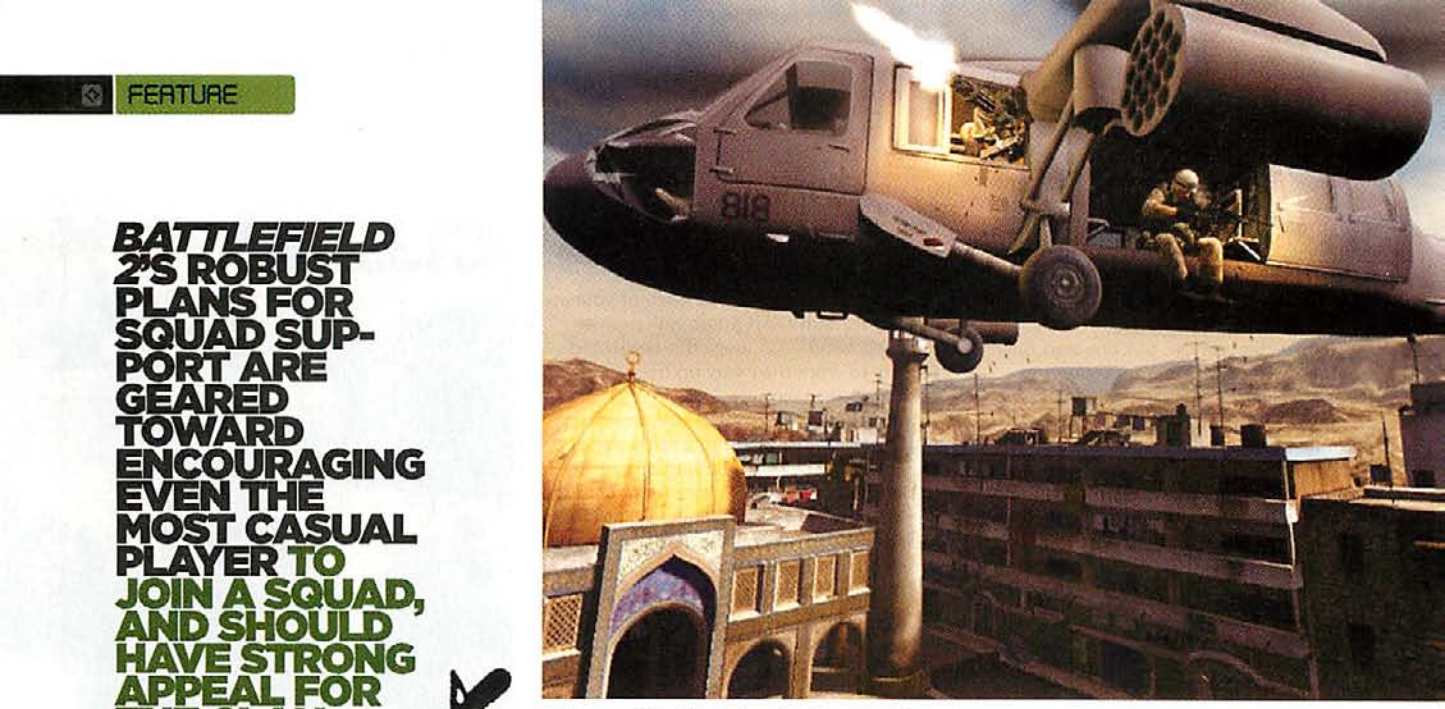
So what do officers gain for their ability and dedication? Access to an online officer's club, which should provide faster downloads of updates through special servers, news, tournaments, and access to games with a minimum rank requirement—perfect for testing yourself against the best and for filtering out the clueless noobs.

But higher-ranked players also gain a huge new distinction, one that underscores *Battlefield 2*'s commitment to

We may just need to add the defibrillator to the short list of great humiliation weapons, right next to *Half-Life*'s crowbar and *UT2004*'s shield gun. While medics in *Battlefield 2* operate primarily as healers, their lifesaving defibrillators turn lethal when applied to a healthy player. Can you imagine anything more satisfying than sneaking up on a camping sniper, shouting "Clear!" and then stopping his heart with a blast of electric current? Of course you can't.

GRAPHICS AND SOUND WORK IN TANDEM TO CREATE A MODERN-ERA WAR ZONE THAT IS AS ALIVE AS CAN BE.

BATTLEFIELD 2'S ROBUST PLANS FOR SQUAD SUPPORT ARE GEARED TOWARD ENCOURAGING EVEN THE MOST CASUAL PLAYER TO JOIN A SQUAD, AND SHOULD HAVE STRONG APPEAL FOR THE CLAN GAMER.



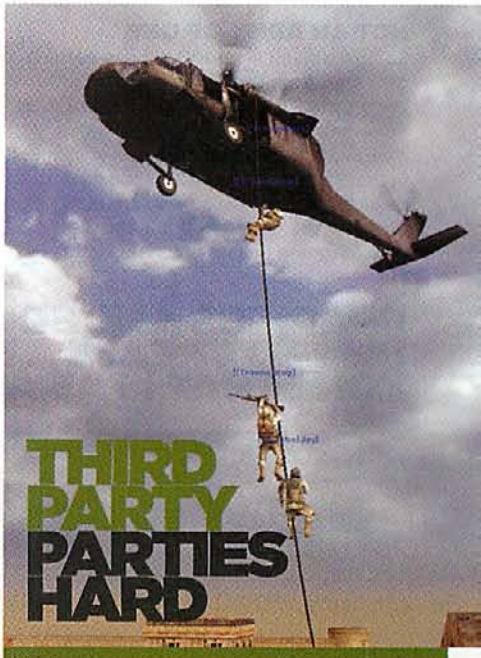
The squad that hunts together lives together.

real teamplay, and that is the designation of "commander." The highest-ranked member of any given side has the option to play as commander (players do have a server option for making this an elected honor) and direct the action.

Commanders have a top-down view of the battlefield and are the only ones who can call in air or artillery strikes. They can direct individual squads over a dedicated voice channel as well. It's a great opportunity to give a more cohesive, tactical edge to all the mayhem. Plus, it gives you someone to blame when your side loses.

Battlefield 2's robust plans for squad support are geared toward encouraging even the most casual player to join a squad and should have strong appeal for the clan gamer. Dedicated squad voice support and a simple radial squad-communication menu for the headsetless let gamers truly coordinate their team's actions. Onscreen chevrons indicate where your squadmates are at all times to help you even more.

Need more incentive to stick together? How about the vehicle bonuses that classes bring to select vehicles? Once your squad's medic jumps in a jeep, for example, a bright red-cross decal is slapped on the door as it becomes a roving medical vehicle with a healing radius. It gets better—these effects stack, so you can drop a heavy infantryman in the same jeep for extra armor and a sniper for a nice little just-because speed boost. One note: These abilities are restricted to certain vehicles per class and are not cumulative (i.e., two medics won't double the healing radius) for balance and modest realism issues. So you can forget about making that radar-invisible, superfast, ultra-armored healing and repairing attack jet.



THIRD PARTY PARTIES HARD

While DICE is doing all the hardcore designing, it has enlisted the help of Trauma Studios for one thing: coolness. This New York City studio is tasked with prototyping smaller features simply to enhance the game experience. Its input so far has led to the medic's lethal and lifesaving defibrillator, as well as rappelling lines that drop from helicopters to both deploy and rescue soldiers. Currently, up to 10 combatants can hang from a line—and they can shoot while they're there. Trauma has more tricks up its sleeve, but this is the one we really hope makes the cut. Don't you want to see 10 rope-hanging monkey killers raining death from above as they sweep through city streets?

WCG
WORLD CYBER GAMES

SAMSUNG ELECTRONICS

WCG 2004

WORLD CYBER GAMES

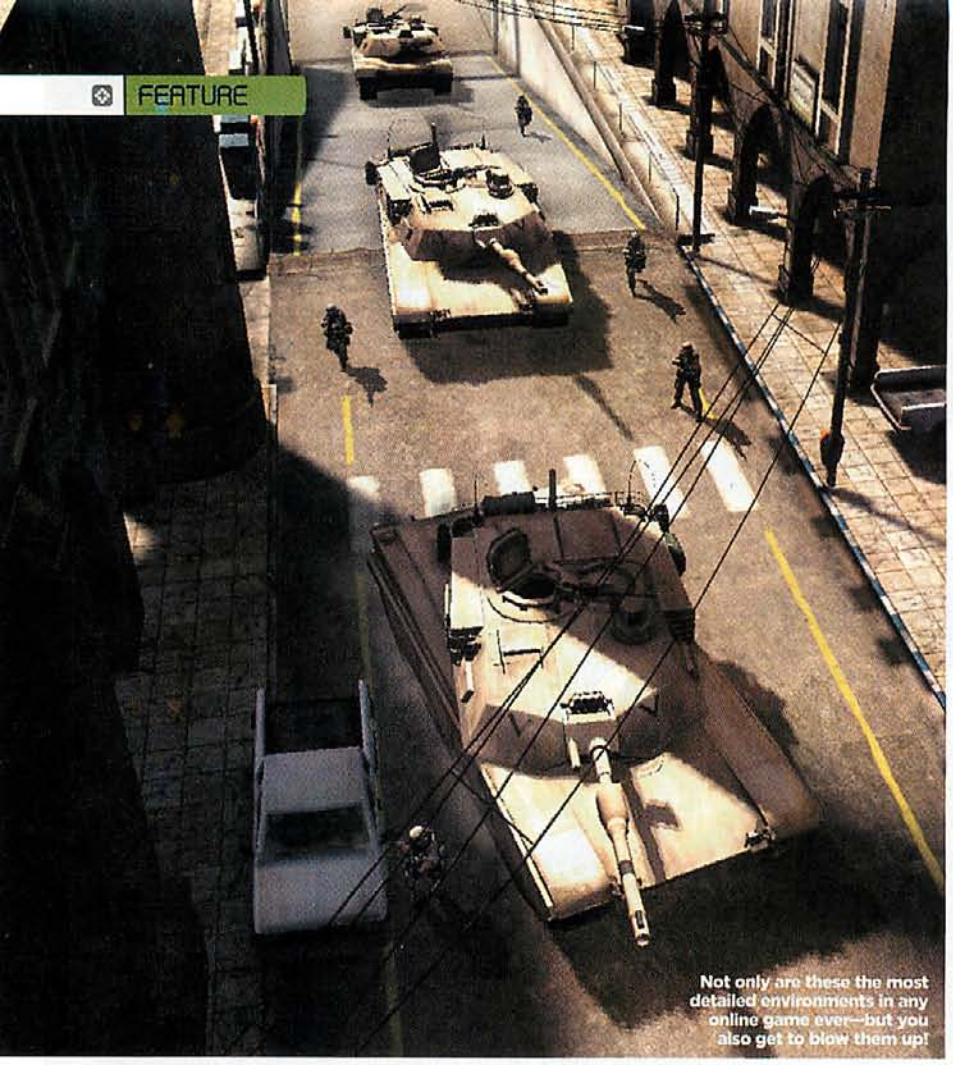
Grand Final in San Francisco

- Date : Oct. 6 -10 (5 days)
- Venue : Bill Graham Civic Auditorium, San Francisco
- No. of participants : Approximately 700 players from 60 countries
- Prize money : $400,000
- Official Games : 6 PC Games and 2 Console Games

6 PC Games	StarCraft® : Brood War™ WarCraft® III : The Frozen Throne™ Counter-Strike™ : Condition-Zero Need for Speed™: Underground FIFA Soccer 2004™ Unreal™ Tournament 2004
2 Console Games	Halo™ (Xbox) Project Gotham Racing 2® (Xbox)

Now, US National Preliminaries are in progress. Visit us to see more at http://us.worldcybergames.com

www.worldcybergames.com



Not only are these the most detailed environments in any online game ever—but you also get to blow them up!

THE INFANTRYMAN WHO PAINTS A TARGET WITH A LASER FOR A GUIDED MISSILE, AS WELL AS THE PILOT LAUNCHING THE MISSILE, GET CREDIT FOR THE EVENTUAL KILL

DRIVE-BY SHOOTING

About those vehicles—you can expect more than 30 land, sea, and air vehicles in the finished game. The developers expect the class-based enhancements to nudge players into using them, but frankly, the stable of tanks, jeeps, fighter jets, helicopters, and attack boats should be plenty of incentive on its own. In a nod to the modern-age setting of the game and in an effort to focus on more intense combat, big naval vessels (like destroyers) have been eliminated from the game. However, the inclusion of fast, vicious patrol boats and the like should more than make up for it.

All the action takes place in three theaters of war: China, Russia, and the Middle East. While none of the war zones are

Yes, the game looks that good.

FIGHTING ON TWO OR MORE FRONTS

One of the biggest problems in any multiplayer shooter is balancing maps for player load. No one likes deathmatching with two people on a sprawling 32-player map any more than they like deathmatching with 32 people in a two-player arena. Obviously, DICE has to create maps big enough to accommodate its targeted player load of more than 100—but what happens when only 22 people show up on a server? DICE has an ingenious solution: dynamically sizing maps. Think of a map as three concentric circles. With, say, 32 or fewer players, only the inner circle is active, and the exterior circles are inaccessible and out of play. When a threshold of players is crossed, the map opens up the next circle, and eventually, right around the 100-player mark, the last one opens. As players drop, the map contracts accordingly, with distant players warned to get back to the active zone. Don't worry—if you're too far to get back, you'll be killed and spawned within the smaller map, but your score won't be affected by the death.

Every item on the soldiers is animated and moves realistically.

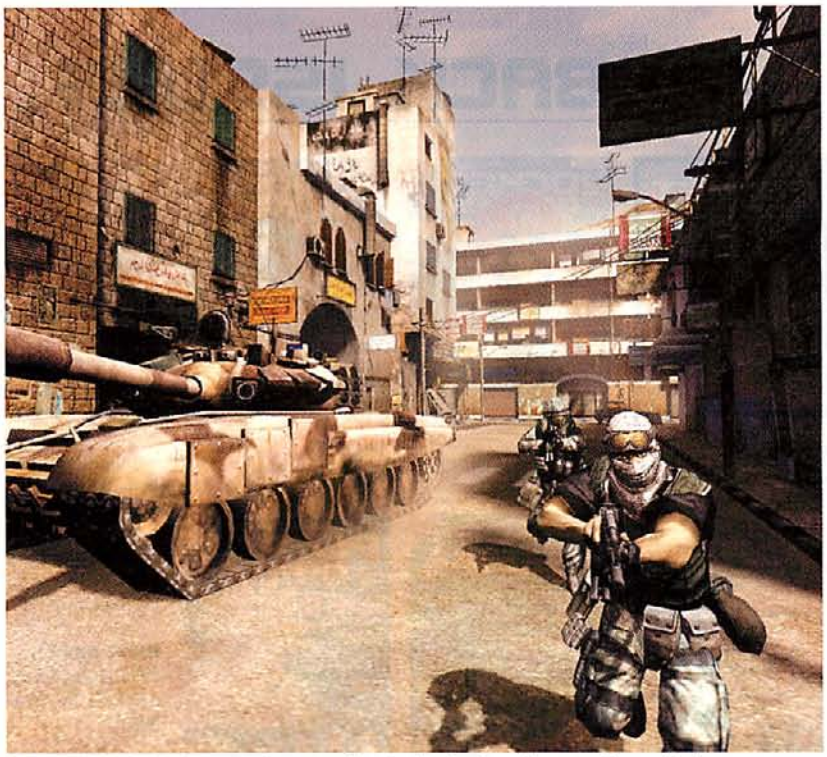
based on any specific city or battle, all are being designed with current world hot spots in mind, so while you won't be fighting in Baghdad per se, you'll be fighting in a place much like Baghdad. And the action should be very familiar to any *Battlefield 1942* or *Vietnam* vet—DICE is very happy with its ticket-based control-point CTF variation and isn't planning on changing it at all. It is adding optional secondary objectives to certain maps that confer in-game advantages—things like taking out power stations to hobble the enemy.

Arguably, the only big change in gameplay is the scoring. In yet another nod to encouraging teamplay, scoring in the game is being tweaked so that medics get points for healing comrades and pilots get points for kills made by their passengers. The infantryman who paints a target with a laser for a guided missile, as well as the pilot launching the missile, will get credit for the eventual kill.

Is there more? You bet. But we'd have to deforest half the continent to get enough wood pulp for the pages we'd need to cover every single detail in this game. You'll just have to try to hold on until spring 2005, when you can experience the game for yourself.

Until then, remember one thing: It's going to be massive.

ALL THE ACTION TAKES PLACE IN THREE THEATERS OF WAR: CHINA, RUSSIA, AND THE MIDDLE EAST.



Battlefield 2 is all about squad cooperation. And tanks. Squad cooperation and tanks.

YOU'RE IN THE ARMY NOW

Here's what you can expect from the various classes when you enlist in *Battlefield 2*.

	USA	CHINA/MEC
COMMANDO		
Pistol	M9 Beretta + Silencer	Tokarev T33 + Silencer
Assault Rifle	M4 Short	AK Short
VEHICLE BONUS: STEALTH		
SNIPER		
Pistol	M9 Beretta + Silencer	Tokarev T33 + Silencer
Sniper Rifle	M82A1	Dragunov
VEHICLE BONUS: SPEED		
LIGHT INFANTRY		
Pistol	M9 Beretta	Tokarev T33
Assault Rifle	M16A2	AK74
HEAVY INFANTRY		
Pistol	M9 Beretta	Tokarev T33
Heavy MG	SAW	PK
VEHICLE BONUS: ARMOR		
ANTITANK/ANTIAIR		
Pistol	M9 Beretta	Tokarev T33
Rocket Launcher	Predator	MBT LAW
VEHICLE BONUS: RADAR		
MEDIC		
Pistol	M9 Beretta	Tokarev T33
Assault Rifle	M16A2	AK74
Grenade Launcher	M203	M203
VEHICLE BONUS: HEALTH		
ENGINEER		
Knife	Knife	Knife
Pistol	M9 Beretta	Tokarev T33
Shotgun	Benelli M1	Saiga 12
VEHICLE BONUS: REPAIR		

ON SALE NOW

LOOK FOR THESE SPECIAL ISSUES ON NEWSSTANDS EVERYWHERE THIS SPRING!

From the same people who bring you Electronic Gaming Monthly, Computer Gaming World, Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine, GMR, and Xbox Nation. These special magazines can be found only on newsstands or through back order.

Look for these magazines at Borders, Waldenbooks, Barnes and Noble, B. Dalton, Babbages, GameStop, Funcoland, Walmart, Kmart, Target, Walgreens, CVS, Kroger and Safeway.

POCKET GAMES 14:	On-Sale NOW!
EGM CODEBOOK 2:	On Sale NOW!
POCKET GAMES 15:	On-Sale 06/04!
EGM GAME GUIDE 3:	On-Sale 07/04!

ZIFF DAVIS MEDIA GAME GROUP

ORDER THESE BACK ISSUES TO MAKE SURE THAT YOU HAVE A COMPLETE LIBRARY OF THE MOST VALUABLE TRICKS, CHEATS, AND CODES FOR ALL THE TOP GAMES ON YOUR CONSOLE.

BACK ISSUES

○ Pocket Games Summer 2000 $12.00

○ Pocket Games Fall 2000 $12.00

○ Pocket Games Summer 2001 $12.00

○ Pocket Games 7 Fall/Winter 2001 $12.00

○ Pocket Games 8 Spring 2002 $12.00

○ Pocket Games 9 Summer 2002 $12.00

○ Pocket Games 10 Fall/Winter 2002 $12.00

○ Pocket Games 11 Spring 2003 $12.00

○ Pocket Games 12 Summer 2003 $12.00

○ Pocket Games 13 Winter 2003 $12.00

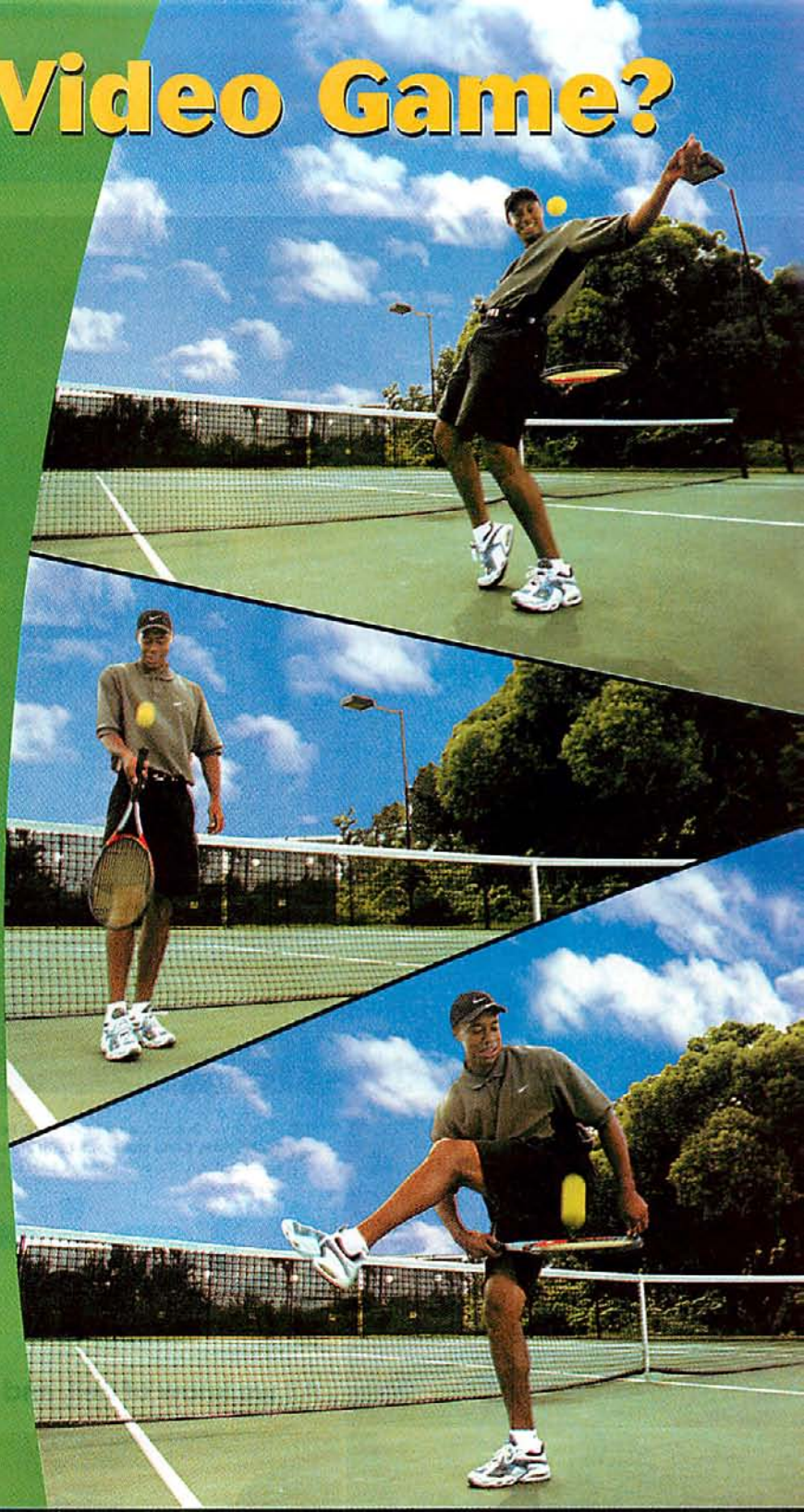
HOW TO ORDER:
Simply check off which magazines you want and send in the order form (photocopies accepted) along with a check made payable to Ziff Davis Media, for the amount indicated for each magazine plus shipping and handling—add $3 for U.S., $3 for Canada and $5 for foreign orders—in U.S. funds only, for each magazine. Orders should be mailed to:

BACK ISSUES
1411 Opus Place, Ste. 340 Downers Grove, IL 60515

Price and availability subject to change without notice.

Buying a Video Game?

Play the game that's right for you!



You can give Tiger Woods a tennis racket, but he knows that golf is the game that's right for him. So how does Tiger know *which computer* and video games are OK to play? He checks the rating on every game box...And so should you!

Computer and video game ratings have two parts: **rating symbols**, which tell you what age group the game is appropriate for and **content descriptors**, which tell you about specific content elements that may be of interest or concern.

So the next time you're choosing a game, check the rating and the content descriptors. And like Tiger Woods, play the game that's right for you.

ESRB

ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE RATING BOARD

www.esrb.org

CHECK THE RATINGS ON EVERY VIDEO GAME BOX

ON FRONT

ON BACK

The satanic high priest of zombies doesn't like it if you make fun of his dress.

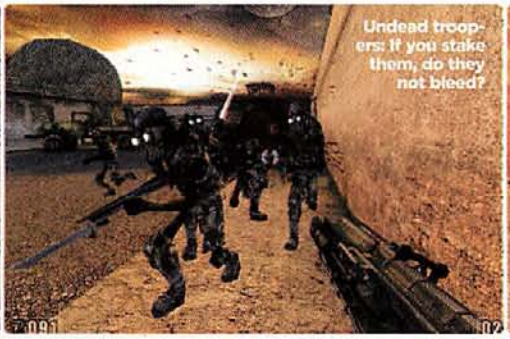
Oops.

PUBLISHER: **DreamCatcher** DEVELOPER: **People Can Fly** GENRE: **FPS** ESRB RATING: **M** REQUIRED: **Pentium 4 1.5GHz, 384MB RAM, 64MB videocard, 1.2GB install** RECOMMENDED: **Windows XP, Pentium 4 2.4GHz, 512MB RAM, 128MB videocard** MULTIPLAYER: **Internet, LAN (2-16 players)**

Painkiller

All we know of hell, and all we need of heaven

Goin' to the chapel—with your shotgun!


Undead troopers: If you stake them, do they not bleed?

He wants your head to join his club.

Breed
This *Halo*-killer is far more successful as a *Breed*-killer

Rise of Nations: Thrones & Patriots
A nice expansion for the best RTS of last year

Manhunt
Does it suck because of the violence or just because it sucks?

In the beginning, there was *Doom*. And it was good. But now there are story lines and characters, jumping puzzles and key hunts, bullet time and night vision, double-jumping and jet packs, improvable attributes and inventories, teammates and squad A.I., stealth, crouching, leaning, reloading, force powers, vehicles, and elaborate scripted sequences that play like your favorite scenes from *Aliens* or *Saving Private Ryan*. *Kicking evil's ass has gotten complicated.*

But *Painkiller* is a return to what matters most: that simple act of shooting hideous things. It's unadulterated and powerful, skillfully distilled to its essence like a shot of pure adrenaline straight to the heart. Its design is relentlessly focused, stripped of pretense, containing no sign of feature creep, and crackling with an energetic glee.

Going to hell

The game is divided into discrete levels that are related only by a loose-fitting story. Each of the levels is a self-contained 20-minute trip through a different setting; a series of checkpoints guides you, plotting out a wander-free itinerary and ensuring that you hit all the highlights. You'll go up into a cupola at the top of an insane asylum, past the electric chair in a prison, and along the walls of a crumbling castle. The levels are carefully laid out and are built to be played on, rather than admired. It's a triumph of level design that they're so varied—some narrow and claustrophobic, others vast and wide open—yet distinct, each with its own sense of style and atmosphere. This is art design in action, as opposed to merely good graphics.

Along the way you'll hear the thunk of stakes, the moan of zombies, and the flapping of crows, all punctuating the playful ambient music like a strangled aria in an opera house. All the while, there's a rogues' gallery of demons and zombies thrown your way, one mob at a time. While each level features only about four or five different monsters, *Painkiller* never overuses its menagerie; each type appears sparingly, so you're constantly facing new enemies. And each monster is created with vivid animation and cunning A.I. that gives it specific behaviors and personality traits. This, along with the level design, keeps *Painkiller* from getting repetitive and gives it some of the best pacing this side of *Half-Life*.

You get only five guns, but the weapons have multiple firing modes, not one of them useless or redundant. And although we've seen a million rocket launchers and machine guns, *Painkiller* brings some inventive new toys to the table. A gun that fires wooden stakes and a magical grappling hook that can sprout blades seem designed not just for their visceral appeal, but also to show off the game's superb rag-doll physics.

No smoking allowed, even if you're a skull-headed wizard.

Painkiller is the truest and most gratifying shooter since _Doom_.

Physics also apply to the environments, but not in that lazy *Max Payne* way where you're constantly knocking over platforms you brush against. *Painkiller*'s interaction with the world consists mainly of breaking things and blowing them up. But there are lots of shrewd physics at work here, like the way a canister of compressed gas skitters away like an out-of-control torpedo, how a courtyard full of fireworks sets off an explosive chain reaction, or how a Roman column cracks and then collapses. These are the sorts of things that you see and then smile at because you know someone thought they were cool enough to go to the trouble of creating—and boy, were they right.

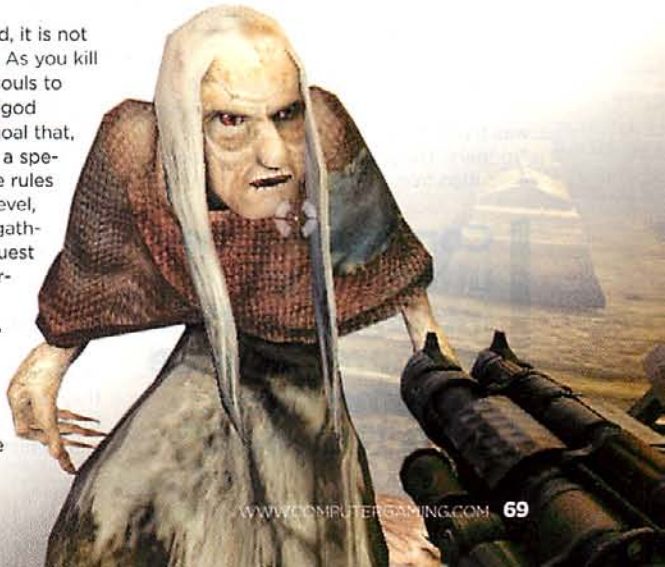
Card tricks

Although *Painkiller* is streamlined, it is not shallow; there are deeper layers. As you kill monsters, you can collect their souls to occasionally trigger a demonic "god mode." Each level has a bonus goal that, if met, unlocks a tarot card with a special power that tweaks the game rules or fires off a spell. Before each level, you can spend the gold you've gathered to load up on cards. This quest to collect cards, and more importantly the ability to play around with them in different situations, gives *Painkiller* considerable replay value.

This makes up, in part, for the multiplayer support, which is tailored to appeal to hardcore 1337-skillz deathmatch speed freaks. Not that there's anything wrong with that. But when the single-player game is the truest and most gratifying shooter since *Doom* established the genre, why bother with *Quake*-like running and gunning?

Painkiller isn't perfect, of course. Some of the boss puzzles get frustrating until you figure out the trick, and it's hard to appreciate what's going on until you've seen a few levels. In fact, if you were to play only the four levels in Chapter 1, you might shrug and assume you know where the game's going from there. You'd be wrong. Because it's not until you've finished the mind-blowing final level that you can really take a breath, look back over what you've just played, and appreciate the absolute genius at work. **Tom Chick**

Verdict ★★★★½
Doom who?



PUBLISHER: **CDV** DEVELOPER: **Brat Designs** GENRE: **First-Person Blunder** ESRB: **T** REQUIRED: **Pentium III 1GHz, 256MB RAM, 32MB videocard, 1.2GB install**
RECOMMENDED: **Pentium 4 1.5GHz, 512MB RAM, 64MB videocard, 1.2GB install** MULTIPLAYER: **Internet, LAN (2-16 players)**

Breed

We like to call it Starship Droopers

We're sure glad a game finally named its übergun the "übergun."

How dare these aliens set up shop in a tropical paradise?

There's one question that begs asking after playing through what has to be one of the lamer attempts at first-person shooterdom: How in the hell could these alien chowderheads beat the human race in the 27th century? The Breed is too dumb to tie its own shoelaces, and it's got the most asinine "advanced" weaponry in the universe. Wait, I know. In the future, the collective IQ of humanity is just below that of a rutabaga.

For a fleeting moment, let's reflect on the few positives in *Breed*: 1) The game does a genuinely good job of creating interesting vehicles (and turrets) that you'll be able to operate. Surprisingly, they handle well. 2) Graphically, *Breed* fares as passable with its destructible environments. The outdoor level designs are at times interesting, giving you a few routes to complete objectives. Not bad, mind you, but nothing too memorable, either. 3) The game actually ends.

Commence bashing

Stylistically, it's obvious that Brat Designs was trying to ape the film *Starship Troopers*. The problem, however, is poor execution from start to painful finish. Hell, the transparent plot and wooden voice acting make the film from which this game steals look like *Saving Private Ryan* by comparison. But why focus on such minor points when there are so many other letdowns?

Considering their utter lack of intelligence, it'd be more accurate to name these guys "Inbreed."

Oh, you know the sorts of weapons you're in store for: There's the obligatory assault weaponry, rockets, sniper rifles...and so on. The Breed's weapons are simply energy-beam flavors of the same damn things. Only less accurate.

Both the game and the creatures you're fighting are predictable and dumb; as you carve your way through the missions, scripted interruptions clue you in on impending trouble. Uh-oh, a whole bunch of heavily armed Breed with tanks just made their way into the canyon! If you fight your way up to an artillery outpost and start showering them with fire, they don't fire back. They don't even move! So I ask again—how exactly is the Breed winning this war?

Special ed

Under your command is a clone army of specially trained character classes. Oh, they're "special" all right; these A.I.-controlled short-bus soldiers literally walk off cliffs when you aren't holding their hands. While they flaunt different outfits, they are all equally dumb. Medic, engineer, sniper, or gunner—they all want to run into the middle of combat and haphazardly return fire, ignoring your commands in order to bask in crossfire from turrets instead.

A personal favorite moment: scouting ahead with the sniper. While ordering the rest of the squad to catch up, the gunner would walk into the ocean and off the map...and this wasn't a one-time occurrence. Throughout the game, you're constantly looking over your shoulder to see if the F Troop is getting itself killed yet again. Considering their utter lack of intelligence, it'd be more accurate to name these guys "Inbreed."

Even with all the bile vented, there's still more to complain about. But time's up. No chance to wax poetic about game-killing bugs (when was the last time you exited a vehicle only to fall through the earth?). No room to touch upon the poorly executed multiplayer matches. No more. Please, no more. **Darren Gladstone**

Verdict ★½☆☆☆☆

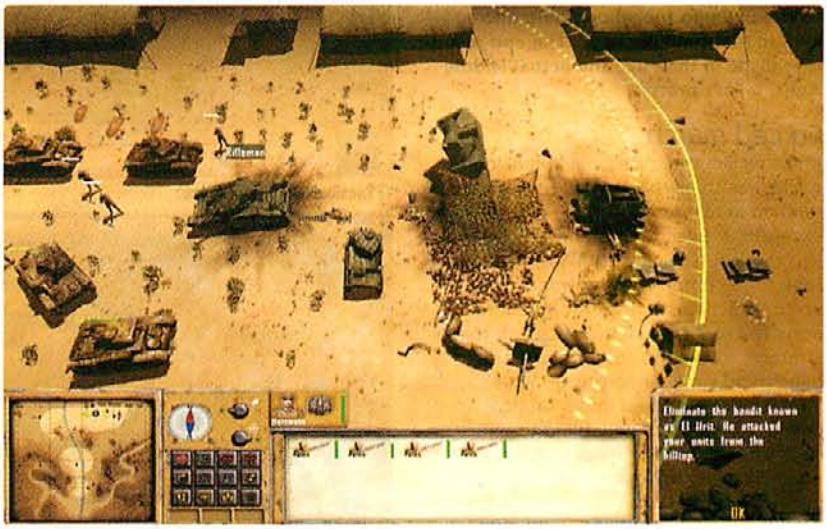
The Breed wants the planet? Let 'em have it.

PUBLISHER: **Encore** DEVELOPER: **Monte Cristo** GENRE: **RTS** ESRB RATING: **T** REQUIRED: **Pentium III 1GHz, 256MB RAM, 32MB videocard, 1.5GB install**
RECOMMENDED: **Pentium 4 2GHz, 512MB RAM, 64MB videocard, broadband Internet connection** MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: **Internet, LAN (2-4 players)**

Desert Rats vs. Afrika Korps

Real-time WWII battles never looked so good

Only *Blitzkrieg* came close to getting the WWII RTS right, striking a largely effective balance between realistic elements and playability. *Desert Rats vs. Afrika Korps* has a lot of the elements that made *Blitzkrieg* so appealing: a realistic feel, ready playability, and dazzling good looks—along with some annoying flaws of its own.



Although *Desert Rats* looks terrific, the camera angles just never get quite low or high enough.

***Desert Rats* is a staggering feast of incredibly detailed models, explosions, and terrain.**

Room to Rommel

As the title indicates, *Desert Rats* vectors in on a single theater of operations in World War II: North Africa in 1942. Sticking to a single group of battles is smart, allowing the designers to flesh out the unique weapons and challenges of desert warfare, as well as a more plausible, coherent story line with a good flow of missions. While this means there are fewer individual units, it still allows for a diverse mix of infantry, armor, support vehicles, aircraft, and artillery.

The tighter focus gives gamers an opportunity to get familiar with the units and terrain types over the course of eight Axis and six Allied missions. Missions can be played in a linked narrative campaign (Axis first, then Allied) or as discrete Axis or Allied campaigns. Unfortunately, that's all there is. The game is woefully lacking in extra options: There isn't a skirmish mode, and the individual battle maps are locked until they're beaten in the campaign.

GPS not Included

This turns out to be the least of *Desert Rats*' problems. One of the oldest clichés in game reviewing is the "pathfinding problem,"—which is a cliché because so few people do it right. *Desert Rats* does it spectacularly wrong, with units that not only take the worst possible paths to their destinations, but also seem to almost willfully expose themselves to enemy fire. It's like they go out of their way to do it.

Normally, you can work around bad pathfinding by baby-sitting your units, but the finicky interface and control system of *Desert Rats* make that difficult. There may be a nice mix of infantry units (riflemen, machine gunners, sappers, flamethrowers, grenadiers, snipers, medics, scouts, and heroes), but they all look similar, and even on a tight zoom they're very small, crowded together, and often hard to select. You might think it would be nice to use the special abilities of each infantry unit, but more often than not, you must simply group-select them all or rely on armor. In fact, the way the game underplays the role of infantry is one of its bigger flaws.

And yet, even in the face of these problems, *Desert Rats* remains a largely entertaining experience. Experienced war gamers will definitely see this as a "puzzle" RTS, with maps often designed for a single ideal approach and little leeway for tactical experimentation. Once you get used to using a lot of armor and moving slowly, the battles are layered, interesting, and challenging.

Thomas L. McDonald

Verdict ★★★☆☆
A good historical RTS, despite flawed infantry and some puzzlelike maps.

PUBLISHER: **Vivendi Universal** DEVELOPER: **Impressions Games** GENRE: **RTS** ESRB RATING: **T** REQUIRED: **Pentium III 800MHz, 128MB RAM, 16MB videocard, 850MB install** RECOMMENDED: **Pentium 4 1.5GHz, 256MB RAM, 32MB videocard, 12GB install** MULTIPLAYER: **Internet, LAN (2-8 players)**

Lords of the Realm III

Workin' on our knight moves

It's been eight years since the last *Lords of the Realm*. Since then, the series has lost sight of the city-building and castle-construction elements that gave it its considerable charm. Instead, now we have an attempt at streamlining the whole thing into a unified real-time package. The end result is realistic in that, like the actual Middle Ages, it isn't pretty.

Tactics? What are those?

Burning oil is not good for your complexity.

Wall-to-wall armies.

Forced march

It seems like the main goal in making this game was to always, always, *always* be running in real time. Always. With no exceptions. Ever. Consistency be damned. In a tactical battle, it takes just as much time for a company of footmen to walk up to a castle as it does for an entire army to cross several provinces on the strategic map—and these things are happening simultaneously. So when you've briefly ducked into a tactical battle, you're absolutely blind to entire days on the strategy map. Oops, the enemy sacked my manor while I was changing formations!

If it weren't for this shotgun marriage of real-time strategy and tactics, *Lords of the Realm III* would simply ape Creative Assembly's *Shogun* and *Medieval*. Borrowed from those games is an attempt at an elegant level of strategy in which you drop leaders onto territories, and they take it from there. And although the mechanics are simple—just drag pictures of little dudes onto the map and they do everything for you, from building armies to gathering resources—they're far from elegant. Your different leaders are distinguished by a bewildering array of poorly documented numbers, icons, attributes, and color-coded squares. It's as if someone dropped a half-dozen different strategy games into a blender and set it on chop.

You just kind of hang out and gawk at numbers and icons.

Bored of the Realms

But for all the stuff in here, there's very little to actually do, and lots of time with nothing to do. Your actions are broad and vague, partly because of the game's scale and real-time pace, but also because of the confusing design. For instance, your performance as a king determines your three attributes: Christianity, chivalry, and honor. Please write in if you figure out the difference between the last two. It must be part of the gameplay to untangle the nuances of two synonyms while enemy armies are zipping across your provinces, which are variously referenced as parcels, estates, realms, regions, and kingdoms.

Lords of the Realm III is like a slightly less disastrous *Master of Orion 3* in that it's ultimately a management management game. You're in charge of putting people in charge, and then you just kind of hang out and gawk at numbers and icons. Sometimes you watch a battle that plays out as a colorful mess in which you can steer bits of the jumble to try to compensate for the atrocious A.I. However, to *Lords'* credit, the graphics are vivid, the 3D battle engine is adroit, and unlike *Master of Orion 3*, the whole thing is merely clumsy instead of utterly broken. **Tom Chick**

Verdict ★☆☆☆☆

A clumsy, series-ending combo of real-time and strategy.

PUBLISHER: **Encore Software** DEVELOPER: **Ascaron Entertainment GmbH** GENRE: **Roleplaying** ESRB RATING: **T** REQUIRED: **Pentium III 800, 256MB RAM, 16MB videocard, 2GB install** RECOMMENDED: **Pentium 4 1.4GHZ, 512MB RAM, 64MB videocard**

Sacred

Diablo for masochists

Those who found *Diablo* and *Diablo II* too short, too easy, and maybe just a tad too much fun, well, Ascaron Entertainment has the game for you. *Sacred* is a bigger and tougher version of Blizzard's blockbuster action-RPG, guaranteed to keep you bashing monsters and collecting loot for weeks on end. It's a giant slab of a game, a slogfest, and if that's your thing, you are going to be in hog heaven, as you'll invest dozens of hours before even making a dent. But some gamers, like me, may feel the game, for all its generosity, is just too much—a whole lot of work with not enough payoff.

Sacred is about as close as a game can get to being *Diablo* without getting lawyers involved. (The box even includes a press quote comparing it to Blizzard's game.) You create a character from a set of classes—melee fighters, ranged fighters, magic users—and then go out into a generic fantasy world, Ancaria, and kill your requisite set of orcs, goblins, and skeletons ad nauseam while leveling up and gaining new skills and abilities. The game is divided into acts, with small cut-scenes in between, over a number of areas linked through portals you discover along the way. Sound familiar?

Look what I started! A train of ogres!

Sacred is about as close as a game can get to being _Diablo_ without getting lawyers involved.

Paging Mr. Ed

But *Sacred,* while an unabashed clone, does get points for cool innovations, as well as an overall smooth design. The quest, map, and log interface is superb. All quests and subquests are logged into your book with specific goals stated, while both your map and minimap clearly mark quest locations—both finished and unfinished—and a compass points you in the direction of the main quest and the current subquest you're following. The net result is a system that totally keeps you focused and on track—crucial in a game this huge. Also outstanding is the ability to ride horses, which not only makes traveling faster but also provides strong bonuses to your character.

Ascaron has done a fine job with both graphics and animations, making the game world feel more alive than most games of this type, including *Diablo.* Animals hop around, villagers mill through town, monsters patrol areas. When you enter a new town, children will start following you around—a nice touch.

If only Ascaron had made the game less tedious and frustrating. The open areas are clogged with monsters, making it feel like a major accomplishment just to move two inches on the map. Worse, the game is overly stingy with healing potions, portals, and respawn points, thereby ensuring repeated death and constant reslogging through territory already conquered. (I learned to quicksave after nearly every kill.)

So this battle mage, skeleton, and dragon go to this bar...

Horseback riding makes travel easier and gives bonuses to your character.

Leveling up only garners you skill and attribute points—not new or improved spells, which, stupidly, can only be obtained through random monster drops. This means that, depending on your luck, 80 hours into the game, you may be stuck with the same low-level spells you started with. This is one case in which veering away from *Diablo*'s design—a spell tree—just does not work.

Still, overall, *Sacred* is a good game and, like the franchise it emulates, is lots of fun in small doses. Nothing prizewinning here, with some serious frustrations at times, but for hundreds of hours of monster bashing, you could do a lot worse. **Jeff Green**

Verdict ★★★½☆

***Sacred* both improves upon and diminishes the *Diablo* model it so earnestly apes.**

PUBLISHER: **Enlight Interactive** DEVELOPER: **Haemimont Games** GENRE: **RTS** ESRB RATING: **E** REQUIRED: **Pentium II 400, 128MB RAM, 672MB install**
RECOMMENDED: **Pentium II 600, 256MB RAM, a bachelor's degree in history** MULTIPLAYER: **LAN, Internet (2-8 players)**

Nemesis of the Roman Empire

Filling the desperate need for a Punic Wars RTS

Most people probably know more about, oh, just about anything other than the Punic Wars. If somebody had mentioned that to Bulgaria's Haemimont Games, maybe it wouldn't have made a game destined for the discount bin.

Like its predecessor *Celtic Kings*, *Nemesis* incorporates some interesting economic and role-playing elements to the tried-and-true RTS formula. But the overall game lacks polish and excitement, and these elements can't lift *Nemesis* above the horde of *Age of Empires* wannabes.

After pounding this fortress with siege engines, a hero leads an assault with war elephants.

You go, Gaul!

There are four races in the game: Roman, Gaul, Carthaginian, and Iberian. Each race has unique units, upgrades, and architecture (although most of the Roman and Gaul architecture is unchanged from *Celtic Kings*).

There are two campaigns: One follows Hannibal's march through Spain and across the Alps, and the other deals with the Roman side of the conflict, including the destruction of Carthage. Apart from a few cut-scenes, the campaigns are no-frills, puzzle-type affairs with no narrative; objectives are spelled out in text.

There's no base building or tedious resource harvesting. Instead, there's tedious resource trafficking.

There's also a random map mode for single-player games against up to seven computer or human opponents. As in the *Age of Empires* games, you can select races, A.I. difficulty, and map style, then hop into a skirmish. You'll get a good fight from the computer opponents, who are clever enough to scout you out, throw feints, and lure your units into a hail of arrows.

There's no base building or tedious resource harvesting in *Nemesis*. Instead, there's tedious resource trafficking. There are only two resources, food and gold, but they have to be transported to your armies (food) or to your stronghold (gold). You have to seize villages and outposts to generate lots of gold, and this is where most of the battles occur. After taking an outpost, you can send resources back to your city by pack mule. The supply model is interesting, but soon you just feel like a mule-traffic controller.

Heroes and ones

Nemesis preserves *Celtic Kings*' RPG elements with heroes who gain experience over time. A hero commanding an army gives it special bonuses and puts it in formation. The unit mix is good, and the battles can be fun, but it felt like something I've experienced a hundred times before.

Combat suffers from weak A.I. among your units. Some are too easily drawn away—even if commanded to stand ground—while others stand around while their comrades are attacked. There's also a bug with the Stand Ground command; after telling an army to stand ground, they reorient to the next item selected.

Heroes impart combat bonuses to their troops. Here, a Roman force led by two heroes wipes out a smaller Carthaginian detachment.

Nemesis is rife with misspellings and missing words in the onscreen text. The voiceovers are terrible, and the game clearly lacks the polish and presentation of most commercial releases. It's an excellent proof of concept, but all it proves is that Bulgarian developers can make an RTS that's not as good as what Blizzard and Ensemble were doing years ago. **Ken Brown**

Verdict ★★½☆☆

Possibly interesting to mule traders, history buffs, and Bulgarian RTS fans.

PUBLISHER: **Evolved Games** DEVELOPER: **Rebellion** GENRE: **FPS** ESRB RATING: **M** REQUIRED: **Pentium III 700MHz, 128MB RAM, 32MB videocard, 1.5GB install** RECOMMENDED: **Pentium 41.4GHz, 256MB RAM, 64MB videocard** MULTIPLAYER: **Internet, LAN (2-4 players)**

Judge Dredd: Dredd Versus Death

Zombies ate this game's brains

While gamers wait in earnest for *Half-Life 2* as if it were a crowned king returned from the Crusades, the court is thick with pretenders. Most of them are cookie-cutter clones of every previous shooter, and *Dredd Versus Death* is no exception. You'll spend your time as a *street judge in a futuristic* world—one where liberty is a misdemeanor and justice is served on-site with fascist efficiency. In all fairness, this is a refreshing change of pace from countless other shooters. Finally, a videogame in which I'm not constantly running for my life from a shambling mass of walking dead!

But, um, *starting* with the second chapter, you'll spend the entire remainder of the game running for your life from a shambling mass of walking dead. Somewhere deep within the overly industrialized prison chambers of the city are a cast of "death judges" who took the law into their own hands—which, of course, *Judge Dredd* himself does—but they did it in a naughty way. I guess. The line between the good fascists and the bad fascists is sort of difficult to pinpoint in this setting. Anyway, the level bosses escape, and all hell breaks loose—literally. The game quickly devolves into a boss chase through the remaining chapters, in which you blast away at tired FPS standards such as skeletons, zombies, and ghoulish vampires. Bonus points are awarded if you finish the game without snoring.

The music is a mixed bag of pulse-pounding excellence, consisting of some of the worst Marilyn Manson knock-offs your ears will ever endure. The game engine runs and looks great, with clever and intricate levels, but they just don't feel polished, even at maximum resolutions. While the weapons are mostly true to the core material, they're more of the same tired staples from every other shooter. The enemy A.I. is also not very good, which makes for a tragically easy game. Predictably, this is compensated for by keeping you forever low on health and continually counting your bullets. Multiplayer is still being retooled by patchwork, but it offers more or less the same venue as any other online shooter.

How do you know you're in a dystopian fascist hellscape of the future? Product placement.

Judge Dredd: Dredd Versus Death is likely to please most fans of the comic and should offer a solid two hours of general fun to anyone who buys it. Bargain-shop accordingly. **Arcadian Del Sol**

Verdict ★★★☆☆
Dredd-fully underwhelming.

PUBLISHER: **THQ** DEVELOPER: **Kuju** GENRE: **Shooter** ESRB RATING: **M** REQUIRED: **Pentium III 800MHz, 128MB RAM, 1.5GB install** RECOMMENDED: **Pentium III 1.4GHz, 256MB RAM, broadband connection for online multiplayer**

Warhammer 40,000: Fire Warrior

Lost in space

Warhammer 40,000: Fire Warrior provides the requisite lasers, crawl spaces, and space marines one expects in a space-based shooter, but it doesn't provide much else. In and of itself, this is not a problem. Not every shooter needs to reinvent the genre, and plenty of engaging games have used these basic elements to excellent results. If only *Fire Warrior* offered that much. A variety of weapons are available, but the default pulse gun is both weak and inaccurate—in the 41st century, when space travel is commonplace and war is constant, designing a weapon that is accurate past 10 yards would seem a high priority, but at times, unloading a full clip on an enemy standing at the end of a hallway provided negligible results. Luckily, many enemies will simply stand next to you as you shoot them, and you can often blast apart one foe while his comrade just stands idly by or, oddly enough, calls out to his now smoldering squadmate, "Be alert."

The crawl spaces and hallways essentially guide you to objectives; apart from backtracking to throw a switch or collecting a key, there are few times you aren't simply moving straight ahead. A poorly implemented checkpoint save system (see *Far Cry*) means you'll be seeing these same hallways over and over and over.

The *Warhammer* universe should provide a rich environment for a shooter; *Fire Warrior* provides only a been-there-done-that setting and story line. An online multiplayer mode is available, but with *Unreal Tournament 2004* out now, there's really no need for it. **Tom Edwards**

Although you're outnumbered, only two of these guys will actually notice you.

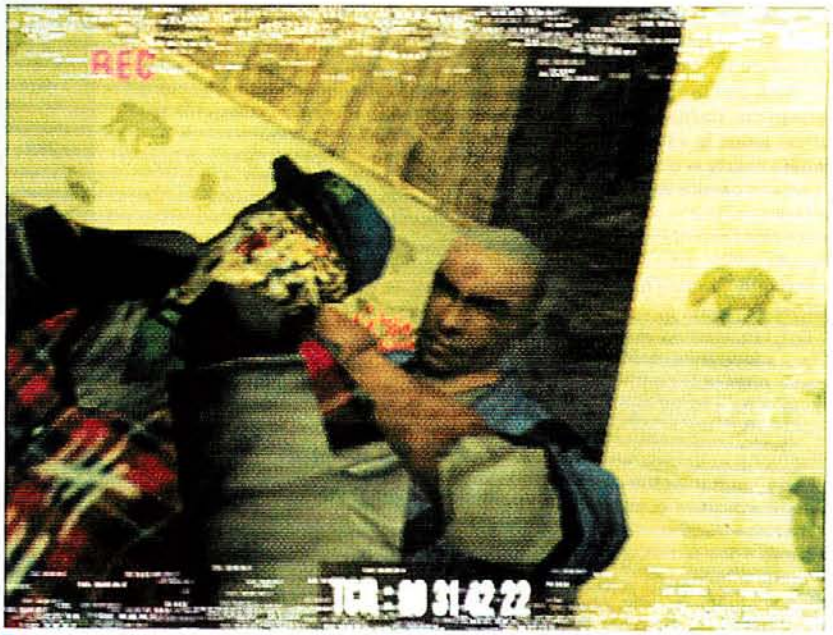
Verdict ★★★★★
If you don't have the latest *Unreal* yet, play *Half-Life*...or *Doom*...or....

PUBLISHER: **Take-Two Interactive** DEVELOPER: **Rockstar** GENRE: **Stealth-Action** ESRB RATING: **M** REQUIRED: **Pentium III 1GHz, 192MB RAM, 32MB videocard, 2.3GB Install** RECOMMENDED: **256MB RAM, 64MB videocard** MULTIPLAYER: **None**

Manhunt

Rockstar plays a most dangerous game with our patience

On paper, *Manhunt* certainly reads like a license to print money. Combine the outrageous amorality of Rockstar's megahit *Grand Theft Auto* franchise with the tense, stealthy creep-a-thon of *Splinter Cell*, topped off with a relevant, albeit psychotic, critique on reality television, and—voilá—you have Rockstar's next golden franchise, right? Not quite. Although *Manhunt* makes good on certain promises, the game breathes little life into the stealth-action genre. Unfortunately for Rockstar, having already exhausted shock value with *GTA* means that *Manhunt* cannot rely on a string of delightful expletives or the novelty of video violence to carry the slack of its bare-bones game design.



Every successful stealth kill is highlighted in grainy video!

Sur-reality TV

Set sometime in the near future, *Manhunt* puts you in the boots of James Earl Cash, a death row convict who is given a nonlethal injection by a faceless and sinister benefactor known as Lionel Starkweather. Cash is free to walk, says Starkweather, on one condition: He has to indulge his voyeuristic savior in a deadly game of cat-and-mouse against a small nation of sickos. As you run from darkness to shade, Starkweather, a passionate snuff-film director, watches your every move, providing you with mean-spirited motivation for doing as much damage as possible to your enemies. *Manhunt* starts off promisingly enough—your first handful of vicious, humorless slayings hammers home the message that this game will be an excursion into true darkness.

Sneak and destroy

What begins as a compelling point of departure for stealth games quickly degenerates into the same old crap in a different engine. *Manhunt*'s brutal stealth kills, the game's biggest selling point for the bloodthirsty, sadly turn out also to be its Achilles' heel. Pulling off a fatality requires more patience than skill. Simply wait until your enemies predictably turn their backs before you move in for the kill, which requires all of one press of a button. The longer you hold down the mouse button, the more intense the execution. While there's nothing wrong with this core gameplay mechanic, *Manhunt*'s codependency on stealth kills renders the game tedious and repetitive. Before long, the game boils down to the following actions: Create distraction. Wait. Stalk prey from behind. Press button. Watch grainy cut-scene. Rinse, repeat.

There's never a sense that you could make your way through a level based purely on your own sense of ingenuity and improvisation.

Compounding the problem of tedium is the game's linear structure and brain-dead A.I. Unlike stealth forerunners *Thief* or *Splinter Cell*, there's never a sense that you could make your way through a level based purely on your own sense of ingenuity and improvisation. Rather, you decipher what the level designer intended to happen through painstaking trial-and-error. And because the frustration factor is naturally high in all repetitive games, you'll necessarily exploit the poor A.I. routines just to get through the day. But then, where's the immersion and tension in any of this?

Despite *Manhunt*'s overall failure as a compelling "survival-horror adventure" (as it's advertised on the box), the game is occasionally redeemed by excellent incidental voiceovers from your enemies and, in particular, from Starkweather, whose lust for blood is genuinely disturbing. Like other Rockstar games, *Manhunt* speaks volumes about the current state of gaming (and pop) culture. The problem is, will the audience be too desensitized to dig that deep? **Che Chou**

Fun for the whole family!

Verdict ★★½☆☆
Lots of gore, little innovation.

PUBLISHER: **Microsoft** DEVELOPER: **Big Huge Games** GENRE: **RTS** ESRB RATING: **T** REQUIRED: **Pentium III 500, 128MB RAM, 900MB install**
RECOMMENDED: **Pentium III 1GHz, 256MB RAM, 32MB videocard** MULTIPLAYER: **LAN, Internet (2-8 players)**

Rise of Nations: Thrones & Patriots

A good game gets better

***Rise of Nations: Thrones & Patriots* is almost what every expansion pack should strive to emulate. Along with the prerequisite new units and new factions, *Thrones & Patriots* honestly expands upon the original with four new campaigns that provide the absorbing single-player experience the original lacked. Unfortunately, some stability problems keep it from being perfect.**

More nations for rising

The six new civilizations include Americans, Lakota, Iroquois, Persians, Indians, and Dutch. Each has unique powers and comes with 20 new unique units. Most of these powers are unexceptional, although it's rather fun watching hordes of war elephants from the Persians and Indians go on a rampage. Persians have civil research bonuses and free caravans, Indians have cheap buildings, the Dutch are economically successful, and the Iroquois gain benefits in forests.

There does seem to be a bit of a balance problem with the Americans and Lakota. While the Americans seem too powerful with advantages in science, economics, and the military, the Lakota are severely handicapped by not being able to build farms. On maps without fishing, they have little hope of competing with the others. In exchange, they get some meager military benefits that are relatively unimportant, since winning in *RON* is often more about economics than tactics.

Other than the factions, *Thrones & Patriots* modifies the original through the senate building. This building allows you to set governments like despotism or republicanism to rule your empire. The totalitarian selections usually offer combat advantages, while the democratic ones aid production. Additionally, you gain access to a head-of-state unit that's basically a respawning übergeneral. The powers you choose stick with you as you advance through the ages so that you can customize your government to your style, mixing the six available options as you will.

Napoleon personally leads an assault on a company of British highlanders.

Circle the wagons: A mob of Iroquois assaults a settler's fort.

Less board game, more PC game

These additions by themselves would make for a decent expansion pack, but the single-player modes set *Thrones & Patriots* apart. While the original game came with a rather bland "conquer the world" campaign that spanned millennia of history, *Thrones* gives you four highly focused campaigns covering such subjects as Alexander the Great, colonialism in the New World, the Napoleonic Wars, and the cold war. All of the campaigns offer a good mix of missions, from the standard conquest to well-scripted scenarios that almost feel like they came from a story-oriented RTS. The campaigns also have a lot of historical flavor provided through various strategic objectives and prescripted events. The cold war scenario in particular excels in this and even includes espionage missions as a break from the larger-scaled conflicts.

Unfortunately, there seem to be some major stability issues with the game. My forays into online sessions met with spotty success, and even the single-player modes had frequent crashes. Still, for anyone who even remotely enjoyed the original, *Thrones & Patriots* should provide more hours of enjoyment. There's almost enough gameplay packed in here for a full-fledged sequel, so it's definitely worth the price of an expansion pack. **Di Luo**

Verdict ★★★★☆
Almost perfect...and then it crashes.

©2004 ATI Technologies Inc. All rights reserved. ATI, RADEON, 3Dc and GET IN THE GAME are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of ATI Technologies Inc. All other company and product names are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of their respective owners.

* RADEON X800 PRO 256MB DDR compared with Nvidia's eVGA FX5950 256MB DDR, as measured by Aquamark3, Halo - Combat Evolved, Splinter Cell, Tomb Raider - Angel of Darkness, Unreal Tournament 2003 and Unreal Tournament 2004. Testing conducted March 30, 2004 on the following system: Pentium 4-3.2GHz CPU, 1GB PC3200 RAM, i875 chipset. 1600x1200 resolution.

Make the new RADEON™ X800 series your own secret weapon for killer High-Definition 3D graphics. With ATI's breakthrough image enhancement technology 3Dc™, you'll see more of everything without sacrificing anything. 3Dc™ is what puts the high in High-Definition gaming for all of today's and tomorrow's hottest game titles. The RADEON™ X800 series - the world's fastest and most powerful VPU*. GET IT NOW at ATI.com/cgamw.

MANUFACTURER: GameBOXX URL: www.boxxtech.com PRICE: $4,418

Less Than

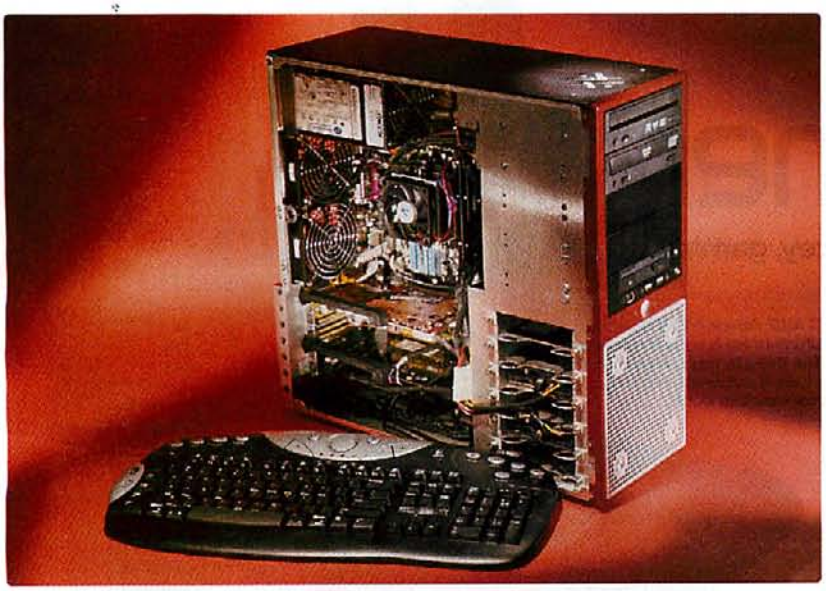
BOXX Tech's GameBOXX FX promises a lot, but

Inside

Battle of the 2.1 Speakers!
Joel Durham Jr. takes a look at 2.1 speakers by Altec Lansing and Bose

The Ultimate Gaming Mouse?
Can Logitech's MX510 improve your gaming experience?

Cracked Case
Loyd talks about this year's Game Developers Conference



By the Numbers

MANUFACTURER/ MODEL	BOXX Technologies GameBOXX FX
PRICE	$4,418
OPERATING SYSTEM	Windows XP Professional Edition
PROCESSOR	AMD Athlon 64 FX-53
MEMORY	2GB Corsair PC-3200 DDR400
HARD DRIVE	Dual 74GB Western Digital Raptor hard drives in a 150GB RAID 0 configuration
GRAPHICS PROCESSOR	256MB ATI Radeon 9800 XT
OPTICAL DRIVES	Plextor 708A 8X DVD burner Samsung DVD/CD-RW combo drive
KEYBOARD	Logitech Elite Keyboard
MOUSE	Logitech MX700 Wireless Mouse
SOUNDCARD	Creative Labs Sound Blaster Audigy 2 ZS Platinum Pro
CASE	Custom BOXX design, toolless aluminum
POWER SUPPLY	530W
MOTHERBOARD	ASUS SK8V (VIA K8T800)
MISCELLANEOUS	Three 1394 FireWire ports; six USB 2.0 ports

There are a ton of reasons to like the GameBOXX FX by BOXX Technologies: The eight year-old company has a proven track record for making powerful multimedia-oriented workstations, and the company's gaming rig, the FX, has every top-notch component that any self-respecting gamer would want in a high-end computer. The thing is, while game designers need all of this horsepower to speed up the process of game development, the actual games themselves that end users like us eventually play aren't *CAD* programs. Therefore, the GameBOXX FX is, in many ways, more than forty-five-hundred dollars' worth of overkill.

ne Sum of its Parts?

s it deliver?

How does it stack up?

Criticisms aside, anyone with a ton of money and an overwhelming desire for "future proofing" will no doubt feel good with the GameBOXX FX humming away beneath their desk. When it comes to raw components, everything about the FX is top of the line. It ships with AMD's Athlon 64 FX-53 processor, ASUS' SK8V (VIA K8T800) motherboard, ATI's 256MB Radeon 9800 XT graphics card, and a whopping 2GB of Corsair PC-3200 DDR400 memory. Based on these components alone, I expected the GameBOXX FX to be faster than it was. However, with the exception of *Halo*, it either performed identically to or slower than the similarly equipped ABS Ultimate M6 that's also reviewed this month—and the ABS machine is more than $1,000 less expensive. This brings us back to the beginning. Simply put, games aren't necessarily designed to take advantage of all that power. Not everyone has a 64-bit processor, so games are designed for the masses.

At least you get a solid machine. It purred through all of our benchmarks and games flawlessly. However, its 3DMark2003 score of 2,331 at 1280x960 with 4x AA and 8x AF would've put this machine near the bottom of the pack of the seven so-called "midrange" machines we tested last month—and those machines all shipped with monitors and speakers. The GameBOXX FX, at $4,418, ships with the tower, keyboard, and mouse. And that's with only 150GB of storage in a dual hard drive RAID 0 configuration.

Ultimately, we expected more from this machine. Based on its unusually high sticker price, we want better performance and no compromises. Unfortunately, the GameBOXX FX wasn't very fast, and it ships with myriad compromises: no monitor or speakers and only 150GB of storage. If you're a game player who also happens to be a game developer, then you may benefit from all the GameBOXX FX has to offer. If, however, you're simply a gamer, there are better ways to spend your money. ⊠ **William O'Neal** Photography by Arnold Tiosejo

Verdict ★★★½☆
A great machine for game developers; overkill for game players.

MANUFACTURER: ABS URL: www.buyabs.com PRICE: $3,099

A Solid Performer

A good, albeit somewhat pricey, gaming rig

ABS' Athlon 64 FX-53 based Ultimate M6 is a great machine. The thing is, you can get just as much, if not more, machine from another outfit.

It used to be that my annual Ultimate Gaming Machine (UGM) story set the bar by which I would measure desktop PCs. Things may be changing. Last month's midrange PC roundup proved something that I've been thinking for a while—that you don't need to spend $4,000 or more to get a great gaming machine. While it's true that a $4,000 or $5,000 machine by Voodoo PC or Falcon Northwest will be truly awesome, the extra dough will improve the quality of your computing experience, but not necessarily your gaming experience.

Similar to many of the machines I reviewed last month, ABS' Ultimate M6 is all about raw power, with a few extra niceties thrown in. That said, considering that the machine ABS sent me this month costs $3,099 without a monitor or speakers, it probably costs about $1,000 more than the complete rigs I looked at last month.

Still, with the exception of the relatively small 150GB RAID 0 configuration, everything about this machine is top-notch. AMD's Athlon 64 FX-53 is arguably the fastest gaming processor available; you can't go wrong with 1GB of Corsair PC-3200 DDR400 memory; and ATI's 256MB Radeon 9800 XT graphics card is pretty much on par with Nvidia's 256MB GeForce FX 5950 Ultra.

Give me some numbers, son!

When it comes to performance, the Ultimate M6 is right there with the top contenders in last month's roundup. Its 3DMark2003 (v. 340) score of 2,561 at 1280x960 with 4x AA and 8x AF turned on would have put it right behind Vicious PC's Ninja and Voodoo PC's Hexx c:355. Furthermore, its 3DGameGauge 3.5 score of 70 frames per second at the same resolution would have put it second only to Falcon Northwest's Mach V. Of course, this begs the question: Why is this machine, if configured with a monitor and speakers, nearly $1,000 more than the others? For starters, the top three machines in the roundup all ship with a single optical drive and use onboard audio. The Ultimate M6 has two optical drives and off-loads audio duties to a Creative Labs Sound Blaster Audigy 2 ZS. Also, the top three machines all used the less-expensive Athlon 64 3000+ or 3400+ processors, while the Ultimate M6 uses the more-expensive Athlon 64 FX-53. Based solely on its components, I would've expected the Ultimate M6 to be faster than it was. This may have something to do with ABS using the ASUS SK8N (Nvidia nForce3 Pro 150) motherboard as opposed to one based on the slightly faster VIA K8T800 chipset.

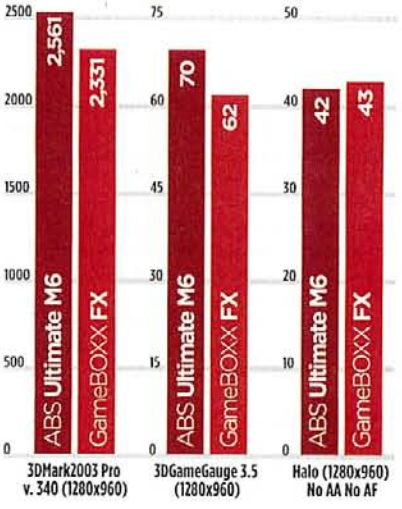
Everyone who reads this magazine knows that I love Antec's PlusView 1000 AMG case and that a TrueBlue power supply has enough juice to power anything you throw in there. ABS also ships this machine with Antec's Lanpal carrying system, which makes it easier to lug this 40-pound behemoth to LAN parties.

That said, the Ultimate M6 was both plenty fast and stable. It ran through my barrage of tests flawlessly. Of course, if I were in the market, I'd save money by going with onboard audio and a single DVD+RW/+R drive. ⊠ **William O'Neal**

By the Numbers

MANUFACTURER/ MODEL	ABS Ultimate M6
PRICE	$3,099
OPERATING SYSTEM	Windows XP Professional Edition
PROCESSOR	AMD Athlon 64 FX-53
MEMORY	1GB Corsair PC-3200 DDR400
HARD DRIVE	Dual 74GB Western Digital Raptor hard drives in a 150GB RAID 0 configuration
GRAPHICS PROCESSOR	256MB ATI Radeon 9800 XT
OPTICAL DRIVES	DVD-ROM drive Plextor 8x DVD+RW/+R drive
KEYBOARD	Microsoft Internet Keyboard
MOUSE	Microsoft Intellimouse Explorer 3.0
SOUNDCARD	Creative Labs Sound Blaster Audigy 2 ZS
CASE	Antec PlusView 1000 AMG
POWER SUPPLY	Antec TrueBlue 480W
MOTHERBOARD	ASUS SK8N (Nvidia nForce3 Pro 150)
MISCELLANEOUS	Three 1394 FireWire ports; six USB 2.0 ports; Antec Lanpal carrying system

Benchmarks



Verdict ★★★★☆

A fast and stable machine. It's a little expensive, though.

BATTALION-101 SL

- 15.0" SXGA+ TFT LCD 1400X1050 Display
- **AMD® Mobile Athlon™ 64 Processor 3000+**
  - **1600MHz System Bus Using HyperTransport Technology**
  - **Wireless 802.11g 54MBps Mini-PCI Wireless Card**
- **Mobile ATI® Radeon™ 9600 PRO 128MB DDR Video**
- 512MB PC-2700 DDR Memory
- 20GB Ultra-ATA100 Hard Drive
- Removable 8x DVD & 24x16x24 CD-RW Combo Drive
- 10/100Mb Ethernet LAN & 56K Modem
- 4x USB 2.0 and 1x Firewire IEEE-1394 Ports
- **3-in-1 Build-in Media Card Reader**
- Free 1-Year ***I-Care*** Deluxe 24/7 Phone Support
- **Choice of 6 Exclusive Reflective Colors**
- **3-Hour Li-Ion Battery**
- **Free Deluxe Carrying Case**

$ 1399

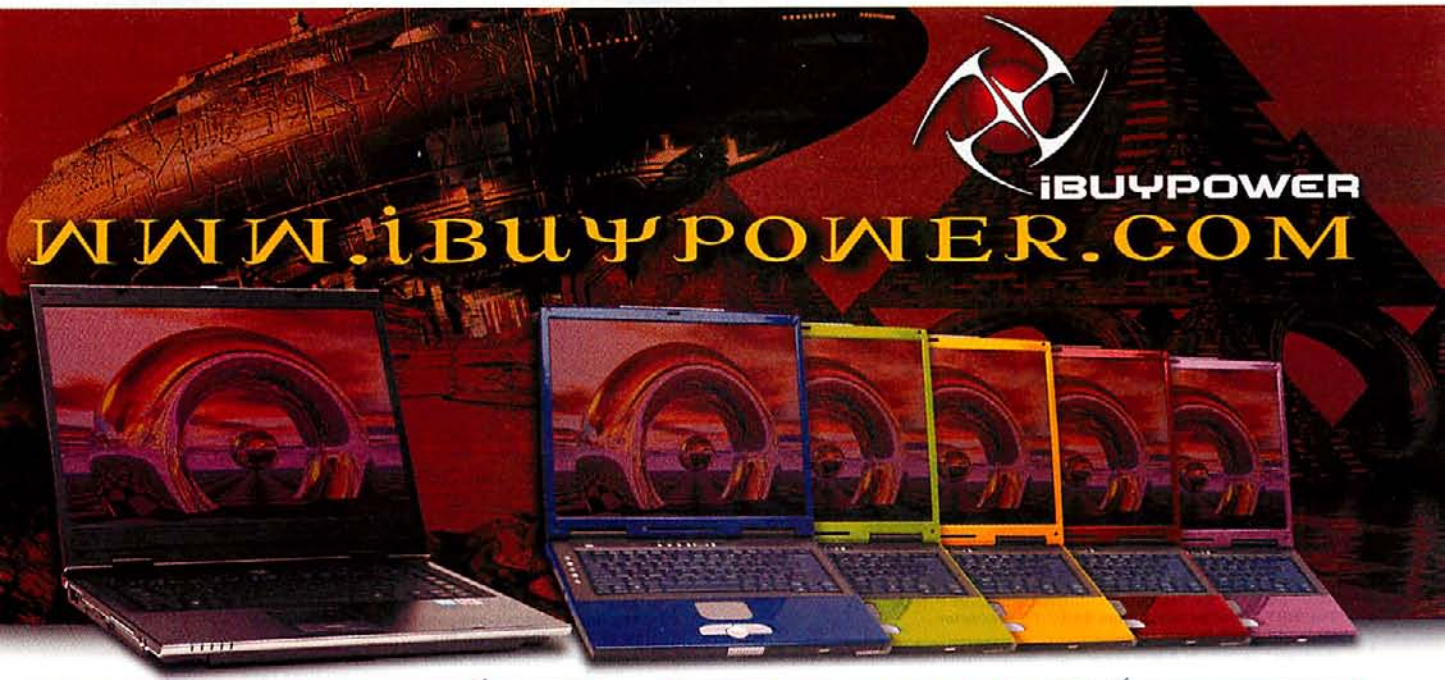
Mobile AMD Athlon™ 64 3400+ Processor	$ 1609
Mobile AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor	$ 1479
Mobile AMD Athlon™ 64 2800+ Processor	$ 1359

BATTALION-101 S

- **15.4" Wide Screen16:10 WXGA TFT LCD 1280x800 Display**
- **Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology Advanced 800MHz FSB or AMD® Mobile Athlon™ 64 Processor with HyperTransport Technology**
- **Mobile ATI® Radeon™ 9700 PRO 128MB DDR Video**
- 512MB PC-2700 DDR Memory
- 60GB 5400RPM Ultra-ATA100 Hard Drive
- Removable 8x DVD & 24x16x24 CD-RW Combo Drive
- 10/100Mb Ethernet LAN & 56K Modem
- **Wireless 802.11g 54MBps Mini-PCI Network**
- 3x USB 2.0 & 1x Firewire IEEE-1394 Ports
- **3-in-1 Build-in Media Card Reader**
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Free 1-Year ***I-Care*** Deluxe 24/7 Phone Support
- **Choice of 6 Exclusive Reflective Colors**
- High Performance Li-Ion Battery
- **Free Deluxe Carrying Case**

$ 1569

Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor 3.2GHz	$ 1639
Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor 3.0GHz	$ 1579
Mobile AMD Athlon™ 64 3400+ Processor	$ 1779
Mobile AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor	$ 1569



BATTALION-101 CL

- 15.0" SXGA+ TFT LCD 1400X1050 Display
- **Intel® Centrino™ Mobile Technology**
  - **Intel® Pentium® M Processor at 1.6GHz**
  - **Wireless 802.11g 54MBps Mini-PCI Wireless Card**
- Advanced 400MHz FSB & 1024KB Advanced L2 Cache
- **Mobile ATI® Radeon™ 9700 PRO 128MB DDR Video**
- 512MB PC-2700 DDR Memory
- 40GB 5400RPM Ultra-ATA100 Hard Drive
- Removable 8x DVD & 24x16x24 CD-RW Combo Drive
- 10/100Mb Ethernet LAN & 56K Modem
- 3x USB 2.0 and 1x Firewire IEEE-1394 Ports
- **Build-in SD Media Card Reader**
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Free 1-Year ***I-Care*** Deluxe 24/7 Phone Support
- **Choice of 6 Exclusive Reflective Colors**
- **4-Hour Li-Ion Battery; Free Deluxe Carrying Case**

$ 1549

BATTALION-101 E

- 15.0" SXGA+ TFT LCD 1400X1050 Display
- **Intel® Centrino™ Mobile Technology**
  - **Intel® Pentium® M Processor at 1.5GHz**
  - **Wireless 802.11g 54MBps Mini-PCI Wireless Card**
- Advanced 400MHz FSB & 1024KB Advanced L2 Cache
- **Mobile ATI® Radeon™ 9600 PRO 64MB DDR Video**
- 512MB PC-2700 DDR Memory
- 40GB 5400RPM Ultra-ATA100 Hard Drive
- Removable 8x DVD & 24x16x24 CD-RW Combo Drive
- 10/100Mb Ethernet LAN & 56K Modem
- 3x USB 2.0 and 1x Firewire IEEE-1394 Ports
- **3-in-1 Build-in Media Card Reader**
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Free 1-Year ***I-Care*** Deluxe 24/7 Phone Support
- **Choice of 6 Exclusive Reflective Colors**
- **5-Hour Li-Ion Battery**

$ 1399

intel inside
centrino™
MOBILE TECHNOLOGY

TOLL FREE 888. 462.3899

INTEL®, the INTEL® inside logo and Pentium® are all registered trademarks and Celeron™ is a trademark of INTEL® Corporation in the United State and other Countries.

ZILLION FX

- **AMD® Athlon™ 64 Processor with HyperTransport™ Technology The ONLY Windows-compatible 64-bit PC processor up to 1600Mhz system bus**
- NZXT® Guardian MOD Tower Case with 420 Watt Power + See-Through Window + Sound-Activated Neon Light
- 512MB **DDR400** Memory
- ***Serial-ATA*** 120GB 7200RPM Hard Drive w/ 8MB Cache
- 16x DVD-ROM Drive
- **8X DVD±R/±RW Drive** & 1.44MB Floppy Drive
- Creative Labs 56K V.92 Fax Modem
- **NVIDIA® GeForce™ 6800 Ultra 256MB DDR AGP 8X** Video Card
- 5.1 Channel Surround 3D Premium Sound
- **10/100/1000 MBps Ethernet LAN**
- Creative Cambridge Desk Top Theater 5.1 S560 Surround Sound Speakers
- 19" ViewSonic® Perfect Flat E90F+SB .21H mm Monitor
- Microsoft® Opcital 5-Button IntelliMouse Explorer
- Multimedia Keyboard
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Free Norton AntiVirus™ 2004 CD
- Free 1-Year 24/7 ***I-Care*** Deluxe Technical Support + On-Site Service

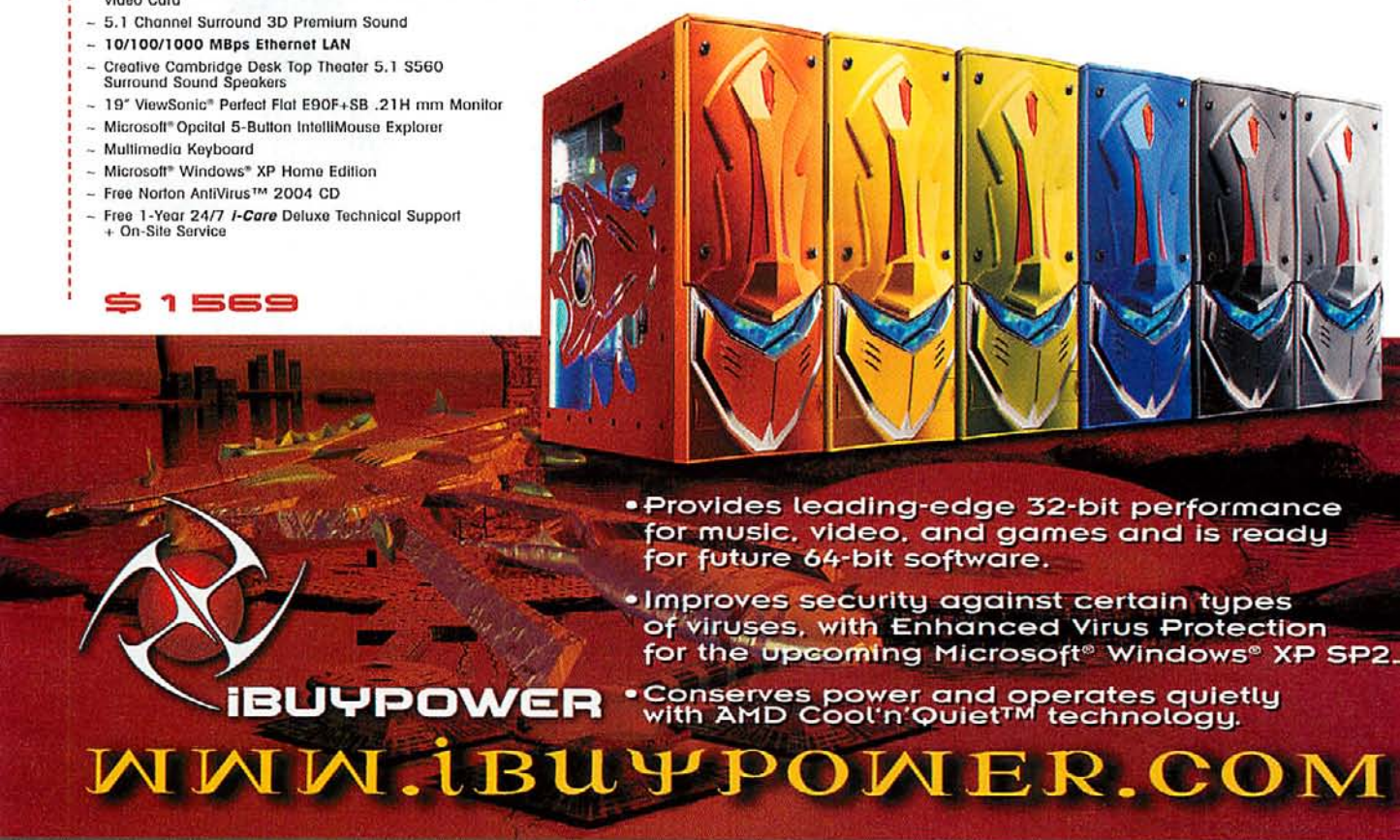
$ 1569

AMD Athlon™ 64 FX-53 Processor	$ 2329
AMD Athlon™ 64 3400+ Processor	$ 1829
AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor	$ 1679
AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor	$ 1619
AMD Athlon™ 64 2800+ Processor	$ 1569

AMD 64 Athlon

AMD 64 Athlon FX

The ONLY Windows-compatible 64-bit PC processor



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

iBUYPOWER

WWW.iBUYPOWER.COM

NIGHT DREAMER FX

- **AMD® Athlon™ 64 Processor with HyperTransport™ Technology The ONLY Windows-compatible 64-bit PC processor up to 1600Mhz system bus**
- Raidmax® Aluminum 8-Bay Super Light Weight Tower Case with 420 Watt Power + See-Through Window + Sound-Activated Neon Light
- 1024MB **DDR400** Memory
- 120GB 7200RPM Hard Drive w/ 8MB Cache
- 16x DVD-ROM Drive
- **8X DVD±R/±RW Drive** & 1.44MB Floppy Drive
- Creative Labs 56K V.92 Fax Modem
- **ATI® RADEON™ X800 Pro 256MB DDR AGP 8X** Video Card
- 5.1 Channel Surround 3D Premium Sound
- **10/100/1000 MBps Ethernet LAN**
- Logitech Z-640 5.1 Surround Sound Speakers
- 19" ViewSonic® Perfect Flat E90FB .21H mm Monitor
- Microsoft® Opcital 5-Button IntelliMouse Explorer
- Multimedia Keyboard
- Microsoft Windows® XP Home Edition
- Free Norton AntiVirus™ 2004 CD
- Free 1-Year 24/7 ***I-Care*** Deluxe Technical Support + On-Site Service

$ 1669

AMD Athlon™ 64 FX-53 Processor	$ 2429
AMD Athlon™ 64 3400+ Processor	$ 1929
AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor	$ 1779
AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor	$ 1699
AMD Athlon™ 64 2800+ Processor	$ 1669

GAMER FX

- **AMD® Athlon™ 64 Processor with HyperTransport™ Technology The ONLY Windows-compatible 64-bit PC processor up to 1600Mhz system bus**
- Raidmax® Scorpio-868 Tower Case with 420 Watt Power + See-Through Window + Sound-Activated Neon Light
- 512MB **DDR400** Memory
- 120GB 7200RPM Hard Drive
- 16x DVD-ROM + 52x24x52 CD-RW Combo Drive
- Creative Labs 56K V.92 Fax Modem
- **NVIDIA® GeForce™ FX 5500 256MB DDR AGP 8X** Video Card
- 5.1 Channel Surround 3D Premium Sound
- **10/100/1000 MBps Ethernet LAN**
- 600Watt Surround Sound Speakers
- Multimedia Keyboard & Optical Mouse
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Free 1-Year 24/7 ***I-Care*** Deluxe Technical Support + On-Site Service

$ 829

AMD Athlon™ 64 FX-53 Processor	$ 1589
AMD Athlon™ 64 3400+ Processor	$ 1089
AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor	$ 949
AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor	$ 869
AMD Athlon™ 64 2800+ Processor	$ 829

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

BARGAIN 64

- **AMD® Athlon™ 64 Processor with HyperTransport™ Technology The ONLY Windows-compatible 64-bit PC processor up to 1600Mhz system bus**
- Raidmax® 268 Tower Case with 350 Watt Power + See-Through Window
- 512MB **DDR400** Memory
- 80GB 7200RPM Hard Drive
- 16x DVD-ROM Drive
- Creative Labs 56K V.92 Fax Modem
- **ATI® RADEON™ 9200 128MB DDR AGP 8X** Video Card
- 5.1 Channel Surround 3D Premium Sound
- **10/100/1000 MBps Ethernet LAN**
- 600Watt Surround Sound Speakers
- Internet Mouse
- PS2 Keyboard
- Upgrade to Sicuro RW360XL 2.1 Gaming Speakers System + $75

$ 609

AMD Athlon™ 64 3400+ Processor	$ 869
AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor	$ 719
AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor	$ 659
AMD Athlon™ 64 2800+ Processor	$ 609

POWER 64

- **AMD® Athlon™ 64 Processor with HyperTransport™ Technology The ONLY Windows-compatible 64-bit PC processor up to 1600Mhz system bus**
- Raidmax® Scorpio-868 Tower Case with 420 Watt Power + See-Through Window
- 512MB **DDR400** Memory
- 80GB 7200RPM Hard Drive
- 52x24x52 CD-RW Drive
- Creative Labs 56K V.92 Fax Modem
- **NVIDIA® GeForce™ FX 5200 128MB DDR AGP 8X** Video Card
- 5.1 Channel Surround 3D Premium Sound
- **10/100/1000 MBps Ethernet LAN**
- 600Watt Surround Sound Speakers
- Internet Mouse & PS2 Keyboard
- Microsoft Windows® XP Home Edition
- Free 1-Year 24/7 ***i-Care*** Deluxe Technical Support + On-Site Service

$ 719

AMD Athlon™ 64 3400+ Processor	$ 979
AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor	$ 829
AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor	$ 769
AMD Athlon™ 64 2800+ Processor	$ 719

Picture Shown with Optional Sicuro RW-870XL 5.1 Gaming Speaker System

64 BEST BUY

- **AMD® Athlon™ 64 Processor with HyperTransport™ Technology The ONLY Windows-compatible 64-bit PC processor up to 1600Mhz system bus**
- NZXT® Guardian MOD Tower Case with 420 Watt Power + See-Through Window + Sound-Activated Neon Light
- 512MB **DDR400** Memory
- 80GB 7200RPM Hard Drive
- **16x DVD-ROM & 52x24x52 CD-RW Combo Drive**
- Creative Labs 56K V.92 Fax Modem
- NVIDIA® GeForce™ FX 5200 128MB DDR AGP 8X Video Card
- 5.1 Channel Surround 3D Premium Sound
- **10/100/1000 MBps Ethernet LAN**
- 600Watt Surround Sound Speakers
- Opcital Mouse & Multimedia Keyboard
- Microsoft Windows® XP Home Edition
- Free Norton AntiVirus™ 2004 CD
- Free 1-Year 24/7 ***i-Care*** Deluxe Technical Support + On-Site Service

$ 769

AMD Athlon™ 64 3400+ Processor	$ 1029
AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor	$ 869
AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor	$ 809
AMD Athlon™ 64 2800+ Processor	$ 769

BACK TO SCHOOL 64

- **AMD® Athlon™ 64 Processor with HyperTransport™ Technology The ONLY Windows-compatible 64-bit PC processor up to 1600Mhz system bus**
- NZXT® Guardian MOD Tower Case with 420 Watt Power + See-Through Window + Sound-Activated Neon Light
- 512MB **DDR400** Memory
- 80GB 7200RPM Hard Drive
- **8X DVD±R/±RW + CD-RW Drive**
- Creative Labs 56K V.92 Fax Modem
- **ATI® RADEON™ 9600-XT 256MB DDR AGP 8X** Video Card
- 5.1 Channel Surround 3D Premium Sound
- **10/100/1000 MBps Ethernet LAN**
- 600Watt Surround Sound Speakers
- Opcital Mouse & Multimedia Keyboard
- Microsoft Windows® XP Home Edition
- Free Norton AntiVirus™ 2004 CD
- Free 1-Year 24/7 ***i-Care*** Deluxe Technical Support + On-Site Service

$ 909

AMD Athlon™ 64 3400+ Processor	$ 1159
AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor	$ 1019
AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor	$ 949
AMD Athlon™ 64 2800+ Processor	$ 909

MANUFACTURER: **Altec Lansing** URL: **www.altec-lansing.com** PRICE: **$199.95**

Altec 2.1 Solution

Altec's little speakers that could

Altec Lansing likes big speakers, as evidenced by its MX5021 set. Each 20-watt (RMS) satellite is fitted with two 3-inch full-range drivers beneath a 1-inch tweeter. The subwoofer is equally imposing, loaded with a 50-watt, 6.5-inch long-throw driver.

Regardless of its size, its THX certification indicates that this system works. The sound is accurate and clean, completely devoid of any hiss or distortion. The midrange is awesome, re-creating vocals and instruments that sound like they're in the room next to you. With dedicated tweeters, there was a chance that the treble would be overwhelming, but in fact, it's surprisingly gentle. The only thing lacking is the bass; it spits out enough bass to faithfully re-create music and gaming sounds, but enthusiasts who want to *feel* the bass shake their seats will be disappointed. In a $200 three-piece system, I *expect* brain-shattering bass.

The controls are a study in convenience. A control pod lets you adjust volume, bass, and treble levels through a context knob, and it includes both a 1/8-inch headphone jack and a handy 1/8-inch auxiliary jack for a second audio source. Altec also includes a tiny, fully functional remote control.

Not a perfect system, the MX5021 offers solid, crystal-clear sound—but at its hefty price, I would have hoped for bass as big as the subwoofer is tall. **Joel Durham Jr.**

Enthusiasts who want to feel the bass shake their seats will be disappointed.

Verdict ★★★½☆

Accurate sound and powerful, handy controls. However, they lack bass and are expensive.

MANUFACTURER: **Bose** URL: **www.bose.com** PRICE: **$249**

Tons of Form, Not Enough Function

They're small and good looking, but how do they sound?

Tiny satellite speakers are all the rage, and the Bose Companion 3 delivers with 2.5-inch-by-4-inch speakers that are only 2.5 inches deep.

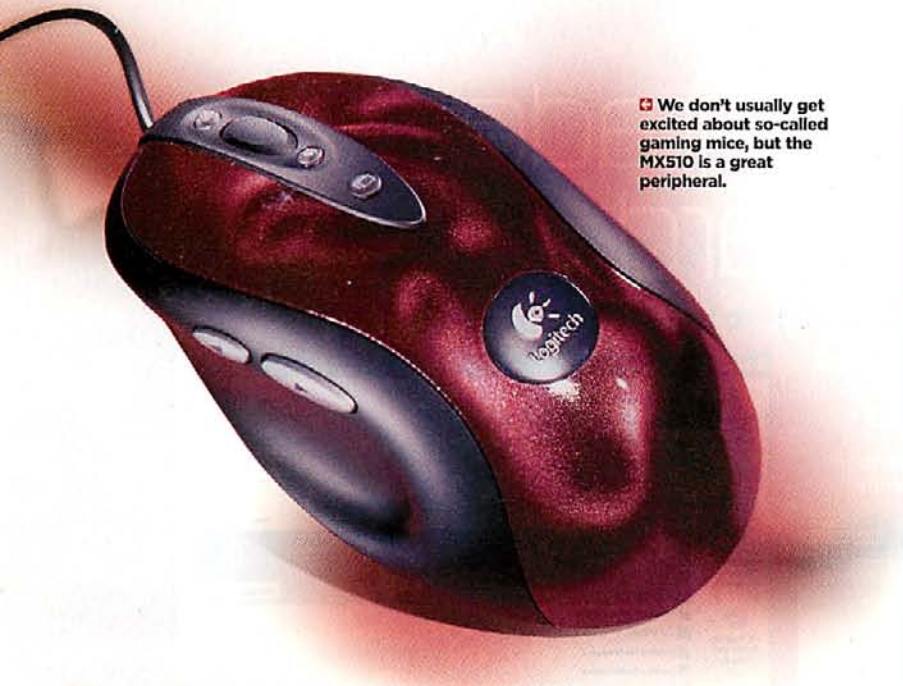
The Companion 3 is full of little conveniences. You can place the satellites on your desk or mount them to your monitor. You can adjust the volume on a little puck-shaped control pod and mute the speakers by tapping a touch-sensitive panel. The puck includes two 1/8-inch minijacks: one for a headset, and one for an auxiliary input for another audio source, like a portable audio player.

The two satellites are fitted with 2-inch long-throw drivers with TrueSpace technology, which creates a startlingly wide sound field for such tiny speakers. The wood-encased subwoofer moves a lot of air with its 5 1/4-inch woofer. You can adjust the substantial bass with a knob on the subwoofer, but unfortunately, you can't turn down the treble. The sound isn't tinny, but it's a bit heavy on the high notes. Also, the left speaker emits a quiet but noticeable hum, which, although it's drowned out when the noise level rises, is annoying when the system is supposed to be silent.

The Companion 3's only other drawback is its price: You can get a five-speaker system from Logitech for less, with equal audio quality. A surprisingly disappointing system from Bose, the Companion 3 leaves a lot to be desired for its price. **Joel Durham Jr.**

Verdict ★★★☆☆

Very strong bass and midrange. However, there's a slight hum and too much treble...and they're expensive.



We don't usually get excited about so-called gaming mice, but the MX510 is a great peripheral.

MANUFACTURER: Logitech URL: www.logitech.com PRICE: $49.95

Ultrapowerful Gaming Mouse

With its eye-popping specs, we wonder if the MX510 is overkill or a fragfest necessity

Are you ready for a mouse that boasts better specs than your digital camera? With the ultrapowerful MX510 Performance Optical Mouse, Logitech has unleashed a gaming monster. Thanks to an MX Optical Engine boosted to 5.8 megapixels and a hefty 12-bit data path, you'll see lightning-fast response times and accurate mouse-pointer movement—and you never know, it may just save your life.

While it's potentially overkill for a strictly business user, the mouse is a shot of adrenaline for LAN-party junkies, giving you extra onscreen control and an alarmingly high degree of mouse-pointer speed. In fact, during testing, we had to lower the sensitivity gauge in the MouseWare driver because the 800-dpi MX510 was too much for our admittedly uncoordinated hands to handle out of the box. Once we configured it to our liking, an era of blissful gaming ensued.

Fashion and function?

With a unique holographic-swirl paint job, the MX510 looks like a tie-dyed T-shirt, so if you dress like a hippie, beware of potential color clashes. According to Logitech, a special magnetic painting process statistically guarantees each design is unique, although we couldn't exactly test that theory out in our lab.

If you're a serious gamer with $50 burning a hole in your pocket, you really can't go wrong with the MX510. The megapixel uptick for this new breed of Logitech mouse provides an improvement in performance upon earlier models, notably the wireless MX700 and Bluetooth-enabled MX900, which both sport a 4.7-megapixel sensor. (A higher megapixel rating for a mouse generally translates into smoother, more accurate mouse movement.)

But should you throw out your old mouse? If it's a ball-based design, yes (what are you waiting for?)—otherwise, think about it carefully. The MX510 is good, but if you already own a high-performance mouse, you probably won't notice much of a difference...unless you really push performance boundaries.

Keep in mind that the MX510 is tethered to your PC via a USB cord, but also remember that wires are a frugal gamer's best friend. ⊠ Robyn Peterson

Verdict ★★★★½
Logitech's paramount gaming mouse really takes the cheese.

Wil Power

His monthly spew of filth

If they build it, you'll have to come!

Having grown weary of reading about how pissed off people were about our first-ever DVD and our subsequent responses, Kristen passed down the following decree: "I hereby request that no additional *CGW* ink or paper be devoted to the topic of our January DVD, whether or not people should or should not be expected to have or to buy DVD players, etc. Not in Letters, not in Tech Medics, not in the editorial, not in any column. Please—even the horse's hooves have been ground into dust."

It should come as no surprise that I just can't let the dead horse lie. That, and I also gain some kind of sick pleasure from pissin' Kristen off.

Anyway, this month's rant isn't about *our* DVD—it's about the latest spate of games that ship on four, five, hell, even six CDs. In a word, that's just ridiculous. Whether it's *Microsoft Flight Simulator 2004* (which ships on four CDs), *Unreal Tournament 2004* (which ships with five installation CDs and a separate "play" disc), or *Far Cry* (which ships on five CDs), this trend shows that, like the consoles, PC game manufacturers should be shipping their games on DVDs.

Of course, as we've learned, not all PCs have DVD-ROM drives. And while not everyone intends to watch movies on their PCs, DVD-ROM technology makes more sense than CD-ROM technology. Hell, I remember in the so-called olden days, games were shipped on 20-plus floppies and machines didn't even have CD-ROM drives. You know what happened? Software manufacturers began shipping products on CDs and, lo and behold, people started buying and building machines with CD-ROM drives.

So while many of you troglodytes refuse to get with the program, I'm hoping that gamers, at least, will get with the future—because the fact remains: "If *they* build it, you'll have to come." ⊠ William O'Neal

How to Upgrade Your Graphics Card

Don't be afraid—that case was meant to be cracked ☒ Joel Durham

Doom 3 **and** ***Half-Life 2*** **are coming out any year now, and guess what: Your old 3dfx Voodoo 3 graphics card can't even imagine itself handling them. It's time to swap it out for a new state-of-the-art GeForce FX or ATI Radeon 9-series monster. Your system needs a transplant: Get ready to operate.**

STEP #1

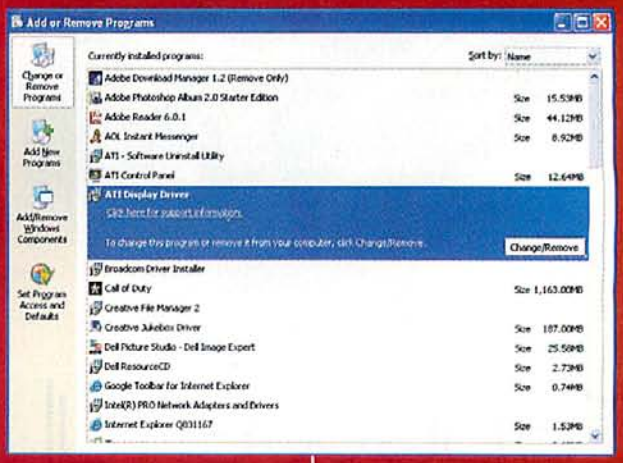
Buy the right part

Most current AGP cards support 8X AGP. Older motherboards may not be able to physically accept new cards in their musty old AGP slots. Knock heads with your motherboard or system manufacturer to ensure compatibility. Grab the absolute best card you can afford—the higher you go now, the longer it'll be before you have to upgrade again.

STEP #3

Swap the hardware

Be static safe: Plant your feet, ground yourself, and don't shuffle your shoes while you're touching sensitive electronic equipment. Remove the screw holding the graphics card in place. (The graphics card will be the card closest to the CPU and the power supply.) Lift it out, hurl it into the nearest trash receptacle, and slide your new card into place. Make sure it's fully seated! Secure it with a screw.



STEP #2

Uninstall your old card's drivers

Head to the control panel and open the Add/Remove Programs applet. Look for your old card's drivers in the list box. You want to purge them from your system to make way for a shiny, new installation. Click on Drivers and then click on the Add/Remove or Change/Modify button. When they're uninstalled, you'll be prompted to reboot. Don't do it—shut down your system instead.

STEP #4

Install the new drivers

Fire up the system. Windows will detect a new device and bother you for drivers. In most cases, the installation CD has its own automated driver-installation routine, so cancel Windows' prompts. Run the driver-installation CD. When the drivers are in, reboot. Then go to the manufacturer's website and download the latest drivers for your new card. Install them, and you're done. Now load up your games and marvel at the smoooooth animation.

THE ULTIMATE GAMING MACHINE

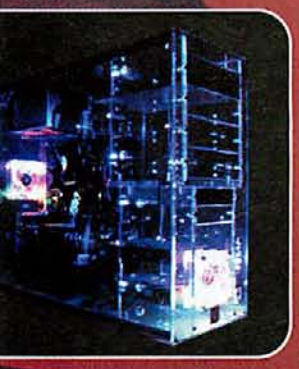
VICIOUS PC

ULTIMATE GAME MACHINE COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

WINNER OF THE EDITORS CHOICE
ULTIMATE GAME MACHINE
COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

ntel inside
ntium 4

ONLY Microsoft ® Windows ®
patible 64-bit PC processor



ULTIMATE GAME MACHINE COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

c|net Editors' Choice

COMPUTER SHOPPER TOP 100 of 2002

Paladin

Price: $3499

Intel® Pentium® 4 Extreme Edition Processor 3.4GHz 800MHz FSB
NVIDIA GeForce 6800 Ultra 256MB DDR3
MSI Intel 875P Neo-FISR 800MHz FSB w/Hyper Threading™ & Gigabit Lan
1024MB Dual-Channel PC3200 400MHz DDR Memory
16X DVD Drive
52X32X52 CD Rewritable Drive
Dual 80GB S-ATA 150 7200 RPM RAID 0 Array Harrd Drive
ViewSonic 22" Aperture-Grill P220FB 2048X1536 PerfectFlat Monitor
Creative Labs Audigy 2 ZS 7.1 8-Channel Sound
Creative Labs Inspire 7700 7.1 8-Channel Speakerrs w/Subwoofer
500W Full-Tower Case with Level-3 Typhoon™ Case Cooling System
"See Through" Red Side window with Vicious™ logo and Cold-Cathod Lighting
Free Lifetime Technical Support
Multimedia Internet Keyboard and Optical Mouse
Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition w/Originalv CD

vww.viciouspc.com

rder Toll Free 1.866.289.2872

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

$ 839

GAMER ULTRA 7000 ELITE

- NVIDIA® Athlon™ 64 MB w/ 8X AGP
- 512MB PC3200 DDR400 Memory
- 120GB 7200RPM 8MB Cache Serial ATA150 HD
- NVIDIA® Geforce™ FX 5500 256MB 8X AGP Video
- 16X DVD-ROM
- 52X32X52 CD-RW Drive
- nForce 3 5.1 3-D Surround Sound
- 600Watt Subwoofer System
- 56K V.92 Modem & 1.44MB Floppy Drive
- Multimedia Control Internet Keyboard & Mouse
- **Turbo X-Infinity Case 420Watt with See Through Windows and Sound Activated Neon Light.**
- 6 Cool Custom Colors to Choose From
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Microsoft® Work 7.0
- Free First Year On Site Service plus 24/7 Tech Support
- Upgrade to Sicuro RW360XL 2.1 Gaming Speakers System for $75

AMD Athlon™ 64 FX-53 Processor	$ 1595	CAH701
AMD Athlon™ 64 3400+ Processor	$ 1095	CAH704
AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor	$ 949	CAH705
AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor	$ 885	CAH706
AMD Athlon™ 64 2800+ Processor	$ 839	CAH707

$ 1035

GAMER ULTRA 8000 DREAM

- NVIDIA® nForce™3 Athlon™ 64 MB w/ 8X AGP
- 512MB PC3200 DDR400 Memory
- 120GB 7200RPM 8MB Cache Serial ATA150 HD
- NVIDIA® Geforce™ FX 5700 8X AGP 256MB DDR w/ TV Out
- NEC 8X DVD+-RW Drive
- 16X DVD-ROM
- nForce 3 5.1 3-D Surround Sound
- Creative Cambridge Desk Top Theater 5.1 S560 5.1 Surround Sound System
- 56K V.92 Modem & 1.44MB Floppy Drive
- Ideazon CrossFire Gaming Swapable Z-Board & Mouse
- **A-Top X-Blade Case 420Watt with See Through Windows and Sound Activated Neon Light.**
- 6 Cool Custom Colors to Choose From
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Microsoft® Work 7.0
- Free First Year On Site Service plus 24/7 Tech Support

AMD Athlon™ 64 FX-53 Processor	$ 1785	CAG701
AMD Athlon™ 64 3400+ Processor	$ 1285	CAG704
AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor	$ 1139	CAG705
AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor	$ 1075	CAG706
AMD Athlon™ 64 2800+ Processor	$ 1035	CAG707

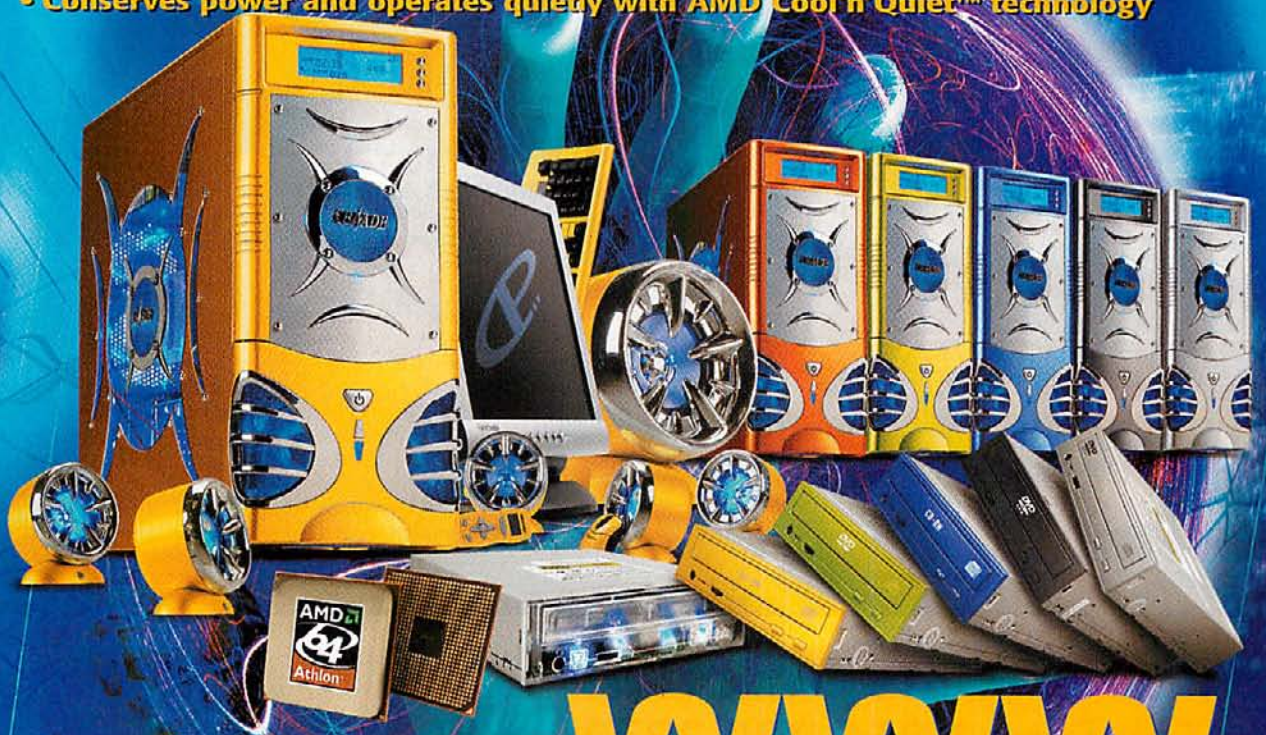
$ 1635

GAMER ULTRA X800 PRO

- NVIDIA® nForce™3 Athlon™ 64 MB w/ 8X AGP
- 1024MB PC3200 DDR400 Memory
- 200GB 7200RPM 8MB Cache Serial ATA150 HD
- ATI® RADEON™ X800 PRO 256MB DDR3 Video Card w/ TV Out & DVI
- Free Half Life 2 Full Version Game
- NEC 8X DVD+-RW Drive 2500A
- Combo Drive (16X DVD-ROM & 52X32X52 CD-RW)
- Creative Lab SB Audigy 2 ES 7.1 Sound w/ IEEE
- Creative Cambridge Inspire T7700 7.1 Surround Sound System
- 56K V.92 Modem & 1.44MB Floppy Drive
- Ideazon CrossFire Gaming Swapable Z-Board
- Microsoft® Optical intelli Explorer Mouse
- **Aluminum** X-Super Alien Server Tower Case 425W w/ MOD "See Through Windows" & Neon Light
- 6 Cool Custom Colors to Choose From
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Microsoft® Work 7.0
- Free First Year On Site Service plus 24/7 Tech Support

AMD Athlon™ 64 FX-53 Processor	$ 2385	CAF701
AMD Athlon™ 64 3400+ Processor	$ 1889	CAF704
AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor	$ 1745	CAF705
AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor	$ 1679	CAF706
AMD Athlon™ 64 2800+ Processor	$ 1635	CAF707

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



WWW.CYBERPOWERINC.COM

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

ORDER TOLL FREE [800]707-0393

$ 905

GAMER ULTRA 5000 PRO

- NVIDIA® Athlon™ 64 MB w/ 8X AGP
- 1024MB PC3200 DDR400 Memory
- 120GB 7200RPM 8MB Cache Serial ATA150 HD
- NVIDIA® Geforce™ FX 5900 128MB DDR 8X AGP Video Card w/ TV Out & DVI
- 16X DVD-ROM & 52X32X52 CD-RW Drive
- nForce™3 3D 5.1 Surround Sound
- Creative Cambridge Desk Top Theater 5.1 SBS 560 5.1 Surround Sound System
- 56K Modem & 1.44MB Floppy Drive
- Ideazon CrossFire Gaming Swapable Z-Board
- Microsoft® Optical intelli Explorer Mouse
- **A-Top X-Blade Case 420Watt with See Through Windows and Sound Activated Neon Light.**
- 6 Cool Custom Colors to Choose From
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Microsoft® Work 7.0
- Free First Year On Site Service plus 24/7 Tech Support

AMD Athlon™ 64 FX-53 Processor	$ 1849	CAI701
AMD Athlon™ 64 3400+ Processor	$ 1199	CAI704
AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor	$ 1135	CAI705
AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor	$ 1095	CAI706
AMD Athlon™ 64 2800+ Processor	$ 905	CAI607

$ 625

GAMER ULTRA 5000 VALUE

- NVIDIA nForce-2 400 Ultra MB with 8X AGP
- 512MB PC3200 Dual Channel DDR400 Memory
- 120GB 7200RPM Hard Drive
- ATI® RADEON™ 9200 128MB DDR Video Card w/ TV Out
- 52X32X52 CD-RW Drive
- nForce 2 5.1 3-D Surround Sound
- 600Watt Subwoofer Speaker System
- 56K V.92 Modem & 1.44MB Floppy Drive
- Multimedia Control Internet Keyboard & Mouse
- **Turbo X-Infinity Case 420 Watt with See Through Windows and Sound Activated Neon Light**
- 6 Cool Custom Colors to Choose From
- Free First Year On Site Service plus 24/7 Tech Support

AMD Athlon™ 64 FX-53 Processor	$ 1379	CAJ701
AMD Athlon™ 64 3400+ Processor	$ 879	CAJ702
AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor	$ 735	CAJ703
AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor	$ 669	CAJ704
AMD Athlon™ 64 2800+ Processor	$ 625	CAJ705

$ 1515

GAMER XPLORER-64 8000

- **VIA K8T800 Chipset Motherboard**
- **512MB PC3200 DDR400 Memory**
- 60GB Ultra ATA100 Hard Drive
- **Mobile ATI® Radeon™ 9700 PRO 128MB Video**
- 15" XGA TFT Display 1024x768 Pixels
- CD-RW/DVD Combo Drive
- 10/100 Network Card & 56K V.92 Modem
- Wireless 802.11G 54Mbps Networking
- 3-in-1 Built-in Media Reader
- 1 Firewire IEEE 1394 & 3 USB 2.0 Ports
- 1 PCMCIA Type II Slot
- Weight only 7.93 Lbs
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Free Carrying Case
- 5 Custom Colors to Choose From

AMD Mobile Athlon™ 64 Processor 3400+	$ 1769
AMD Mobile Athlon™ 64 Processor 3200+	$ 1619
AMD Mobile Athlon™ 64 Processor 3000+	$ 1555
AMD Mobile Athlon™ 64 Processor 2800+	$ 1515

$ 769

GAMER XTREME 8000 DREAM

- NVIDIA nForce-2 400 Ultra MB with 8X AGP
- 512MB PC3200 Dual Channel DDR400 Memory
- 120GB 7200RPM Hard Drive
- NVIDIA® Geforce™ FX 5500 256MB 8X AGP w/ TV Out & DVI
- NEC 8X DVD+-RW Drive 2500A
- nForce 2 5.1 3-D Surround Sound
- Creative Cambridge Desk Top Theater 5.1 SBS 560 5.1 Surround Sound System
- 56K V.92 Modem & 1.44MB Floppy Drive
- Multimedia Control Internet Keyboard & Mouse
- Microsoft® Optical intelliMouse
- **A-Top X-Blade Case 420Watt with See Through Windows and Sound Activated Neon Light.**
- 6 Cool Custom Colors to Choose From
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Microsoft® Work 7.0
- Free First Year On Site Service plus 24/7 Tech Support

AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 3200+	$ 885	CBE701
AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 3000+	$ 839	CBE702
AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 2800+	$ 815	CBE703
AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 2600+	$ 779	CBE704
AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 2500+	$ 769	CBE705

$ 599

GAMER X-TREME 8000 LIGHTNING

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

AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 3200+	$ 715	CBL701
AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 3000+	$ 669	CBL702
AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 2800+	$ 645	CBL703
AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 2600+	$ 615	CBL704
AMD Athlon™ XP Processor 2600+	$ 599	CBL705

AMD 64 Athlon FX

AMD 64 Athlon

The ONLY Windows-compatible 64-bit PC processor

- **Features HyperTransport™ technology for improved multitasking performance**

ARTEC

Gamer's #1 Choice for Optical Solution!!

Artec® Presents to all the Gamers - Transparency **"DIABLO I"** DVD-ROM & CD-RW Drives

CyberPower Inc.

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

Tech Medics

You've got questions, Wil's got a hangover

A PC gamer with a PS2?

I recently read the review of the Logitech Z-5300 speakers and I was wondering how they would compare to the Z-560s. I understand the 560s are 4.1 with 400 watts RMS, while the 5300s are 5.1 with 280 watts RMS. This makes me wonder which set would be better suited to my needs, since they both run for about the same price. I will be using the speakers for my computer as well as playing DVDs on my PS2.

Philip

The Z-5300s are better suited for multiple systems, including PCs, DVD players, and game consoles, while the Z-560s are more specifically PC speakers. So, considering you'll be using them with a PS2 as well as your PC, get the Z-5300s. They come with an adapter that makes connecting them to a game console a snap. Or a plug. Ha ha!

Logitech Z-5300 speakers

We have a convert!

After reading your article on PC gaming in *Electronic Gaming Monthly*, I checked out the Vicious PC website. However, I've run into a problem choosing a graphics card. Two of the choices are an Nvidia GeForce FX 5600 256MB and a GeForce FX 5700 Ultra 128MB (note the 5700 is an Ultra, while the 5600 isn't). My question: Which one's actually more powerful, since the cost is the same (plus or minus $1)? I know that a 256MB card is typically more powerful than a 128MB one, but the 128MB one, in this instance, is of a higher class and an Ultra edition. I'm freakin' lost, especially since I just started with PC gaming—I've mostly been a console gamer until now.

Chris

Welcome to the "better side" of gaming, Chris. Anyway, the question you pose is a good one. Having given it some thought, I'm inclined to agree with your conclusion that going with the "higher class" card is the best choice.

Buy this graphics card

I'm now recommending that everyone in the world run out and buy Nvidia's GeForce FX 6800 Ultra. Look for a review of the card next month.

The French would say you're sh*t out of luck...or something

I am currently using an Alpha Vega (have you heard of them?) computer from 1999. It has a 700MHz AMD Athlon processor, and I recently upgraded the graphics card to a 128MB GeForce 4 MX 440. I am using a Windows 98 Second Edition OS. If I have only about $200 to upgrade something, what do you think I should upgrade first?

Mike

I'd suggest replacing that pathetic processor with one that...well...doesn't suck. Of course, that all depends on what kind of motherboard you have. You should get the fastest processor your board supports and as much RAM as you can cop with the leftover change. If that doesn't work, just buy yourself an Xbox with that $200, get a job, and buy a new computer.

Patches? You may need some stinking patches

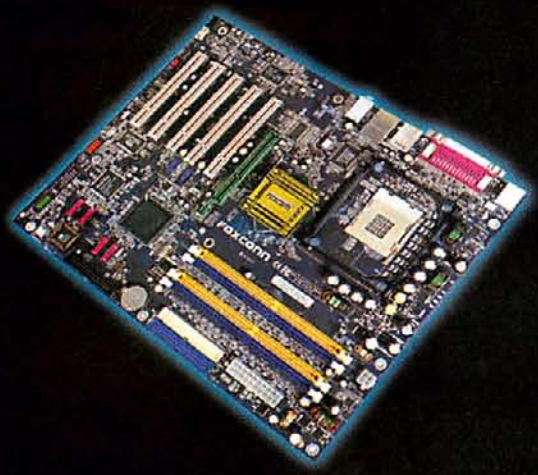
Well, based on almost every freaking PC gaming magazine's recommendation, I bought *Deus Ex: Invisible War*, and—so far—it's a great game. But I have a problem. First off, my ATI Radeon 9600 XT plays the game like crap when I have it running at just 800x600 with 2x AA enabled. If I turn it up any higher, the framerate drops too much. The thing is, *Call of Duty* runs perfectly at 1024x768 with 4x AF and AA enabled. What gives?

Thierry

I've heard from several people that *Deus Ex: Invisible War* tends to get chunky when you enable things such as AA and AF. My advice to you would be to play it at 800x600 with AA and AF turned off. Like *Halo*, it's one of those games that looks better only by increasing the resolution. Of course, that doesn't really help you, does it? Make sure that you have vertical sync (V-sync) turned off in your display properties and that there aren't a bunch of applets running in the background. Also, download ATI's latest drivers and look for any game-specific patches.

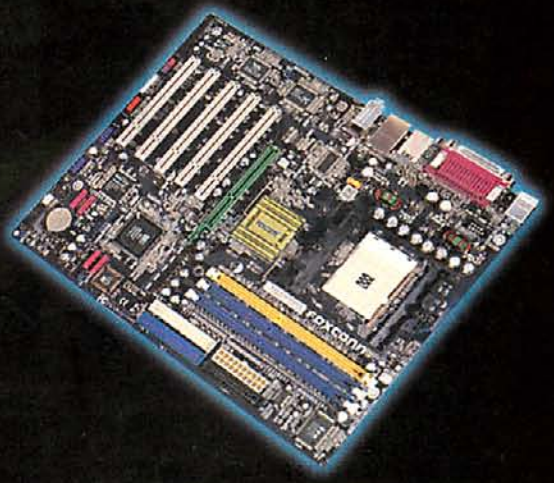
THE PERFORMANCE AND SELECTION YOU DEMAND FROM FOXCONN!

875A02-6EKRS



- Supports all Intel® Pentium® 4, 478-pin, 800 MHZ FSB processors, including Prescott
- Intel 875P MCH and ICH5R
- Dual channel DDR266/333/400, 4 DIMMs
- 1 x AGP 8X, 5 x PCI 2.3
- 4 x SATA/150 (2/w RAID) 2 x ATA/100
- Integrated 6-channel audio
- Integrated Realtek 10/100/1000 (GbE) LAN
- Integrated IEEE-1394 (rear + internal front header)
- Supports up to 8 USB ports
- ATX form factor
- Comprehensive software stack including Symantec's Norton Internet Security 2004

755A01-6EKRS



- Supports AMD™ Athlon™ 64, Socket 754 processors
- SiS755 Northbridge and 964 Southbridge
- Supports DDR333/400, 3 DIMMs
- 1 x AGP 8X, 5 x PCI 2.3
- 4 x SATA/150 (2 w/RAID), 2 x ATA/133
- Integrated 6-channel audio
- Integrated Realtek 10/100/1000 (GbE) LAN
- Integrated IEEE-1394 (rear + internal front header)
- Supports up to 8 USB ports
- ATX form factor
- Comprehensive software stack including Symantec's Norton Internet Security 2004

About Foxconn - "Foxconn" is a registered trade name of Hon Hai Precision Industry Company, Ltd., a Taiwanese company with major production facilities in mainland China. Hon Hai is a world leader in providing product and service solutions to the communications, consumer, and computer industries. With 2003 worldwide sales exceeding $10B (USD), Hon Hai is the world leader in the production of computer connectors and enclosures (chassis). The company is also a leader in computer motherboards, producing more than 26 million in 2003 for the world's leading names in personal computers and computer infrastructure products.

www.newegg.com

www.foxconnchannel.com

Trade names, brands, and logos, which may be claimed as the property of others, are hereby acknowledged.

newegg.com™

- 8,000+ Customer Testimonials
- A Rating on ANY Merchant Ranking Site
- 98% of Orders Ship within 1 Business Day
- 87,000+ Product Reviews From Customers

FREE Shipping

Best Value, Always!

FREE SHIPPING*
FedEx Super Saver Shipping

AMD Athlon™ 64 Technology

The Only Windows®-compatible 64-bit PC processor

- Enhanced Virus Protection for the upcoming Microsoft® Windows® XP SP2
- Cool'n'Quiet™ technology offers performance-on-demand capability to reduce energy usage and enable a quiet environment for home computing
- Streamlines multitasking performance with HyperTransport™ technology, invented by AMD, which removes I/O bottlenecks, increases bandwidth, and reduces latency

Athlon™ 64 3400+
1MB L2 Cache
64-bit Processor
Model# ADA3400BOX

$416.00

Athlon™ 64 3200+
1MB L2 Cache
64-bit Processor
Model# ADA3200BOX

$282.00

Athlon™ 64 3000+
512KB L2 Cache
64-bit Processor
Model# ADA3000BOX

$223.00

$404.00

Athlon™ 64 3400+
1MB L2 Cache
64-bit Processor
Model# ADA3400AEP5AP
OEM

$270.00

Athlon™ 64 3200+
1MB L2 Cache
64-bit Processor
Model# ADA3200AEP5AP
OEM

$211.00

Athlon™ 64 3000+
512KB L2 Cache
64-bit Processor
Model# ADA3000AEP4AP
OEM

Unreal Tournament 2004

Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow

* Available for both Xbox & PC

Battlefield Vietnam

Far Cry

Speakers

Logitech Z-5300 5.1 THX Certified Speaker System

$140.00

Memory

Simple Tech PC3200
1GB 184 Pin DDR
64M x 64 Bits x 2 Pieces

- Model# SDC3200C3/1GB
- DDR400 Unbuffered
- 3.2GB/S Bandwidth

Video Cards

$101.00

Rosewill
ATI Radeon
9600LE
256MB DDR
128-Bit

$408.00

Sapphire
ATI Radeon
9800XT
256MB DDR
256-Bit

Creative Labs
Sound Blaster
Audigy2 ZS PCI

$84.00

NYKO Air Flo PC
Gamepad USB

$22.00

M-Audio
Revolution 7.1
Channel PCI

$101.00

Belkin Nostromo
Speedpad N52 USB

$35.00

©2004 Newegg.com Inc. All rights reserved. Newegg.com is not responsible for typographical errors. All typographical errors are subject to correction. All items are sold as retail unless otherwise noted. OEM products may be sold without packaging, documentation or other articles. All prices and specifications are subject to change without notice. Prices do and will fluctuate dramatically due to the nature of the market. The listed prices were the current price at the time this ad was submitted to the publisher on 5/3/04. *On These Advertised Specials.

Shoppers' Choice Award 2003 Best Place To Buy Components

Fulfilling over **10,000** orders a day...and winning awards doing it!

AMD Athlon™ 64 FX Technology

The Only Windows®-compatible 64-bit PC processor

- Cinematic computing lets you run the latest games with maximum detail and maximum performance
- Get access to unprecedented PC software performance and the Windows® -compatible 64-bit PC processor
- Blow your mind with DVD-like gaming - where fire looks like fire, shots sound like a cannon, and it all feels like it's happening right here, right now

Athlon™ 64 FX-53
1MB L2 Cache
64-bit Processor
Model# ADAFX53DEP5AT
OEM

See Newegg.com For Lower Price

Athlon™ 64 FX-53
1MB L2 Cache
64-bit Processor
Model# ADAFX53BOX

See Newegg.com For Lower Price

AMD Opteron™ Model 244
1MB L2 Cache
64-bit Processor
Model# OSA244CEP5AL
OEM

$307.00

AMD Opteron™ Model 244
1MB L2 Cache
64-bit Processor
Model# OSA244BOX

$327.00

AMD Opteron™ Model 246
1MB L2 Cache
64-bit Processor
Model# OSA246BOX

$461.00

City Of Heroes

HOT

Painkiller

See Newegg.com For Lower Price

Star Wars Knights

See Newegg.com For Lower Price

Halo

See Newegg.com For Lower Price

Monitor

ViewSonic P95F+B 19" UltraBrite™ PerfectFlat CRT 2048x1536 @ 68Hz

$270.00

Case

Antec Silver Aluminum Performance 1 Series ATX Mid-Tower Case w/ Swiveling Front Control Panel Features LED Display Model# P160

$115.00

Fan & Cooler

Thermaltake
Extreme Volcano 12 All Copper 2 Adjustable Fan Speed Controller For AMD Athlon XP Up To 3400+

$33.99

Zalman CNPS7000A-Cu Pure Copper CPU Cooler For AMD XP Socket 462/754

$41.00

Antec 480 Watt Power Supply w/ Blue LED Fan Model# TRUEBLUE 480

$86.00

NEC 8X Black DVD±RW Drive Model# ND-2500A OEM

$79.00

newegg.com™

Best Value, Always!

©2004 Newegg.com Inc. All rights reserved. Newegg.com is not responsible for typographical errors. All typographical errors are subject to correction. All Items are sold as retail unless otherwise noted. OEM products may be sold without packaging, documentation or other articles. All prices and specifications are subject to change without notice. Prices do and will fluctuate dramatically due to the nature of the market. The listed prices were the current price at the time this ad was submitted to the publisher on 5/3/04. *On These Advertised Specials.

Loyd's
Cracked Case

GDC 2004: the merging of the medium

Microsoft didn't announce its next-generation Xbox at the 2004 Game Developers Conference in San Jose this year, but what the boys in Redmond did announce may perhaps be more significant in the long run. Dubbed "XNA," it represents an effective merging of the Xbox software-development tools and DirectX.

While Xbox has always had DirectX as its core, XNA means that DirectX on the PC and console will essentially merge. Note that the underlying Xbox hardware (as it exists today) can't handle the newer technologies built into the current version of DirectX, but having cross-platform tools will make life substantially easier for developers. Whether this is a good thing for PC gamers is somewhat unclear. On one hand, having a single development target will make cross-platform games easier to develop. The flip side of the coin, however, is the possibility of dumbed-down content for the PC.

Perhaps a worrisome indicator is Microsoft's intent to define a standard game controller for the PC—and that game controller will be a gamepad. Sure, standardization is a good thing, but the PC has a tremendous leg up with the mouse and keyboard. Having a standard gamepad may mean more robust sports games and even fighting games. But if game developers try to force-fit traditional PC games into a gamepad environment, the PC becomes no more than a glorified console.

PC game sales are down, which may be part of the driving force here. But for every *KOTOR*, which represents a highly successful console port, we also see superb PC games that simply won't work on the console. Imagine trying to play something like *Rise of Nations*, *Battlefield Vietnam*, or even *Diablo II* on a console. Shooters, which exist on both platforms, simply feel different on one platform or the other. And intricate real-time-strategy games simply don't transfer.

J Allard, Microsoft's Corporate VP and Chief XNA Architect introduces the World to XNA.

Also, the PC is still a superb platform for experimental and small studio titles. Games like GDC award winner *Oasis* (www.oasisgame.com) or Charles Moylan's *Combat Mission* (www.battlefront.com) series simply won't get traction on consoles. Development costs for console games are higher, and no easy distribution mechanism exists today. It remains to be seen if XNA will have a positive or negative impact on the future of PC gaming.

Games may actually catch up to the hardware

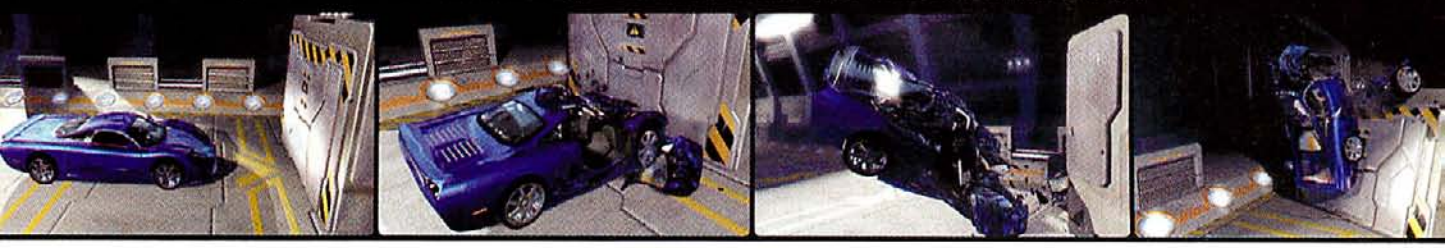
On a different note, those of you who have invested serious dollars in high-cost graphics hardware for the PC may start to see more shader-enabled games going forward. As more pixel-and-vertex shader–enabled hardware gets out into the world, game publishers have more incentive to take advantage of it. However, we're starting to see tools that enable easier creation and visualization of shaders—tools built for artists, not programmers. The most interesting one currently is RTzen's RT/Shader (www.rtzen.com), but Nvidia's FX Composer and the shader authoring tool built into the next-generation Unreal engine look promising.

Finally, Intel is readying an integrated graphics core for its chipsets that will support Pixel Shader 2.0 and offer four pipelines. Those features, coupled to a 333MHz core clock, should finally give the world a modest but usable minimum for graphics. Furthermore, it will remove a key objection to developing games with shader content. Of course, vertex shaders will still be handled by the CPU, so vertex-shader–heavy games may be problematic. But I suppose you can still call it progress.

So the PC and console leapfrog cycle continues. The only real worry is this: Will any game publisher, driven by visions of high-volume console game sales, really care that the PC is now a more capable platform for games? We'll just have to wait and see. **Loyd Case**

The Evolution of Game Development

Microsoft is hoping that by using XNA, which is essentially the merging of Xbox development tools and Xbox, that developers will be able to create intricately detailed titles like this "Crash" demo by Pseudo Interactive.



What's a wizard to do? The LAN party's 30 blocks away, and Mr. Furry Pants wants a ride. Good thing he's got Aria at his side. Because this clever cube case packs everything he needs to take on the fiercest opponents. Like four drive bays. A 300 Watt power supply. And unlike other cube cases, it accomodates microATX motherboards. So when he needs to upgrade his rig, he'll only be limited by his imagination. However bizarre it may be. To learn how we can help you build reality-defying systems, visit www.antec-inc.com.

Antec
The Power of You

BEST BUY COMPUSA fry's CITY micro center STAPLES amazon.com buy.com newegg

TELL US ALL ABOUT YOUR WIRELESS GAMING LIFE...

and you could win a brand new 40GB Apple iPod.*
(A PRIZE PACKAGE WORTH $500!)

IT'S SIMPLE. Just log on to:
www.surveymonkey.com/mobilegaming

Enter your unique I.D. code:
CGWSUBS

And, complete a brief survey.
It's that easy!**

DOUBLE YOUR CHANCES OF WINNING!

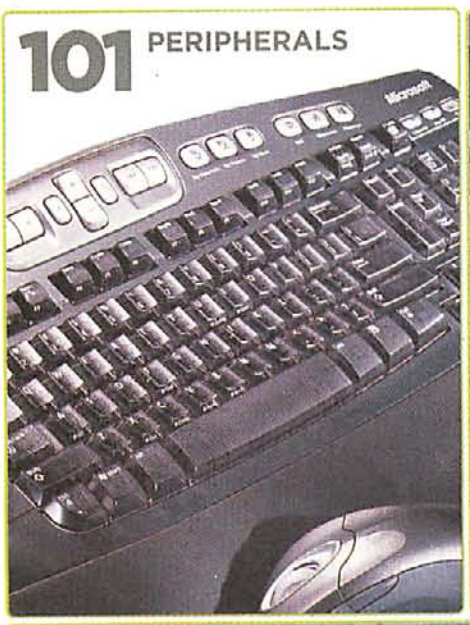
Be one of the first 500 people to complete the survey.
Survey closes June 28, 2004.

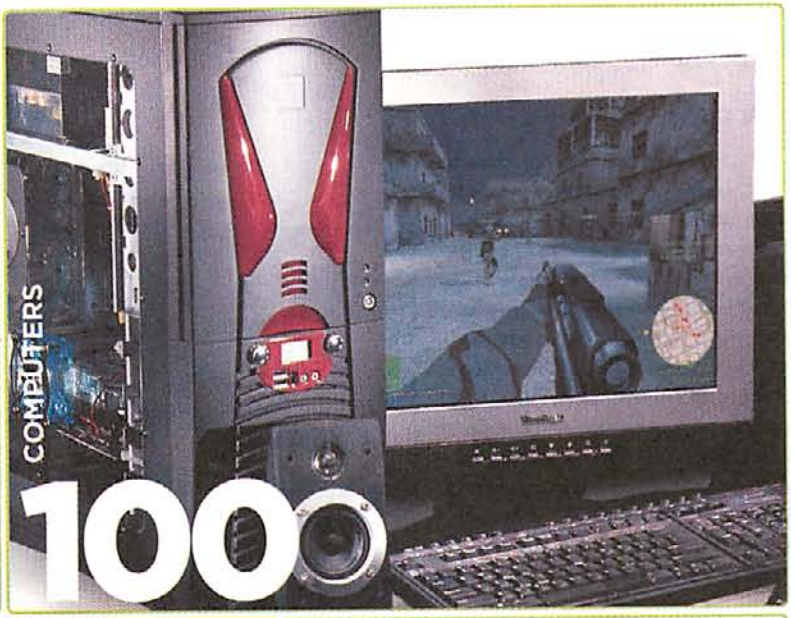
* "iPod" is a registered trademark of Apple Computer, Inc.
Apple Computer, Inc. does not endorse or sponsor this sweepstakes.
** Go to www.surveymonkey.com/mobilegaming for complete sweepstakes rules.
Only one entry per household. No purchase necessary.

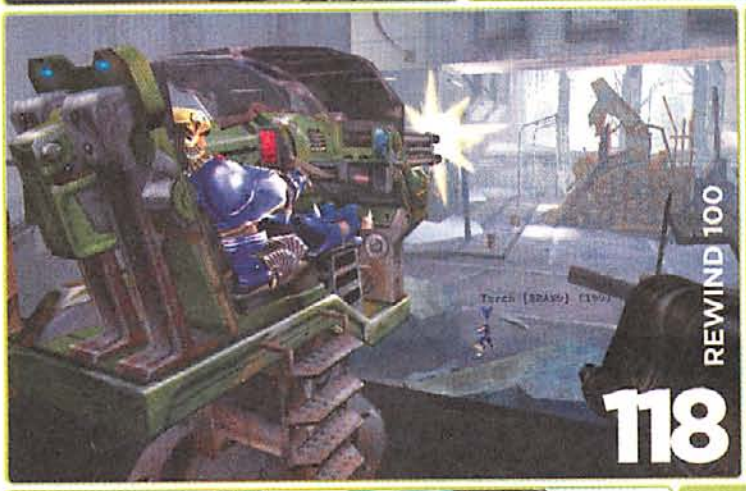
COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

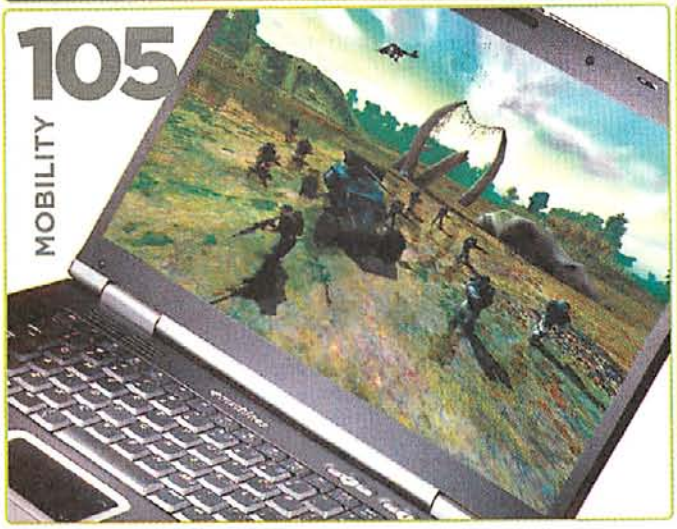
ZIFF DAVIS MEDIA GAME GROUP

Check Out









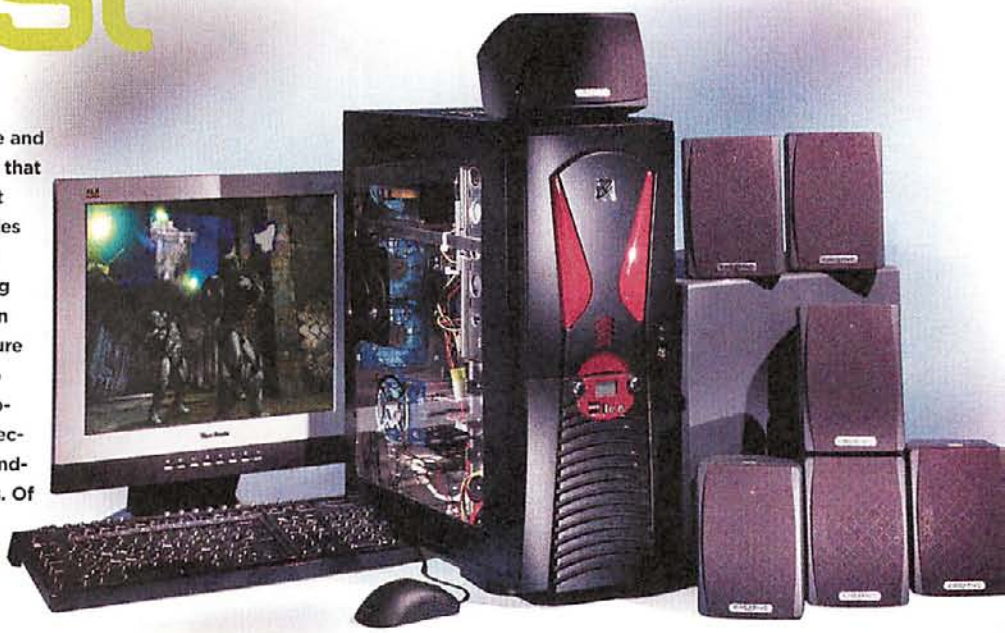
Inside

Need a game to play? Need a computer to play it on? Our Check Out section has you covered. As always, we've got lots of quality hardware recommendations for the performance-minded gamer, as well as a look back at the latest and greatest games of the past several months and a new chapter in the never-ending battle that is Tom vs. Bruce.

A-List

Our picks

This year's E3 expo has come and gone, which probably means that a lot of you PC gaming fanatics out there are salivating at all the goodies that will soon be coming your way. What better time to start upgrading your rig to tip-top shape so you can take full advantage of all those future prospects? From retail machines to gaming laptops to high-end components, we've got all the hardware recommendations that any budget-minded or computer-crazy gamer needs. Of course, the standard rules still apply—that is to say, our printed prices are guidelines, not gospel.



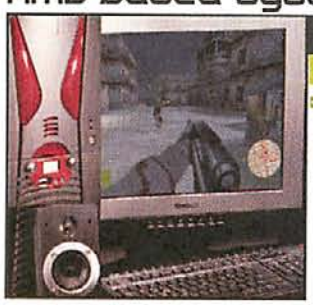
COMPUTERS

Remember the days when 1MB of RAM was a lot? Or when everyone had monochrome screens and tinny PC speakers? Wow, we feel really old now.

Intel-based system

PRODUCT	WHY YOU SHOULD BUY IT
OUR PICK **710G Gamer** $2,160 Gateway	Gateway has found the sweet spot between being a major OEM and a boutique system maker. Its 710G Gamer uses the same parts the small guys use, and it is damn near as fast. This machine is so sweet, in fact, that it won this month's desktop roundup. While it isn't necessarily as "fast" as machines by Voodoo and Falcon, its 256MB Nvidia GeForce FX 5950 Ultra graphics card, combined with a bevy of awesome accessories, has us sold.

AMD-based system



PRODUCT	WHY YOU SHOULD BUY IT
OUR PICK **Hexx c:355** $2,500 VoodooPC	**While Gateway's 710G Gamer is like the Swiss Army knife of computers, Voodoo PC's Hexx is an awesome balance of speed and style. AMD's Athlon 64 3000+ CPU, in combination with a 256MB ATI Radeon 9800 XT graphics card and 1GB of Corsair memory, makes this rig plenty fast—but it's the Hexx's unique styling that really has us hooked. Who said PCs have to be ugly?**

ILLUSTRATIONS BY KRISTIAN OLSON

LAN-boy rig

PRODUCT	WHY YOU SHOULD BUY IT
OUR PICK **FragBox Pro** $1,795 Falcon Northwest	Dave Salvator doesn't like anything, which is why we were surprised that he wanted to give Falcon's FragBox Pro an Editors' Choice award. Of course, one look at the thing and you can see why it's so cool. Inside that little box lurks an Intel Pentium 4 2.80GHz CPU, a 120GB hard drive, 1GB of memory, and a 256MB Nvidia GeForce FX 5950 Ultra graphics card. Not all small form-factor PCs can pack that kind of power, but Falcon worked some serious "cooling magic" to get all that to work together.

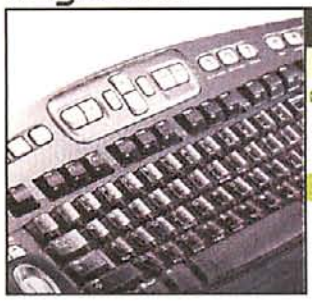
PERIPHERALS

Ever try to play a flight sim with a keyboard? Yeah, that doesn't work too well. Neither does playing a shooter with a gamepad. What are all you console kids thinking?

Speakers

PRODUCT	WHY YOU SHOULD BUY IT
HIGH-END PICK **GigaWorks S750** $500 Creative Labs	While some may scoff at a 7.1 speaker setup, who would turn down 700 watts of awesome audio power? With two rear and two side satellites, the S750 will turn your home sound setup into a movie theater.
MIDRANGE PICK **Z-5300** $200 Logitech	**Having earned an Editors' Choice award in our February issue, Logitech's Z-5300 boasts incredible power, quality, and bass all at a decent price. Take note, though—these speakers lack digital inputs.**
BUDGET PICK **Z-3** $100 Logitech	If you're on a budget, we suggest you forgo a cheap set of 4.1 or 5.1 speakers and opt for a good set of 2.1 speakers instead. Logitech's Z-3s sound great and look even better.

Keyboard



PRODUCT	WHY YOU SHOULD BUY IT
WIRED PICK **MultiMedia Keyboard** $30 Microsoft	You can't go wrong with this handy keyboard. The buttons at the top allow you to perform common functions like launching a Web browser, opening folders, and controlling multimedia apps such as Media Player.
WIRELESS PICK **Wireless Optical Desktop Elite** $100 Microsoft	**Microsoft's latest desktop set sports the company's new "tilt wheel" technology that allows you to scroll horizontally through documents. The keyboard is highly customizable, and its cushioned palm rest is more comfortable than a standard plastic one.**

Gamepad

PRODUCT	WHY YOU SHOULD BUY IT
OUR PICK **Dual Action USB** $20 Logitech	Ever since we put the Dual Action USB in the A-List, we've received complaints about it. Hey, it may look like a PS2 DualShock controller, but the fact is, if you're playing sports games on a PC, this is the pad to use.

A-LIST PERIPHERALS

Mouse

PRODUCT	WHY YOU SHOULD BUY IT
WIRED PICK **Intellimouse Explorer 4.0** $50 Microsoft	Microsoft's latest Intellimouse Explorer boasts the company's new tilt-wheel technology, but more important, it's very comfortable and rocks plenty of customizable buttons. It can also be connected to either a standard PS/2 port or a USB port.
WIRELESS PICK **Intellimouse Explorer 2.0** $60 Microsoft	**Microsoft's Wireless Intellimouse Explorer 2.0 is essentially the wireless version of the Intellimouse Explorer 4.0. While it comes in several colors, we prefer the leather-bound version.**

Headset

PRODUCT	WHY YOU SHOULD BUY IT
OUR PICK **PC155** $70 Sennheiser	Not necessarily a radical change, the Sennheiser PC155 is more of an update to the company's PC150 headset that Darren Gladstone loves so much. That said, if you're playing any online games with voice support, you'll like the PC155.

Joystick

PRODUCT	WHY YOU SHOULD BUY IT
OUR PICK **Extreme 3D Pro** $35 Logitech	**While they aren't as popular as they once were, there are still some pretty good flight sims out there. Whether you're a hardcore or casual flight-sim fan, Logitech's Extreme 3D Pro will help you get the job done.**

Racing wheel

PRODUCT	WHY YOU SHOULD BUY IT
OUR PICK **MOMO Racing Wheel** $100 Logitech	The entry-level MOMO wheel is an awesome peripheral. What's not to love about feeling like you're actually behind the wheel? It's just the kind of thing that'll get your motor in gear for some *Need for Speed Underground*.

DISPLAYS

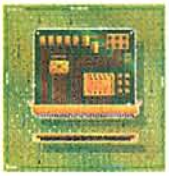
Ever have a monitor totally freak out and make funny noises when your cell phone rings? Picture that, but with every electronic device in the room, and presto—you've got Jeff Green's office!

CRT monitor

PRODUCT	WHY YOU SHOULD BUY IT
HIGH-END PICK **22-inch MultiSync FE2111SB** $600 NEC	When it comes to gaming, CRTs can't be beat—and NEC's MultiSync has been the favorite of many of the boutiques for years. With a huge viewable area and a great price, this is definitely a recommended buy.
BUDGET PICK **19-inch E90fb** $225 ViewSonic	**For gamers on a budget, ViewSonic's 19-inch E90fb is a fantastic CRT display. While 14-inch monitors used to be entry-level displays, there's no reason to go below 19 inches with prices like this.**

LCD monitor

PRODUCT	WHY YOU SHOULD BUY IT
HIGH-END PICK **UltraSharp 2001FP** $1,000 Dell	Dell's UltraSharp 2001FP is often packaged with the company's XPS gaming system. With a slick design and a response time of 16ms, this display makes gaming a real treat. It also pivots 90 degrees for vertical document viewing.
BUDGET PICK **CML175B** $500 Hitachi	**Hitachi's update to last year's CML174B model, the CML175B boasts a native resolution of 1280x1024 (great for gaming) and a 16ms response time. In other words, a great gaming LCD just got more...uh...greater(er).**



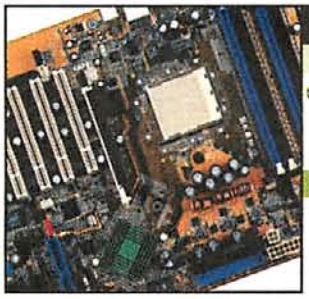
COMPONENTS

Some people love Nvidia, others love ATI. What's our take on it? Hey, as long as *Unreal Tournament 2004* looks pretty, we really don't care one way or the other.

Processor

PRODUCT	WHY YOU SHOULD BUY IT
HIGH-END PICK **Athlon 64 FX-53** $800 AMD	Among gaming processors, the Athlon 64 FX-53 is at the top of the heap. Even though the 64 bits aren't being exploited, the 32-bit applications run almost as fast as Darren can talk. We said almost.
BUDGET PICK **Pentium 4 2.8GHz** $200 Intel	**While the 2.8GHz Pentium 4 chip is not as king of the road as an 800MHz frontside-bus 3.4GHz model, it is still one zippy little core. Plus, with an Intel mobo, you'll be ready for the eventual upgrade.**

Motherboard



PRODUCT	WHY YOU SHOULD BUY IT
HIGH-END PICK **SK8V** $200 Asus	Designed for AMD's Athlon 64 FX line of processors, the SK8V sports the 64-bit chipset of choice—the VIA K8T800. This motherboard also boasts a 400MHz frontside bus, as well as support for DDR400 RAM.
BUDGET PICK **D875PBZ** $150 Intel	**Intel's D875PBZ isn't so much "low end" as it is flexible. Constructed around the i875P chipset, it has built-in SATA RAID support and makes a great backbone for an affordable Pentium 4 system.**

Soundcard

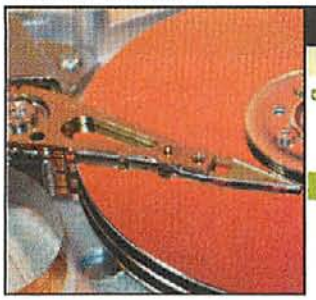
PRODUCT	WHY YOU SHOULD BUY IT
OUR PICK **Audigy 2 ZS** $200 Creative Labs	You haven't experienced surround until you've heard an awesome 7.1 system. In conjunction with Creative's GigaWorks S750 7.1 speakers, the Audigy 2 ZS is awesome. Serious audiophiles can upgrade to the Platinum or Platinum Pro models for even more power.

A-LIST COMPONENTS

Videocard

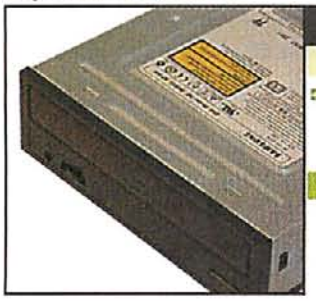
PRODUCT	WHY YOU SHOULD BUY IT
HIGH-END PICK **256MB Radeon 9800 XT** $350 ATI	The Radeon XT was originally supposed to come packaged with *Half-Life 2*. Unfortunately, the game's release date slipped, but many of these cards are still being packaged with a coupon for the game when it is eventually released.
MIDRANGE PICK **128MB Radeon 9600 XT** $175 ATI	**ATI's midrange part is plenty fast enough to handle any game that you're currently playing. Sure, it may not be as fancy as a 256MB 9800 XT card, but it's definitely easier on the wallet.**
BUDGET PICK **128MB GeForce FX 5200 Ultra** $80 Nvidia	Stay behind a generation of graphics cards to save some of money. The Nvidia GeForce FX 5200 clocks in at about $80, which is quite a bargain. Just make sure you don't buy the cheaper, non-Ultra version.

Hard drive



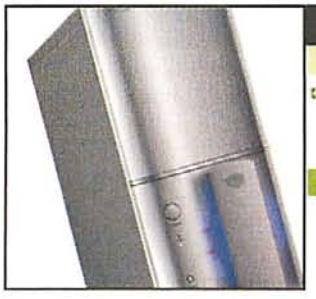
PRODUCT	WHY YOU SHOULD BUY IT
HIGH-END PICK **Deskstar 7K250 250GB** $250 Hitachi	A single 250GB Hitachi Deskstar hard drive provides more than enough disk space for 99 percent of the world's population. If you're in that rare one percent who needs more, double them up for a monstrous RAID array.
BUDGET PICK **DiamondMax Plus 9 80GB** $100 Maxtor	**At a little more than $1/GB, Maxtor's 7,200 rpm DiamondMax Plus 9 80GB drive is a great option for a single-drive rig.**

Optical drive



PRODUCT	WHY YOU SHOULD BUY IT
HIGH-END PICK **DVR-A07U** $200 Pioneer	This drive is not for the faint of heart—or light of wallet. Pioneer's latest combo drive does everything you need: You can create your own DVD movies, burn music CDs, or just back up your data.
BUDGET PICK **DDU1621 16x DVD-ROM** $30 Sony	**Judging by the responses to our first-ever DVD, many of you have yet to adopt this technology. At around $30 for a basic 16x drive, there's no reason to wait—and Sony's 16x DVD-ROM is a great choice.**

Case

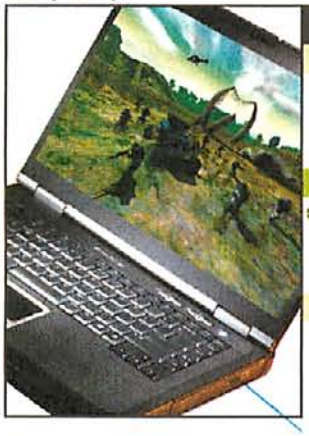


PRODUCT	WHY YOU SHOULD BUY IT
TOWER PICK **TAC-T01-E1C** $150 Cooler Master	Cooler Master's TAC-T01 is big, heavy, and not necessarily cheap, but it's a great case for building that rig of your dreams. It's solid and shiny, and there's a metal monolith inset on the case's face. What is that thing for, anyway?
ALTERNATE-FORM PICK **SN85G4** $300 Shuttle	**Shuttle's Nforce3 150-based setup is the perfect option for building an Athlon 64 FX-based shuttle box. The motherboard supports DDR400 and rocks Realtek's 6-channel audio. Plus, it's much more portable than a bulky tower.**

MOBILITY

Laptops are great for getting work done during a busy travel schedule. They're even more useful when you want to avoid all your annoying relatives when they come to visit.

Laptop



PRODUCT	WHY YOU SHOULD BUY IT
HIGH-END PICK **M675** $2,600 Gateway	With a 128MB ATI Mobility Radeon 9600 (M10) graphics card and a 17-inch display, Gateway's M675 is doper than most desktop PCs. Plus, it can be difficult to put a desktop PC in your backpack.
BUDGET PICK **M6807** $1,549 (after $100 mail-in rebate) eMachines	**eMachines' M6807 ships with a 64MB ATI Mobility Radeon 9600 (M10) graphics chip, but in many tests, it outperforms machines with 128MB graphics options. That said, at only $1,549, you'll be damned happy with this Athlon 64-based laptop.**
LIGHTWEIGHT PICK **Inspiron 300m** $2,000 Dell	The 300m is the perfect traveling companion. The docking station's extra battery space means more than five hours of life, and additional speakers give added rockability. Just don't expect to do much gaming on it.

Phone

PRODUCT	WHY YOU SHOULD BUY IT
FLIP-PHONE PICK **VI660** $199 ($49 with a two-year contract) Samsung	Of the current crop of gaming-enabled phones, this one is the slickest, most game friendly of the bunch. With the addition of the $39 PCS Game Pad, (a GBA-like docking station), it's much easier to control the action.
NON-FLIP-PHONE PICK **3660** $200 Nokia	**Thanks to a new federal policy that allows you to keep your phone number when switching cell providers, negotiating and pinning down a really good deal on a phone is much easier. For a normal-sized phone, this model works great.**

PDA

PRODUCT	WHY YOU SHOULD BUY IT
PALM OS PICK **Zodiac 2** $400 Tapwave	For the moment, you aren't gonna find another PDA with this kind of juice for the price that Tapwave is asking. With it, you can bust out some grinds in *Tony Hawk*, juggle your contact manager (yay!), listen to music, and watch *The Simpsons*.
POCKETPC OS PICK **e805** $540 Toshiba	**This PDA sits at the top of Toshiba's food chain. It's built especially for the power-hungry PocketPC user, and its bells and whistles far surpass the 400MHz processor and 128MB of free RAM. What better way to run MAME and countless games?**

Gadget

PRODUCT	WHY YOU SHOULD BUY IT
OUR PICK **DSC-T1 Cyber-shot** $550 Sony	Holy crap! Your wallet is probably bigger than this 5-megapixel digital camera. Sony's DSC-T1 is tiny, but it has a large LCD screen and 3x optical zoom. Poor battery life is the only price you'll be paying for high style.

Rewind 100

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

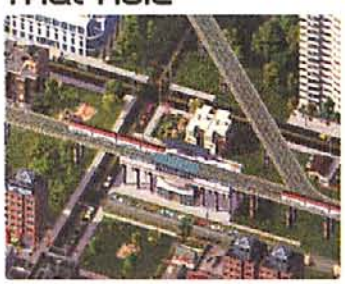
GAME	ISSUE	VERDICT	SCORE
Across the Dnepr	4/04	An imbalanced, single-scenario *Korsun Pocket* add-on: Dnot worth the Dmoney	★★★½☆
Age of Mythology: The Titans Expansion	1/04	More bells, more whistles, same game	★★★★☆
American Conquest: Fight Back	1/04	Fight boredom and micromanagement by avoiding this lame stand-alone expansion	★★☆☆☆
America's Army: Special Forces v2.0	3/04	*Special Forces* is the tactical-sim genre at its finest	★★★★½
AquaNox 2: Revelation	12/03	Like drowning in a sea of boredom	★☆☆☆☆
Armed & Dangerous	3/04	A straight-laced shooter with great cut-scenes	★★★☆☆
Battle Engine Aquila	4/04	Gorgeous and fun *MechWarrior*-style action, but not deep or groundbreaking.	★★★☆☆
Battlefield 1942: Secret Weapons of World War II	12/03	The last bit of fuel injection for the aging *Battlefield* engine is worth the money	★★★★½

GAME	ISSUE	VERDICT	SCORE
Battlefield Vietnam	6/04	Scarier, tougher, and prettier than *Battlefield 1942*	★★★★☆
Beyond Good & Evil	3/04	Gorgeous, stylish, and wholly original, this action-adventure is a gem	★★★★½
Black Hawk Down: Team Sabre	4/04	An entertaining add-on that beefs up the single- and multiplayer games. Rat-a-tat-tat!	★★★★☆
The Black Mirror	2/04	*The Black Mirror*'s gothic horror doesn't require much reflection	★★☆☆☆
Blade and Sword	4/04	A lame *Diablo* clone that might've been interesting four years ago	★★☆☆☆
Broken Sword 3: The Sleeping Dragon	2/04	*Dragon* flamboyantly breaks out of the box, but drags it around a little too much	★★★★☆

GAME	ISSUE	VERDICT	SCORE
Call of Duty	1/04	*Call of Duty* is so good and so much fun that you'll undoubtedly wish it was longer	★★★★½
Celebrity Deathmatch	2/04	Save your money by just throwing beer cans at the television	★☆☆☆☆
Chaser	1/04	A good-looking shooter that's only fun for the first few hours	★★☆☆☆
Chrome	2/04	A stunning sci-fi-themed shooter that makes *Halo* look hollow	★★★★☆
Civilization III: Conquests	4/04	An incredibly refined new version of *Civ III* with multiplayer that finally works	★★★★½
Cold Zero: No Mercy	12/03	*Cold Zero*'s repetitive, depthless play leaves you cold	★★☆☆☆
Combat Command 2: Danger Forward	11/03	A great scenario editor can't lift this average grand-tactical war game above *Korsun Pocket*	★★★☆☆
Combat Mission: Afrika Korps	4/04	*Combat Mission 2.1*	★★★☆☆
Commandos 3	5/04	Maybe the toughest game ever, and not in a good way	★★☆☆☆
Conspiracies	5/04	Cheesier than the ripest Greek feta	★☆☆☆☆
Contract J.A.C.K.	2/04	No franchise shines forever—*J.A.C.K.* is the first blemish on the *NOLF* series	★★☆☆☆

GAME	ISSUE	VERDICT	SCORE
Counter-Strike: Condition Zero	3/04	This game was great when it was free. For $40, it's just good	★★★½☆
Dark Age of Camelot: Trials of Atlantis	2/04	Good expansion for veteran players, but not much for new players	★★★½☆
Dead to Rights	2/04	This no-frills port of an aged, derivative, repetitive shooter was dead on arrival	★★☆☆☆

Sim Games That Rule



Sim City 4: Rush Hour

★★★★☆

In this car-crazy *SC4* expansion, you can take part in high-speed police chases, stage spectacular freeway accidents, and undertake plenty of automobile-related missions.

Monopoly Tycoon

★★★★½

Monopoly meets *Sim City*—it just...makes sense, doesn't it? This ain't no board game—you've got shops to manage, budgets to balance, and bills to pay, as well as plenty of competition to crush under your heel.

GAME	ISSUE	VERDICT	SCORE
Desert Storm III	2/04	At times engaging, but not quite all it can be	★★½☆☆
Deus Ex 2: Invisible War	3/04	The sequel to *Deus Ex* is both dumbed down and smarted up	★★★☆☆
Dominions II	2/04	The most gameplay of any 4X game available anywhere	★★★★½
Dungeon Siege: Legends of Aranna	2/04	Good stuff for fans of the original	★★★½☆
Empires: Dawn of the Modern Age	2/04	A solid entry into the burgeoning historical real-time-strategy subgenre	★★★★☆
Etherlords II	12/03	A better, cheaper, 3D version of *Magic: The Gathering*	★★★½☆
FIFA 2004	2/04	It might be a rough console port, but it's still the best soccer game on any platform	★★★½☆

Far Cry	6/04	There's a good, maybe outstanding game lurking underneath all the frustration. Good luck getting at it	★★★½☆
Final Fantasy XI	2/04	A rock-solid MMORPG from one of the most unlikely sources	★★★★☆
FireStarter	6/04	It's better than *Deer Hunter*	★★☆☆☆
Freedom Fighters	1/04	Great teamplay tactics, but the PC version drew the short stick	★★★★☆

Gangland	6/04	A lot of possibilities and potential, but the riot of unmanageable action makes it hard to enjoy	★★★☆☆
Gothic II	2/04	Better than the first, but still a little too wonky and foreign to be a classic	★★★★☆
Hidden & Dangerous 2	2/04	A really good game hampered by the same pesky bugs and problematic A.I. as the original	★★★½☆
Highway to the Reich	1/04	An excellent system gets better	★★★★☆

GAME	ISSUE	VERDICT	SCORE
Homeworld 2	12/03	It's no *Cataclysm*—it's not even *Homeworld*	★★½☆☆

Horizons: Empire of Istaria	5/04	More of the same, with dragons	★★☆☆☆
Hoyle's Majestic Chess	12/03	A valiant attempt at chess for dummies that doesn't quite teach dummies—but does provide some decent chess	★★★½☆
Jack the Ripper	5/04	A good Ripper story butchered by bugs, feeble puzzles, and a bad ending	★★☆☆☆
Jetfighter V	2/04	A rare combination of frustration and boredom	★★☆☆☆
Korea: Forgotten Conflict	4/04	A nice attempt at a *Commandos* clone in a fresh setting, with horrible A.I.	★★☆☆☆
Knights of the Old Republic	2/04	A total masterpiece from BioWare. Easily the best RPG of the year and possibly the best *Star Wars* game ever made	★★★★★
Lock-On: Modern Air Combat	03/04	A tasty treat for starving jet-sim fans, even without the dynamic campaign	★★★½☆
Lords of EverQuest	03/04	A fairly decent attempt at capitalizing on a tried-and-true (*WarCraft III*) formula	★★★☆☆
LOTR: The Return of the King	2/04	Check your brain at the door for this sword-swinging, spell-slinging good time	★★★★☆
Magic: The Gathering—Battlegrounds	4/04	A painful fighting game in which you don't fight and don't use cards. Run away	★★☆☆☆
Massive Assault	1/04	Lemmings gone turn-based	
Max Payne 2	1/04	Improves upon nearly every facet but doesn't mess with the formula	★★★★½
Medal of Honor: Allied Assault—Breakthrough	12/03	Intense and usually satisfying, but barely good enough to justify the price	★★★☆☆
Midnight Nowhere	2/04	Horrible horror with a zero for a hero	★☆☆☆☆
Mistmare	12/03	Just throw your $20 into the street instead	☆☆☆☆☆
MVP Baseball 2004	03/04	A good game that could be destined for great things but isn't quite ready for The Show	★★★½☆

The Good Guys

The heroes we love

Gabriel Knight

Gabe's one of those cool, rebellious, motorcycle-riding anti-heroes who laughs in the face of evil, saves the day, and gets all the chicks. Plus he gets to shack up in a German castle with a hot live-in maid. Why can't real life be like that?

Sam Fisher

The hero of *Splinter Cell* has the "Fifth Freedom"—basically, the freedom to sneak up on you, do one of those cool-looking Hollywood throws, and slap you silly—just because he feels like it. So don't mess with him. Unless you really want to.

Gandalf

As everybody's favorite badass wizard from the *Lord of the Rings* games (and books and movies), Gandalf is the original übermage—the guy who set the standard for all future badass wizards. We just wish he had pulled out more cool magic tricks in the movies. Fortunately, the games pick up the slack.

Tropico

★★★½☆

Take a small tropical island, turn it into a tourist trap, and keep your nagging population happy—basically, it's *Sim Tropical Island*. It may not be everyone's cup of tea, but *Tropico* excels in all the ways that count.

Sim Isle

N/A

What's with all the good tropical-themed sim games? Not that we're complaining or anything. *Sim Isle* is a different take on the whole "sim" thing, giving you power over the fragile ecosystem of a lush island habitat.

The Bad Guys

The villains we hate

Nazis

Indiana Jones said it best: "Nazis. I hate these guys." And he's not the only one who's had to deal with them time and time again. Nazis are a tried-and-true staple of videogame villainy; gamers have been laying the smackdown on them for years, from *Wolfenstein 3D* to *Call of Duty*.

Darth Malak

You can't have a villain roundup without a Sith lord in there somewhere. This *KOTOR* baddie may not be Darth Vader, but he's still one dark Jedi you don't want to mess with—not to mention he's way cooler than a certain namby-pamby Anakin Skywalker we've been dealing with for two movies.

LeChuck

Having survived four *Monkey Island* games, the devilish undead pirate LeChuck just doesn't know when to stay dead...er, undead. But will he ever return for a fifth outing? According to adventure game icons *Sam & Max*, "hell no!"

GAME	ISSUE	VERDICT	SCORE
Mysterious Journey II	3/04	For puzzle players who like pretty pictures, too	★★½☆☆
NASCAR Thunder 2004	3/04	Not bad, but we expected more	★★★½☆
NBA Live 2004	3/04	One of the best 5-on-5 games for any platform	★★★★½

Need for Speed Underground	3/04	Racing doesn't get much better—unless you're in a real car	★★★★½
Neighbors From Hell	1/04	A fun way to spend a single afternoon	★★★½☆
Neverwinter Nights: Hordes of the Underdark	3/04	A five-star expansion sadly undone by bugs	★★★½☆
NHL 2K4	1/04	The best NHL experience on virtual ice	★★★★★
No Man's Land	1/04	Another follow-the-numbers RTS	★★½☆☆
Nosferatu	2/04	Well, at least it sounds spooky	★½☆☆☆
Once Upon a Knight	2/04	A decent-enough RTS bogged down by a lame RPG and the mistaken belief that milk is funny	★★½☆☆
One Must Fall: Battlegrounds	4/04	If you're into third-person fighting games with robots, knock yourself out	★★☆☆☆
Patrician III	2/04	Little more than a glorified *Patrician II* patch	★★½☆☆
Pax Romana	3/04	A decent primer for *Rome: Total War*	★★★☆☆
PlanetSide: Core Combat	2/04	A decent idea at its core, but not worth the price	★★½☆☆
Railroad Tycoon 3	2/04	You don't have to love trains to enjoy the historical and economic challenges here—but a little train love won't hurt	★★★★½

Rainbow Six 3: Athena Sword	6/04	There's no excuse for this game to have the same sorry bugs and lame A.I. that plagued the original	★★★☆☆

GAME	ISSUE	VERDICT	SCORE
Rebels Prison Escape	1/04	Go get a copy of *Commandos 2* instead	★½☆☆☆
Republic: The Revolution	12/03	Good idea, bad game	★★½☆☆
Runaway: A Road Adventure	12/03	The bimbo of graphic-adventure games: both pretty and stupid	★★☆☆☆
Savage	1/04	A potential blockbuster marginalized by its own delivery	★★★½☆

Secret Weapons Over Normandy	3/04	If the combat didn't stink, it might have been cheesy, over-the-top fun	★★½☆☆
Shadowbane: Rise of Chaos	4/04	A skimpy add-on that's barely enough to satisfy true *Shadowbane* junkies	★★½☆☆
Silent Hill 3	3/04	In *SH3*, the only things that go bump in the night are klutzy monsters	★½☆☆☆
Silent Storm	4/04	Like a gorgeous WWII mod to the revered *X-Com*. Highly recommended	★★★★½
SimCity 4: Rush Hour	1/04	The new focus on transportation adds substantially to an already excellent game experience	★★★★☆
Space Colony	1/04	A clever combination of real-time strategy and *The Sims* isn't clever enough to hold your interest for long	★★½☆☆

Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow	6/04	A four-and-a-half-star game riddled with far too many critical bugs	★★★½☆
Squad Assault: Western Front	3/04	Better than *GI Combat*, like anchovies are better than lutefisk	★★☆☆☆

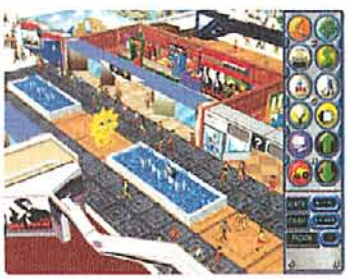
That Suck

Sim Games

Civilization III: Play the World

★☆☆☆☆

Two words: train wreck. The big "draw" here was the online playability—which didn't even work. Isn't it kind of tough to play a game when its entire reason for existing is broken?



Mall Tycoon

★☆☆☆☆

It's an ugly game with a frustrating interface and a wonky camera. If you're going to play a business-tycoon simulator, do yourself a favor and play something else. Heck, *Airport Tycoon* is better than this.

GAME	ISSUE	VERDICT	SCORE
Star Chamber	5/04	Original, fun, competitive, and free to try. What're you waiting for?	★★★★½
Star Fury	2/04	Open-ended and flexible without being too complex	★★★★☆
Starsky & Hutch	1/04	The bad rep of the '70s continues with this crappy game from a crappy license	★★☆☆☆
Syberia II	5/04	Visually stunning, but the pedestrian gameplay saps some of the fun	★★★½☆

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	5/04	It's not as bad as you'd imagine—it's worse	★½☆☆☆
Temple	1/04	Yet another good game marred by bugs. Wheeee!	★★½☆☆
Terminator 3: War of the Machines	4/04	Ugly and just plain terrible	★½☆☆☆
The Hobbit	2/04	Standard console fare, lightly Tolkien-flavored	★★☆☆☆
The Simpsons: Hit & Run	2/04	The best *GTA3* rip-off ever, and a must-have for *Simpsons* fans	★★★★½
The Sims: Makin' Magic	1/04	The final *Sims* expansion plays like a charm	★★★★☆
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004	12/03	A game that will please both hardcore golf-sim addicts and casual gamers	★★★★½
Titans of Steel	1/04	An old-school game with little crossover potential	★★½☆☆

Title Bout Championship Boxing	5/04	The undisputed heavyweight champion of boxing sims	★★★★☆
Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness	10/03	Not as bad as the movie—oh wait, yes it is	★½☆☆☆

GAME	ISSUE	VERDICT	SCORE
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4	12/03	As long as you have a gamepad, it's the most fun you can have on a skateboard without putting yourself in the hospital	★★★★☆
Two Thrones	6/04	It gets an extra half point for the low price	★½☆☆☆
UFO: Aftermath	1/04	*UFO: Aftermath* is a good game that should have waited three weeks and one big patch longer to be released	★★★☆☆

Unreal Tournament 2004	6/04	Too busy shooting...must... write...review	★★★★☆
Uru	2/04	Some good puzzles, some bad action, no story, lots of familiar elements—maybe the eventual online content can make it more compelling	★★★☆☆
Vegas Tycoon	4/04	A colorful and entertaining casino builder that fell shy of the jackpot	★★★½☆
Victoria	3/04	Good game, bad bugs	★★★☆☆
War of the Ring	2/04	Good use of Middle-earth elements in a sadly mundane RTS	★★★☆☆
Warlords IV	1/04	A strangely joyless version of a classic strategy franchise	★★☆☆☆
Warrior Kings: Battles	12/03	Good game, but it's a warm glass of milk when what you really want is a shot of your favorite poison	★★★★☆
Wars & Warriors: Joan of Arc	5/04	Though it has its moments, *Joan* lacks a certain *je ne sais quoi*	★★½☆☆
World War II: Frontline Command	10/03	Bad interface, boring missions, and no realism, but the documentary footage is OK!	★★☆☆☆
Worms 3D	5/04	Short doses of personality don't overcome the long frustration	★★★☆☆
X-2: The Threat	3/04	A much deeper yet less playable version of *Freelancer*	★★★★☆
XIII	2/04	This Belgian import waffles between fun and frustration, excitement and tedium	★★★☆☆
You Don't Know Jack: The Lost Gold	5/04	Some treasures are best left buried	★★☆☆☆
X-Plane 7.40	4/04	Lets would-be aircraft designers create a wild variety of flyable vehicles	★★★☆☆
Zero Hour	1/04	*C&C* better than it's ever been	★★★★☆

The Babes

The hotties we...like a lot

Lara Croft

She's the original gravity-defying videogame superbabe and a popular lady with computer geeks everywhere. Let's just hope her next game improves on the atrocity that is *Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness*. If you ask us, the only thing that could possibly make up for it is *Tomb Raider: Wild Spring Break Adventures*.

Jade

Don't let the fact that she hangs around with talking pigs fool you—the heroine of *Beyond Good & Evil* kicks ass and takes names...er, pictures. And she wears green lipstick. Which, for some inexplicable reason, is kinda hot.

Firiona Vie

Ms. Vie, the ubiquitous *EverQuest* mascot, is the epitome of "hot elf chick." Then again, maybe she's not even a chick—this is an MMO, after all. She could be a married father of two with Tourette's syndrome and a Gary Gilmore haircut.

Tropico 2: Pirate Cove

★★★☆☆

While it's certainly a fresh—if odd—spin on the series, this pirate-centric sim caught many fans of the original *Tropico* off guard and didn't offer much in the way of compelling content.

RollerCoaster Tycoon 2: Wacky Worlds

★★½☆☆

Don't you hate it when an expansion just doesn't deliver what it should? This *RCT2* add-on chugs along with a stale formula that's really begun to show its age.

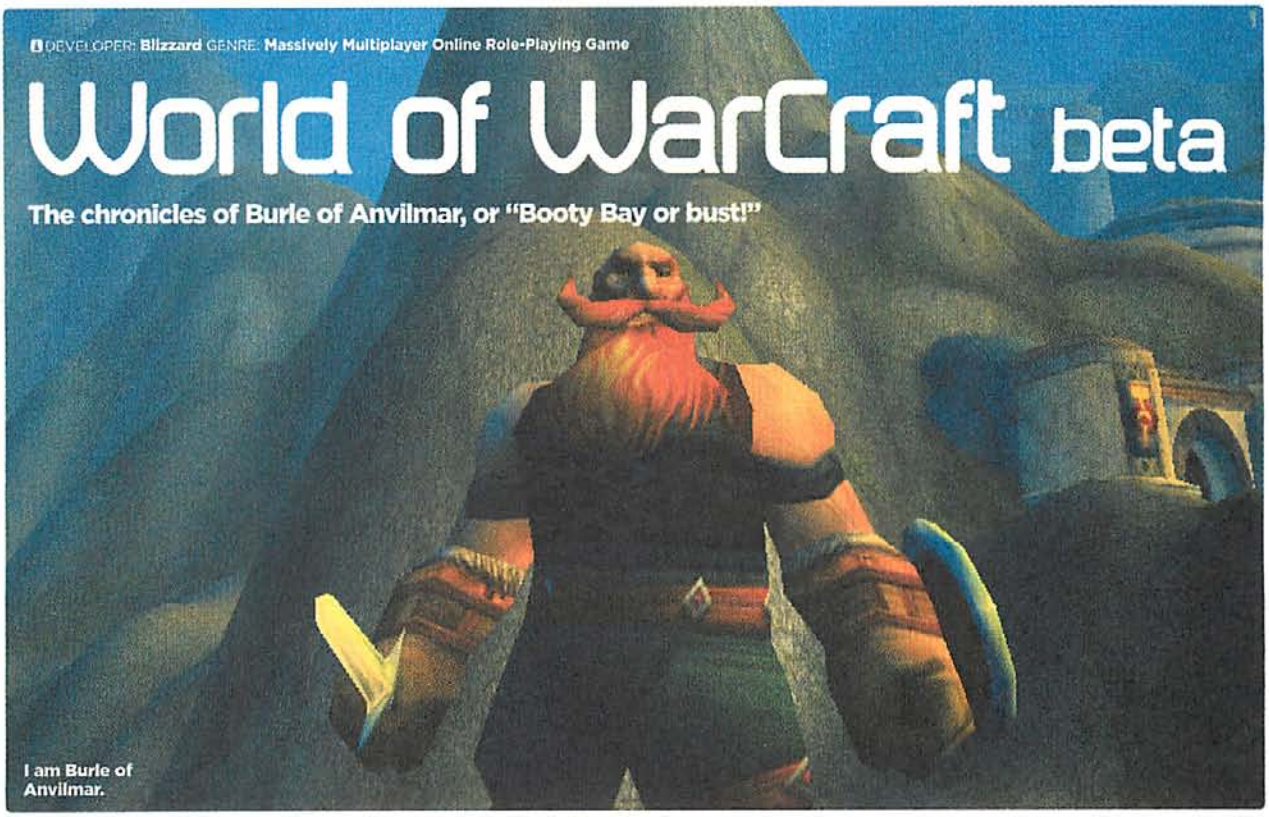
Tom vs. Bruce

Two gamers enter, one gamer wins

DEVELOPER: **Blizzard** GENRE: **Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game**

World of WarCraft beta

The chronicles of Burle of Anvilmar, or "Booty Bay or bust!"



I am Burle of Anvilmar.

This month, we stopped fighting each other just long enough to check out the beta of Blizzard's upcoming massively multiplayer RPG, *World of WarCraft*. That doesn't mean we won't bicker, though.

Bruce: Because of a conspiracy between Tom and the designers of *World of WarCraft*, I was forced to play second fiddle to Tom, who insisted that he be the lead character and that I play as a night elf. Because I'm more interested in the philosophy of gaming than actual gaming itself, I'll play as a priest and perhaps become the Mircea Eliade of online gaming. Or at least the Martin Buber. Maybe I'll even meet one of those guys in the game and have a long discussion with them in which I'm forced to click through dialogue boxes. My character is named Eno, in acknowledgment of the synthesizer's contribution to theological discourse.

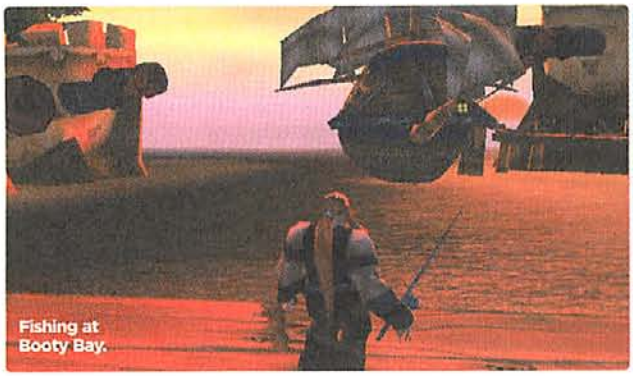
Tom: I am a dwarf from Anvilmar. My name is Burle. Although I'm a rogue, what I really want is to be a fisherman, whiling away the days by plucking surprises from the deep sea, cooking seasoned fillets, and selling whatever treasures I happen to snag.

Another green world

Bruce: Wasn't that cute? It reminds me of eighth grade, when people in front of me in the lunch line would have serious discussions about their *D&D* characters. I don't even know where Anvilmar is, so I can't actually prove that Tom isn't from there. But he gets into the whole role-playing thing, so as long as he doesn't start asking me for "thine gold," I'm just going to let him run with his make-believe.

Tom: Anvilmar is in the frozen land of Dun Morogh, where all the lakes and streams are locked under an impenetrable sheet of ice. By joining my elven friend Eno, I'll find warmer climes. Eno is far to the northwest on the island of Teldrassil. So I'll make my way to the dwarven city of Ironforge, where I can ride a gryphon to meet Eno in his elven lands with their open waters.

Bruce: The way *World of WarCraft* works is that each race starts out in its own little homeland, thus setting the stage for subsequent hate crimes and eventual ethnic cleansing as the races start to mix. Like Kofi Annan, I'm pretty indifferent to all of that, so the only thing that really bothered me about this recipe for a global fantasy holocaust was the fact that I was supposed to eventually join up with Tom. But our racial homelands dictated that we start



Fishing at Booty Bay.

Fishing at sunset.

Tom
Last month:
Tom beat Bruce at *UT 2004*, which is like beating Stevie Wonder at darts.

Bruce
Last month:
Bruce lost but doesn't care because shooters are for morons.

the game on opposite sides of the world.

To make a long story short, I eventually found Tom. To make a short story slightly longer, I achieved this by clicking on monsters, waiting patiently until they ran out of hit points, pressing the X key to sit down until my health and mana bars regenerated, and then invariably repeating this process for hours. Sometimes I had to click on something, run somewhere else, and click on another thing. Eventually, one of those things was Tom. I suspect that given Tom's penchant for talking, you're going to get a lot more detail from him.

Tom: On the way to Ironforge, an NPC named Whitebeard asks me to deliver a report to Kharanos. Once there, I do a few quests to earn enough money to buy a small targe at the smithy across the road from the tavern. But as I'm climbing the hill to Ironforge, I realize I won't have enough money for gryphon fare. Drat! So I swing east to Steelgrill Depot, where I take jobs gathering boar meat, bear furs, and wendigo manes, braving snow leopards and winter wolves.

Bruce: *World of WarCraft* does a lot of inherently dumb things really well. This does not make these things any less dumb from a gaming perspective, but it at least makes them work so smoothly that you can't really object to them on any basis other than a philosophical one about whether they should exist in the first place. For example, if an NPC has a quest for you to perform, a big exclamation point floats over his head. When you accept the quest, the exclamation point turns into a question mark. And as you do the quest, you know exactly how you're progressing. Need to kill six Gnarlpine ambushers? *World of WarCraft* tells you how many more you have to go. Everything is as clear as possible, other than the question of why you're doing all of this in the first place. For instance, there's a guy you release from his magical prison who thanks you for releasing him, but then he stays in his magical prison so that the guy behind you can free him. He thanks that guy, too. Maybe he just likes the attention.

Tom: Ironforge! The massive underground city is a testament to the prowess of dwarven engineers and architects. Unfortunately, I can't find any recipes for the fish I'll catch. But an even greater setback is finding out that—alas!—gryphons can't take me to Teldrassil. To get to the elven lands, I'm told I'll need to take a boat from Menethil Harbor, which can only be reached on foot. On to Menethil!

Bruce: I love the giant map in *World of WarCraft* that instantly shows you where all of the members of your group are in the game world. I also love the fact that

Eno the night-elf priest at your service.

you can invite anyone into a group just by clicking on their names in the friends list, even if they are half a continent away. However, the part where you have to get across the continent to meet them still needs a little work. I try to join Tom by finding my way across to his land of dwarven mystery. I actually get pretty far across the continent, only to make the error of going down what looks like a road that will lead to a port. Eventually, I come upon a huge pile of player corpses on the road. As I run by them, I am suddenly told that the "Guardian of Blizzard" has warned me that I am entering an off-limits zone and has struck me for 146 points of damage, killing me. Great. Tom can come find me, then.

Little fishes

Tom: Along the way to Menethil, the ice thaws away. I'm tempted to stop and fish in Loch Modan, but there will be plenty of time for lollygagging once I find Eno. In the rugged lands north of Modan, the dwarven mountaineers have firearms to ward off scarred boars and Dragonmaw orcs. With only a nicked blade, I don't stand a chance. After a series of resurrections, I finally manage to sneak past a Dragonmaw scout and onto a high peak overlooking the deadly wetlands. Trying to work my way down into the marshes, I fall and die. However, this time I resurrect in Menethil Harbor! Perfect! After trying to recover my body and getting instantly killed by a black slime, I decide the wetlands are too much for me and board the ship to Darkshore.

Bruce: In the movies, dwarves are supposed to be comic relief, so I ask Tom to tell me a joke. All he can come up with is something about two gnomes and a farmer's pig. We can't print the punch line here in case children are reading. But I now know that dwarves aren't very funny.

Tom: In the interest of realism, I ask Eno to keep the chat to a minimum until we find each other. I've gotten as close as I can to him once I arrive at Aubergine. I'm told the only way for a non-elf to reach Teldrassil is to swim, where he's just as likely to drown as be devoured by a 90th level sea monster. So I'll wait for Eno and spend my time fishing. I find a nice spot by a fallen log under the

In the movies, dwarves are supposed to be comic relief, so I ask Tom to tell me a joke.

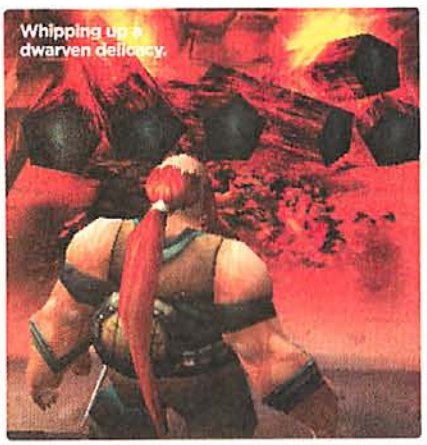
hippogryph nests. I hook my shiny bauble to the fishing pole and start casting. The waters are teeming with rainbow-fin albacores and oily blackmouth, the former good for eating and the latter good for selling. A dark elven warrior comes up and sits next to me. He asks me what I can find fishing. I tell him that it's not just fish, that sometimes you'll discover crates of supplies, scrolls sealed in bottles, or even treasure chests. I give him all my albacore, since he can use it to heal himself after a battle.

Bruce: Some guy is talking to Tom. This is probably related to roleplaying and what I suspect is his secret desire to form a guild in which the players will meet weekly to be served exquisite fish delicacies that he lovingly cooked by repeatedly clicking his mouse button. I tell Tom that we have a job to do, and that job is not to start a fantasy seafood restaurant. He says something to the dark elf about "thine silken finery," so I put him on Ignore for the next half hour.

Tom: Eno is slow in coming, so I head north, braving the occasional rabid thistle bear attack. I fish for brilliant smallfish and longjaw mud snappers where the Cliffspring River empties into the sea. I even get a few bristle-whisker catfish, which are particularly good eating. But I don't have recipes for any of these fish. After asking around, I'm told the best fishing recipes can be found in Booty Bay. "But you won't be able to make it there," someone cautions me, "30th level apes." Little does he know that I have an elven priest who will accompany me. Together, we'll go to Booty Bay, where I'll learn the secrets of cooking bristle-whisker catfish.

Bruce: On the island where I started, I killed spiders, cats, birds, some kind of dog/bear thing, and some harpies. I collected water from public urinals, and delivered it to wise elves who have special knowledge of the real uses for public-urinal water. When I finally found Tom, he was obsessed with finding a place called Booty Bay. And fishing. This was far from the last I was to hear about these two seemingly unrelated but actually closely connected things.

Tom: The elf has agreed to make the journey with me. He even says he knows the way. Huzzah!


Whipping up a dwarven delicacy.

Bruce: According to the map, Booty Bay is all the way on the very southern tip of the other continent. We're going to have to find a place to get a boat. I explain to Tom that if we go too far south, empirical evidence strongly suggests that the Lord High Guardian will kill us, but Tom is too busy equipping his fishing tools to reply. We complete a quest in a graveyard, in which our job is to read some tablets describing fantasy history. Tom can't read them, but we later figure out that because my character is an elf, the text shows up in English, which must be a language elves can read. But because Tom's character is a dwarf, his text shows up as gibberish, which must means dwarves can't read English. We get our four farthings of reward or whatnot and set off down south for good.

Mr. Eno, I presume?

In dark trees

Tom: As we're heading down Darkshore, we pass what look like some great fishing spots. I prevail upon Eno to let me sample the waters from time to time. We're occasionally accosted by cats and bears who want to play, but we won't be deterred. We come into Ashenvale, where Darkshore's gray skies give way to blue. But we don't stop, not even to fish, because we wouldn't stand a chance against these shadowhorn stags, wildthorn lurkers, and shadethicket stones. Eno's magical shield has protected us in the past, but these beasts rip right through the shimmering blue aegis.

We cross the Fallfarren River, and the forest gives way to wide plains. We are on the Gold Road, with dinosaurs wandering in the distance. We kill one, just because we can, and salvage its teeth. As we continue south, we come upon Crossroads, which is guarded by powerful horde warriors. So we swing wide around it and continue into the savannah, where giraffes quietly graze.

Bruce: When I went to Kenya, I remember the view from our jeep across the plains being absolutely amazing. Tom, who has never been to Kenya, finds this computerized depiction of a fantasy Kenya inhabited by orcs and dinosaurs to be really amazing. It's great that we can share this virtual moment of plains appreciation through the vehicle of our booty-seeking role-playing characters.

Tom: Eno starts talking about a place called Kenya, which doesn't exist in the world of *World of WarCraft*, so I tell him to leave off his starry-eyed fantasies and let us make our way to Booty Bay, where he'll taste the finest albacore ever prepared. He makes yet another snide comment about the name Booty Bay, I make fun of the way his ears bob when he runs, and then we're on our way.

Bruce: For almost this entire trip, Tom has been complaining about the limited storage space in his backpack. I spend a lot of time waiting for him to rearrange his inventory, which invariably results in him asking me to carry some of his raw fish. I feel like I'm the sidekick on one of those cable fishing shows. Eventually, Tom stops complaining when he finds a red leather bag that can hold multiple items in one backpack slot. Then I start hearing all about how great his red leather bag is. I stop hearing about it after I refer to it several times as his "purse."

Tom: Eventually, the road descends into Ratchet, a goblin town with a ship moored at the end of a pier. Sure enough, the ship takes us to Booty Bay. What a splendid place! It's a harbor built around a quiet, sheltered inlet. And, at last, here is the fisherman's shop where I'll buy my recipes!

Bruce: Tom finds out he'll never be able to afford the recipe he wants, so he logs off to play *Star Wars Galaxies* with Desslock while I explore a bit more and discover that he was right about something: There are indeed 30th level apes out there. And 30th level hot women who shoot fireballs. Just to prove that I can do anything that Tom can, I decide to roleplay from this point on. My choice of character is a guy who is not going to play a multiman role-playing whatever. And I do. I win!

I feel like I'm the sidekick on one of those cable fishing shows.

Coming Next Month...

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

AUGUST 2004 ON SALE JUNE 29

AD INDEX

ACTIVISION **True Crime PC** 22-23

Alienware Corp. **Area-51m Mobile Gaming System** 32-33

Antec, Inc. **Aria Case** 97

Atari **Unreal Tournament 2004** 41

ATI TECHNOLOGIES INC. **Radeon** 78-79

CasEdge-Foxconn **CasEdge** 93

Codemasters, Inc. **Perimeter** 39, 53

Creative Labs **New product TBD** 116

Cyberpower Systems **Cyberpower** 90-91, 115

Dell Computer Corp. **Dell Home Systems** 14-15

Eidos Interactive, Inc **Shellshock: Nam '67** 17, 29

iBuyPower **IBuyPower Computer** 83, 84-85

Microsoft **Rise of Nations Expansion** 51

Mythic Entertainment **Dark Ages of Camelot** 6-7

Nc Soft Corp. **City of Heroes** 19-21

Nevrax Games **Saga of Ryzom** 42-43

Newegg.com **Newegg.com** 94-95

Nokia Telecommunications **N-Gage** 27

Nova Logic, Inc. **Joint Operations** 36-37

Sony Online Entertainment **EQ II** 2-3

The Guildhall at SMU **Game Design Degree Program** 48

Vicious PC **Vicious PC** 89

Vivendi Universal Games **Ground Control 2** 4-5

Wizards of the Coast **Magic: Online City** 13

Dear Moron McStupid

I hate you! I hate you! I hate you!

Do you know what it's like to scream obscenities so hard that you actually force pearls of blood to blossom from the pores on your face? To be so buffeted by a swirling storm of blinding fury that, body quaking with rage, you vow to scoop the eyes of strangers from their skulls with a serrated grapefruit spoon? To so thoroughly exhaust your knowledge of profanity that you start stringing together the most innocuous words, bellowing "slippy slippy exorcist fish!" in the vain hope that by luck, you'll stumble upon a new epithet so irredeemably foul, the FCC will preemptively ban you for life? I do...for I have played *Far Cry* unpatched. If I were you, Crytek, I'd hide the grapefruit spoons.

Fortunately, my work environment is less "office" than "ward," so despite the bilious torrent of dirty talk, my job remains what is laughingly considered secure here at the Ziff Davis veal combine. That, and I've got the whole Tourette's syndrome card to play. But while that might excuse my foul-mouthedness, it doesn't excuse the Everest-scale idiocy of Crytek when it decided, "Y'know, PC gamers really hate the freedom and enjoyment they gain by being able to save anywhere. Let's put the most half-assed checkpoint save system known to man into our game. And let's make it unfairly hard to boot! They'll love us!"

But wait, you cry. Aren't you the same half-wit who gave *Far Cry* a 3.5-star review last issue? Why yes, yes I am. But that was the official, measured, superego-filtered appraisal of the game. This is the unauthorized id version, everything I wanted to put into that review but couldn't because I was flummoxed by the inability of print media to accurately capture and reproduce a tortured yowl. Of course, that yowl is now somewhat muffled by a quicksave patch that, in theory, is available as you read this. So, why waste my life with all that pointless anger? Because anger is only rendered pointless when a drifter at the depot fails to fall for "the handcuff trick." Me, I've got a fury furnace going full blast in my brain.

Far Cry's checkpoint saving was/is so insanely flawed, it would boggle the prodigious psychic force of a 20-rodent rat king. While Crytek occasionally displays the good sense to slap down a checkpoint right before a big battle—and by this I mean a close-quarters battle against four or five rocket-launching fat boys who can take a good five rockets from you before falling dead—it almost without fail neglects to drop another one on the other end of that battle. No, instead there's usually another big firefight or a sniper half a mile away on the map who you could never see, but who can see you...even though it's night and you're on your stomach in heavy brush on the other side of a hill he can apparently see through, because he picks you off the second you crawl into his miraculous view. How many times did that happen? About as many times as I stumbled upon two different save points five seconds apart with nothing to speak of in between. Which is a lot of times. *A lot* a lot. This is a save system and gameplay designed by drunkards and implemented by pinheads.

Do you know what it's like to vow to scoop the eyes of strangers from their skulls with a grapefruit spoon?

OK, so we've established gross incompetence—let's talk about what is either Crytek's contempt or profound idiocy. What kind of dolt makes PC games with checkpoints these days, anyway? This is where some supercilious twit usually sniffles, "We wanted to make the game challenging." Well, what if I don't want it to be challenging? What if I just want to kill something other than my children, wife, or employer for an hour, and what if I want to quit when I actually want to quit and not have to lose progress when I do it? Is that OK by you, Timmy Tightpants? Hey, what if I just avail myself of the *five different difficulty levels* you built into the game if I want challenging? Dumbass.

"We don't think the game should be played that way," pooh-poohs Timmy. Here's an idea: When you play the game, never save it until you're done. Me, I'm gonna mommysave that sucker every friggin' second if that's what I want to do. You got my money, now shut the hell up. If you're going to arrogantly dictate the way I spend my leisure time, then I get to tell you how to live your life, and here's directive A-1: From now on, you crap standing up. Don't worry, I'll get around to patching my directive some time well after it's going to matter. Quid pro quo, my friend, quid pro quo. **Robert Coffey**
robert_coffey@ziffdavis.com

ILLUSTRATION BY JON WAYSHAK

Computer Gaming World (ISSN 0744-6667) is published monthly by Ziff Davis Media, Inc., 28 E. 28th St., New York, NY 10016. Subscription rate is $27.97 for a one-year subscription (12 issues). Canada and all other countries add $16.00 for surface mail. Postmaster: Send address changes to Computer Gaming World, P.O. Box 57167, Boulder, CO 80328-7167. Canadian GST registration number is 865286033. Publication Mail Agreement No. 40009221. Return Undeliverable Canadian Addresses to PO Box 503, RPO West Beaver Creek, Richmond Hill, ON L4B 4R6. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY 10016 and additional mailing offices. Printed in the U.S.A.

$ 1716

XPLORER X5 8000 NOTEBOOK

- 1024 PC2700 DDR333 Memory
- 80GB Ultra ATA100 Hard Drive
- Mobile ATI Radeon 9700 PRO 128MB Video
- 15.4" WXGA Wide-Screen TFT Display 1280x800 Pixels
- 16X/2X CD-RW/DVD-RW Combo Drive
- 10/100 Network Card & 56K V.92 Modem
- Wireless 802.11G 54Mbps Networking
- 3-in-1 Built-in Media Reader
- 1 Firewire IEEE 1394 & 3 USB 2.0 Ports
- 1 PCMCIA Type II Slot
- Weight only 6.39 Lbs
- Microsoft Window XP Home Edition
- Free Carrying Case
- 7 Custom Colors to Choose From

Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor		
3.4Ghz 800MHz FSB	$ 1973	CNB711
3.2Ghz 800MHz FSB	$ 1824	CNB712
3.0Ghz 800MHz FSB	$ 1758	CNB713
2.8Ghz 800MHz FSB	$ 1716	CNB714

Get more done, have more fun.

You can quickly run multiple applications at once with a CYBERPOWER XP 8000 Dream based on the Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology.

WWW.CYBERPOWERINC.COM

$ 1735

GAMER INFINITY X800 PRO

- Intel® I875PE Chipset 800Mhz FSB 8X AGP MB
- 1024MB PC3200 Dual Channel DDR400 Memory
- 200GB 7200RPM 8MB Cache Serial ATA150 HD
- ATI® RADEON™ X800 PRO 256MB DDR3 Video Card w/ TV Out & DVI
- Free Half Life 2 Full Version Game
- NEC 8X DVD+-RW Drive 2500A
- Combo Drive (16X DVD-ROM & 52X32X52 CD-RW)
- 5.1 3D Surrond Onboard Sound
- Creative Inspire S560 5.1 Surround Sound System
- 19" Viewsonic® E90F+ SB TwoTone Silver/Blk .22MM 1800 x 1400 SVGA w/ Ultra Bright Technology
- Creative Lab V.92 Fax Modem w/ Voice
- 1.44MB Floppy Drive
- Ideazon CrossFire Gaming Swapable Z-Board
- Microsoft® USB Optical Mouse
- **Aluminum** X-Super Alien Server Tower Case 425W w/ MOD "See Through Windows" & Neon Light
- 6 Cool Custom Colors to Choose From
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Microsoft® Work 7.0 & Norton Anti Virus 2004
- Free First Year On Site Service plus 24/7 Tech Support

Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology		
3.4Ghz 800MHz FSB	$ 1989	CBA701
3.2Ghz 800MHz FSB	$ 1845	CBA702
3.0Ghz 800MHz FSB	$ 1779	CBA703
2.8Ghz 800MHz FSB	$ 1735	CBA704

$ 935

GAMER INFINITY 8000 DREAM

- Intel® I865PE Chipset 800Mhz FSB 8X AGP MB
- 512MB PC3200 Dual Channel DDR400 Memory
- 120GB 7200RPM Ultra ATA100 Hard Drive
- NVIDIA® Geforce™ FX 5700 256MB DDR w/ TV Out & DVI
- NEC 8X DVD+-RW Drive 2500A
- AC97 3D 5.1 Surrond Sound
- Creative Inspire S560 5.1 Surround Sound System
- Creative Lab V.92 Fax Modem w/ Voice
- 1.44MB Floppy Drive
- Ideazon CrossFire Gaming Swapable Z-Board
- Microsoft® USB Optical Mouse
- **A-Top X-Blade Case 420Watt with See Through Windows and Sound Activated Neon Light.**
- 6 Cool Custom Colors to Choose From
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Microsoft® Work 7.0
- Free First Year On Site Service plus 24/7 Tech Support

Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology		
3.4Ghz 800MHz FSB	$ 1189	CBC701
3.2Ghz 800MHz FSB	$ 1039	CBC702
3.0Ghz 800MHz FSB	$ 975	CBC703
2.8Ghz 800MHz FSB	$ 935	CBC704

$ 749

XP 8000 DREAM

- Intel® I865PE Chipset 800Mhz FSB 8X AGP MB
- 512MB PC3200 Dual Channel DDR400 Memory
- 80GB 7200RPM ATA100 Hard Drive
- NVIDIA® Geforce™ FX 5200 8X AGP 128MB DDR w/ TV Out
- 16X DVD-ROM
- 52X32X52 CD-RW Drive
- 3D 5.1 Sound & 600Watt Subwoofer System
- 56K V.90 Fax Modem w/ Voice
- Mitsumi 1.44MB Floppy Drive
- Internet Multimedia Keyboard & Internet Mouse
- **Turbo X-Infinity Case 420Watt with See Through Windows and Sound Activated Neon Light.**
- 6 Cool Custom Colors to Choose From
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Microsoft® Work 7.0
- Free First Year On Site Service plus 24/7 Tech Support
- Upgrade to Viewsonic® Office Keyboard and Optical Mouse +$49

Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology		
3.4Ghz 800MHz FSB	$ 1009	C7021
3.2Ghz 800MHz FSB	$ 859	C7022
3.0Ghz 800MHz FSB	$ 795	C7023
2.8Ghz 800MHz FSB	$ 749	C7024

ORDER TOLL FREE [800]707-0393

Intel®, Intel® logo, Intel Inside®, Intel Inside® logo, Intel® Centrino™, Intel® Centrino™ logo, Celeron®, Intel® Xeon™, Intel® SpeedStep®, Itanium®, Pentium®, and Pentium® III Xeon™ are trademarks or registered trademarks of Intel® Corporation or its subsidiaries in the United States and other countries.

Hear Every Detail in 7.1 Surround and 24-bit ADVANCED HD™ in Splinter Cell® Pandora Tomorrow™ with

Sound BLASTER AUDIGY 2 ZS and GIGAWORKS S750

"The accurate 3D positioning from the combination of an Audigy®2 ZS and the GigaWorks™ S750 kept us from getting shot in the back more than once."

— CGW - April 2004

Tom Clancy's SPLINTER CELL PANDORA TOMORROW

UBISOFT

SOUNDS BEST ON Sound BLASTER 24-bit ADVANCED HD

EAX ADVANCED HD

LUCASFILM THX

www.us.creative.com

Get CREATIVE with PC Gaming

©2004 Creative Technology Ltd. The Creative logo is a registered trademark of Creative Technology Ltd. In the United States and/or other countries. All other brands are trademarks or registered trademarks of their respective holders.
© 2004 Ubisoft Entertainment. All Rights Reserved. Splinter Cell, Sam Fisher, Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow, the Soldier Icon, Ubisoft, ubi.com, and the Ubisoft logo are trademarks of Ubisoft Entertainment in the U.S. and/or other countries.