VOLUME 2 AUGUST 99 ISSUE 5

NEW AGE GAMING SOUTH AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA'S OWN PC AND PLAYSTATION GAMING MAGAZINE

OUTCAST
HYPNOTIC
SA FIRST REVIEW

DUNGEON KEEPER 2
HORNY RETURNS
BUMPER REVIEW

DRIVER
NAG INFILTRATES
UNDERCOVER REVIEW

TOTAL ANNIHILATION KINGDOMS
FANTASY VISITS STRATEGY
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ED's Note

Severe Misconceptions

Over the past few months I have been on the receiving end of a number of letters, e-mails, passing comments and general jealous innuendo regarding what I do for a living. Everyone seems to think that the life of a magazine editor - especially that of a gaming magazine is simply put, as far into the butter as anyone can get. Although I have to lay a little blame at my own doorstep for this situation (after all if someone tells me how great I've got it, disagreeing with them is a tough thing to do), I suppose at the end of the day it's an ego thing. An ego is a dangerous entity and is often fed and nourished by nobody other than yourself until it becomes bigger than you are, leading to delusions of grandeur and opinionated speeches at every opportunity. Now, enough about my problems and on to the subject at hand. I get mails from people who want to review games for a living. It seems that the idea of being able to play games at work and get paid for it is everyone's definition of a perfect lifestyle. But it's not like that at all...

Putting together a magazine is a time consuming process that always ends up running late no matter how well you plan and prepare. Last minute information simply must go in the issue even if it means having to write an article through the night to meet the morning's deadline. One week of every month is spent putting the finishing touches on another great issue, late nights and early mornings seem to blend into each other and when it's finally over you have to start everything all over again. Like a snake eating its own tail, we are forever chasing something new and exciting, the latest and the best for our readers. During all this we never stop to look at what we've left behind in our mad and frenzied wake. One important area we also seem to forget while we're so busy chasing after the perfect issue are our relationships. Yes, our poor wives and girlfriends who really can't understand what all the fuss is about, it's only a game they'll say, aren't you a little old for this kind of thing they'll ask? Barely raising our eyes up over our glowing monitors we'll say, but it's work. This is all leading somewhere and like everything it has a good side and a bad side. You might even recognise these symptoms in your own life. The nineties has given birth to a new culture, one where you spend more free time playing computer games than anything else. This has moved a long way from spending the entire day in front of a TV watching rugby - same problem, different media. The good thing here is that we are interacting with something instead of just observing it, the brains are now working instead of slowly shutting down - it's a great way of life if you can somehow get your other half involved. Successfully easing your wife or girlfriend into playing games will ensure a happy home environment, the only thing that might initially suffer is your bank account - for that new ladies model PlayStation or PC. This is the trick to surviving the new era - curiosity always gets the better of most people and once you've got them hooked they'll never leave... This of course doesn't apply to any of our female readers, don't worry though if this sounds like a male bonding thing - I'm really just trying to get everyone playing together nicely. This raises a few questions like, are women potentially better at playing games than men? I think that given enough time and interest the multiplayer battle grounds might end up littered with more bodies of male players than females. So if you are reading this magazine while your husband/boyfriend is whiling the hours away in front of his computer stop now and go and have a look, it's more fun than you think.

Michael James, Editor

A good season for gaming

Well it's finally happened, the new release drought is over - I don't usually bore people with the contents of the magazine in this space but once you've browsed through the pages you'll discover that the big ones are starting to arrive. Looking at the list of games due for release right after this issue is wrapped up will put a smile on anyone's face. The lead up to the big Christmas period starts here, late in August. All you have to do now is sit back and enjoy the ride. Long live Gaming.

New Age Gaming
South Africa's own Gaming Magazine
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Colour Curve

Printer
Paarl Printing
(011) 804-6201

Distribution
CNA Newstand

Responsibility cannot be taken fo unsolicited editorial material. Th Editor reserves the right to amen and / or alter any submitted cop

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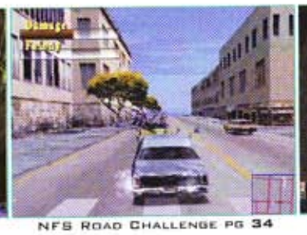
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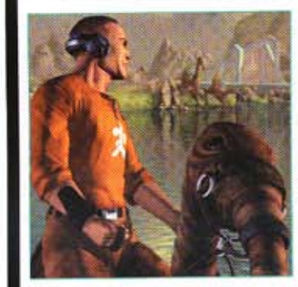
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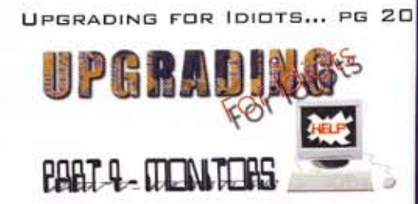

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WWW.PLAYSTATION-EUROPE.COM/SYPHONFILTER

Going to the Syphon Filter site via the main Playstation Europe site couldn't be easier: it's the first thing you see! The link is right there, big and bold.
And the site itself? Wow! Initially, the whole page is black, with a sighting reticule following your mouse pointer, displaying the hidden elements of the page beneath it as it passes over them. All you need to do is track down the menu link, and fire... err, click.
The Syphon filter site is set up like a game. It even has a mission to fulfill, which, when completed, unlocks screen savers and wallpapers for you to download. With a heavy Flash presence, the site is full of movement and sound, although these options can be disabled if you wish. Graphics constantly cycle, and music fills the normal silent void associated with web browsing.
By choosing one of five language options, you enter into the body of the site, which offers several options to the visitor. By browsing around, you can find out the story behind Syphon Filter, or check out dossiers on three of the game's main characters. Other links enable you to find out about the various missions contained within the game (with screen shots from the various missions provided) while others are useful for those who want to learns about the character, Gabe Logan's movements and weapons, with graphics and full details on each weapon that can be found and used within the game.
The developers link takes the browser to a basic links page, which in turn leads to the various development teams' home pages.
One of the niftiest features within the entire site is the link to a short online Syphon Filter mission. Complete this mission successfully (which entails deactivating a bomb placed in a subway tunnel) and the game will allow you to download a screen saver, or one of four wallpapers for your desktop.
On the whole, the Syphon Filter web page is as slick as... well, as slick as a very slick thing. The pages load quickly, and navigating the site is fast and efficient. The information contained within it's electronic pages (and there is a lot of it) is well presented and helpful, both to those playing the game and those who just want to learn more about it. It is a vibrant, exciting, lively bit of ether.
This is an excellent web site to visit, both for players and those who build web sites. It is extremely well handled, and presented with painstaking attention to detail. This is a site that should not be missed!

NAG's WEBSITE OF THE MONTH

NAG's Favourite Websites of the Month

http://driver.gtgames.com

This site, for one of the hottest games to grace both the PC and Playstation this year, is a slick piece of work indeed.
With a console style presentation and Flash graphics, this GT Interactive Games Site is almost as good as the game itself.
The overview section of the site gives extensive details on the game: what it's about, how it was made and what it's many features are.
Move on to the mission briefing section, and you have videos captured from the game, according to the cities in which the missions are played: Los Angeles, New York, Miami and San Francisco.
The Surveillance section takes the visitor to various screenshot selections and videos, while a Developers tab takes you to a page about Reflections interactive, the company that came up with this stunning game.
The game itself is great stuff, with a web site to match. It's a good idea to visit it, even if only to see what a well constructed and presented web page looks like! And, of course, you may fall in love with Driver along the way, don't say we didn't warn you!

http://www.lucasarts.com

Pay a visit to the Lucasarts site, and follow the products link, and you may just come across the Star Wars: Force Commander preview site. Those of you who read the E3 tribune included with last month's issue (and we know that you all did read it) may have noticed that the boys at Lucasarts have finally woken up and decided to produce a Star Wars based real time strategy game.
Well, it appears to be early days yet, if the developer's site is anything to go by. Other than a press release and a few screen shots, you won't find much here. But what you do find will set your heart a-pounding, especially if you are one of the true Star Wars devotees out there. The screen shots (by far the best part of the site) speak of a great, 3D enhanced battle of epic proportions.
Okay, so the site is very empty, but we have to remember that this is a site in it's infancy. Developer sites like this one are an excellent source of information for those wanting to know what's coming up, and how projects are progressing. Going here often might just be a good idea.

http://www.westwood.com

With all the hype surrounding the soon to be released Command and Conquer 2: Tiberian Sun, I thought we may take a look at a development site for another upcoming Westwood title. The game's name is NOX, and it is said to be the one game capable of doing the long awaited Diablo 2 in. We shall have to see....
Westwood's webmasters seem to enjoy title pages, and after a few of these, things get a little annoying, including the fact that it loads a little slowly, due to it's graphic intensive nature.
Navigating the site can be a little bit of a pain - even though the site is framed, there are no permanent menu bars, and you need to scroll a bit to find the links to other sections of the site.
While the press release section makes for some interesting reading, most people are going to head straight for the images, so we'll do the same. Six screen shots are available for your perusal, with a promise for more images also included, so we'll have to check back here soon.
It seems as though the developers at Westwood are a little wary of giving us too much information just yet...

http://www.quake3arena.com

One site that will be getting a huge amount of hits, now that the new Quake 3 test version has officially been released, is the Quake 3 Arena site.
Although somewhat sparse, the site is guaranteed to be popular (particularly during "call more" time) as hundreds of rabid Quakers download the 32MB of gibbing bliss that is the new test version.
What the site does contain is lots of information, mainly technical specifications and press releases, concerning this long awaited id Software release. Interviews, announcements and other information to get you all salivating all over your keyboards...
And if that isn't enough, the site also contains 14 or so screen shots showing the incredible quality of the graphics now used by the Quake 3 designers.
The final link option leads the surfer to the download section, where the hottest gaming property on the net can be obtained - and the warning that the Quake 3 test is addictive is true.
As a site, this place is pretty sparse. But then, who gives a rodent's hindquarters. Let's get gibbing!

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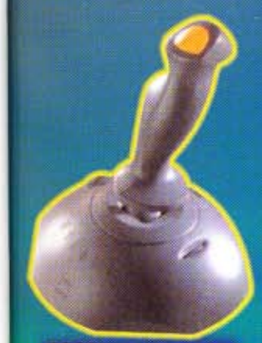

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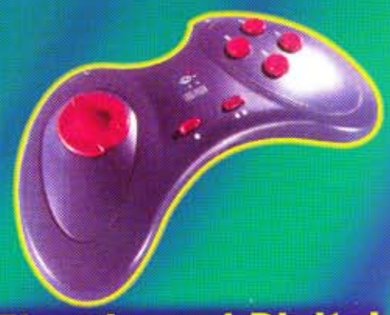

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BITS & BYTES

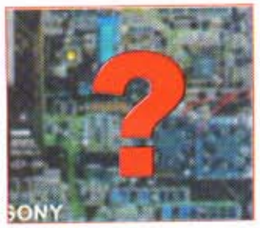
ELECTRONIC ARTS MAGIC

Electronic Arts and Wizards of the Coast announced an agreement to co-operatively develop a new intellectual property and on-line computer game. The game is still a long way off, but from what our sources have uncovered it's going to be an Internet based strategy title. The software will use digital trading cards similar to the paper cards used in Wizard's Magic: The Gathering series. The cards can then be sold and traded over the Internet. Rumour also has it that Maxis will be developing the game.

Wizards News Release

UNREAL ENGINE FOR PLAYSTATION 2

You know the PlayStation 2 is going to be something special when companies like Epic make statements that they are currently coding and porting their Unreal engine technology over to the PlayStation 2. This news goes a long way to answering some of the questions about the PSX 2 and its role in the 3D-action market. Tim Sweeney had a few comments to make about the press release saying that Epic was currently in the process of acquiring a PlayStation 2 development system [stop drooling]. The team at Epic are now continuing development of the Unreal Tournament engine and when they get their development system from Sony, they'll start porting the code over to the new platform. The way things are looking right now it should be possible for PlayStation 2 owners and PC owners to play multi-player games on the same server. The guys at Epic aren't going to release Unreal Tournament on the new machine but are rather going to develop a new game that might be based in the Unreal universe. At the end of the day this means that developers for the PSX 2 will have a capable engine to work with thus avoiding the time consuming and costly business of writing their own 3D engine, provided they are prepared to pay the engine licensing fee. This practice is as common as grass in the PC development environment and saves valuable development time that could be better spent on pure creativity. In addition, this kind of technology will facilitate the porting across platforms, which means we'll be seeing the same games on both systems appearing much faster. We at Nag personally feel that only the next generation PlayStation 3D engines will be ones that will get people excited, but then again Unreal isn't a bad place to start. Tim Sweeney could not be persuaded to release any further details about all the exciting features this new engine will offer, as everything is under wraps with numerous watertight non-disclosure agreements. What all this really means, is that you should start seriously saving some cash for a PlayStation 2



56 MILLION FOR SONY PLAYSTATION

Cumulative global shipments for the PlayStation have risen above the 56 million mark in May this year, up from 50 million last December from its first release in December 1994. The main area of growth has been from the European community. Good news for investors, but even better news for us gamers out there is that the new Sony console will be unveiled in a prototype case on 17th September 1999 at the Tokyo game show in Japan, said Ken Kutaragi president of Sony Computer Entertainment Interactive. The final retail release should hit Japan on the 3rd December 1999 exactly five years after the original PlayStation was released. This means that the rest of the world will only see the console towards the end of 2000. A number of games have already been announced for the new console. Information is scarce at this stage but we have confirmed that the next Metal Gear from Konami, the next Resident Evil from Capcom and other untitled racing and fighting games from Namco and Square have all been listed. When this console hits it's going to cause quite a stir in the gaming community, PlayStation and PC alike.

NABOO STARFIGHTER

Some good news for owners of the PC version of Rougue Squadron, LucasArts has released an add-on for this popular game that allows gamers to fly the Naboo Starfighter from Star Wars Episode One: The Phantom Menace. The Naboo Starfighter is highly agile, with rapid-fire twin laser cannons, homing missiles and other weaponry. The starfighter's "advanced hyperdrive engine and superior handling characteristics" will allow players to rapidly outmanoeuvre their dreaded foes. Rogue Squadron is an action-arcade game that challenges players to join an elite group of starfighter pilots in intense ground-to-air and air-to-air battle scenarios. You can find the add-on at www.lucasarts.com

TOMB RAIDER 4 PLAYBOY

The Fourth Game

Returning to its roots for the fourth iteration, Tomb Raider 4: Last Revelation is dropping the combat and action for an adventure approach, similar to the original game. No longer will you have to face endless bad guys and monkeys but rather you'll be encouraged to explore and solve puzzles. So far we know the game is being developed for both the PC and PlayStation but the location is still a closely guarded secret. Eidos aren't saying anything and the only clue that there will be a fourth game was a small insignificant entry on the company's release list.

Playboy Magazine

A judge has ruled that Playboy magazine is to place adhesive labels on the front covers of some twenty thousand issues circulated in Britain. The words 'Lara Croft' and 'Tomb Raider' appeared on the cover of the issue, and were deemed damaging to the clean image of Lara Croft. The problem began when Playboy ran a nude layout of model Nell McAndrew, previously Core's official model for their digital creation, Lara Croft. The names were covered up but not the nude layout inside...

New Model

Lara Weller is the new official Lara Croft, the 24 year old professional model made her first appearance at the Electronic Entertainment Exhibition (E3) in Los Angeles in May this year. At 5ft 8' and measuring 34c-24-34, the model's vital statistics certainly reflect those of her digital counterpart. She also has brown eyes and hair making her a perfect choice. You have to laugh when reading the Playboy incident, aren't these people taking this thing just a little too far?

ATARI CLASSICS

Hasbro Interactive has released Atari Arcade Hits: Volume 1 for the PC. The six games include Asteroids, Centipede, Missile Command, Tempest, Super Breakout and Pong. This is the first in a three part series and as an added bonus you'll also get an exclusive interview with Atari founder, Nolan Bushnell and other memorabilia. Besides the games and interview Hasbro has also included original video footage of the games, posters and other historic items and there's also a collection of mouse pointers, system icons, fonts and other goodies.

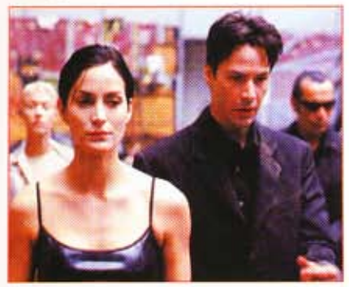
PLAYSTATION ON PC

bleem!

After all the legal wrangling, bleem! has finally been released and is finding its place on retail shelves, distributed by Navarre Corporation. This software allows PC users to play hundreds of PlayStation games on their machines. The software takes advantage of the newer PC hardware to offer the user better resolutions and higher levels of detail than a PlayStation and television set can. bleem! runs with Windows 95 or 98, DirectX 6.1 on a Pentium 166 MMX, 16 MB RAM, 16-bit graphics card, double speed CD-ROM, a Windows compatible sound card and needs just under 4 MB of hard drive space. This software is going to change the face of PlayStation gamers once and for all, and we're guessing Sony will reap the financial benefits down the line. We'll have to wait and see if anyone is going to distribute bleem! in South Africa, if not, then just make your way over to their web site and order it yourself. It should cost around R275.00 (orders taken with a credit card) with packaging and shipping (DHL) - overseas the product costs $29.95 with international shipping weighing in at $15.95. bleem! can be found on the Internet at http://www.bleem.com

THE MATRIX STRIKES BACK

For obvious reasons the movie, The Matrix has attracted almost as much attention as Star Wars Episode 1. The good news for fans of the first movie is that you can now look forward to not only one sequel but two. The deals have already been signed and we will definitely be seeing the sequels soon. The creators of The Matrix said that the original concept had always been to create a trilogy. Even better news is that the two sequels will be released shortly after one another. The only thing they haven't decided yet is if the two new movies will take place before or after the original. Keanu Reeves will be starring in both the new movies, which are going into production now in Australia. The new movies have imaginatively been titled Matrix 2 and Matrix 3. So what has this got to do with computer games? Well rumour has it that the first game is currently under development, and that is all we have for you now, as soon as we hear more details of this exciting development you'll be the very first to know.

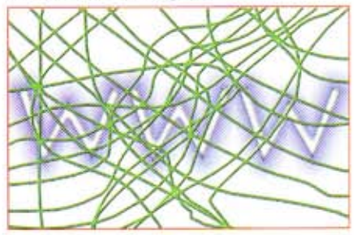


SPEEDBALL 2100

Many thought the day would never arrive, but it has. The best alternative sports game ever, Speedball is making it's way to the PlayStation, early in 2000. The game was released many years ago on the Atari and Amiga and became something of a classic. Players select one of 16 Speedball teams and are charged with leading them to victory in a series of tournaments and leagues. Played within walled arenas, Speedball is a frantic sport wherein teams of twelve muscle bound gladiators attempt to throw a solid metal ball into their opponents' goal. Anything goes as players weave intricate passes together, use the walls to deflect long passes to the attacking line and attempt to slam the ball past heavily armoured goalkeepers. For safety reasons, each player is required to wear padded suits as the ability to foul an opponent or crack their skulls with a well-placed ball is as essential as perfecting long shots at goal. The previous game even featured stretcher-bearers who had to remove the more seriously injured players from the field. Thankfully the developers have retained the old isometric viewpoint as another option to the new 3D perspective. The game will be published by Empire Interactive and we'll definitely be doing a full in-depth preview soon.

BIG INTERNET

This year another 35.2 million people around the world will go on-line bringing the total number of active Internet users to a staggering 130.6 million. The same report also predicted that this number would grow to 350 million by the year 2003, a 267 percent increase from the 95.4 million people using the Internet in 1998. This is also significantly linked to e-commerce with a prediction that revenues will grow from $98.4 billion to more than $1.2 trillion by 2003. Interestingly enough 75% of the worlds Internet sites are in English.



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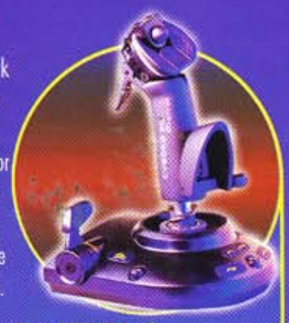

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Available from Incredible Connections, Software Connections, CNA and most leading computer retail outlets. Please phone the distributor for details of your nearest stockist.

Bits & Bytes

New Age Gaming Price Comparison

Game Title	Incredible Connection	CNA Interactive	Toys R Us	Reggies
Anna Kournikova's Tennis (PSX)	R 349.99	None	None	None
Driver (PSX)	R 399.99	None	None	None
Need for Speed 4 (PSX)	R 349.99	R 369.00	R 409.99	R 410.00
Big Air (PSX)	R 379.99	R 369.00	R 409.99	R 410.00
Dungeon Keeper 2 (PC)	R 299.99	R 299.00	NA	NA
Alien Versus Predator (PC)	R 299.99	R 299.00	NA	NA
Redline (PC)	R 299.99	R 299.00	NA	NA
TA: Kingdoms (PC)	R 299.99	R 299.00	NA	NA

Release Lists

New Age Gaming takes no responsibility for the accuracy of this information. Any of the release dates may be changed if the developer deems it necessary. The only official shipping date that most developers give these days is, "When it's done!"

PC Release List

August

02 - Civilization: Test of Time - MICROPROSE
02 - Homeworld - SIERRA
02 - Outcast - INFOGRAMES
03 - Core Rules 2.0 Expansion - TSR
05 - Starfleet Command - INTERPLAY
10 - Braveheart - EIDOS INTERACTIVE
10 - Dragon Magazine Archive - TSR
10 - System Shock 2 - ELECTRONIC ARTS
16 - 1602 A.D. - GT INTERACTIVE
16 - Re-Volt - ACCLAIM ENTERTAINMENT
16 - Road to Moscow - UBI SOFT
16 - Mob Rule - SIMON & SCHUSTER
17 - Slansky's Table Poker - INTERPLAY
24 - Tiberian Sun - WESTWOOD
24 - Viva Soccer - INTERPLAY
25 - Cutthroats - EIDOS INTERACTIVE
30 - Seven Kingdoms II - UBI SOFT
31 - Delta Force 2 - ELECTRONIC ARTS
31 - Madden NFL 2000 - ELECTRONIC ARTS

September

01 - Age of Empires II - MICROSOFT
01 - Driver - GT INTERACTIVE
01 - Forgotten Realms: Atlas - TSR
01 - Jumbo Jack - HAVAS INTERACTIVE
01 - Oni - BUNGIE
01 - Pro Pilot 2000 - HAVAS INTERACTIVE
01 - Messiah - SHINY
01 - Wizardry VIII - SIR-TECH CANADA
07 - NHL Hockey 2000 - ELECTRONIC ARTS
07 - Tetris - HASBRO INTERACTIVE
14 - Expert Pool - ACTIVISION
14 - Flight Unlimited 3 - ELECTRONIC ARTS
14 - Hired Guns - ACTIVISION
15 - Abomination - EIDOS INTERACTIVE
15 - Gabriel Knight III - SIERRA
15 - Sinistar Unleashed - THQ
15 - Unreal Tournament - GT INTERACTIVE
20 - West Front: Sea Lion - TALONSOFT
21 - Grand Prix 500 - HASBRO INTERACTIVE
21 - Nations - ACTIVISION
21 - Panzer Elite - ACTIVISION
21 - Scrabble II - HASBRO INTERACTIVE
21 - Space Invaders - ACTIVISION
21 - Tachyon - ELECTRONIC ARTS
24 - Planescape: Torment - INTERPLAY
27 - Revenant - EIDOS INTERACTIVE
28 - Battlezone 2 - ACTIVISION

PSX Release List

August

02 - Croc 2 - FOX INTERACTIVE
02 - R Type Delta - AGETEC
03 - Quake II - ACTIVISION
03 - WWF: Attitude - ACCLAIM
10 - Chocobo Racing - ELECTRONIC ARTS
10 - NCAA GameBreaker 2000 - SCEA
10 - Sled Storm - ELECTRONIC ARTS
16 - Black Bass with Blue Marlin - HOT B USA
16 - Championship Motorcross - THQ
16 - Shao Lin - THQ
17 - Um Jammer Lammy - SCEA
23 - Thousand Arms - ALTUS
24 - Konami Arcade Classics - KONAMI
24 - NFL Blitz 2000 - MIDWAY
24 - Re-Volt - ACCLAIM
24 - Viva Soccer - INTERPLAY
25 - Silhouette Mirage - WORKING DESIGNS
25 - Tonic Trouble - UBI SOFT
31 - Madden NFL 2000 - ELECTRONIC ARTS
31 - NFL GameDay 2000 - SCEA
31 - Shadowman - ACCLAIM
31 - Tiny Tank - SCEA

September

01 - Monster Rancher 2 - TECMO
01 - Vegas Games 2000 - 3DO
07 - Final Fantasy VIII - SQUARESOFT
07 - G Police 2- ACTIVISION
14 - Die Hard II - FOX INTERACTIVE
14 - Jet Moto 3 - SCEA
14 - Kingsley - ACTIVISION
14 - NHL Hockey 2000 - ELECTRONIC ARTS
14 - Omega Boost - SCEA
15 - Bass Landing - AGETEC
15 - Demolition Racer - INFOGRAMES
15 - Dino Crisis - CAPCOM
15 - Gallop Racer - TECMO
15 - LEGO Racers- LEGO MEDIA
15 - Toonstein - VATICAL ENTERTAINMENT
20 - Rat Attack! - MINDSCAPE
21 - Madden NFL 2000 - ELECTRONIC ARTS
21 - Suikoden 2 - KONAMI
21 - Space Invaders - ACTIVISION
21 - Wipeout 3 - ACTIVISION
24 - WCW Mayhem - ELECTRONIC ARTS
28 - NHL FaceOff 2000 - SCEA
30 - Clock Tower 2 - AGETEC
30 - Rising Zan - AGETEC

2 Million for Gran Turismo

In the United States, Sony Computer Entertainment America announced that their racing title has surpassed the two million mark. The title, produced by Polyphony Digital (a satellite company of Sony Computer Entertainment) is now the best selling Playstation title ever and has sold over 6.86 million units around the world. With the game's amazing graphics, vehicle selection, sound and pure game play the level for all to follow has been set in gold. The sequel is also on its way and with the tremendous response to the first game the second is guaranteed to do well. The second game will feature around 400 authentic vehicles and over 20 different racing tracks.

Metal Gear Solid for PC

TACTICAL ESPIONAGE ACTION
METAL GEAR SOLID

Konami and Microsoft have decided on which games they will be porting across to the PC. A multiplayer version of Metal Gear solid is the big one as well as Silent Hill. Also, Konami will be developing Combat Flight Simulator, Links, Age of Empires and a few others for the PlayStation 2. News like this always seems to grey out the lines between the PC and the PlayStation 2.

No Maps for Quake 3

Brandon James, map designer at id Software has made an abrupt departure from the company. The timing around this decision is problematic for the development team but they have managed to divide up the workload between the rest of the team. Despite the rumours, the talented level designer was not fired but rather chose to pursue personal interests. The big question is how will this affect the release of Quake Arena? Not at all is the response from id and the game will be released as always, when it's done... In more Quake 3 news, an updated test version of Quake III: Arena has hit the Internet with a number of code amendments, a new map and team play mode. An hour after the 30 MB file was posted the Internet took a major slow down as hundreds of thousands of keen Quake players started sucking the file down. As they say, only id Software can jam the Internet like this.

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JUST CHARTS

Local PC Charts

Position	Name	Last Month	Total Months
1.	Lands of Lore 3	3	1
2.	World Cup Cricket	1	1
3.	Myth 2 SoulBlighter	4	1
4.	Age of Empires Gold Edition	6	1
5.	Dungeon Keeper 2	New	New
6.	Superbike World Champs	8	1
7.	Sim City 3000	7	1
8.	Half Life	9	1
9.	Civilization Call to Power	2	1
10.	Sim City 2000 Classic Edition	10	2

International PC Charts

Position	Name	Developer/Distributor
1.	Alpha Centauri Firaxis	Electronic Arts
2.	Might and Magic 7	New World/3DO
3.	Baldur's Gate	Bioware/Interplay
4.	Heroes of Might and Magic 3	New World/3DO
5.	Half-Life	Valve/Sierra
6.	Starcraft/Add-on	Blizzard
7.	Might and Magic 6	New World/3DO
8.	Total Annihilation: Kingdoms	Cavedog/GT
9.	MechWarrior 3	Zipper/MicroProse
10.	Dungeon Keeper 2	Bullfrog/Electronic Arts

Local PlayStation Charts

Position	Name	Last Month	Total Months
1.	Gran Turismo	8	7
2.	Crash Bandicoot 3	9	5
3.	Metal Gear Solid	7	1
4.	C&C Retaliation	6	1
5.	Tekken III	4	5
6.	Fifa '99	3	5
7.	Heart of Darkness	5	1
8.	Brian Lara Cricket	1	5
9.	Driver	New	New
10.	Need for Speed 4	New	New

International PlayStation Charts

Position	Name	Developer/Distributor
1.	Metal Gear Solid	Konami
2.	Final Fantasy 8	Square
3.	Lunar	Game Arts
4.	Star Ocean	Tri-Ace/Enix/Sony
5.	Syphon Filter	Eidetic/989 Studios
6.	Gran Turismo	Sony
7.	Driver	Reflections/GT
8.	Ehrgeiz	Square
9.	Shadow Madness	Craveyard/Crave
10.	Tomb Raider 3	Eidos

TOTAL ANNIHILATION

KINGDOMS

COMPETITION

Exclusive TA Kingdoms Jacket and 5 copies of the game up for grab

What are the four races that are featured in Total Annihilation: Kingdoms?

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BACKCHAT

Thank you to everyone who wrote in this month, unfortunately we cannot reply to all of the letters, but we do read them all. You can send your letters and e-mail to the addresses on the postcard. Please remember to include all your details when you write in or we can't send you your prize should you win. Don't ask us to change your prize or magically convert it into cash. As always, the Editors decision is final and that's that.

Well done to **Jonathan Moon** who wins our editors choice this month - keep the questions coming. Until next month...

Backchat
PO Box 2749
Alberton
1449

letters@nag.co.za

Immature Programmers

What the heck is wrong with most people in South Africa when it comes to game development? I was totally overwhelmed when I heard about the first S.A. game, Toxic Bunny and then The Tainted - finally, there was a light in the dark void of South African gaming. A while back, I surfed to Celestial's site, only to find that it had been shut down due to a lack of funds (and I read their computers had been stolen during the same period). If that wasn't bad enough, it seemed that nobody was interested in helping them to put "The Tainted" on the shelves, which really sucked! You can imagine my joy when I heard that Celestial was still going strong and now have a distributor. Why is it that in S.A, people in "high places" have such a negative outlook on game developers and programmers? In most other countries, game development is encouraged in schools and other institutions but here in S.A, if you mention that you're interested in game development, your peers look down at you. Then they bombard you with cynical rubbish that game programming is for children. If it was, why is it so popular overseas - because they're all immature programmers? Rubbish! Well, if there's any of those cynical people out their, reading this magazine just to find something to nag about, I have a news flash for you. Game programming is extremely hard work and the people involved in it are some of the most (if not the best) creative thinkers, programmers and developers in the computer industry. If those people would just stop and think for a moment about what potential game development has for this country, we might just put South Africa on the map in the gaming world - something that could result in quite a lot of income for this country as well. I have to write a program for the end of this year (studies), but instead of writing the usual database application, I'm attempting to write a game. Some of the judges might blow their top, but I don't care. At least my demo period will give me the opportunity to show them the work, time and skill that goes into writing computer games and maybe, just maybe, they'll realise that game programming and development is something worth fighting for. Hell, for all I know, this letter might change someone's perspective... I really hope it does.

E-mail
Cape Town

I remember many people telling me when I was younger that playing games and sitting in front of a computer was a waste of time. How I can laugh at those narrow thinkers now, the kind of thinking and attitude you describe in your letter reeks of fear. Fear of the unknown is mankind's greatest enemy - how far do you think the human race would have evolved if nobody was prepared to venture out into the unknown from the safety of their caves? The message here is clear, ignore the feeble minded masses and fight for what you believe in. Sooner or later everyone's going to have to realise that computers and gaming have a big place in the future and there's nothing that's going to stop that from happening.
Ed

What do you mean?

Greetings, I always read your magazine from cover to cover every month and love every minute of it. I have a question about the terms you use sometimes and your abbreviations for things. Here are some of the terms I'm not sure about. I know AI means artificial intelligence but what are clipping problems, fogging, pop-up syndrome, I had a longer list but I can't remember them all now. Please let me know, as I'm sure other readers out there would also like this information.

Adrian Scott
Richards Bay

We've received a number of letters like this one over the last few months and will now divulge these closely guarded trade secrets. In the reviewing bible these terms are all explained in-depth but for this forum I'll condense the entries for easier consumption. You are perfectly correct about the AI thing, although the term artificial intelligence is something of a contradiction. Clipping refers to the graphics engine's ability to make solid objects behave like solid objects, the worst example of clipping seen to date was in Tomb Raider 3 when our lovely heroin disappeared from view after accidentally side-leaping into a wall. If a game has clipping problems then it means that while playing you'll see areas of the map that don't join together correctly, your character standing in mid-air or half-way through a wall and in some bad cases you'll be able to see through walls and doors. Fogging is a technique that programmers use to try and speed up a game by not having the entire level on display all the time, i.e. objects in the distance are always hidden in a veil of fog, which looks atmospheric but is really a cheap parlour trick. In a similar vein the same problem occurs when using the pop-up technique, popular in racing games. Here, roadside objects like trees and rocks appear out of thin air when you race towards them. The reason we use terms like this is largely due to space constraints, if we had to explain all the terminology in each review we'd need an extra ten pages all together.
Ed

Not happy

I've been a supporter of your publication for quite some time. The overall quality is acceptable and the cover CD gets around. The promotional posters are a welcome gift, and the competitions are worth a "look at". The previews and reviews seem to improve every month and the rest of the magazine is worth another "look at". All in all worth the R18.95 thousands of South Africans spend on it monthly. Or is it? Let it be known that I am the supposed first person to criticise the "Holy NAG"! Oh yeah! Anticipating Episode I and the monthly NAG is what gets me through life (well not entirely, you dare tell me to get out more!). I'm writing this letter after I've finished scanning through the June Edition. This is the most boring issue I've read to date. The cover CD didn't live up to my expectations as well. But that's cool (The Star Wars poster was worth the 20 bucks, BTW. How about another one for the adventure game?), since May was a slow month in the gaming industry, and you guys can't please me all the time! But I've come to the conclusion that NAG is one big advertisement. All the ads give the magazine its backbone (literally and figuratively!). Also, I'd like to invent a new term. Gamers Prejudice. Now on the subject of the ads, I count more or less 21 of them (excluding the ones on the inside of the cover and the one on the back). That's at least 20 pages that could have featured more news, previews and reviews. And if there aren't enough games to review, how about giving your reviewers or other famous people in the SA Gaming community (like the legendary Witblitz or some other Quake1/2 or StarCraft hero) the opportunity to write a monthly column? Also, how about publishing some walkthroughs or strategies (like the ones on BroodWar) for all the diverse titles out there. As for your lame PlayStation reviews, drop them immediately! They suck bricks, and why would a PSX player buy NAG when he can buy The Official SA PlayStation Magazine which also features a PSX Demo CD? Spend the space you usually spend on PSX reviews on PC previews, reviews, columns and walkthroughs/strategies.
And now on to the subject of Gamers Prejudice. Everybody suffers from these symptoms. Everybody (including me!). You might just not like a company because of one of their games, or just because of the company (for instance, I hate Westwood Studios because of the C&C series). But you guys being game reviewers should try really hard to overcome these feelings. In the December 1998 Issue, one of the reviewers reviewed Sin, giving it a mere 79% (which it probably deserved). But it seemed to me that no effort had gone into this review. Anyways, a few pages later I find Shogo MAD's review. It is given a whopping 90%, and the reviewer says he updated Shogo to v2.0, fixing a few AI issues and some minor bugs. Now I've played Shogo, and it was worth it, although I finished the game twice in 24 hours. Hmmm. Is that value for money? Is that worth a 90%? I think not. In the long run Sin beats Shogo hands down. But to top it all off, the June Issue features a review of the Sin Mission Pack, which I also have. Really nice, the way Sin should have been. The reviewer, same one who did the Shogo review, gives this a discriminating 70%. Once again, because of its name. Sin. Well now mister Editor. My letter is in your hands. You decide whether it gets printed or not (I know it's a little on the lengthy side, but who cares?). You make the decision about the columns, strategies and walkthroughs.
And for all those brown noses out there who keep trying to win the monthly prize by writing all those soggy letters, give it a rest!

Willem Grobler
Pretoria

You aren't the first to criticise our magazine - I usually just delete anything negative and only print the good stuff. Jokes aside, you've made a few comments that beg to be put in perspective. Firstly regarding the adverts, the pages in the magazine dedicated to advertising are there because they pay for the monthly publication of New Age Gaming. If we didn't have any adverts we'd have to charge you around R50 or more an issue and this would be without the cover CD or poster. As it is we've managed to keep our price under R20 since the first issue and besides, our ad to page ratio is lower than most other publications. The absolute bottom line is this: No adverts, no magazine. Simple. Now ask any other magazine the same question and you'll get the same answer. Now the term you refer to as 'Gamers Prejudice' does exist in the gaming community but will never show its ugly face in our magazine. The story behind Sin started with the Beta we received long before the final game ever hit the shelves. We played the Beta often and based on the game dynamics and a number of other features we were all looking forward to the final product. However, when the final version did reach us something had gone horribly wrong, bugs had appeared and the overall finished version was a substandard version of its Beta (an extremely odd occurrence). You yourself said that it got what it deserved, and you are right. The add-on pack also didn't offer anything revolutionary nor did it add to the game as much as say the StarCraft expansion did. Add-on packs really need to be something special to impress us. I hope this gives you a fair idea of what we're all about and thanks for your comments, it's great to get feedback like this and only helps us to improve the magazine for our readers.
Ed

Big plans

When you buy a new game, you usually play it for a while and then say, damn, if only they had done this or that. I have definitely said this about a few games before. Some of my friends actually design games (on paper) of what they would like their perfect game to be, but they never actually do anything towards making the game a reality. The first thing that most of us do not have access to are the people who actually create games and make the classics we play today. You people at NAG should have a column or even a page of ideas/plans from gamers. The best idea/plan could win a prize and the worst would just get thrown away. Somewhere out there in the public, there may be a great game in the waiting. If an exceptional idea or plan comes along, you could hold a poll on it, by asking readers to send in their opinions on it. If the public thinks it's great, you could submit it to a design company like Celestial for serious consideration. We have an exceptional South African gaming magazine. Now we need an exceptional South African game, something that can compete with Quake Arena or Command & Conquer.

Richard Hampson
Howick

This is a nice idea but we already get a few of these 'game' concepts each month, and I'll quote (out of context). 'Me and my friends have this idea for a game that should combine elements of Tomb Raider, Quake and Command & Conquer - it should also have a kind of virtual control system and work using reality goggles. Here is a picture I drew in crayon of my dog spot - he's a brown puppy with black spots. My mom said I should write this letter...' This is the reason why I'd be worried about launching a column like this. Don't despair though - in the next few months we are going to be starting something that will have all you aspirant game writers in tears of joy.
Ed

NAG

Something bothers me. The name New Age Gaming, does it have anything to do with the new age movement? At first I was offended by the name and there are many people I know who feel the same way. So would you please explain the name. I hope you will be shocked by this letter and quickly prove me wrong.

Geres
Standerton

Why on Earth would anyone be offended by the name of a magazine? Now as far as the new age movement goes, what exactly are you referring to, or which one - new age thinking or new age way of doing things? How strange.
Ed

Improvements

I would like to see some improvements. Firstly, introduce a comic character and give him a whole page (yes, a whole page!). Secondly, downgrade your paper from the glossy, expensive to a environmentally friendly and cheap alternative one (PC Joker uses one where you almost do not notice the difference and the picture quality is great, spend the money you save on... free, older games). Bring the classics, games that have little sale value (1994 and beyond and were programmed by South Africans!). Thirdly, in each issue have a head and shoulders picture of each of your editors and their personal favourite and the game they most dislike. Also let the editors tells us what genres they like e.g. sports and action. Otherwise, I shall buy your magazine from now on and I like the poster. Your ratings sometimes seem a little high, for example 91 is ONLY 9% off the perfect game. Please give these ratings only to very special games, not 2-3 games an issue!

Jan Eger
E-mail

Thanks for your comments - we aim to please. Regarding your requests, we are planning to launch a cartoon series in the near future and have some ideas that should have our readers rolling on the floor in laughter while trying not to lose their lunch. The paper we use is biodegradable to a certain degree (just leave it out in the rain and you'll see what I mean). We will also be introducing the people behind NAG as soon as they've all lost some weight, combed their hair and changed their wardrobe but until then it's better that nobody is exposed to that kind of punishment.
Ed

First Person Gloss

The reason for writing to you is that I think we're all getting tired of seeing so many First Person Shooters around. All over the net there are sites dedicated to forthcoming Quake-like games. Why don't games developers rather try to give stunning graphics and superior game play to a less popular genre and try to popularise it?

Riaz Itzkin
Greenside

Yes, there is plenty of focus on the First Person genre but you're forgetting about all the real time strategy games out there like Total Annihilation: Kingdoms. Developers always use the latest and best technology when putting a game together and just because a game is a first person game doesn't mean it's automatically got superior game play. Just take sports titles for example, they all use cutting edge technology. The saying goes, never judge a game by its genre.
Ed

Please send all question and opinion related questions to
Backchat
Please send all your technical and troubleshooting questions to
Backchat Technical
Thanks for all the letters, send more!

Physical Violence & Cricket

The Ed's Note in the May issue is spot on. Having played numerous computer games (a lot of them first person shooters) I have still not had the urge to go and shoot anybody in real life. I don't and have never possessed a fireman and have never committed a violent act. How people can seriously believe that a game like Doom can drive a person to actual physical violence is almost laughable. If that were the case then not only me, but also millions of others would be certifiable prison cases. In fact, as pointed out by the Ed, these games offer a form of escape (stress reliever) and do more to prevent rather than encourage violence. After all you are the good guy saving the world in most of the games on offer.
I recently bought my copy of World Cup Cricket 99 before NAG had reviewed the game. Having played Brian Lara Cricket for a while I must throw in my 2 cents worth on WCC 99. The game to me is a bitter disappointment after the brilliance of SBK. It is so obvious that EA Sports shipped this game to meet the World Cup deadline. The graphics are excellent as is usually the case with the latest EA sports games but the playability of the game is pathetic. My 10-year-old daughter after one hour at the game had it taped. She is able to bowl out any side below 20 runs with the difficulty level at its highest setting. Having showed me the ropes I am also able to achieve this with little effort. Can we honestly believe that Kenya will bowl out South Africa for less than 20 runs time and time again at the 99 World Cup? Ball after ball you are able to run in, bowl in the same spot and the poor old CPU batsmen would play the same shot to the same fielder standing in the same fielding position. Result - all 10 batsmen caught out in the same fielding position. (Why is it always mid off?). Now that's not a playable PC game. What a yawn - after you get over the disappointment. I cannot believe that this game was properly tested and fixed before release. As an honest game player I rate Brian Lara Cricket a far superior game to WCC 99 (apart from the graphics). Who needs great graphics with no game play? I broke my one golden rule of never buying a PC game before trying a demo or reading a review from a credible game reviewer. Never again!

Jonathan Moon
E-mail

I was just starting to think that I was the only one around here who thought that the idea of computer games inciting violent behaviour was a ridiculous notion. It's good to know that I'm not alone, let us stand up and be counted - so far two. Does anyone else out there have an opinion on this topic or is it just me and Jonathan? This months challenge is for a head doctor to write in and share with us a professional point of view or perhaps a new way of looking at the problem. I'm also sorry to hear about your disappointing experience with the cricket (it hasn't been a terribly good year for this sport it seems - sorry I didn't hear that, please scream again!). You really should have known better, next time read the review first so I won't have to say - I told you so. Maybe your free copy of Dungeon Keeper 2 will make the whole ugly incident just go away.
Ed

KONAMI - HISTORY IN THE MAKING

AtariBaby concludes his investigation of Konami and makes no startling discoveries or interesting observations.

Well here it is, the last part of our look at Konami, it's hard to imagine how far they have come since their humble beginnings. Last month we ended off with the massive success they had with Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles and now we'll see how they went from this to Metal Gear Solid.

After the HUGE success of the Turtles, Konami took a well-deserved break from the arcade business. Not releasing any new titles in 1991 rather concentrating on rehashed versions of old games. Not surprisingly 1991 saw Konami suffer its biggest financial loss in its gaming history.

Early 1992 saw Konami returning to their old ways in releasing top titles. Relying again on its strong licensing team, Konami snatched the deal to release an arcade game based on The Simpsons, which is just beginning to achieve fame. Like the company's banner title, TMNT, The Simpsons was positioned as a four-player side-scrolling beat-em-up allowing players to use Marge, Homer, Bart, and Lisa simultaneously in an adventure to save Maggie from a mysterious evil kidnapper. (Losing her pacifier, as Homer bumps into a jeweller outside of his store, Maggie begins to suck on a huge diamond the jeweller has lost. She is snatched up and carried away).

METAL GEAR SOLID FOR THE PLAYSTATION

Because Acclaim secures home rights to produce Simpsons titles, Konami never released a home translation of the arcade game, which is arguably the strongest game holding The Simpsons license. Another key title Konami released in 1992 was Sunset Riders, a Western-theme walk-and-shoot game that featured elaborate cartoon artwork and appropriate audio, and which, like TMNT and The Simpsons, was a four-player title designed to suck in quarters. Well I guess that's about it.... Well almost! In 1993 Lethal Enforcers was released to be the company's strongest arcade title in 1993. Capitalising on improvements in photograph digitisation technologies, Konami makes this the most realistic cops-and-robbers game yet, placing one or two players in the first-person role of police officers who are assigned to blowing bank robbers to bits, with lots of blood and gore all over the screen.

NEMESIS, ANOTHER GREAT ARCADE GAME FROM KONAMI

Players could absorb several hits before being taken out of the action. Making the action more complex was the inclusion of hostages and other clearly innocent civilians trapped in the middle of the gunfire, and the player is forced to take out only villains while sparing the lives of the hapless (and often hazardously placed) good citizens. I must say I could never hit the woman held by the masked lad in the bank, so I used to blow them both to smithereens. Somehow I think this game could go down well in JHB at the moment.

Interestingly enough in 1995 Konami was asked to produce a similar simulator for the California Police Dept. that was used for combat and emergency training. With the birth of the PlayStation in 1994 a new market in gaming opened up and by 1996, Konami was firmly entrenched as a PlayStation developer and supporter, preferring the system to the Saturn (which seems not to be keeping pace with Sony's new machine). Yet, when Matsushita (Panasonic) acquired the 3DO's M2 chipset for a new game console, Konami surprised everyone by announcing that it would develop arcade games based on the M2 hardware with possible home versions to follow. Mysteriously noting that the M2 will be used in their arcade line-up for inexpensive titles demanding a reasonable amount of power. Nintendo announced that its long-awaited console will finally be coming to the market, but that the name "Ultra 64" has been changed to Nintendo 64 for world-wide release. Information suggests that Konami, which had wisely and ironically trademarked 'Ultra' years earlier (when Nintendo decided to restrict the number of games that one company could produce), was approached by Nintendo to turn over the 'Ultra' name.

Konami declined - with that name, it could be the only company permitted to release Ultra Football, Ultra Soccer, Ultra Baseball for the system, names so powerful that they would sell cartridges even without any promotional effort. The name was changed, and Konami's plans were scrapped, but not for lack of trying. Konami has managed to stay abreast of things in the gaming industry with their latest release being Metal Gear Solid for the PSX. Most recently rumours have been flying around that Konami has signed an exclusive deal with SEGA for a huge development deal on the Dreamcast but SEGA has remained fairly tight-lipped about it all... I wonder why!

WHO REMEMBERS THE MIGHTY GYRUSS?

IT'S A WRAP

And there you have it, as brief as possible, the gaming history behind Konami. So when next you see an old Yie Ar Kung Fu or a Pengo, spare a thought (and maybe a 50c) for the guys at Konami who made it all happen! Until next month when we uncover the hidden secrets of one of the most mysterious games that came to life in the 80's, Xevious, have a great gaming month and keep those Archive questions coming...will@radioalgoa.com.

[Keep an eye out for the Archives section in the next issue, it's receiving a major and much needed overhaul. This is a special pet project of mine because next month we're looking at one of my all time favourite games, Xevious-Ed.]

AtariBaby

TIMEPILOT - ANOTHER KONAMI FAVOURITE

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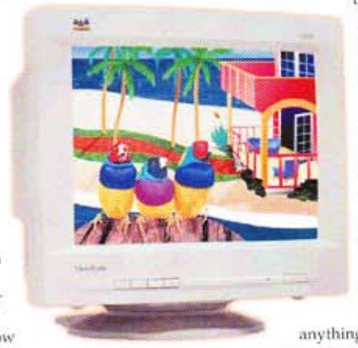
UPGRADING For Idiots

PART 4 - MONITORS

So many people think all monitors are created equal, unfortunately this isn't the case, the differences between monitors is usually found in their specification. Most people tend to look at the monitor and make a purchase decision based on the look and never take the specification into consideration. At the end of the day a low-end monitor can damage your eyesight and even cause headaches in some people. I will detail what to look out for when buying a monitor and explain what their functions are so that you can make an informed decision.
This month we discuss monitors so you should be well on your way to making informed purchase decisions for buying a new computer or simply upgrading your existing one. When it comes to monitors, buying the cheapest will cost you in the long run and you need to find a monitor with the highest specification at a reasonable price.

CRT versus LCD

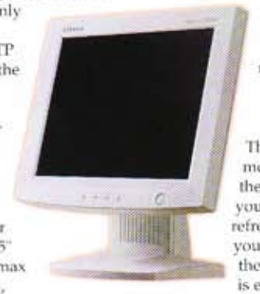
Recently LCD (Liquid Crystal Display) displays have made some advancements, but right at this point in time CRT (Cathode Ray Tube) displays are still being bought by the majority of computer users. This isn't surprising since a 14" LCD display generally sells for about R12000.00 ($2000.00). For now CRT is still the way to go and when LCD prices drop enough I am sure everyone will be switching to them. LCD has obvious advantages such as a digital input and higher image quality than CRT displays. The biggest advantage in my opinion is that LCD monitors require less desktop space than CRT monitors leaving you with more space to work with. For now I will only be discussing CRT monitors since this is what almost everyone is still using.



Screen Size

The first aspect to decide on is the size of monitor you are looking at buying. I know everyone would love to own a 21" monitor but price also has to be taken into consideration since 21" monitors start at about R5000.00 and can go up to over R14000.00. There is a misconception that most people have when it comes to deciding on the size, usually the viewable area is smaller than the specified 14", 15", 17", 19" or 21". If you get the specifications for a monitor you are looking at you will notice that the viewable area is always smaller e.g. a 14" will only have a viewable area of 13.5".

Generally you should never consider anything less than a 15" as it has become the standard for desktops in the last year. 17" monitors are usually good for general home or office use, and only people using CAD/CAM/ DTP applications, or the very serious gamer should consider a 19" or 21" screen. A general rule of thumb is the bigger the screen the higher the resolution. 15" screens usually max out at 1280x1024, and 17" at 1600x1200, anything above this is the domain of 19" and 21" monitors. Even with monitors capable of resolutions such as 1920x1440, most people will still stay in 1280x1024, the reason being that most on screen text and objects are still discernible and very legible, although it is great if your monitor supports higher resolutions especially for gaming.



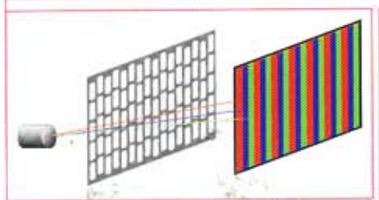
Refresh Rates

The next aspect, and probably the most important, is the refresh rate of the monitor in the resolutions that you will be using it most in. The refresh rate is the amount of times your monitor can be repainted from the top to the bottom in one second. It is expressed by the vertical refresh rate which is measured in Hz e.g. a vertical refresh rate of 85Hz means your monitor can be updated 85 times in one second. Your monitor should support 75Hz in the highest resolution that you will be using it, anything less than 75Hz and the screen tends to flicker. You might not notice the flicker but it does tend to irritate your eyes and can cause headaches in some people with prolonged use. If the monitor supports refresh rates higher than this you need not worry.

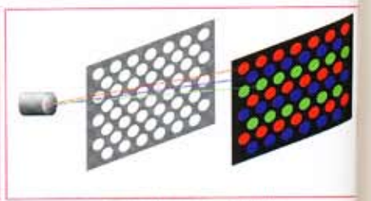
There is a flip side to the refresh rate aspect and that is your graphics card. You need to make certain that it also supports the resolution and refresh rates that you are looking for. This has become more evident with 3D accelerators, which are pushing 80+ frames per second. It doesn't help if you have a 3D card that does 85 Fps in 1024x768 and your monitor is only capable of a vertical refresh rate or 60Hz at that resolution.
You also have to find out whether the monitor is interlaced or non-interlaced. In all probability it will be non-interlaced since most manufacturers have dropped making interlaced monitors a while ago. This affects the refresh rate as well since an interlaced monitor requires two passes to update the screen, every even number line in one pass and then every odd numbered line on the second pass, while a non-interlace monitor only requires one pass.

CRT Screen Technology

A CRT (Cathode Ray Tube) monitor utilises an electron gun to shoot electron beams through a mask onto the inside of the glass monitor which is coated with phosphor dots. The electron beam causes the dots to glow, which produces an image on the screen.
The two types of CRT monitors in production today use either a shadow mask or aperture grill mask through which the electron beam is focused. Both of these monitors produce excellent quality images but have unique strong points.
The shadow mask, a metal plate punched with holes, are preferred for CAD/CAM, heavy text applications and precision graphics work while the aperture grille, a wire frame strung with vertical metal strings, are preferred by graphics artists and desktop publishers. The shadow mask produces a much clearer and crisper image while the aperture grille produces brighter, richer and more saturated colour.
This makes it easier to choose a monitor with a specific mask based on the type of application you will be using most. Fortunately both of them are equally good for gaming.



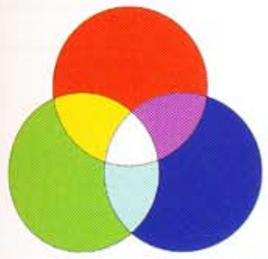
AN APERTURE GRILLE CRT



A SHADOW MASK CRT

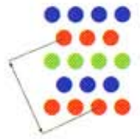
How Colour Is Displayed

As explained an electron beam lights up phosphors on the inside of your screen to produce an image. The way colour is produced is the same as on TVs, three different coloured dots, red, green and blue produce the colours. These three colours are combined in different intensities to produce different colours. For example if all three dots, red, green and blue are activated at their full intensity the colour white is produced and when none are activated the colour black. Each of these dots can have a varying degree of intensity to produce all the colours available.



Dot and Stripe Pitch

The last important aspect to look for when buying a monitor is the dot pitch or stripe pitch, depending whether the monitor uses a shadow mask or aperture grill.
Dot pitch is the distance measured in millimetres between two phosphors of the same colour and stripe pitch is the distance between two stripes of the same colour. For example, dot pitch is the vertical distance between two red phosphors and stripe pitch is the horizontal difference between two red stripes. Images look smoother and clearer on screen the closer these dots or stripes are.
Due to the obvious difference between dot and stripe pitch you cannot compare them directly. You need to allow for some slack for the dot pitch. For example a monitor with a 0.27mm dot pitch is comparable to a monitor with a stripe pitch of 0.25mm. That being said you should look for a monitor with the lowest possible dot or stripe pitch and remember that the lower it is the more you will be paying. A decent dot pitch is 0.25mm and most monitors have this size today. If you are looking at a monitor that uses an aperture grill try to find one with a stripe pitch of 0.23mm.
The dot and stripe pitch is especially important for high-resolution displays if you are considering working or playing games in resolutions of 1600x1200 or higher - always keep that in mind when shopping for a monitor.

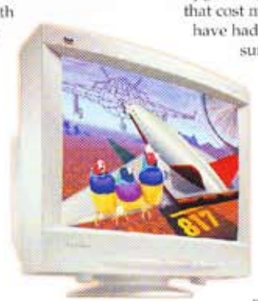


DOT PITCH

STRIPE PITCH

Features To Watch Out For

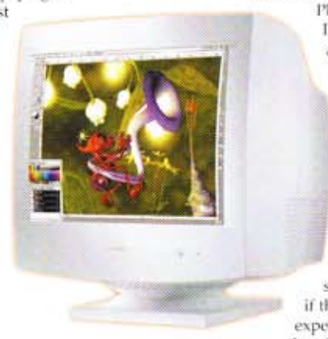
Controls used in monitors make it easier to manage your display and there are currently three different types of controls used in monitors to configure brightness, colour, contrast and the like. The three control types are Analogue, Digital and On Screen Digital.
Analogue usually comes with economy monitors that cost less while digital comes with higher end and more expensive monitors. The advantage of digital is that the controls are more precise and the monitor saves your setting when it is turned off.
The most ideal controls are referred to as a digital OSD (On Screen Display) which works similar to digital controls with the added advantage of actually being able to see the settings visually on screen. Most of the newer monitors ship with OSD controls with front side buttons to bring up the OSD and navigate through the series of menu options available. An OSD also enables the user to access advanced functions such as trapezoid, parallelogram and rotation, which affects the edges, and rotation of the display.



Higher quality monitors usually also come with a degauss function as well, which rids the display of magnetic build up over time. This feature needs to be used sparingly since over indulgence of the degauss function can damage your monitor.
Plug and Play should also be considered when buying a monitor since it eases installation and allows Windows 95/98 to correctly determine the monitor's refresh rate and maximum resolutions.
Another interesting feature to look out for is a USB hub. A lot of the bigger displays (17" or higher) are shipping with a USB hub built into the monitor. This makes it easy to change USB devices without having to fiddle behind your machine all the time.

In Closing

When you are in the market for a monitor try and stay away from lesser-known manufacturers and look for well-known branded monitors. Viewsonic, Sony, Phillips, MAG Innovision and NEC are the more known brands, although there are smaller manufacturers such as Hyundai, Samsung etc., which also manufacture excellent monitors. The best way is to research the specifications and see if they live up to your expectations. Just remember the higher the specifications the more you will be forking out of your pocket for the monitor. On the other hand it is wiser to pay more now and keep the monitor for a longer period before you need to upgrade again. I am still using a 21" monitor that cost me a bundle back in 1995 and to date I have had no problems whatsoever. Also make sure that the monitor comes with a decent warranty period such as a 3 or 5 year warranty and that the manufacturer has a local representative capable of doing technical support.
Once again make sure you get a manual for your monitor when you buy it. The manual contains all the necessary specifications you might require to set it up correctly under Windows. This is generally the case if your monitor doesn't support Plug and Play or doesn't ship with an installation disk.



Next month we will be looking at soundcards and afterwards at smaller peripherals. Till then you can do some research on monitors and visit all the respective manufacturers web sites to obtain specifications.

If you did not have the privilege to be at the recent E3 computer show in Los Angeles, California, on display were a number of titles that 'hit the mark'. One such title that everyone is talking about is 'The Sims', coming at the end of the year from Will Wright, creator of Sim City.

Derek dela Fuente

Already with over nearly 4 months to go there are conflicting reports as to its release date. Some say summer, some say end of the year, which is now more likely, for it is reaching almost cult status in the USA with web sites and magazine columns appearing almost daily about the game. Billed as a strategy game it is almost like a virtual pet come Little Computer People game and could even be viewed as a 'fly on the wall' simulation where you watch the progression of a collection of people and their daily routines. Maxis has always focused on city or planet building but The Sims is about controlling a neighbourhood, focusing on families of artificial people. You control how they live and act by creating their environment, constructing homes for them and maintaining their lifestyle, utilities, and other necessities. You must help your Sims achieve career goals and make friends with neighbours. The game is open ended with so much to do it will have you captivated from the moment you start.

Genre: People Simulation

Developer: Maxis

Publisher: Electronic Arts

Supplier: EA Africa
Tel: (011) 803-1212
Expected Release Date: August 99

Internet:
www.maxis.com

A dream in the making

Placed in charge of a neighbourhood of Sims it is up to you to show them that they're living in your world now! It is like Sim City but you are more involved, not in the making of the world, but in the ways the characters on screen react and interact. There are so many things to do and see that 'The Sims' is going to be one of those games that can be viewed as intellectual, or by most players as a really innovative approach to a strategy simulation game. You can force the characters into a life of crime or help them live life in the fast lane. Build them a luxurious mansion or dump them into a dilapidated shack. Let them party like swinging singles or fall in love, get married and raise a family. They can live out your wildest dreams or experience your worst nightmares. It is up to you to decide ... their fate is in your hands.

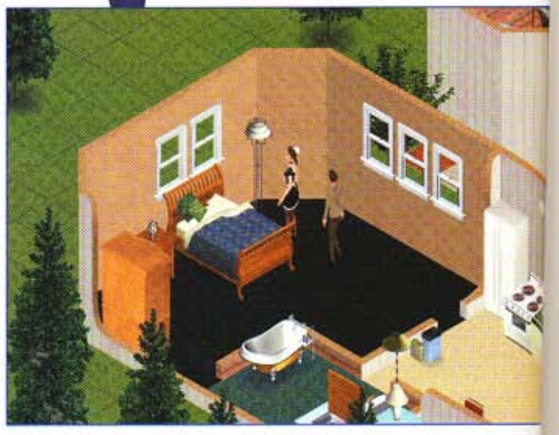
Unemployed

The look of The Sims, as with most Maxis games, is almost old fashioned, many might call basic, but its appeal lies in its solid ideas and continually changing gameplay. No two games you play could ever be the same. Viewed from isometric vantage points, you look down on the character you control at the start of the game and for instance you can create a chap called Michael, who is unemployed with no money living the life of a bachelor *[Hey, watch it-Ed]*. It's pizza for tea and a night watching the TV. Not very exciting but you can change things if you are clever.

The options open to the creation of this one person are adjusting their skills and making sure that your character fulfils the eight basic needs like hunger, comfort, hygiene, bladder, energy, plus other skills. Each of the needs has to be fulfilled for you to keep him happy and healthy!

He can go and earn some money and before you can say, The Simpson's, yes it does have the same American slant and humour going on, you will find yourself helping Michael move to a new neighbourhood. Build a new home and kick-start a new career, which is pretty top secret. To build you must have money and construction is very nifty for you can lay out the hall and rooms on a construction screen and then place it down.

Living in a new location brings forth-new surprises, not least some of the people who just love to meet and talk to Michael. Life is pretty sweet now and when things are going well, they just roll along, including a new woman. You will see Michael's relationship develop, with marriage and the patter of little tiny feet as a new home starts to build. If that all sounds straight forward let me inform you that in between these phases a lot will happen and it is you that will have total control over the unfolding events



If it exists in real life then it'll be in the game, no stone has been left unturned, you'll even get to play with a French Maid!

because you are in charge of a neighbourhood of Sims and their life is in your hands. Simply create a family and build them a home. Then help your Sims pursue a successful career, earn lots of money, make friends, and find romance - or totally mess their lives up! There is no right or wrong way to play this game. However, you'll put your 'people skills' to the test as you deal with family, friends, careers, and chaos to help your Sims come out on top! Now as you can see it is starting to become slightly more complex. One pleasing factor is that the game never becomes too complex because with dialogue and a great view on the world you can easily ascertain what to do!

There are lots of options on offer and you can choose from a library of pre-generated families or create your own Sims if you really want to spice things up. The Sims can pursue any of 10 possible career paths and ultimately become an astronaut, an actor, a criminal mastermind, an international spy, which is one that many will choose, or even the Mayor of SimCity. The creation of so many options gives the game its unlimited open-ended gameplay and allows you to help your Sims develop and mature. The game is about building up the cast and making friends. If you think of this as a real life simulation then you will come closer to understanding the essence of the game. Have conversations, compliment or insult your neighbours, argue, fight or even smooth talk the girl next door and eventually fall in love. As you can see the game is very unique in its approach to character building. Not only do you have the interactive personal process but you also have what Maxis is famous for - the ability to actually build and design homes, be it a one-room bachelor pad or grand 40-room mansion. You will be able to use the game's powerful architectural design tool to build the home of your dreams for your Sims. You can go into minute detail from hot tubs, swimming pools, lava lamps, pool tables and giant screen TV's - over 150 different objects to furnish your homes to download new objects and character skins.

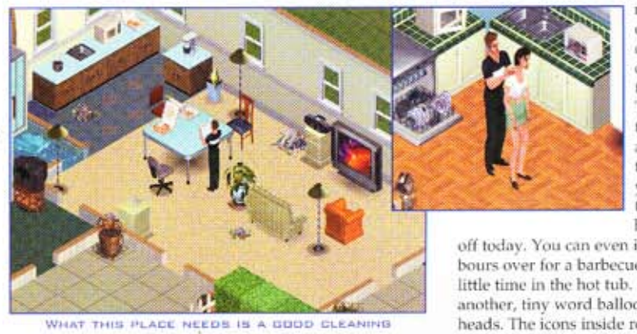
Urban Planning

The Sims' started life as an architecture simulation. It's roots are apparent as you begin the game. You start out by creating rooms, laying out floor tiles, and adding the basic amenities on a plot of land in a Sim neighbourhood. To start you'll need a bathroom, a kitchen, a few doors and windows to let in the light, and each window you put in does brighten up the walls a bit. The interface is intuitive, and instantly recognisable to any veteran of Maxis' Sim City series.

Then your Sim appears. A far more advanced version of Sim City's little black dots, this 3D-modeled guy, or girl, moves into your structure and begins living his or her life. This is the main part of the game, simply watching your Sim as it does the things that guys and girls do. Among other activities they hang out, shower, eat, watch TV, make friends and go to work. And at first, watching this virtual creature as it lives out its rather mundane existence doesn't seem inspiring. And seeing as it's such a familiar world to anyone in American society who has a life, you have to wonder what's fun about it. But a decade later it may be hard to remember that before the existence of 'SimCity' urban planning wasn't a major American pastime.

nity for the game so players will be able to trade files and stories about their Sims on a collection of Websites. The underlying factor is that there is no right or wrong way to play the game and already the web is full of comments that people want to be implemented in the game and so the cult is already growing.

Grandfather in the kitchen!



What this place needs is a good cleaning

This is the 'After Tornado' view

The Game Design

The Sims has three main areas - Build, Buy and Live. In Build mode, you can put together your own house and design your own backyard. There is a lot of freedom in what one can do with the house construction tools. In Buy mode, you pick up objects from furniture or building blocks and move them into your house or backyard. Each of them has a cost and has different properties and actions that can be executed. An example of that is a pool table. One can practice pool or join someone playing.

On a computer, one can play a game, study or look for a job. The computer is the most expensive item but benefits the Sims more. The Live mode is where you can control your characters, develop relationships and see how well your home is running. The characters in the game have needs, like hunger, comfort, fun. They have personalities like lazy or active. The characters can get married and have kids. When things get bad it is possible that one of your characters can die. Your home resides in a neighbourhood. The neighbourhood is made of dozens of lots, and you have total control on who moves into these lots. The characters you create in one house become potential neighbours for your other characters.

You can customise the way your characters look. Maxis will provide several hundred different character 'skins' in the game, and you will be able to match heads and body types any way you want. The graphics were made in such a way that users could modify any of them and save them under another name. This means you can add new character faces and looks in the game. More importantly the interface is pretty friendly, being mouse-driven and context sensitive, so clicking on someone gives you the option of what he or she can talk about or how they can interact with an object near them.

Real Life

Just like in life, the possibilities are endless, but in this world things don't take nearly as long. And every game you save onto your hard drive creates another resident for your virtual village. The secretary with the two level house you created yesterday may be the future bride of the young office worker in the pizza littered one-bedroom that you saved off today. You can even invite your new neighbours over for a barbecue, and let them grab a little time in the hot tub. As they 'talk' to one another, tiny word balloons appear over their heads. The icons inside represent their point of view. The grinning skull in the Uncle Sam hat obviously represented the liberal viewpoint. Maxis are still looking to add lots more features with as many direction and slants as possible so although things will not change in terms of the basic ideas, there could be more implemented and this could build into a massive game with global appeal.

Derek dela Fuente

Maxis has placed a strong focus on being able to create and use the Internet to send features of your games to other people and get feedback. It is hoped that you may eventually be able to download famous houses and buildings and Maxis wish to develop a strong online commu-

PREVIEWS UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Eidos's bulging catalogue of games holds no boundaries. What with the recent release of Braveheart, and the news of David Bowie working with Eidos on a new game, it appears the company is looking to expand and give every game a cutting edge or lead over their competition. Although you might see some of their licences as gimmicks, the actual games are rock solid and move the genre forward. Eidos's use of technology and licensing is the perfect mix to give a game added appeal. - Derek dela Fuente

Revenant, an isometrically viewed game, comes from Cinematix and can easily be likened to Diablo but with its visual appeal, the graphics which are truly amazing, its fine blend of RPG, along with some adventure, it appears you have a game tailored to please a lot of game players. Already there are mixed views as to whether this has a strong enough RPG theme and if too much emphasis is targeted at the graphical focus which could make the game of less appeal to the avid strategy player. Only time will tell if this can truly compete with the likes of impending and eagerly awaited - Diablo II.

FURIOUS COMBAT ENSUES...

The game's plus points could easily read like this - could have been written by the team to try and entice but Revenant has a strong and compelling storyline that gives added appeal to the innovative combat system programmed into the game. The pivotal slant from the team was to create a game that was easy to understand and compelling to play.

It appears that a lot of time was spent on the look of the game, as that would always be the first enticement for any player. If a game looks good then you are half way there. To support all the new graphics cards was a mammoth task and presenting new special effects was also on their hit list but never to the detriment of actual gameplay. Some new techniques have been explored, including perfecting the graphical use of their tile base system, which is created from 3D rendered art.

Brief Story

Revenant is based around Locke D' Averam, 'a fully polygonal' ancient warrior resurrected from hell after thousands of years. [A Revenant is a person brought back to life.] His mission, which is a task to behold, is to rescue the kidnapped daughter of a warlord. It appears, he believes rivals instigated the evil deed of abduction, but he cannot be sure. The game unfolds to Locke as he progresses through the game and his past life and experiences become an interesting sojourn. It transpires that he wasn't just chosen randomly for this task, and that this warlord's daughter is no ordinary woman either. Along the route you'll encounter a myriad of enemies, and an ever expanding and complex plotline. As you discover your past you play the crucial role in the fate of Ahkuilon.

The sheer size of the game will come as a real bonus to the player as he will face a wealth of non-playing characters, which total over 50. They interact and talk to you and divulge the kind of information you require. Monsters, barbaric torturers, even poltergeists are to be seen in this enthralling RPG. If you had to focus on one facet of the game then it has to be the interface and menuing, which the team has really worked on. If you have ever wished for a combat fighting system spurred on by that of a 3D-fight game then look no further. It combines skill and strategy so excitement is always high! Revenant offers all you would expect from an RPG game but it's strengths in each segment of the game are well rounded. The stats screens are easily understood, you have a nice range of weapons, spells, interaction, fighting and cerebral challenges.

Brief Combat

There will be four primary modes of attack - along with martial arts, melee weapons (you can thrust, swing, or chop), bow combat (the easy option to most), and stealth mode. Also on offer is the function to perform combo manoeuvres that join up to produce a powerful attack. Hand to hand is similar to weapon mode with punch, kick, and jump kick. Revenant offers facets not unlike Tekken when you fight hand to hand in combat! To add, Locke has over 35 armour types and the same number of different weapons to use throughout the game.

The armour and weapons appear on your character in real time - one of the games salient points. The armour sets encase chest, legs, feet, hands and head protection - a variety of mixing and matching of sets can be used. The weapons on hand are gruesome and include maces, swords, ball and chains, sickles, axes, daggers, plus much much more! All these weapons when used will require stealth and skill and the mayhem that ensues causing some pretty gruesome end results, something that most combative sections of RPG gloss over! Some might even find this too close to that of a hack and slash feature offering a very console focused slant but at least the team has gone a route some have wished!

Looks Great

High on polish as well as technology. The graphics are part hand painted, as well as computer generated, which has been supplemented with the use of motion capturing to give it a rich and almost glowing, live look. With its extended use of the palette it portrays some of the most detailed backdrops you will have seen in a game. Lighting effects, billowing in the dark and ambient settings that range from sinister tones to vibrant and lively.

Night and Day

To add that extra touch of realism the game has a full 24-hour day night-time cycle. This might sound like a standard feature that many games offer but the team has linked time with their AI and so monsters you see in the day will react differently to those at night. Some may have bad vision at night making them easier to fight, whereas in full daylight they could offer a far tougher challenge. Also different monsters will appear at differing times! Monsters and enemies include Lurkers who are fast, Monks with guile, and some amazingly huge Ogroks!

Specifications

Revenant includes an amazing selection of locations from dungeons to forest to inside trees to catacombs to castles. Explore endless environments in a non-linear fashion. As well as multiplayer support, along with the support for up to four people in deathmatch or co-operative mode. A games editor should be included for players to create their own missions via an easy pick up and drag/drop system.

DEREK DELA FUENTE

WALKING THE PLANK IS SERIOUS BUSINESS...

GENRE: ROLE PLAYING GAME

DEVELOPER: NIHILISTIC

PUBLISHER: EIDOS INTERACTIVE

SUPPLIER: NONE

EXPECTED RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER 99

INTERNET: WWW.EIDOS.COM

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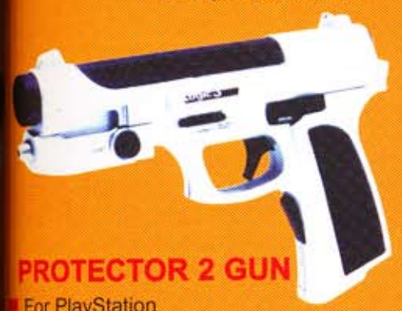

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RE-VOLT

Anyone who attended the E3 Trade Show in Los Angeles would not have failed to be impressed by what many saw as one of the neatest and most visually impressive games on show. Although at the time it was only a sneak peak it left a lasting impression. Re-Volt, based around remote controlled cars, is a game that has some strong ideas as well as a slick look. Programmed by Probe in London, Derek dela Fuente met with the team to see how the game was progressing.

GENRE: REMOTE CONTROL RACING

DEVELOPER: PROBE

PUBLISHER: ACCLAIM INTERACTIVE

SUPPLIER: MULTIMEDIA WAREHOUSE
TEL: (011) 315-1000
EXPECTED RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER 99

INTERNET:
WWW.ACCLAIM.NET

With so many racing games around it is hard to choose one that stands out, as quite frankly all of them are very good. Re-Volt, with its clever ideas and attention to detail, can't fail to impress. One wonders why a simple idea of using your joystick or gamepad as the actual controller to steer Radio Controlled cars around a track has not been used before.

THE WILD WEST IS NO PLACE TO RACE CARS!

Re-Volt was started in March 1998 and will be due for release towards the end of 1999. With a 19 man team all working full time on the project which takes in the PC, PSX and N64, this adds up to a massive amount of man days. The game is a fine mix of an arcade racing game with the look and feel of a simulation as the racing game's physics and AI are based around real remote controlled cars and the way they would respond at speed in real life. It is only when you see the game live that you can appreciate the sheer quality of it. With every game boasting endless lighting specifications this one shows so many discerning aspects you soon look at other racing games in a lesser light, excuse the pun. As the cars move along the shiny floors, the reflections mirror themselves, lighting from windows and dark spots where shadows are cast by objects portray a really true to life environment. Nick Baynes, Project Manager, explained in detail the many intricacies that go into making Re-Volt something exciting. "Before we even started writing and designing the game we had been developing the 3D engine. Everyone on the team wanted to write a racing game but they knew it had to be different to capture the imagination of the public. What with Touring Cars games, Rallying and Grand Prix we needed to evolve a different game and so what better than a game based around Radio Controlled Cars?"

The PC version will be aimed at a P200 and will support 3DFX. The PlayStation will have split screen mode. There will be varying numbers of cars in a race, which will depend on the machine. Hidden bonuses and surprises have been placed in the game!
Single Player Race, Championship, Time Trial, Battle Mode and Practise. For multiplayer you have single race and tag. A track editor will be included. The game in terms of technical features is far more advanced than games such as Grand Turisimo or TOCA.

SHOWCASE

Re-Volt offers 28 cars with a mixed variety of looks and attributes. From battery to petrol RC cars you will find all have a different feel when you take control of them. From Stunt class cars, which lack speed but make up for it with off road raggedness to Touring cars which are slick but far from easy to handle when you start to move at speed. To add some mystery hidden cars can be found in the game.

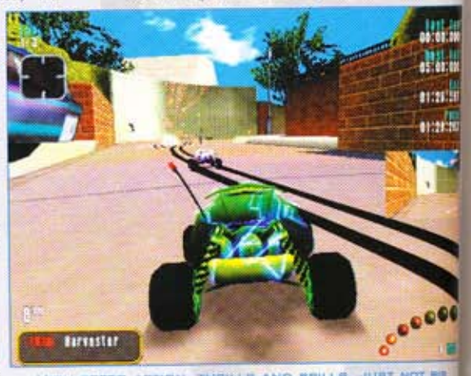
Seven different environments which are small circuits but feel like large open expanses as you cannot see any boundaries, make up the backdrop that includes racing in a Museum, Toy World, Botanical Garden, Neighbourhood, Supermarket, Abandoned Fairground and Cruise Ship - which is split up offering 18 tracks. If this sounds like Micro Machines then it is not. Nick explained, "The tracks and environments are designed not to look like tracks, they are created to feel as if you are actually racing a radio controlled car around say a museum, which in effect you are. In any museum you have rooms, walls, objects, paintings, etc. and this is the environment we have created in fine detail. Once you choose your car you will race along carpets, bump down stairs, see 'do not step on' signs, and generally interact with objects you would expect to see in that setting." Re-Volt really comes into its own when you see the shiny floor turn to carpet, move under luminous lights and see the shadows reflect along the skirting board. Every square metre of the surface has something to see."

"What strikes people first, other than the graphics, is the physics engine which has been written by a Doctor of Physics. Initially it was so true to life the way the cars responded that we had to adjust them to give them more of an arcade feel.

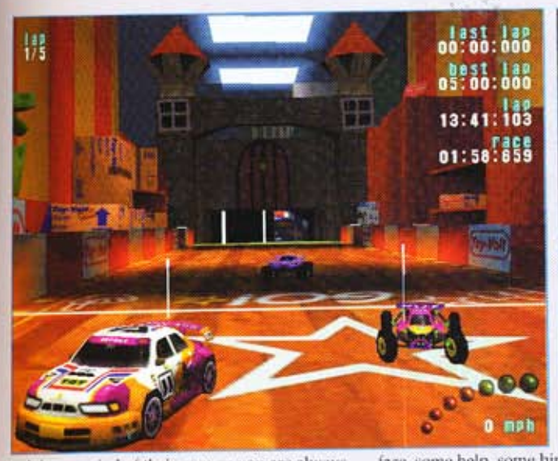
Everyone now talks about their physics engine being the best but we can only work on the premise of coding the best we can. We believe that Probe's past track record speaks for itself and in this case the public will test our expertise when they play the game. With competition so high you have to advance ideas and create something new and appealing."

"The basic idea was to recreate a game based on radio controlled cars. If you have ever played with them you will find them highly responsive and quite tough to control. On that basis we then tapered the game so that it was fun to play without too many restrictions. With real RC cars if you move more than a certain distance away, the car loses power/control which would not work in a game so the storyline is that the con-

EYE CANDY LIKE NO OTHER RACING GAME TO DATE



HIGH SPEED ACTION, THRILLS AND SPILLS, JUST NOT BIS



trols have a mind of their own so you are always controlling the car. We have even added handbrakes to certain cars, which some cars do have."

FUN VERSUS GAME PLAY

You might ask whether a game based on RC cars can become merely a selling point for a game and lose the real focus? Probe explained it well and playing the game proved their point. When you are racing the cars they slide around, as their weight against their speed is very different to a real car. Moving up a steep incline, the car slows down and its pull feels just as it would do if you were in control of a RC car. So in effect the team have highlighted all the best aspects pertaining to these cars and added them to some wacky and impressive settings. "The physics models of the cars are as near as you can get. We have spent a lot of time racing them, reading magazines and soaking up what RC fanatics get from racing them. It can become quite boring talking about the physics of the cars for it is the whole setting that has physics incorporated. As you race around the landscapes you will see objects like a big beach ball that dwarfs the car and you can hit it and see it roll in real time. Hit the skirting board at speed or drive down some steps and the car will flip over. Real centrifugal force is incorporated."

NEVER TURN YOUR BACK ON THE COMPETITION

The premise of Re-Volt is very simple - you are to finish in the first three to progress on to the next stage. At varying points if you do well you will be able to change cars and get a better model. Special pickups can be found on the surface, some help, some hinder. Turbo boost, electric shock (grab this, hit another car and its power depletes for a certain period), oil slicks (these can be picked up and dropped so the car behind will move through one and slide around and go out of control), bombs (you can target with a cursor and bomb a car up but it will reappear in its original form after a period of time), Polariser, exploding pickups, water bombs and fireworks. Grabbing some pickups is beneficial but you will not be able to actually blow an opponent's car up nor can yours be pulverised. All the bonuses will do is give you or the opponent advantages speed wise for a set period. "We do not want to have cars blowing up and the game ending so we have gone for the option of damaging a car for a period to give the other cars an advantage. We have tried to make the weapons in keeping with the RC cars. Having giant ball bearings to drop is fun, drop these at the top of the stairs and they will roll down step by step giving an ultra realistic feel. You also have small fireworks instead of missiles," explained Nick.

"What's fun about the game? Everything! Move through an oil slick where one side of the cars' tyres goes into the oil and it will have a totally different effect on the way the car drives if all four wheels hit the oil. Here is just one instance of which there are many game features to create exciting gameplay. OK one more. If you crash and roll the car it will be dependant on the shape, weight and size of the car, how long it will roll or how far you are thrown into the air." -Nick.

FINAL STAGES

At present the team is focusing on the controls and the way the user will be able to know where to drive. Being in such a huge environment can easily confuse the player. Arrows will aid the player in the right direction and an X will appear if you are going the wrong way. At present a map is being worked on to make life easier. When you look at the game, even in its present form, you cannot see any facet of the game that is weak. The gameplay aspect is strong with its many settings and locations and obstacles you must negotiate and the forces of inertia as well as other cars will keep the interest factor high. With well tuned AI Re-Volt offers an ever-growing challenge. If you are inclined to think of Micro Machines then this is so far removed from that game it is not true. Think of sequences from the film Toy Story and you have that polished, fun and exciting feel - then add the speed. Physics and inertia of top racing games have been well mixed into the game. Pure unadulterated interactive speed racing is a good description.

DEREK DELA FUENTE

NAG Rating System

39% - 0%

Any game scoring in this dreaded range isn't even worthy of bargain bin status. Avoid completely. Go lower down the scale and these games just keep getting worse, although titles scoring in the single digits might be good for a laugh. It got 20% for doing something right after all.

49% - 40%

Very poor games fall into this range. Terrible they may be but a few redeeming qualities rescue them from dropping into the next bracket. Sometimes worth a look if they sell in Rands what they scored.

59% - 50%

Middle of the road. Games scoring here are average games, not too good and not too bad. Games like these usually end up in your Christmas stocking from well meaning but clueless grandparents.

69% - 60%

Good solid games usually score around this mark. Combinations of serious flaws or lacking features prevent these games from scoring anything better. Fanatical gamers or fans of the genre will probably love these titles.

79% - 70%

Tricky territory here, there is usually no good reason for not buying a game that scores in this range. Good games here suffer from a tired formula or lack of innovation. Technically flawless but just not very inspired.

89% - 80%

Any game reaching this status deserves your attention. Good in every way but just lacks that little extra that separates it from classic status. No game is ever perfect but some come very close and here is where you'll find them.

100% - 90%

The ultimate achievement for a game is to get over the magic 90%. It represents an automatic purchase if you enjoy the type of game on offer. Also a good place to shop if you're tired of one kind of game and would like to broaden your horizons.

It's beginning to feel a lot like Christmas

It would seem that, at this moment in time, there are a lot of really good games hitting the market. That's the reason why we have so many awards this month. Honestly. We did not accept any bribes, under any circumstances, from anybody. The sudden swelling of our bank accounts are due to, um, excellent luck at the Sun Dome. Yes. That's it. We went gambling and made lots of money. Honest!

Seriously, it does look like a good year for PC games, and its only going to get better as we start the run up to Christmas. With games like Quake 3 Arena, Command and Conquer: Tiberian Sun and others on the way, developers are literally donning their red suits and fake beards and shopping at used reindeer lots - because we're having quite a Christmas this year!

Of course, it's still five months away, but we thought it might be fair to warn you in advance, so that you can either start saving up your hard earned cash, or whining at the right people, to make sure that you get all the games you want.

Some people may have mistakenly thought that the computer industry has also gotten on the South African Christmas Marketing Bandwagon. You know, the movement that states that Christmas advertising starts in July. This may happen because there are so many games hitting the market that would be perfect for Christmas time - that wonderful family time that distributors save their best games for, just to capitalise on the whole "spirit of giving" thing. The scary fact is, boys and girls, that this is just the beginning.

To start listing the fabulous titles that are going to see the light before the end of the millenium would be silly. If you saw the E3 tribune that we selflessly slaved over last month, you will have some idea of what's going to hit the shelves - if you didn't, we'll have our knee breakers around shortly.

It sometimes makes one wonder: what's going to happen next year? What marvels of gaming will be produced by developers eager to brighten your life and lighten your pockets?

For now, we can certainly content ourselves with the fact that the last half of the last year of this decade, century and millenium is going to see some really great gaming on PCs around the country. - NAG

Yes, yes, yes, I know. You people are so picky. So it's not really the last year of the millenium. So what? I play computer games for a living, alright? What do I know?

DUNGEON KEEPER 2

Trying to get the Editor to stop playing Dungeon Keeper 2 and start doing his work was quite a task this month!
That's why we've decided to give this brilliant dungeon building game this month's award.

See PG 30

The Awards Ceremony

Apache Havoc PG 40

Aliens vs Predator PG 44

NFS: Road Challenge PG 34 (PC) PG 62 (PSX)

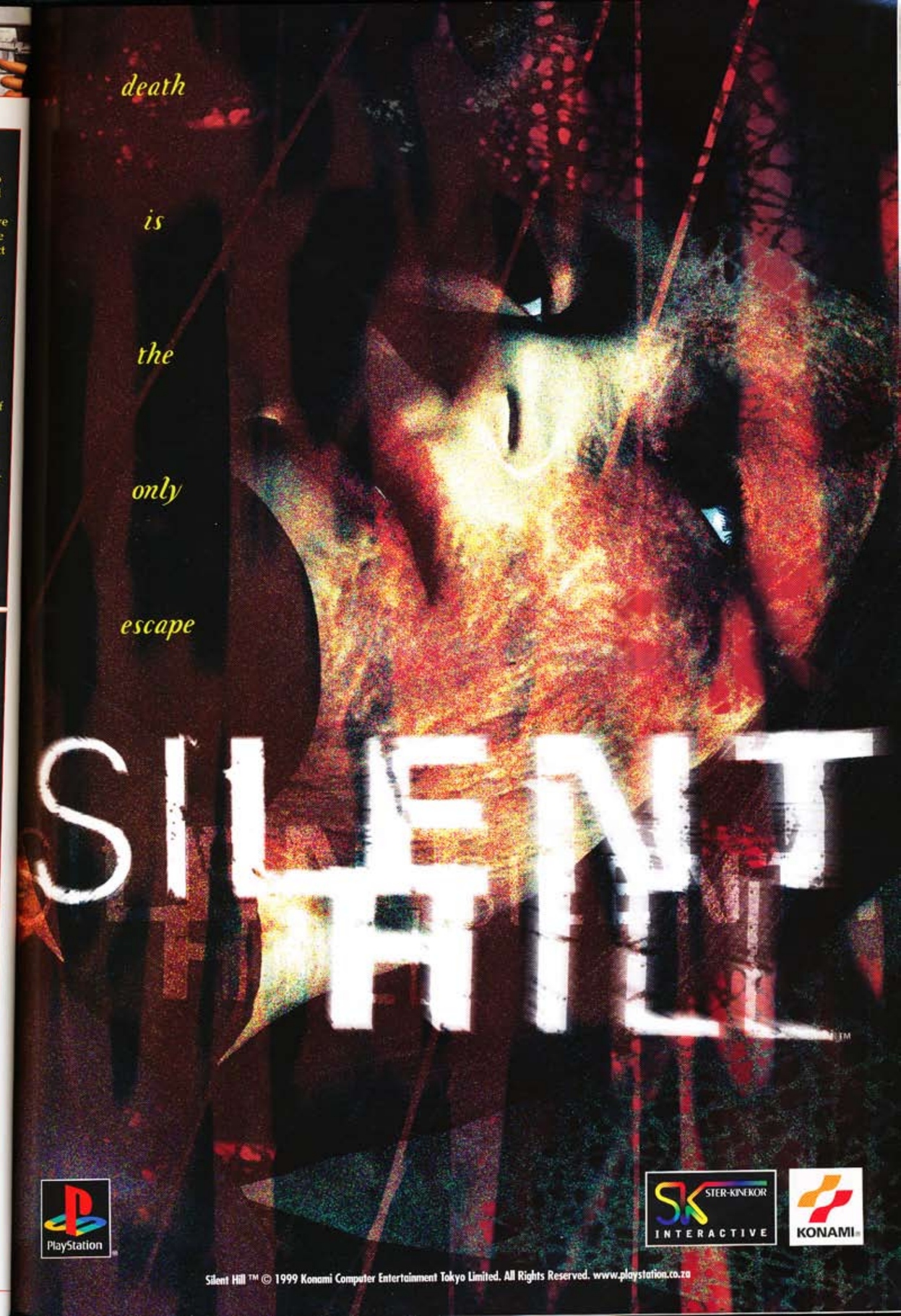
TA: Kingdoms PG 48

Outcast PG 54

Ape Escape PG 58

Syphon Filter PG 64

Driver PG 68



NO REST FOR THE WICKED.

The quaint little town of Dewdrop Cove lies nestled in a field of whispering grass, dotted with happy cows. The people of Dewdrop are happy and content, safe behind their cottage pane windows. Like a rusty nail being driven slowly through your skull the delightful sound of children's laughter sickens you to your rotten core. The time has come to put an end to this merriment and joy as you must find it within your black heart to torture the locals, blacken the ground and slaughter every last soul. Dewdrop Cove must fall.

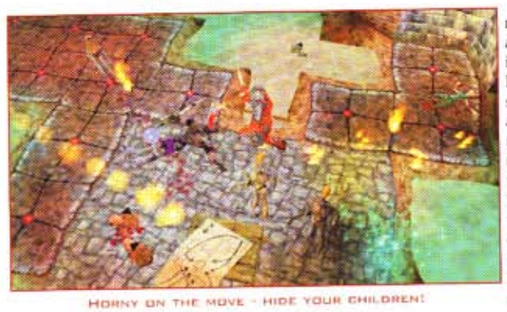
RedTide

DUNGEON KEEPER 2

If playing the bad guy is such an appealing prospect you can only wonder why so few games cater for this sadistic streak we all try so hard to hide. Almost every game release has you portrayed as the hero who must defeat the evil dragon and save the princess or as the marine on another mindless 'save the world' mission deep within an alien fortress. Wouldn't it be great to be that evil dragon or that nasty organic mass of alien scum, putting the proverbial thumb screws to the steroid abusing marine or adding a touch of flame to the tights worn by the prancing dragon slayer? Instead of saving the world how about frying it instead, why save a town when you can plunder it for yourself? Master game developers, Bullfrog have pondered these probing questions and have cooked up a sequel to end all sequels. The legendary Horned Reaper, The Mistress and those crazy imps have returned in Dungeon Keeper 2, a game where you get to play the bad guy. Now you'll quickly discover it really is good to be bad... welcome to the dark and dank, evil and bad, twisted and sick but wonderfully satisfying task of being a world class Dungeon Keeper. It's hard to describe the warm fuzzy feeling you get when slapping your lazy imps with a disembodied hand.

Quick History Lesson

The original concept that gave birth to the first game almost seemed too good to be true - you'd be the chief administrator of a dungeon. Heroes would come to try and steal your treasure and it was up to you to stop them either by devious dungeon design or raw monster power. Four years went by and finally the first game was released. It was original and fun and although plagued by a few minor problems proved to be a massive hit. Now, remember this was in a time when 3D acceleration wasn't a financially feasible prospect for everyone and thrilling first person shooters were only just starting to take over the market we know today. Surprisingly the original game did feature a primitive first person mode that proved during play to be just barely functional and was largely ignored by serious dungeon keepers. People preferred to just play the game from its isometric viewpoint, as the first person mode was a sluggish ill-defined mass of pixels that caused more frustration than fun. All this history is important because so much of what was wrong with the first game has been fixed and refined in the second to such a degree that you're left with a gaping mouth and a pool of drool.



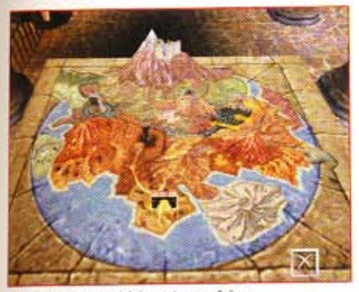
Horny on the move - hide your children!

The combat pit increases the experience level of your creatures

Dungeon Management Simulation

Dungeon Keeper 2 is a dungeon management game with first person elements. A sequel it might be but the overall concept isn't showing any signs of ageing just yet, perhaps DK3 will throw this theory out the window but for now this current game is definitely a 'sit back and enjoy the show' experience. Most levels begin with a brief narrative and description of your objectives for that specific level, which usually involve creating a dungeon and killing the hero of the land, the overall aim is to collect a Portal Gem from each conquered realm until you have them all. The voice acting during these briefings is superb and the same voice actor has been used from the original game. His sarcastic, sadistic and humorous overtones make for some entertaining listening and will always bring a smile to your face. You begin most levels with a handful of imps, a Dungeon Heart, some gold and acres of dirt that must be tunnelled out by your imps. As the imps dig and tunnel they also claim floor tiles, expanding your realm as they go. These tiles are important firstly because each floor tile increases your Mana generation by one point and secondly, you can't build, cast spells or drop creatures anywhere other than on one of your tiles. As you dig out your dungeon you'll encounter gold which must be mined and stored. Gold represents one of the three forms of 'currency' in the game, the remaining two are gemstones and Mana. Gold is common and must be mined out by your imps, gems are harder to find but then provide an endless source of income. Finally, Mana generation is directly proportional to your dungeon size, specifically how many floor tiles you have. You'll need gold for building things and paying

Hordes of your minions attacking a rival Dungeon Heart



your creatures and Mana is used for casting spells and is also directly linked to the imps, run out of Mana and your imps will disappear. Once you have a few rooms dug out and your nice new floor tiles laid you can begin construction. A lair and a hatchery should be the first rooms you build as they collectively provide a resting area and a source of food for the evil minions that will enter your dungeon. The last step is tunnelling your way to a portal and getting one of your imps to claim the portal on your behalf - claiming is like placing dungeon tiles, the only real difference is that the portal or other rooms can be likened to one big tile. Once you have these basic bases covered new creatures will start arriving, providing you with your dungeon's fighting force. This all sounds relatively simple in concept but when put into practice many small but important factors must be taken into consideration, it's up to you to keep these beasts happy, fail in this task and they'll desert your dungeon for danker pastures. For example your hatchery and lair must be big enough to cater for the number of monsters you have in your dungeon. You'll also need to mine gold to pay your staff and as you attract more and more creatures and build all the different rooms available, managing the entire lot takes a practised hand and a keen wit. There are a number of different rooms available and each one has the potential to attract different creatures, for example a workshop attracts trolls and a graveyard will attract vampires. Don't worry about being thrown in the deep end, the game has an uncanny knack for holding your hand through the first half of the game and as new traps, rooms or creatures are encountered a full explanation will be narrated. This on-going training is so artfully integrated into the game you won't even need to consult the manual, very well done to Bullfrog for this. If you obey a few simple rules, are mindful not to squander too much gold and adequately protect your underworld habitat with traps, doors and guard posts, before long you'll have a fully functional dungeon with enough resources to stave off any attack and protect your dungeon heart.

Welcome to the Nineties Keeper

The only accurate phrase to describe the improvements that have been made to the game is mind-blowing. For people who have never ever seen the original game the slush 3D graphics and highly detailed world will impress but not as much as someone who experienced the original. Not only have the graphics received a facelift but so has the sound (most of the original sounds effects have been left in place - any change to these and it just wouldn't be Dungeon Keeper). The spot effects for the different rooms are amazing and don't be surprised when you hear seventies music playing faintly in the background as you move your cursor over the casino. The game engine is a pure 3D engine that allows you to rotate, pan and zoom in on the action from any point, so basically you can zoom right out to get an overview of the action or zoom right in, a few feet from your dungeon floor. Much the same as in the first game, the second offers a first person view via the possession spell. Select the spell and click on a creature and you'll be magically transported inside its head, again all within the same 3D environment. You will need to use the possession spell quite often and, unlike the previous game, this mode really proves useful in defeating rival keepers as you have access to a few unique abilities in this mode that aren't available during normal play. The only real problem with this is that some of the levels force you to use the possession spell to conquer the realm. The control interface used to order your minions around, build rooms or cast spells is a smartly designed masterpiece. Everything you need is at your fingertips and after a few playing sessions you'll be

Lair

All your creatures need a place to put up their feet, tentacles or claws after a hard day. Note: you shouldn't put creatures together who don't get on with each other or one species will end up dead.

Temple

Your creatures will feel much happier if they can pray to their Dark Gods. Each Temple has a sacrifice pool into which you can throw creatures for a reward (not imps though, they're far too scrawny).

Prison

After a battle half-dead prisoners will be taken to the prison where they will eventually die if you don't feed them. Dead prisoners are converted into skeletons, which add their talents to your evil army.

Hatchery

Besides managing a dungeon you also need to dabble in a little chicken farming every now and then. This room represents the entire food stockpile of your dungeon so make sure it's big enough to cater for everyone.

Workshop

The Workshop is where all the doors, traps and guard posts are built. Certain creatures enjoy working here but you'll need to keep an eye on the lazy buggers or they'll quickly tire and head for bed.

Library

An important room, if you want to make use of all the spells in the game. Warlocks are attracted to a library and will wile away the hours there researching new and more destructive spells for you.

Treasury

This is where your imps store all the gold and gems they've mined. The treasury is also where all your creatures come on pay-day, so make sure you keep your coffers topped up or your evil army will desert you.

Casino

Keep your creatures happy and make a little money in the process with the casino. You can set this room to make money or make creatures happy, it's up to you on how you want to run your operation.

Guard Room

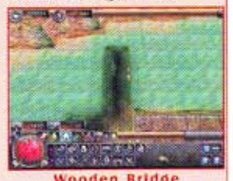
Any creature placed in the guardroom will patrol the area and keep a lookout for attacking heroes. This room is useful for providing an early warning against nasty surprises. Some creatures love guard duty.

Training Room

The training room helps prepare your creatures for battle. Creatures all have experience levels that can be increased with some solid training, but only the battlefield can take them beyond a level four.

Graveyard

The corpses of your slain creatures can be stored in the graveyard where they will attract the attention of vampires. The stronger the creature was during its lifetime the larger the chance you'll acquire a vampire.



Wooden Bridge

These bridges allow your creatures to travel over water and lava. Now lava is really hot so wooden bridges don't last very long over this molten rock. Bridges are vital for exploring water locked areas of the map.

Combat Pit

Here your creatures can test and perfect their combat skills in a safe environment. This room will allow creatures to attain an experience level of seven, from here only authentic combat can increase them to level ten.

Torture Chamber

How wonderful it is to have a room like this in any game. Place lazy creatures in here to get the job done better next time or try and convert heroes over to your side with some painful persuasion.

Stone Bridge

These structures are exactly like wooden bridges but only much stronger and molten lava is no match for their rock solid foundations. They are much more durable but also cost much more to build.

casting and building like a seasoned veteran. With most games there is always a fair amount of customisation involved when first playing but with DK2 nothing needs to be altered, everything is placed just right and with the option of creating your own user cameras players will quickly find a comfortable set-up.

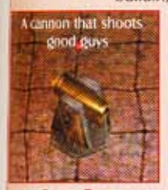
The little things

Taken from any number of angles the game is excellent in so many ways from a technology point of view right down to the control system, sound and variety but these things are only the icing on the cake. The real meat of the game is in the playing. The creating, fiddling and fine-tuning that goes into a single session is an absorbing experience and adding to this formula is the constant addition of new rooms, spells and creatures to your collection. The drive to make your dungeon a perfect masterpiece is a time consuming but rewarding experience and to have it all end after you slay the hero is almost heart breaking. Besides the campaign mode you can also play against the computer or a few humans in a multiplayer game or if that doesn't interest then there is always the My Pet Dungeon option where you can take as much time as you like to build the perfect dungeon. In this mode you have access to the Hero Toolbox (a room filled with heroes), this toolbox is like an instant supply of unwilling good guys that you can pick up and place anywhere in your dungeon to test out defences or overall skill in dungeon defence. This mode also allows you to trigger a single hero invasion or multiple hero invasions, each one harder than the last. This mode is a dream come true and allows you the freedom to build the ultimate dungeon. The only downside to not having specific objectives is that once you have built all you can build the question of what now raises its head.

Who farted?

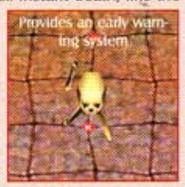
The game is without a doubt one of the best sequels ever, so much has changed and almost all the little problems with the original have been effectively eliminated, and the rough edges ironed out. The real challenge here was to offer the player more in terms of longevity and remove the repetitive nature of the game. It's only so much fun for so long and soon the actual dungeon construction part tends to get a little

The only way to really protect your dungeon adequately is with a few devious traps. The game has twelve different kinds of traps you can use while building your dungeon. Some spell instant death, like the boulder trap while others merely warn you of an incursion.

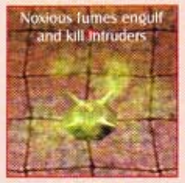


Sentry Trap

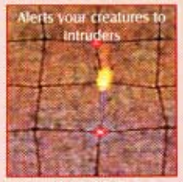
Fear Trap



Alarm Trap

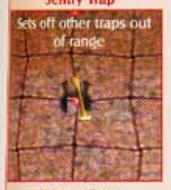


Gas Trap

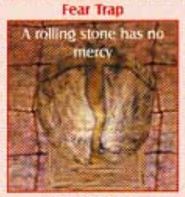


Guard Post

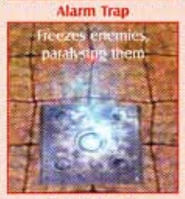
Spike Trap



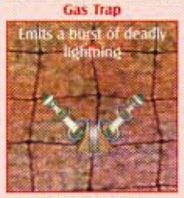
Trigger Trap



Boulder Trap

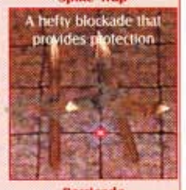


Freeze Trap



Lightning Trap

Fireburst Trap



Barricade

A bunch of stinking heroes invading!

The secret 'Boulder-golf level'

The motor mechanic of the underworld

tedious. Bullfrog has addressed this problem in two ways. The first is by starting you off with the bare bones of a dungeon and a few creatures with a specific objective, the other is by structuring the missions differently and in one particular mission you must take over a deserted dungeon eliminating the need to build the rooms yourself. Despite all this the game does wear a little thin towards the middle but fortunately picks up at the end. A person can only start from scratch so many times before tiring of the whole process. This problem isn't enough to seriously affect the scoring but is worth a mention. The first person mode, even though improved, still is a little primitive compared to other games. Sometimes your character gets stuck in passageways especially when negotiating any area with a trap. It's annoying but with a little persistence you can get around without any problem. One other complaint is the fact that the game is a little easy, once you become adept at building and defending your dungeon almost nothing will get through and you'll find winning is almost too easy. The inclusion of a few secret levels also keeps the interest going and these secret levels will have you playing gold with a giant boulder or having to find your way out of a maze within a certain time limit. Also remember that you will need a decent PC to play this game and even when using a beefy system things tend to slow down a little during big battles. Seeing that the developers have very little else other than raw imagination to draw their inspiration from the game impresses with its originality above anything else. Simply put it is one of the best titles released this year and without any hesitation comes highly recommended.

PC CD-ROM

RedTide

Genre: Dungeon Management

The sequel to end all sequels, every single possible aspect of this game has been drastically improved with many game play tweaks implemented. For veteran keepers it's a dream come true. Bullfrog have really outdone themselves with this one.

Developer: Bullfrog

Publisher: Electronic Arts

Supplier: Electronic Arts Africa (011) 803-1212

RRP: R 249.00

http://www.dungeonkeeper.com

Multiplayer	Comparitives	Pro's	Con's
Yes	Dungeon Keeper	Huge Improvement Imaginative Original	Suspect Clipping Little Easy High System Required

Min Requirements	Recommended
Pentium 166 MMX 32 MB Ram 4 X CD Rom 2 MB Video Card 285 MB HD Windows 95/98 (DirectX 6.1)	Pentium II 266 64 MB Ram 16 X CD Rom 4 MB 3D Direct3D 285+ MB HD Windows 95/98 (DirectX 6.1)

Graphics	Sound	Control	Story	Continuity	Playability
92	91	93	86	90	96

91

The Need for Speed franchise has undergone many changes over the years but none as significant as Road Challenge. Electronic Arts are past masters at breathing new life into the sequels sequel. We have always enjoyed pounding million Rand vehicles into submission, now we can enjoy it even more as the PC shows just what it was built for. Picture a joy ride in your dads new BMW, then add a touch of Ferrari, a dash of horsepower, and a speckle of torque, then hold on for a driving adventure of pure fun.

Storm

NEED FOR SPEED ROAD CHALLENGE

The Need for Speed franchise has been one of the most successful titles ever and has been directly responsible for the growth and strength of its publisher Electronic Arts. Now as we enter the next phase its difficult to find where EA could improve on the product besides with a few cosmetic changes. Surprisingly there are significant changes eliminating the normal stale and re-used feel that sequels normally succumb to. For years NFS has undergone cosmetic changes but none as drastic as Road Challenge. A totally new engine has been initiated and with excellent results. Vehicles are detailed with the terrain, weather and special effects taking on major improvements. Certain cosmetics do let NFS: RC down such as the small amount of pop-up. A better job could have been done with the trees that line the tracks,

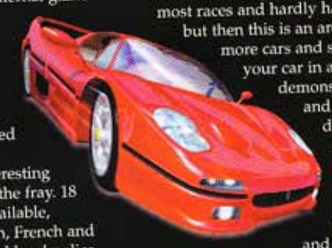
HONEST, OSSIFER, IT JUMPED OUT AT ME!

which look as if a helicopter has trimmed the tops off. The good side to this is that you're to busy watching where you are going to worry about what's on the side of the road.
The most noticeable change is definitely the addition of crash damage. The vehicle models are put through their paces as you weave and crash your way to the finish line. Everything from body panels to light fittings can be mangled and are very costly to repair. The new Career mode takes advantage of vehicle damage through repair costs. The more hostile you're driving, the more expensive your car is to repair and in the early stages money is difficult to come by.

NFS: RC has the standard internal game modes that its predecessor had. The likes of Arcade modes include the ever-popular Hot Pursuit, Knockouts and Tournaments. The Hot Pursuit mode has been improved and the AI has become more aggressive as well as a few interesting roadblock changes added into the fray. 18 cars and 19 super tracks are available, which includes British, German, French and American racing conditions and local police. The gameplay suffers slightly because EA have chosen to keep the arcade physics at the forefront rather than change to a more realistic one. Cars continue to glide rather than grip, which feels as though the cars are on ice and not tar. As many racing games have come and gone we have been spoilt with true dynamics and have enjoyed arcade style racing with realistic physics. NFS: RC is not far off but has to improve to the levels of Gran Turismo to compete for the top positions.
You may have noticed the new title name of this release being Road Challenge and wonder why? Well, to put it bluntly it is what makes this sequel a much better game. I have touched on the Career mode briefly but it deserves much more attention. The Career mode can be described as a complete In-Game Economy mode where you can earn money, repair damage, enter races, upgrade cars and eventually have bundles of boodle and all the trophies in the cabinet.
Similar to GT in many ways, you are able to buy cars and keep them to challenge friends and enemies. But the most interesting feature is the High Stakes option, which pits you against your opponent, the winnings being each other's car. Yes, your hard-earned favourite car could be lost in a duel of High Stakes.

The usual dose of NFS sound tracks are included for your listening pleasure and are quite good. The in-game sound effects are incredible, with some of the best EAX (Environmental Audio Extensions) ever heard creating an awesome listening experience if you have a four point surround speaker system. The tracks are well designed but sometimes lack inspiration, especially when the chips are down and you need to be challenged to the limit. You are able to keep the throttle open throughout most races and hardly have to touch the brakes, but then this is an arcade style racer. For more cars and showcases (highlights your car in an interactive demonstration including stats and figures) you can download them from www.needforspeed.com.
Overall I feel that NFS: RC has improved enough to keep the flame alive once more and even challenge the next batch of racing titles to better it. The commerce game play certainly makes this a must have game for your fun racing collection. This may not be the simulation driver's dream but it certainly entertains you enough to warrant the Need for Speed.

IF ONLY WE'D BEEN GOING THE RIGHT WAY!



In-game commerce and the new High Stakes racing mode combined with the new graphics engine spark the power behind Road Challenge. Arcade style racing has never been so much fun with an all or nothing approach to its gameplay.

Developer:	Publisher:	Supplier:	RRP:
Electronic Arts	Electronic Arts	Electronic Arts Africa (011) 803-1212	R299.00

http://www.needforspeed.com

Multiplayer	Comparitives	Pro's	Con's
Yes	Need for Speed 3 Viper Racing	Vehicle Damage Commerce More of Everything	Slippery Control Pop-up Lost my Favorite Car

PC CD-ROM

STORM

GENRE
Arcade Racing

Min Requirements	Recommended
Pentium 200 MMX 32 MB Ram 4 X CD Rom 100 MB HD Windows 95/98 (DirectX 6.1) Glide / Direct 3D	Pentium II 266 64 MB Ram 4 X CD Rom 400 MB HD Windows 95/98 (DirectX 6.1) Glide / Direct 3D

Graphics	Sound	Control	Story	Continuity	Playability	
93	95	75	NA	90	86	88

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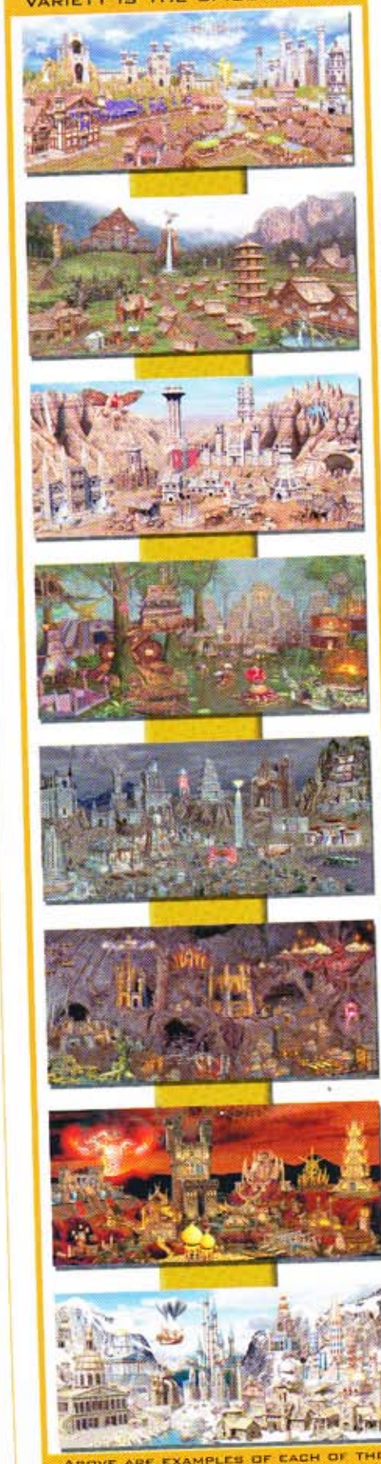
VARIETY IS THE SPICE OF LIFE



ABOVE ARE EXAMPLES OF EACH OF THE EIGHT CITIES FOUND IN HEROES OF MIGHT AND MAGIC 3. EACH CITY BUILDS A DIFFERENT RACE OF SOLDIERS, MAKING FOR A WIDE VARIETY OF USER CONTROLABLE UNITS.

HEROES III
OF MIGHT AND MAGIC

There is something about fantasy that spurs the imagination and excites the mind. Just think of it. Vast armies gathering beneath growing storm clouds, orcs against men, trolls against elves, while overhead great dragons wheel and breathe out great gouts of flame. Ah yes, the worlds of authors like Tolkein, Feist and Eddings... these are places where we can lose ourselves and leave the troubles of real life behind. It is there that men are men, and small green creatures generally get squished for the greater good. It is to these worlds that millions of fans around the world flock with alarming regularity, and return time and again. Little wonder, then, that the fantasy genre is so big in the world of PC gaming.

Shryke

However, the term "fantasy world" is something of a catchall that doesn't go a long way to define the particular setting being discussed. And fantasy being, well, fantasy, it gets difficult to push settings into little boxes. So, when we say that Heroes of Might and Magic 3 is a game set in a fantasy world, we're not really telling you much. Suffice to say that this game's setting falls into what could only be described as "traditional fantasy". You know, elves, dwarves, orcs, dragons, pegasi, centaurs... you get the picture.

This game is really quite fun. Before I throw my reputation out the window by telling you that it is a turn based strategy game, let me assure you that it is a top class turn based strategy game. Sure, you can make yourself a cup of coffee, read the newspaper and answer the call of nature between turns - particularly in multiplayer games - and it doesn't have the break-neck, adrenaline pumping pace of real time strategy games, but it does have a certain something about it. I'll be sure to tell you what it is as soon as I figure it out. Let's just say that Heroes of Might and Magic 3 is one of the most entertainingly enthralling games I have come across in recent times.

Stop raising your eyebrows! I'm being serious! Let me try to explain. Firstly, HMM3 has an incredibly friendly interface. It's literally a matter of point and click, no matter what you want to do within the game. And what you want to do is dominate the world. To this end, you employ a number of heroes, who trek around the landscape in the company of armies, securing resources, discovering treasures and, of course, trashing enemies. These heroes make the core of the game. Without them, things would get pretty stale very quickly. As they traverse the world, they gain experience and skills, which translates into bonuses for the armies they command.

THESE REPRESENT ABOUT HALF OF THE UNITS IN THE GAME, WHICH FEATURES 112 PLAYER CONTROLLABLE UNITS IN TOTAL.

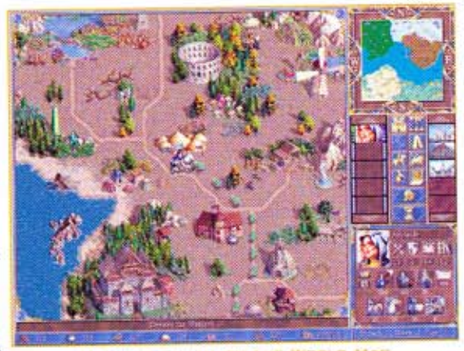
To generate a decent fighting force, you need a city of some kind. There are eight different kinds of cities within the game, each of which produces a different race of army. These armies consist of seven different units, each of which are upgradeable, making for 14 unit types per race. That figures out to, um, wait... 112 different unit types. So? Well, this brings me to one of the best features of the game. Not only does it have this large number of constructable units, but the player can build every single one of them in one game - as long as he controls the appropriate cities. The possibilities are huge! An army can contain anything from elves to dragons to imps or genies.

THE BATTLE MAP IN ALL ITS GLORY

Additionally, there are a large number of spells for heroes to learn - although I do admit that I didn't get round to counting them! These spells can be used in two of the game's many interface screens, which include the world view, battle view and town view. Graphically, this game is very pleasing. Okay, the world screen is not the best, but it gets the message across perfectly, so who's complaining. However, the cities within the game are stunningly beautiful, each of them with it's own character and appeal. Likewise, the battle screen is nicely put together, with each unit displaying unique animations for walking, attacking, defending and, obviously, dying.

Combat is simple enough to handle - units either move or attack. Some do have magical abilities, and the hero (who does not take part in the fight) can chuck spells from the sidelines, but, basically, combat is made up mainly of those two elements. Single images may represent one or one thousand units on screen (or any number in between) which is mildly annoying, but does keep the screen remarkably uncluttered. The outcome of each melee within every battle is a matter of unit strength, number and a smattering of luck. Obviously, upgraded units are generally stronger than others, and therefore take longer to get.

Okay, so there must be more to the game than bashing enemies into submission, right? Right! There is something of a management side to the game, which although simple, does make a bit of a change from just bashing things with big weapons. Resources include gold, wood, gems, mercury and minerals, and are all obtained from different sources and needed for building new structures within cities. These resources can also be traded for other resources in a pinch. Also, quests are available for the discerning hero (which generally involve the recovery of some kind of mysterious artifact), and touching obelisks on the world map interface may reveal the location of the mystical Grail (by showing a grey scale portion of the map the whole sequence of "obelisk-touching" has been completed).



HEADING SOUTH ON THE WORLD MAP

Heroes of Might and Magic even sounds good. Although simple, the sound effects are unique and, quite often, even funny. Add to this pleasant music in the world map, and really good music in the battle mode, and you have a really enjoyable listening experience when playing HMM3.

A large elvish population inhabits Erathia's southeastern coast. Green and gold dragons, native to the region, augment

NO, IT'S NOT HORNY...

There are a few cut scenes, although (unfortunately) many of them are just static pictures. Alas, the cut scenes are not the greatest, by any means. Every now and then poor modelling techniques creep into what are potentially wonderful story additions, and there could be a lot more of them. But nothing's perfect, so we'll just have to live with it.

For those who are so inclined, HMM3 includes a wonderful map generator. When compared to some of the other map-makers out there, this one is truly wonderful. It's easy to use, and offers a vast variety of options as far as landscape types, objects and structures are concerned. It is also really easy to use, which makes a change from some map makers I can think of. Unfortunately, making maps in this game takes a lot of time, as maps can get quite intricate when details and objects are added, and creating an unbalanced map is far too easy to be any good. Some thought and pre-planning will be required of those planning to use this excellent mapmaker.

Okay, I hear those sniggers. You're asking yourself, why would any RTS junkie be enthralled by a turn-based game. The secret lies in attitude and approach. Many great games are cast aside by gamers because of the fact that they are turn based and they have the dubious belief that RTS is the only type of game worth playing. This is, I'm sorry to inform you, an incredibly narrow minded way of approaching computer games. Every game should be taken on merit, after all. So, if you're going to take my advice to heart, and give turn based gaming a try, you might as well start with Heroes of Might and Magic 3. It's a winner!

DECIPHERING THE GRAIL PUZZLE...

PC CD-ROM

Shryke

GENRE
Turn Based Strategy

Although turn based games generally have a bad reputation, Heroes of Might and Magic deserves no such thing. A wonderfully playable, exciting visit to a traditional fantasy world filled with dragons, dwarves and devils, this game will hook you from the word go.

Developer:	Publisher:	Supplier:	RRP:
Ubisoft Entertainment	3DO	No Local Distributor	$49.95 USA

http://www.ubisoft.co.uk

Multiplayer	Comparitives	Pro's	Con's
Yes	HOMM 2 Lords Of Magic	Graphics Sound Number of Units	Slow Turns

Min Requirements	Recommended
Pentium 133 32 MB Ram 4 X CD Rom 150 MB HD Windows 95/98 (DirectX 6.0)	Pentium 166 32 MB Ram 4 X CD Rom 150 MB HD Windows 95/98 (DirectX 6.0)

Graphics	Sound	Control	Story	Continuity	Playability
76	77	82	75	75	80

78

STAR TREK
BIRTH OF THE FEDERATION

Imagine being responsible for the fate of entire galactic empires? This is the challenge you will meet in Microprose's latest Civilization-type turn-based strategy offering. - RAVEN

It is several centuries in the future, and mankind has made staggering advances in space travel and exploration. But humankind is not the only species to be emerging into the galactic arena - at least four other space-capable races will soon be vying for space and star-systems - the mercantile Ferengi, the honour-bound Klingons, the reclusive Romulans and the war-like, oppressive Cardassians. Each of these five races (including the Human Federation of Planets) seeks to carve its own empire in the galaxy. Beyond this, however, there is no real story-line, and no campaign mode - every game is just a game (skirmish-style), whether you play single player against computer opponents, or whether you play multiplayer.

STARSHIPS HEADING INTO BATTLE

As you set up a game, you are prompted with a number of options, including the starting tech-level of each of the five main races, the number of neutral "minor" races, the shape and size of the galaxy, as well as the race you are to play. Any of the five races mentioned above may be played, and each has its own particular game play advantages and characteristics. The Federation excels at diplomacy, and thus finds creating treaties with minor races much easier. The Klingons respect honour through victory in battle, and as a warrior society, gain certain combat bonuses. The Ferengi start the game with mercantile advantages, while the Romulans have an edge in covert operations and espionage. The Cardassians suffer less than other races with regards to morale problems, having learned how to efficiently subjugate a culture.

Choose your Affliction

Once you have set your game parameters and chosen your affiliation, the game begins. The game play and interface are very reminiscent of Civilization and Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri, but wrapped in a Star Trek theme and appearance. The entire interface is made to look like the starship controls on the Enterprise or Voyager (for the Federation side) or one of the other star ships for the other races. Nonetheless, despite this apparently hyper-modern look, the graphics often manage to look dated (perhaps it is something to do with the fonts used, or the none-too-high resolution). In all other respects, the interface is virtually identical to any of the Civilization clones out there, even down to the two-dimensional galactic map (one would think that, by now, game developers would stop using the idea of "flat" space!).

DIPLOMACY! A GREAT ASSET

PROPER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IS VITAL

As you expand from your home-system to other planetary systems, you have a number of variables to consider. Firstly, ranges play an important role in Birth of the Federation, as Colony Ships only have medium range, and thus cannot colonise as far away from any of your shipyards as your scouts can explore. Thus it becomes necessary to build either shipyards (an expensive and time-consuming past time, early in the game) or build outposts to re-supply your ships. Only planetary systems containing at least one Terran or terra-formed planet may be colonised, and if no such planet is present, at least one of the planets comprising the system must be terra-formed. Resource management is of paramount importance, as in any strategy game. Credits (cash) are a simple enough resource, and one that can be stockpiled. Other resources include Research Points, Intelligence Points (for covert ops) and Dilithium as empire-wide resources, and Food, Energy, Population and Industry on the planetary system level. These resources must be carefully juggled in order to succeed.

Diplomatic negotiations form a vital part of this game. Establishing good-will treaties allows trade routes to be established, which generate income for both parties concerned (the exception to this are the Ferengi, who need not necessarily have a treaty in place in order to trade). I have counted ten minor races so far, on top of the five major ones. This means that it is possible to have very complex political situations, and your enemy's enemy is not necessarily your friend, and intricate webs of alliances quickly form. Sooner or later, you will find yourself in a combat situation. I was shocked, at first, to learn how quickly the AI player gets up to speed and attacks you by military might. This forced me to rethink my strategy, and I found that economic development on its own would not suffice, as armed conflict can happen at any time. Of course, the more developed a planet is, the quicker it can build anything (including star ships and planetary defences). Planetary defences are, on the whole, not as strong as they should be (after all, they do have an entire planet to be mounted on!). A combination of star ships and troop transports are required for a successful invasion, while star ships complemented by planetary defences should repel such.

Once combat begins, you will be taken to a tactical combat screen (unless you chose auto-combat; however, auto-combat does not fight very imaginatively). In this view, you will see a (more or less) three-dimensional representation of space and the star ships and other objects it contains. Orders can be given to the star ships, detailing what attack or defence mode they are to use - should they charge straight up, circle and harass their opponents, evade fire, or retreat altogether. As in the strategic view, combat is turn-based, and once you have issued all your orders, you may signal for the turn to be resolved. At this point all orders are interpreted and applied to the current situation. Weapons may fire, ships will move as directed (though remember - you do not have direct control over the ships' actions - the ships' captains decide the details, according to your orders) and damages will be resolved. Turns will be taken until there is no longer any need for them - if one side is destroyed or retreats, combat ends. Combats may be reviewed afterwards, should you wish to.

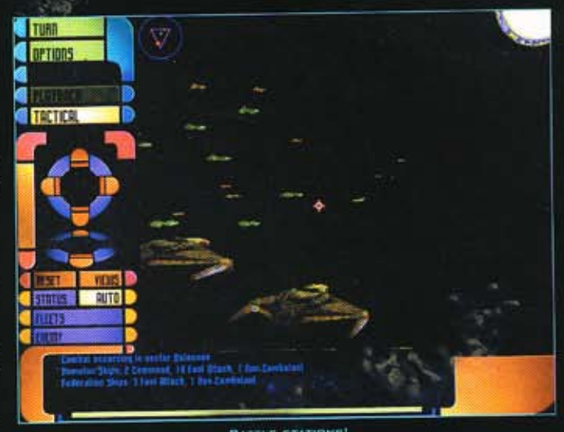
THE GALAXY IS YOUR MOLLUSC...

In combat, ship crew experience plays a very heavy role. Veteran units that have survived multiple engagements become very powerful indeed, and able to overcome odds, even against superior hardware. Also, some races have certain special structures that allow training of personnel (such as the Federation's Starfleet Academy).

Researching technologies is, as in most strategy games, utterly important. However, unfortunately the research tech-tree is too linear, with six disciplines that may be researched to various tech-levels. It works best just to leave them as is and let the research take care of itself, which is somewhat disappointing.

MAKING COLONIES TICK...

Certain important game events are accompanied by a voice-over, announcing whatever earth-shattering event prompted it. Unfortunately, the mandatory female voice (representing, presumably, "computer") sounds rather stilted and contrived, and some remarks are just plain inappropriate (programming glitch, perhaps). The music that plays constantly in the background is true Star Trek material, but drones on far too monotonously - in fact, it was so tiresome, I eventually turned it off. The bleeps you hear every time you touch a control also sound genuinely Star Trek, and provide a comfortable level of feedback to the player's commands.



BATTLE STATIONS!

As mentioned earlier, the graphics in this game are far from stunning, but that does not mean that they are not functional. In fact, this seems to be a trademark of turn-based games, and there is not all that much that can be done about it, after all. Apart from having to adjust the map overlays almost constantly due to overcrowding of the map with abundant information (eventually one finds a configuration that is acceptable), all information is presented clearly (although make sure you read the manual first, or you won't know what most graphs and indicators represent). Unfortunately, enemy ships don't show up on the map strongly enough, and it is easy to overlook a twenty-warship taskforce just because of the overlay mode you happen to be in.

A rather unusual, umm, "feature" of the game is a built-in screensaver (yes, believe it!). Should you leave the game running for a while and come back to it later, nothing will have happened (of course; it is turn-based, after all) except that a number of star ships and star bases will spin gracefully around on your screen. Quite pretty, really. And, arguably, the most sophisticated graphics in the game!

50 Hours!

What I found most surprising, in this age of real-time strategy games, is that this turn-based title not only grabbed my attention, but held it tight until I finally gritted my teeth and closed it (needing to write this review - otherwise, I'd still be glued). Furthermore, unlike most Civilization-type games, Birth of the Federation has you controlling relatively few settlements (planetary systems). The maps do not contain huge numbers of star systems, and intensive fine-tuning of every system is required. Also, a game of Birth of the Federation will entertain you, on average, for somewhere around thirty to fifty hours (sometimes it might even be without a break!). However, as with most turn-based games, it remains to be seen whether Birth of the Federation will withstand repeated play, or whether it will become too easy after a couple of successful attempts.

PC CD-ROM

RAVEN

GENRE
Turn Based Strategy

With an impressive variety of star ships and facilities based on the Star Trek universe, this title should appeal to all who enjoy both turn-based strategy and Star Trek. However, can a turn-based game survive in this day and age, where the multiplayer arena is dominated by all manner of real-time challenges?

Developer:	Publisher:	Supplier:	RRP:
Microprose	Microprose	No Local Distributor	$49.95 USA

http://www.microprose.com

Multiplayer	Comparitives	Pro's	Con's
Yes	Civilization SM's Alpha Centauri	True to the Star Trek Universe	Civilization Wrapped in Star Trek

Min Requirements	Recommended
Pentium 166 MMX 16 MB Ram 4 X CD Rom 2 MB PCI Video 160 MB HD Windows 95/98 (DirectX 6.1)	Pentium 200 32 MB Ram 8 X CD Rom 4 MB 3D AGP 180+ MB HD Windows 95/98 (DirectX 6.1)

Graphics	Sound	Control	Story	Continuity	Playability
75	70	80	60	65	80

72

APACHE HAVOC

Ever since the release of the monumental Longbow 2, fans of rotor-simulations have been awaiting its successor. When Empire announced the release of Apache-Havoc, a simulation of the American Apache AH64D and also the Russian Mil Mi 28 Havoc, I could not wait to get my grubby little paws on it.

Reaper

The installation went relatively smoothly. The only problem was that it was rather long and did not give you an option of installation size and it took up 360 MB. The box includes a 140 page manual, a nice thick keyboard and of course the CD, unfortunately no maps. The manual is adequate and does a good job of explaining everything you need to know. The installation does take some time to complete but even worse is that the game takes an awfully long time to load up the first time you play it but it loads much quicker after that. However I found that loading missions, especially dynamic campaign missions takes a ridiculously long time to load. You could probably go buy a pizza while your mission is being loaded.

THE CHOPPERS

The game simulates the AH64D Apache and the Mil Mi-28 Havoc. Both are attack choppers whose main reason for existence is tank busting. However both can accomplish a number of missions including Suppression of Enemy Air Defences (SEAD), Escort, Combat Air Patrols, Reconnaissance and Close Air Support and (my favourite) tank busting! The two choppers are very similar in capabilities and if you can fly the one then it is quite easy to fly the other. The only real difference is that the Apache has better avionics. The Apache has numerous whiz-bang avionics including two large Multiple-Function Displays whereas the Havoc has only a large TV type screen. The two cockpits are pretty different and whereas the Apache is very modern, the Havoc is more rudimentary. I found the cockpit graphics to be very impressive and realistic. Even the 3D virtual cockpit looked pretty good and was exactly the same as the 2D cockpits' albeit of slightly lesser graphical quality. Rather disappointing was the fact that the cockpits were not mouse click-able as has been the fashion lately.

THE WARS!

The most impressive thing about Apache-Havoc is its dynamic campaign. The campaign is set in three different scenarios, a Cuban crisis, an Opium war or a campaign in the Caspian Sea area. In fact all missions are generated in this simulation by the dynamic campaign engine, from simple free flights to single dynamic missions. What is the big deal about dynamic campaigns you ask? Dynamic campaigns are the Holy Grail of flight simulators. In a dynamic campaign no two missions are ever the same since there is no scripting just like real life. So the result is endless re-playability. In the campaigns you will realise the obsessive attention to detail that the designers have implemented in this game. There are moving objects a plenty from swivelling radar masts to tanks, trucks and aircraft carriers. All in all a very realistic and convincing world to fly around in and kill things! Of course you can choose to fly either for the Yanks or the Russians. The campaigns are on a time for success basis. There is a running clock when you start the campaign. For every successful mission you get more time to achieve your objectives. Of course this is easier said than done since some of the missions can be almost suicidal. However before you start getting too brave, remember that the campaign starts you with rather easy missions such as scouting and combat air patrols or reconnaissance missions. This of course should enable you to build up enough points and promotions so as to qualify for more difficult missions and that's when the fun (and tears) really begins.

Graphics in most simulators range from realistic to cartoon-like. This game has more than adequate graphics although the terrain is not quite photo-realistic like that found in Falcon 4. Rather it reminds me of the terrain in Hornet Korea... which is in itself not a bad thing. However where the graphics are quite spectacular is in the rendering of dawn and dusk lighting and the rendering of objects and cities. You will see some of the most beautiful sunsets ever seen in a simulation. However there is no dynamic lighting such as that found in Longbow 2, which made my jaw drop. The various features found in this virtual world are extremely detailed, such as cities, harbours, ships, bridges and narrow winding roads through thick forests... with trees... yes trees! Flying through cities in Cuba you will see graffiti paintings on the walls of such heroes of the Revolution such as Che Guevara.

However, as usual, such graphical splendour comes at a price. You will have to possess a serious machine to run this title without pauses. Clearly my P200 was seriously inadequate (time for an upgrade!). As I said the attention to detail is astounding. I saw tank-commanders buttoning up their hatch before battle. Burning hulks of vehicles which have seen their... you know what follows. Vehicles driving around at aerodromes. Moving radar masts on the carrier and on SAM vehicles. There is just too much to mention. You'll have to buy it yourself to appreciate it all.

SPOT THE DETAILED TERRAIN BELOW THE DETAILED CHOPPER

WEATHER AND WIND

You'll find some of the most detailed weather effects ever modelled in a flight simulator. There is rainy weather and strong winds. Both are extremely dangerous for choppers, especially sudden gusts of wind. In bad weather watch out for those telephone lines... you don't want to get tangled in them at night. Fortunately the windscreen wipers are accurately modelled and will help in rainy weather. This model even comes complete with intermittent sweep mode. Of course what also helps at night is the Pilots Night Vision System which turns the world into an eerie green and helps the pilot fly at night. All in all there are some of the most realistic weather effects I've seen since Flight Unlimited III. Did I mention the snow on the mountain peaks?

CARRIER TAKE OFF!

SOUND AND YOUR GUNNER

I suppose you are wondering why I'm grouping these two subjects together. Well it's like this.

The sounds are very good, not spectacular but good.

However one option I decided to switch off in the options is the corny co-pilot/gunner. Man where did they find this guy? In the heat of battle I seriously doubt a realistic gunner is going to repeatedly tell you that he was born for this. He is useful in that he will point out targets and tell you what weapons system you've just selected, but usually I know this bit of info already. Even the Russian gunner and all the other Russian voices sound so corny. However I can understand that they would have a rather strange accent since they are Russians.

The flight modelling is excellent and wait for it... it may even surpass that of Longbow 2! There, I finally said it! You will have a difficult time controlling the tail of the choppers since the airfoil effect of the tail-rotor is very accurately modelled. For those of you who do not possess rudder pedals or a joystick/throttle combo that has a rudder pedal, now is the time to go buy them. The damage modelling is also very good and if certain parts of your chopper are damaged expect to experience different types of problems such as failure of hydraulic pressure which makes your controls non-existent gradually as pressure is lost. Of course you can land at FARPs and have such damages repaired. Of course such damage comes from weapons (although a lot of mine comes from reckless flying). The weapons are accurately modelled and can even cause proximity damage. If you're flying the Apache will be able to load Hellfire missiles, Stinger AA missiles, rocket pods and of course your trusty chain-gun is a permanent feature. If you're flying the Havoc you'll have a choice of Ataka missiles, AA missiles, rocket pods and the chain-gun. As you can see it is pretty much the same sort of weapons.

Now for the AI, the good news is that the enemy AI is very good... or is that bad news? The "bad" news is that although you can give your wingmen commands they do not often listen and generally do their own thing. I think they need a court-martial but that is unfortunately not modelled in the game. Of course you can also call for air-support and artillery barrages and they do tend to respond if they are available.

The game offers all the standard DirectPlay multiplayer options such as IPX, TCP/IP, modem connection and serial connection. You can do anything in multiplayer that you can in solo.

HIGHLY DETAILED MODELS EVERYWHERE!

THIS IS THE STANDARD COCKPIT SHOT, NEXT...

There is a marked pause when choosing weapons and changing targets. However the lag is so bad in this country that I did not really get into the multiplayer but this is the future and Apache-Havoc does cater for it.

NO PROBLEM

Does this simulation have its fair share of problems? Yes, all simulators do. But since this one was released in Europe a month before releasing in the USA the game designers added and debugged the code before the USA release and we have subsequently reaped the benefits. You will still have to download the patch and install it into the game (I'll see if the editor can put it onto one of our cover CDs). Unfortunately, I did not have the space to go into detail in this review but if you like chopper simulations (and there aren't many around!) then you should do yourself a favour and get this one.

Apache Havoc is a definite must buy for any military chopper simulator enthusiasts. The game's crisp graphics and remarkable attention to detail make it a winner. It's not perfect but it's as close as you can get to the real thing.

Developer:	Publisher:	Supplier:	RRP:
Razorworks	Empire Interactive	Multinneda Warehouse (011) 315-1000	R 299.00

http://empireflight.com

Multiplayer	Comparitives	Pro's	Con's
Yes	Longbow 2	Superb Graphics Attention to Detail Realistic Campaign	Some Boring Missions Needs Fast System

Graphics	Sound	Control	Story	Continuity	Playability
90	85	88	85	95	85

88

REAPER

GENRE
Helicopter Simulation

PC CD-ROM

Min Requirements	Recommended
Pentium 233 MMX 32 MB Ram 4 X CD Rom 4 MB 3D Accelerator 360 MB HD Windows 95/98 (DirectX 6.1)	Pentium II 300 64 MB Ram 8 X CD Rom 12 MB AGP 3D 360+ MB HD Windows 95/98 (DirectX 6.1)

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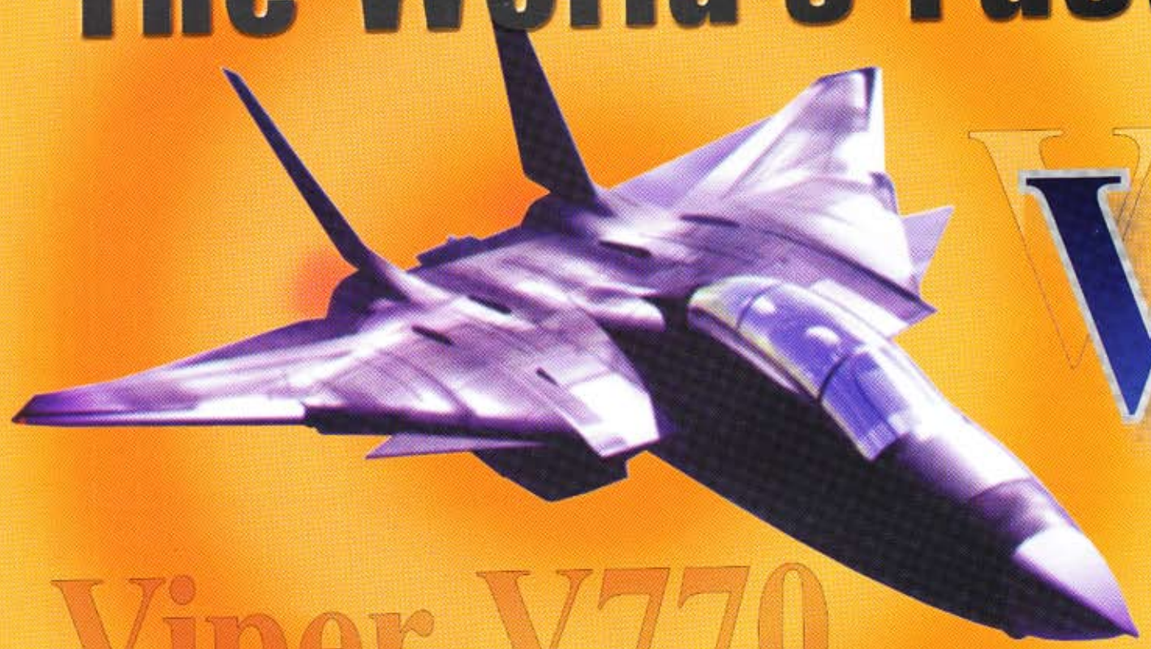

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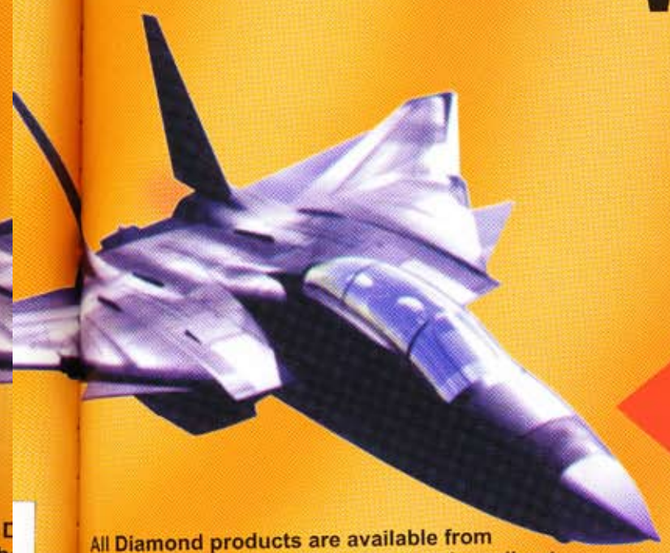

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Rebellion has taken two of the most fearsome alien characters of all time from 20th Century Fox Entertainment films and created a game that is both visually stunning and scary as hell to play. Of course no game would be complete without their on-screen counterparts, the United States Marine Core which is also represented, should the desire to play a human ever overwhelm you.

Soul Assassin

ALIENS VERSUS PREDATOR

It has been some time in the making and now finally with the release of Aliens versus Predator from Rebellion, fans from all over can take on the role of their favourite alien species.

The game is refreshingly different, in the sense that you can play as a non-humanoid character. Rebellion also did an excellent job of conveying the surroundings and capturing the ambient atmosphere of the characters.

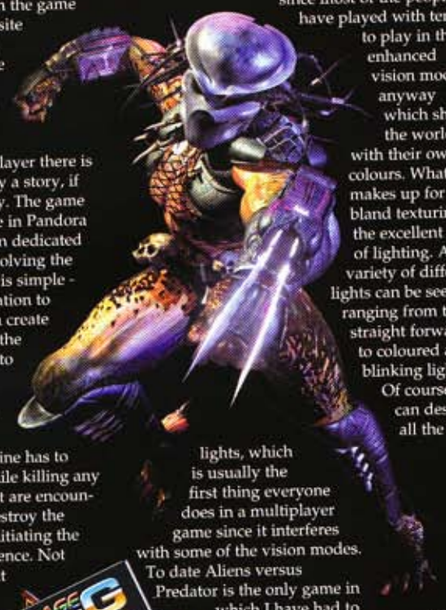
Not one, but three

In the game you get to play any one of the three characters, namely the infamous Alien, cunning Predator or their human opponent the Marine. Each of the characters have been recreated in the game with exquisite detail that does justice to their on-screen counterparts.

In single player there is supposedly a story, if only barely. The game takes place in Pandora Base - a Weyland-Yutani installation dedicated to secret biological experiments involving the Aliens. As the Alien your objective is simple - destroy anything within the installation to ensure that you can create a thriving hive. As the Predator you need to find the missing parts of your spaceship and rescue captured clan members. The Marine has to escape the base while killing any alien life forces that are encountered, as well as destroy the doomed base by initiating the auto destruct sequence. Not much of a story but there is lots of action to make up for the lack thereof. Each of the three races has five levels to reach their objectives and each also has five bonus levels which are activated by finishing the default levels in different difficulty modes. This makes it interesting to play all the difficulty modes and ads to the continuity of the single player experience.

Interestingly enough the game is not based on an existing engine and uses a new engine developed by Rebellion. There is currently little information available on the exact details of the engine except for the specifications published on the Internet. Suffice to say that the engine is fast with unique features that easily compare with the big boys of 3D out there - namely the Quake 2 engine and the Unreal engine.

Graphically the game offers an immersive experience with an engine that has over 1000 polygons to represent the characters. As you can well imagine the characters are well detailed and the texturing artists did an excellent job on the skins of these characters making them as close to the originals as possible. The level design could have been more varied within the game and seems to lack imagination. The multiplayer levels take place mostly in in-door levels that are reminiscent of the second Alien film. It seems that Rebellion must have loved the second film since so much is taken from 'Aliens' and implemented in the game. The texturing of the levels is also bland and most parts tend to be mostly greyish metal textures. This isn't such a big issue since most of the people I have played with tend to play in the enhanced vision modes anyway which show the world with their own colours. What makes up for the bland texturing is the excellent use of lighting. A variety of different lights can be seen ranging from the straight forward to coloured and blinking lights. Of course you can destroy all the lights, which is usually the first thing everyone does in a multiplayer game since it interferes with some of the vision modes.



To date Aliens versus Predator is the only game in which I have had to take a break every hour or so just to give my nerves a rest. The game totally draws you into the part you are portraying be it Aliens, Predator or Marine. At times you find yourself too scarred to peak around the next corner due to the sheer odds stacked against you and Rebellion's gloomy but tense level design.

Most of the levels are dark with flickering lights and scurrying noises seemingly coming from every direction and players can also hear the hum of machinery or insects about, depending on the level being played. This adds to the gameplay experience and has a tendency to boost your adrenaline level and induce fear.

Another feature that makes the game so intense and scary to play is the background music which has been taken from some of the Alien films as well as new music composed especially for the game by Rebellion. The soundtracks are dark and ominous conveying a feeling of being utterly alone against an enemy which might pop up around any corner ready to claw you to shreds, blow you into bits, or take your head as a trophy.

On the multiplayer side Aliens versus Predator delivers the goods as well with thrilling deathmatch gaming. It is unfortunate that there are so few DM levels though as only 5 are included.

There are however a couple of interesting multiplayer modes to keep your interest piqued - Species Deathmatch where each species forms a team; Predator Tag where there is one Predator on the level and only he can score points, should you kill the Predator you become the new Predator and are able to score points and Alien Tag, which is the same as Predator Tag except that only the Alien can score points. There is also Last Man Standing where the game starts with one Alien and the rest of the players are Marines, every Marine that is killed becomes an Alien and the last remaining Marine is declared the winner.

An all in one family shot

In Closing

Aliens versus Predator is in my opinion the first game to accurately portray their on screen counterparts and brings something unique to the FPS genre. The game is mostly aimed at fans of the Predator and Alien but offers enough to satisfy any FPS lover. The gameplay is addictive and you can play as any one of three characters each with their own weapons and unique style of gameplay. All the races are well balanced and any one

Anyone seen the pimple cream lately...

Alien Background

The Alien was first introduced to the public in the 1979 Ridley Scott movie Alien with Sigourney Weaver taking the lead role. Her ship crashes on a distant planet while investigating a distress beacon signal. The crew discovers some strange pod-like eggs and face-hugging creatures on the planet and foolishly brings one of the creatures aboard the ship.

Renowned artist H. R. Giger designed the original Alien for which he received an Academy Award for 'Best Achievement of Visual Effects'. Since then the movie Alien has become a cult classic, there have been three sequels to the original film so far and over that course the Alien has become a cult icon and gathered numerous fans all across the world. There are even fan-based web sites on the Internet solely dedicated to the Alien. While visiting these sites I came across an interesting rumour - it seems that the 5th sequel in the Alien saga is currently being planned, and will be taking place on Earth this time. Sigourney Weaver is also supposedly writing the script for the film and has signed on for $18 Million. It's just a rumour but interesting none the less. Let's just hope it is better than the last Alien film.

Normal View

Hunting View

Alien In-Game

As in the films the Alien is extraordinarily fast and can climb on any surface, even hang upside down from ceilings to drop down on unsuspecting prey. This does take some time to get used to and I know of a few people who have experienced motion sickness while playing the Alien. The Aliens main advantage is its speed. It can be very hard to track an Alien especially if you are playing as a Marine or Predator.

The Alien has two modes from which it can view its surroundings, firstly there is a hunting mode in which the environment is seen in a bubble view or 'fish eye' lens view. In this mode the alien tracks its prey by seeing the pheromones released by their bodies, it is this mode that seems to induce motion sickness in some individuals. The second mode is a navigation mode, which allows the Alien to see in low light or utter darkness, it unfortunately negates the pheromone view and the Alien has to rely purely on sight alone.

The Alien has few options as far as weapons are concerned and has to rely on its strong physique to kill opponents. It has three basic attacks namely its claws, its tail and its monstrous jaw. The jaw attack does take some getting used to as it only appears if an opponent's head is dead centre on the screen and is low enough on health to be killed with it. It has the added effect of replenishing the Alien's health should you need medical attention. Overall the Alien is the most difficult to play and really does take some time getting used to due to the speed and strange hunting view the player is presented with. If mastered it is the most deadly though, and can kill opponents with a few hits even before they know what's happening.

Marine Background

Normal View

The Marine has been in most of the Alien films and also featured in the first Predator movie. The incarnation in the game is taken mainly from the second Alien movie 'Aliens' with their high-tech weaponry. They just had to be in the game in my opinion since we can't have Sigourney or Arnold to represent the human species in this little versus matter of who is the superior fighter.

Marine In-Game

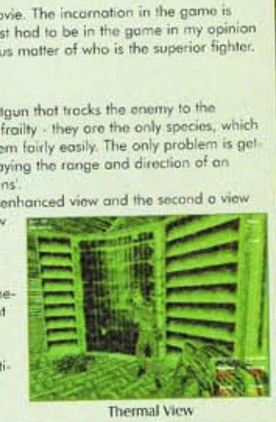
The Marine is well rounded and comes with an array of weaponry ranging from a Smartgun that tracks the enemy to the destructive SADAR missile from the movie. The biggest factor against the Marine is their frailty - they are the only species, which take large amounts of damage from falling, and both the Predator and Alien can kill them fairly easily. The only problem is getting close enough to actually attack since they are equipped with a motion tracker displaying the range and direction of an approaching enemy. It is similar to the motion tracker used in the second Alien film 'Aliens'.

The Marine also has two modes to view his surroundings, the first is your everyday non-enhanced view and the second a view that utilises an image intensifier to display the surroundings, even in darkness. The only drawback to the Image Intensifier view is that it works on light and you can blind a Marine with a weapon that has an explosion effect.

One interesting feature in the game is that the Marine is the only species that has to run around a level to pick up health and weapons, unlike the Alien or Predator, which have everything they need.

I don't know exactly how, but since we received the final copy of Aliens versus Predator our Editor-in-Chief has become extremely well versed in multiplayer with the Marines, and continues to massacre the rest of us playing the alien races. This shows that even with lesser health the Marines still pose a great danger even to aliens. Kind of reminds me of the movies somehow, although I still think the Alien and Predator are superior to the Marine.

Make no mistake the Marine is thoroughly enjoyable to play, especially when you are at the winning end of the stick in a multiplayer game. They are weak but come with weapons that pack a large enough punch to make any alien think twice about attacking, not to mention that they are human and we have to show that no alien scum can come and invade our territory.



Thermal View

Predator Background

The Predator made his film debut in the 1987 John McTiernan movie, Predator that starred Arnold Schwarzenegger in the leading role of a Special Forces operative out in the South American jungle on a rescue mission. Unfortunately he comes across an alien species which travels through the universe in search of prey, which in this case just happens to be Arnold's squad. On an interesting note the development of the third instalment of this movie series is currently in the works and should be released in the year 2000.

Thermal View

Alien Hunting View

Marine Hunting View

Normal View

PREDATOR IN-GAME

The Predator has to be my favourite character to play - it's versatile, reasonably fast and best of all has the ability to cloak. The cloaking feature isn't perfect and Aliens can see you when cloaked if they are in their hunting vision and Marines can see you when they use their image intensifier, but it does give you an advantage over the other races, if only barely.

The Predator has four modes in which it can view its surroundings. Firstly there is the standard view in which the Predator sees the world non-enhanced. Then there are the two hunting modes, the first hunting mode is for hunting Marines and makes it easy to spot Marines and in this mode Aliens are barely visible. The second hunting mode is for tracking Aliens, as with the other hunting mode Marines are barely visible. As can be seen the down side to the hunting modes is that you can only see the prey for which it was intended. Often you find yourself confronting an opponent who doesn't fall within your hunting mode and have to change mode fairly quickly if you wish to survive. The fourth mode in which the Predator can view its environment is a night vision type mode. I found this mode to be used mostly when hunting other Predators and becomes a necessity in a multiplayer game.

The downside to the Predator is that everything he uses requires energy and he has a limited supply which regenerates slowly over a period of time when all functions utilising this energy are turned off. Energy is used by the cloaking device, and some of his weapons as well as his medicomp, which produces two vials of fluid that he injects himself with for healing. The element that balances this out is the pure destructive nature of the Predators weapons, two of them that can kill instantly with one hit. He comes equipped with wrist blades which do the least damage and require no energy; a Speargun which is an assassination weapon and kills instantly without using energy; a Shoulder Cannon that can lock on to targets as long as you are in the correct hunting mode; a pistol which creates a radius based damage effect although it has an extremely short range and last but not least the infamous disc from the movie which also tracks targets and kills with one hit. While the weapons are extremely effective all of them will turn off the cloaking field when fired with the exception of the shoulder cannon. Weapons can also only lock on targets if you are in the correct hunting mode - it won't lock on a Marine while you are in the Alien-hunting mode.

The Predator does take time getting used to and you have to remember that you are a hunter and need to take time and move slowly, ready to strike in an instant. I found the Predator the most fun and my favourite to play giving you enough of an arsenal for the toughest battle while still maintaining an alien feel to the gameplay.

So just how fascinated are the public with the Alien and the Predator? It seems that since either of them appeared on the big screen, game companies from all over made games based on these characters. Below is a list of all the games to date that are based on the Alien or the Predator:

ALIEN (Fox Games) - Atari 2600
ALIEN (Argus Press Software) - ZX Spectrum, Amstrad CPC, Commodore 64
ALIEN (Unknown) - Apple IIe
ALIENS (Square / Activision) - MSX
PREDATOR (Pack-In Video) - MSX Nintendo
ALIENS - US Version (Activision) - ZX Spectrum, Amstrad CPC, Commodore 64, Apple IIe
ALIENS - UK Version (Electric Dreams) - ZX Spectrum, Amstrad CPC, Commodore 64
PREDATOR (Activision) - ZX Spectrum, Amstrad CPC, Commodore 64
PREDATOR 2 (Imageworks) - ZX Spectrum, Amstrad CPC, Commodore 64
ALIENS (Konami) - Arcade coin-op
ALIEN 3 (Probe / Acclaim) - Sega Genesis, SNES, Commodore 64, Commodore Amiga, Sega Gameboy
PREDATOR 2 (unknown) - Sega Genesis, Sega Master System
ALIEN 3: THE GUN (Sega) - Arcade coin-op
ALIEN VS PREDATOR (unknown) - SNES
ALIENS VS PREDATOR (Capcom) - Arcade coin-op
ALIEN VS PREDATOR (Rebellion / Atari) - Atari Jaguar
ALIENS ONLINE (Kensi Entertainment / Fox Interactive) - PC (online only)
ALIEN 3 (unknown) - Nintendo Gameboy
ALIENS: A COMIC BOOK ADVENTURE (Mindscape) - PC
ALIEN VS PREDATOR (unknown) - Nintendo Gameboy
ALIEN TRILOGY (Acclaim / Fox Interactive) - Sony Playstation, Sega Saturn, PC
ALIENS VERSUS PREDATOR (Rebellion / Fox Interactive) - PC
ALIEN RESURRECTION (Argonaut / Fox Interactive) - Sony Playstation, PC

of the characters with an experienced player can dominate a multiplayer game. I do wish that they had included more multiplayer levels but there are already maps in the working from the gaming community to alleviate this small annoyance. I recommend the game to any FPS lover, you won't be sorry and it will fill the gap while we all wait for Quake III to arrive sometime in the future. Even then you might find yourself loading up Aliens versus Predator to re-experience the thrill of playing one of the most terrifying alien races ever produced.

I'M SURE I'VE SEEN THIS IN A MOVIE BEFORE...

SOUL ASSASSIN

PC CD-ROM

GENRE
First Person Shooter

Aliens versus Predator does justice to its on screen counterparts with a game that is enjoyable and at times terrifying to play. Excellent graphics and ambient soundtracks totally immerse you in your environment taking on the role of your chosen race.

Developer:	Publisher:	Supplier:	RRP:
Rebellion	Fox Interactive	Electronic Arts Africa (011) 803-1212	R 299.00

http://www.foxinteractive.com

Multiplayer	Competitives	Pro's	Con's
Yes	Quake II Shogo Blood II	Excellent Gameplay 3 Different Species Very Atmospheric	Too Few DM Levels Wimpy Story

Min Requirements	Recommended
Pentium 200 MMX 32 MB Ram 4 X CD Rom 4 MB Direct3D 200 MB HD Windows 95/98 (DirectX 6.1)	Pentium II 400 128 MB Ram 24 X CD Rom 16 MB 3D AGP 400 MB HD Windows 95/98 (DirectX 6.1)

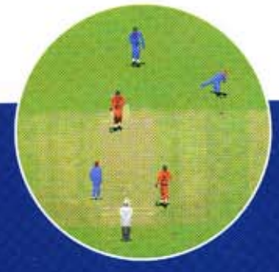
Graphics	Sound	Control	Story	Continuity	Playability	
90	92	92	72	88	95	88

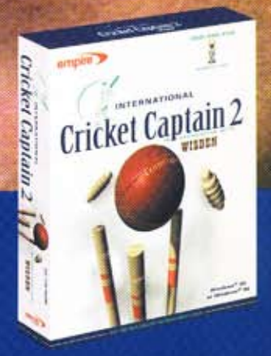
Cricket Captain accused of unfair tactics

Deliberately flouting world-beating heritage, and backed by indecent amounts of promotional spend, Empire's International Cricket Captain 2 will drive home its unfair advantage this summer.

... you didn't think we meant Alec Stewart, did you ?

INTERNATIONAL Cricket Captain 2
IN ASSOCIATION WITH WISDEN





International Cricket Captain was the best-selling PC cricket game of 1998. This year,

International Cricket Captain 2 is set to regain the title.

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This game is not officially endorsed by Alec Stewart

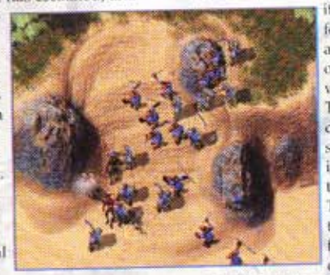
Cavedog's long-awaited Kingdoms takes a drastic departure from their previous title, Total Annihilation, by thrusting the player into a magical setting of fantasy swords and sorcery. Will you be the master of Earth, Water, Fire or Air?

RAVEN

TOTAL ANNIHILATION KINGDOMS

Four siblings, the two sons and two daughters of a king who has stepped down, inherit four quarters of the land of Darien. Granted immortality, they rule for thousands of years, and slowly grow apart, until all semblance of sibling love is gone. For the past few hundreds of years, they have skirmished amongst themselves, but now the conflict has escalated, and they prepare for total annihilation...

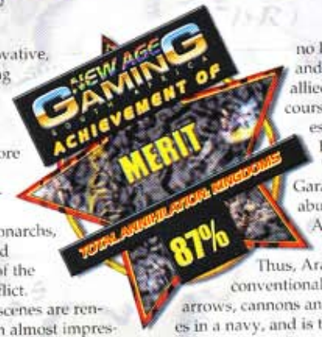
And so begins a tale of struggle. "Tale" is the most appropriate description, as the single-player campaign in Total Annihilation: Kingdoms is structured as a story, an adventure even. It is most unusual in that, in stark contrast to all other real-time strategy campaigns, it does not deal with each race in succession, with a separate campaign for each, but rather with all simultaneously. At first, this seemed rather strange, but once I accustomed myself to this unfamiliar format, I found myself enjoying it thoroughly.



CURVE 'SPIKE' BALL

The player takes on varying sides all along the story, jumping from one to another as the plot unravels, then switching back. Here's an example - one mission has the player fortifying a region against the opposition, then the next mission has the player taking the role of the opposition seeking to break through those very fortifications. This approach is innovative, and it is good to see something new in a well-established genre.

Cut-scenes unfold the story between missions, and are more than mere briefings, but also offer a look into the personalities of the feuding monarchs, and a grand overview of the whole conflict. These cut-scenes are rendered in an almost impressionistic style, giving the impression of fantasy art at all times.



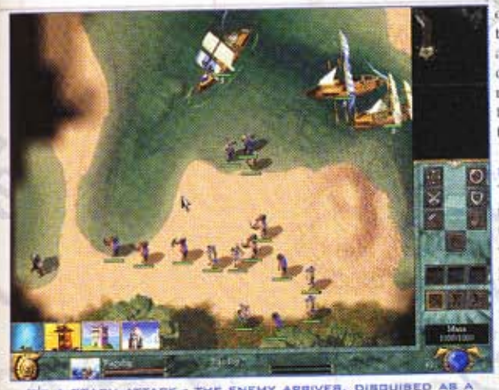
The learning curve is neither too steep nor too slow. The first few missions are intended to familiarise the player with the interface and basic unit and resource management and, as such, are very easy. However, they become challenging soon enough! None of the missions are too hard, and most can be completed, if not on first attempt, with one or two replays. An unusual side effect of the campaign style that Cavedog have implemented is that one grows all tech-trees pretty much simultaneously. You might encounter some new units being used against you in a mission, then be using that same unit one or two missions later.

Well, by now you are no doubt wondering just what the four sides are (yes - Kingdoms features no less than four forces!). Earth and Water find themselves allied against Fire and Air (of course, these alliances don't necessarily hold in multiplayer!). Both Earth (Aramon) and Water (Veruna) keep Garacaius's old promise not to abuse magic. Fire (Taros) and Air (Zhon), however, have decided to use magic freely.

Thus, Aramon's chief strength lies in conventional weaponry - swords, arrows, cannons and the like. Veruna specialises in a navy, and is the chief naval power. Taros's forte is the unabashed use of magic and necromancy, and thus commands undead armies. Zhon specialises in the summoning of monstrous beasts. All sides can build walls and gates, the latter to keep out unwanted visitors while not inconveniencing the locals too much. However much Aramon and Veruna try to limit their use of magic, everything in Kingdoms is achieved through it. Even these two nations require Mana to summon their armies, even if they don't throw energies around on the battlefield. Mana and time are the resources one must manage in order to win at Kingdoms. Scattered across the map are Sacred Stones, sites surrounded by Stonehenge-like standing stones where Mana is available. On these sites Lodestones must be built in order to collect and store Mana. Each Lodestone brings in infinite Mana, but at a predetermined rate (usually between 15 and 20 per unit time, depending on the Sacred Stone it is built on). Furthermore,

HEY, I CAN SMELL BURNT HAIR

THIS IS A NICE TIDY BASE, BUT IT'LL LOOK LIKE HELL AFTER A FIGHT



IT'S A BEACH ATTACK - THE ENEMY ARRIVES, DISGUISED AS A GROUP OF TOURISTS

each Lodestone can hold only so much Mana (usually 1000). These figures can be augmented by the building of Divine Lodestones (a more advanced version). Other structures and units also influence Mana income and storage - every structure or unit that summons others holds between 100 and 200 Mana, and ups the income by 1 (which is practically negligible, but not quite). Thus, with infinite resources at one's disposal, it becomes a matter of balancing income and expenditure, to most efficiently summon forces and climb the tech-tree.

The four forces have been diversified somewhat, making the contest more interesting. For instance, while Veruna can hold its own on a land map, it is on water maps that it truly shines. Zhon's forces enjoy greater mobility by dint of numbering more flying units among their arsenal. Taros inflicts much damage from a distance, while Aramon has the toughest, best-armoured and best-trained troops. While Aramon, Veruna and Taros all have fairly conventional tech-trees, in that low-level builder-type units summon various structures, which in turn summon the combat units, Zhon implements a very interesting, and innovative, approach - their low-level builder units can summon higher-level builder units and low-level fighting units, and their higher-level builder units, in turn, summon the higher level fighters. This means that, while the summoning infrastructure is more vulnerable (units are softer than buildings, after all) it can be moved at will - either into enemy territory (when attacking) or out of harm's way, as needed. This force takes a lot of getting used to.

INTERFACE THIS!

The interface takes some getting used to as well, but is fairly powerful and easy-to-use, once one has grasped it. It seems to lack a few minor features, such as selecting all units of a type visible on the screen, offering instead the ability to select all units of a type across the entire map - so a slip of the keyboard can wreak havoc to carefully placed units. However, all in all, Kingdoms's interface incorporates some very powerful features, once all the appropriate short-cut keys have been learned.

The simulation aspect of the game has been brilliantly implemented. Firstly, the terrain is three-dimensional, and this affects how units behave - line-of-sight is blocked by objects, and is calculated based on relative heights. Also, physical rules have been programmed in - ranged weapons benefit by being on an elevation, and such weapons' trajectories are calculated in three dimensions - therefore, a shot might miss not only horizontally, but also by dint of being too high or too low. One can actually watch the path a projectile follows from the time it is fired to the time it lands, and it yields a realistic parabolic curve. Also, ships have been designed to be more realistic than in most real-time strategy games to date - they carry more than four or five troopers, can carry more of some units than others, and are unable to carry the largest, heaviest of units. And all ships carry onboard weapons, however light some of them might be. All ships except for the Flagship (which is a builder) can carry troops. (Ever wondered why

SOME OF THE BEST LOOKING TERRAIN IN RTS TODAY

Aramon - Earth

Elsin the Mage King rules Aramon, and is the keeper of the Legacy that pertains to Earth. He believes that his father was right in withholding magic except in dire emergencies, and strives to live the same way. His forces feature the strongest foot and mounted warriors, all clad in metal armour. In combat, the only uses Elsin has for magic are in the summoning of his forces, as well as their healing and, occasionally, resurrection. The Barracks and the Keep are where Aramon's forces are summoned. Watch Towers (manned by archers) and Strongholds (equipped with cannons) serve as defence. The only naval units that Aramon boasts are their War Galleys, which carry cannons and can also transport units over water. Elsin's army counts only two flying units in its ranks - the Spyhawk, which is used purely for reconnaissance, and has no offensive capabilities, and the great Golden Dragon, which has somewhat more substance. For sieges the recommended remedies are catapults, trebuchets and cannons. Special units include Titans, who are so adept at armourcraft that they bestow an armour bonus to nearby units; the Mage Archers, who are able to fire special fire, tracking and paralysis arrows; and Assassins, who throw lethal knives and can cloak.

Veruna - Water

The island kingdom of Veruna is ruled by Kirenna, the Sea Mage. Her ground troops are fairly similar to Elsin's, though not as stoutly armed or armoured. The same range applies - infantry, cavalry and Crossbowmen (instead of Archers). Her forces are gathered at the Enclave and Citadel for land and flying units, and the Sea Fort for ships. These include Skiffs, Harpoon Ships, Flagships, Marine Transports, Trebuchet Ships and the devastating Man of War, a full-fledged warship complete with cannons. For defence, Kirenna has at her disposal Watch Towers identical to Elsin's, as well as Bastions, similar to Strongholds, and also packing a cannon, and the slow-firing Mortar; for aquatic defence, Kirenna may order Floating Towers. For heavy assault Verunan forces rely on Catapults. In the air, Veruna fields trained Parrots for scouting, Dirigibles for support and the Dragon of Lihr. A special structure available to Verunan forces is the Pillar of Light, which heals friendly units near it.

exactly a Battleship from Warcraft II couldn't carry units?). You will also find the availability (for Verunan forces only) of Floating Towers - great towers mounted with ballistas that can be built on water.

Units gain experience as they fight. Every kill a unit inflicts counts toward its experience rating. As units advance during the course of a battle, their accuracy increases, and they become more lethal. Pleasantly enough, veteran units can be easily picked out by virtue of gaining golden trim or some other such distinguishing feature. Several levels of competence are available to each unit. This also applies to structures that carry weapons (such as Watch Towers).

The multiplayer interface deserves a mention. Up to eight players can play in one game, with the usual options for allying. Each player starts with the monarch appropriate to his or her chosen force. These monarchs may be set to "expendable" or not - if set to "not expendable", losing your monarch loses you the game. The game host can also set whether fog of war will be used or not, whether true line of sight is to be calculated, whether the map is revealed at the start of the game, and whether cheat codes may be used (what on earth for?). Starting locations may be fixed or random, and the unit limit can be set from here (the default is 150, but it can be raised as high as 200). It is strange to see a game imposing unit limits these days, and perhaps not entirely desirable. However, the processing power required to calculate lines of sight for every unit and building, as well as projectile trajectories for every shot fired must be quite staggering. The game also features a "scripted multiplayer" mode, which enables players to battle out scenarios with specific objectives.

Taros - Fire

Lokken, the Necromancer has arguably the most spectacular and unusual forces. He requires three structures for summoning his minions - the Cabal for low-power units, the Abyss for medium-strength monstrosities, and the Temple for the truly powerful abominations. For defence, Lokken keeps Caged Demons, who breathe fire on intruders, and Mage Towers, with lightning-hurling mages keeping vigilant watch. On the ground he relies on various undead nasties such as Zombies, Executioners, Skeleton Archers and Black Knights. Taros has no naval might whatsoever, except for the Ghost Ship, which travels on both land and water. However, Lokken has several aerial servants, including Gargoyles for spying, Iron Beaks, Sky Knights, Dark Priests and a Black Dragon. His special units are all spellcasters of one sort or another: Weather Witches, Fire Mages, Mind Mages and Liches. Overall, while having some of the most awesome-looking units, Taros's force requires the most and trickiest micro-management.

From a graphical point-of-view, Total Annihilation: Kingdoms doesn't offer much that is particularly new, although support for all major 3D accelerator chipsets does add value.

An interesting aspect is the non-uniform graphics for the various structures - two towers placed next to each other will not look identical, and might be set at slightly different angles; this is a purely cosmetic thing, and not at all under the player's control, not affecting game play in any way. The various spells are, nonetheless, very pleasant to watch. It is worth mentioning, however, that the cut-scenes are rendered in an unusually "arty" style, which suits the mood of the game perfectly. The introduction is lengthy and, though it suffers slightly from the "history lecture" syndrome, follows nicely from the background presented in the very well turned out manual.

The sound effects are simple - and very effective! When a full-scale battle is underway, you will know about it, as lightning bolts crash, water maelstroms gurgle, fireballs explode, cannons blast and men and women scream or cry out to their gods. Be warned - your neighbours may well complain! The music, while appropriate and well written, is rather slow and monotonous - it all sounds like one track throughout (and may even be!).

Zhon - Air

Zhon's tribes are controlled by Thirsha, The Huntress. Her only structures are the Lodestone, Divine Lodestone, Sacred Fire (which is similar to the Pillar of Light of Veruna) and the Death Totem, a defensive structure that fires lightning bolts at enemies. Her ground forces include all sorts of beasties like Goblins, Trolls and Jungle Orcs. Her only maritime unit is the Kraken, a squid-like monster. In the air is where Zhon shines - their air force includes Bats (for reconnaissance), Gryphons, Drakes, Wisps, Rocs (aerial transports) and an Ancient Dragon. Special units include Basilisks, which turn enemies to stone, Harpies - a flying unit that subverts enemy units to your side, and Stone Giants - walking catapults that are close to impossible to kill, but which move slowly.

Beefy Machine

The software includes a graphics renderer selection utility, and a very comprehensive scenario editor. This Windows-based application is quite similar in most respects to the editor included with Starcraft, and is fairly easy to learn. With this tool one can not only create maps to be played, but also script AI for units and modify virtually any setting.

Total Annihilation: Kingdoms is a worthwhile buy for any lover of real-time strategy with a powerful machine, as this game is rather heavy on system resources. The three-dimensional terrain and simulated physics all make for every game becoming a sharp tactical battle.

RAVEN

PC CD-ROM

GENRE
Real Time Strategy

Developer:	Publisher:	Supplier:	RRP:
Cavedog	GT Interactive	Datatec Crew (011) 233-1111	R 299.00

http://www.www.cavedog.com

Min Requirements	Recommended
Pentium 233 32 MB Ram 4 X CD Rom 2 MB PCI Video 80 MB HD Windows 95/98 (DirectX 6.1)	Pentium II 266 64 MB Ram 12 X CD Rom 8 MB 3D AGP 80+ MB HD Windows 95/98 (DirectX 6.1)

Multiplayer	Competitives	Pro's	Con's
Yes	Warcraft II StarCraft	Innovative Graphics and Sound Excellent Story	Resource Hungry Slow Downs

Graphics	Sound	Control	Story	Continuity	Playability
85	85	80	95	85	90

87

An interesting game with great scope for exploration and experimentation, with lots of new ideas. A couple of small oversights are more than made up for by intense play and a brilliant story line, appealing graphics and truly atmospheric sound effects.

NO HYPE ALL GAME

Game of the Show E3 1998 -CGW

Actual Game Screen

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REDLINE

GANG WARFARE 2066

First person shooters are probably amongst the top three genres of games when it comes to popularity. Driving simulators are also probably way up there. But how does one compete with the Quakes and Need for Speeds out there? These games, and others like them, have pushed the limits, making it almost impossible to break into the market without being compared to one of them, and generally not performing favourably in the comparison. This is a difficult question for developers to address. The key to everything is originality. The few games that make it out alive are the ones that approach these genres with a new way of thinking. Redline is that kind of game. As a first person shooter, it measures up fairly well against the competition, while as a driving simulator, well, it's sort of Carmageddon revisited. Wait a minute. A first person shooter AND a driving simulator? Yep. Two for the price of one, baby! - Shryke

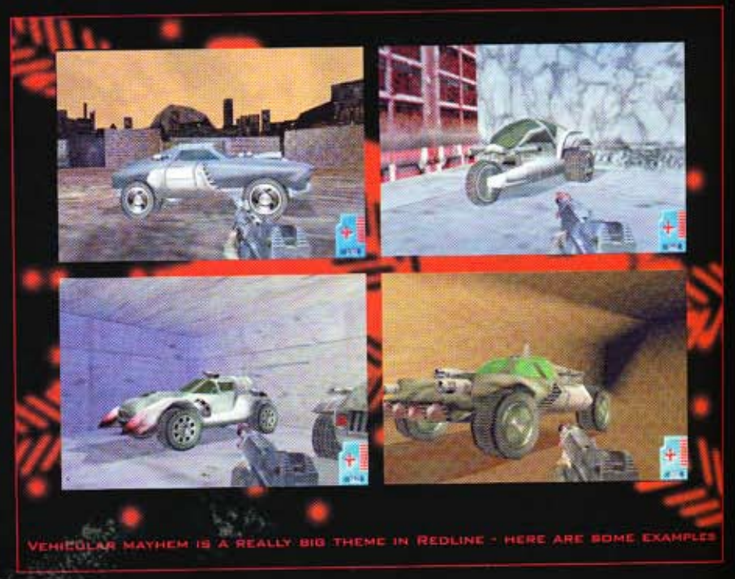
BLOWING THINGS UP IS AN ART

So how does the whole thing work?
Realistically, the two genres are worlds apart. One involves skill and steel nerves as you hurl a huge piece of metal around a racetrack, while the other involves skill and steel nerves as you hurl lots of little bits of metal around a level. Well, when you put it like that, they do seem kind of closer, don't they?

MAKIN' THINGS GO BOOM...

Redline is a game set in an apocalyptic vision of the future, when street gangs rule the cities, and near criminal "security companies" use blackmail, extortion and strong arm tactics to "keep the peace". It is in this world that your unnamed hero lives, shoots and drives.
The bulk of the game falls into the category of first person shooter, with your characters running around various beautifully modelled levels and killing the opposition with one of ten weapons. These, too, are beautifully handled in terms of graphics. Assault rifles, rocket launchers, plasma cannons, sniper rifles - they're all here, and fairly easy to find within the game. Actually, all you have to find is the ammo required to fire a particular type of gun and, hey presto, you have the gun.
Weapons change fairly slowly, which can be detrimental in a fire fight. But them's the breaks kid - you just have to learn to live with it. You'll certainly die if you don't!
This brings me to a rather um, cute feature of the various weapons.
When changing weapons, it comes down to (graphically) just changing the barrel of your gun. The new barrel just kind of swivels into place and away you go. Its novel but doesn't have much to do with game play.
A rather annoying aspect of game play is that your hero seems to move really slowly. Okay for some, but try outrun an opponent in a car, and you're going to learn the meaning of road kill in a very big way. Okay, so I suppose that's pretty realistic, but the slow movement counts doubly for agility. It ain't easy to dodge or strafe, whether it be from bullets or Buicks. With some practice you may learn to avoid either form of flying metal, but it gets pretty damn frustrating in the meantime.
Additionally, it's something of a challenge to find out where the bullets that are hitting you are flying from. Lets face it - in Quake, you get hit, you know where from. Not in Redline! You lose half your life just trying to find the tonsil that's putting lead in your hide. This does not make for fun game play.
Once you get tired of trying to dodge bullets and getting a faceful of lead for your efforts, you can always leap behind the wheel of the nearest vehicle and teach your opponents a lesson in vehicular pain. While Redline is hardly the most accurate driving simulator, screeching around the huge

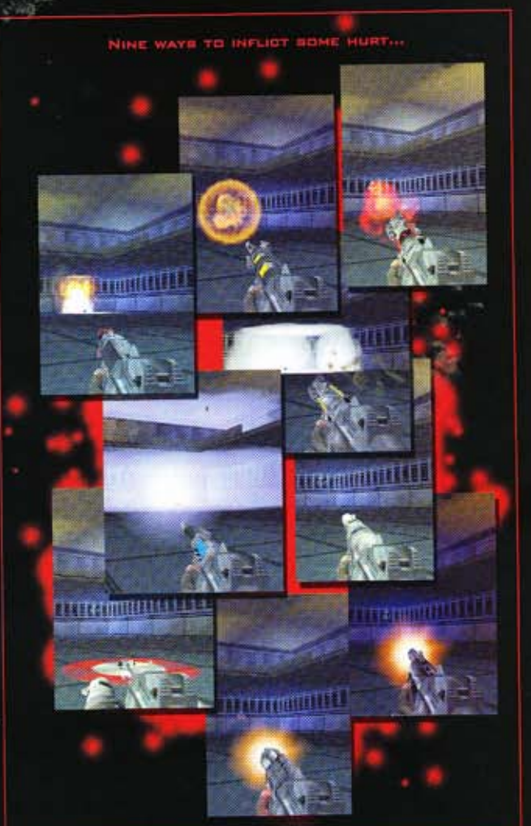
WHOA! FLYING CARS!



VEHICULAR MAYHEM IS A REALLY BIG THEME IN REDLINE - HERE ARE SOME EXAMPLES

levels in an insanely boosted motor vehicle is the best part of the game. These cars would get Mad Max green with envy. Not only do they have enough horsepower to lift the Space Shuttle, but they're brimming with weapons that fire forward, sideways and backwards. The forward firing weapons are aimable by whatever means you prefer, but you're generally rocketing around far to fast to worry much about accuracy. Hitting anything with vehicle mounted weapons is made up of one part skill and about ten parts luck. But who needs guns when you can just run the buggers down?
Controlling the various in-game vehicles takes a little getting used to. However, the developers kindly included two tutorials (one for on foot, one for behind the wheel). These tend to help, particularly when considering that you need to get acquainted with two sets of controls. Running through them before taking on real live rabid dog opponents is quite a good idea.
The story behind Redline is basically an episode-based chronicle of the main character's life, with each mission being one episode. The story itself is wonderfully tongue in cheek, and you'll find yourself chuckling quite often. Buyers beware, however, the language gets a little on the dark side of acceptable every now and then. But it's hardly a game full of cute pixies and cuddly purple dinosaurs - although I wish they had included a few of the latter for particularly satisfying target practice. The graphics also get quite unsavoury at times, with bodies exploding in great big bursts of crimson all over the place (just what the anti-PC game violence lobby needs to add fuel to the fire). However, I will once again refer you to the absence of nauseating purple reptiles, and would like to point out that the packaging of Redline, although not ESRB rated, makes no bones about the content of this game. If you find it disturbing, tough!
One thing is for certain. Reline looks, and sounds good.
Wonderfully modelled graphics go hand in hand with full-bodied explosions and gunfire, all to the raucous accompaniment of a punky, rocky, just shy of metal sound track.
This game is arguably best in multiplayer mode. Although the levels are large, and demand a lot of players, the one disk per LAN requirement makes for a nice change and adds the possibility of a rather large death match field. Multiplayer play is fast and furious, although the availability of sniper rifles does promote camping. Trust me, when the field is full of cars and pedestrians all flinging several tons of hot lead in your direction, though, finding a nice hidey-hole from where to pot the opposition is probably the furthest thing from your mind.
A really cute feature of the multiplayer game is the inclusion of car alarms. More of a booby trap than a deterrent, they add a hilarious element to the game.
How so? Well, you try stealing an opponent's car, only to have it explode with you inside. Yeah, so maybe you're not laughing, but everyone else is!
For all it's faults (and there aren't that many) Redline is a good game. It is graphically very strong, and its story line is highly entertaining, if only from a comedic point of view. While it may not gel with every gamer out there, those who enjoy either first person shooters, or savage driving simulators, or both, will certainly get into this one. Redline is a violent, brutal and graphic journey through the world of 2066 AD. It probably won't make you lose

SNIPER MODE MEANS GUARANTEED KILLS



NINE WAYS TO INFLICT SOME HURT...

SHRYKE

GENRE
First Person Shooter

PC CD-ROM

A hybrid between first person shooters and vehicular mayhem simulators, Redline lets you take out your opponents while either on foot or behind the wheel. And the story is pretty funny to boot. A bit hard to control at first, but enjoyable none-the-less.

Developer:	Publisher:	Supplier:	RRP:
Beyond Games	Accolade	Electronic Arts Africa (011) 803-1212	R199.00

http://www.ubisoft.co.uk

Multiplayer	Comparitives	Pro's	Con's
Yes	Quake Carmageddon	Graphics Sound Sense of Humour	Difficult to Control

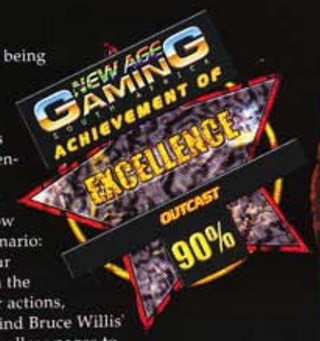
Min Requirements	Recommended
Pentium 200 32 MB Ram 4 X CD Rom 360 MB HD Windows 95/98 (DirectX 6.1) 4MB 3D card	Pentium II 266 64 MB Ram 4 X CD Rom 360 MB HD Windows 95/98 (DirectX 6.1) 8MB 3D card

Graphics	Sound	Control	Story	Continuity	Playability
90	90	70	75	70	65

77

Remember the days when adventure games were played by typing text commands while moving your character with the cursor keys? Whilst great graphic engines were reserved for action games only, finally an adventure game appears with great elements of action, story line, and a groundbreaking new graphics engine. Enter the world of Outcast... - MemnocH

OUTCAST



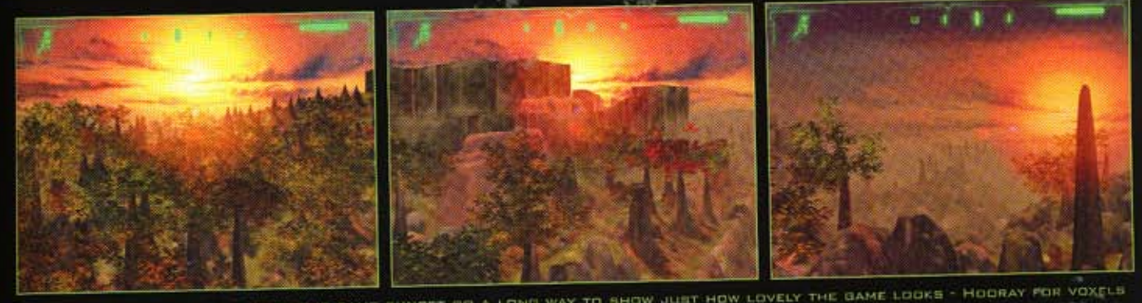
Ever felt like being a Special Forces soldier, leaping between worlds in parallel dimensions through portals as seen in Stargate? Now picture this scenario: the future of our planet hangs in the balance of your actions, and you can't find Bruce Willis' number in the yellow pages to help you out. Don't worry, help is always around the next dark corner...

In Outcast one plays the role of Cutter Slade, a U.S Navy S.E.A.L. It is the year 2007, and the government scientists figured out a way to travel to parallel dimensions through some technological breakthrough by a scientist called William Kauffman. A probe is sent to a world called Adelpha, and as fate would have it, a soldier attacks the probe, creating a rift back to Earth having the effect of a growing black hole. Slade is commissioned to escort three scientists to Adelpha to retrieve the damaged probe, saving Earth in the process. A simple process, but with more unforeseen complications than the human mind could ever comprehend.

As Slade wakes up, he finds himself in a foreign world, resting comfortably with a native of the land's home. The being announces himself as the leader of a race called the Talan, and that you, Cutter Slade, are actually the Ulukai, a being sent by the gods to save the Talan from the oppression of the evil ruler Fae Rhan, fulfilling an ancient prophecy. After this rude awakening, Cutter also finds out that his weapons (except for his HK-P12 standard issue sidearm) and supplies are missing, or rather scattered across the five worlds within Adelpha. There is also no sign of the other scientists, nor the probe you came to recover...

Cutter makes a deal with the Talan leader to help save this foreign world, and in return, the Talans would help our hero save his own. The story starts here, and the player will get the chance to familiarize him/herself with the environment and Cutters moves, before taking on the quest of finding the five Mon hidden in the five worlds in Adelpha.

The leader of the village's son, Jan, will guide you through four training exercises to stretch your legs after the long journey to Adelpha. The training starts off with simple jumping and swimming practice, and then you're off for some target plinking with your sidearm. Your character can be controlled with the keyboard and mouse/joystick, although I feel the mouse and keyboard are the most convenient. Outcast is played from either a third or first person perspective. The third person view offers more situational awareness and better control, and works quite well for Outcast. Weapons are aimed



THESE THREE DIFFERENT VIEWS OF THE SAME SUNSET GO A LONG WAY TO SHOW JUST HOW LOVELY THE GAME LOOKS - HOORAY FOR VOXELS

using the second mouse button, and a standard laser sight makes it so much easier. Later on you will have the opportunity to buy weapons from merchants in the city of Okreana. Finally, after a stealthy sneaking test, the first gateway or Daoka will be activated, and Cutter will travel to the land called Shamazaar. A guide awaits you on the other side and shows you around, while cunningly evading the soldier patrols. The soldiers are commanded by the evil ruler Fae Rhan, so it will be best to avoid them until you have enough ammo and medikits to survive a skirmish.

SHRINK!

As in all adventure type games, Cutter will need to talk to all the various characters to gain an understanding of the ways of the land, and a conversation will usually result in a specific task that you will need to perform. To assist you in these tasks, Cutter will have a bunch of gadgets, specially designed for this dangerous mission. First will be the map, which will reside on a window in your heads-up display. The first time the map is accessed, the land will be scanned into the headgear, and is handy for navigation. A compass tape will be present to the top of the heads-up display, as all directions will be given in this format throughout the game. Cutter also carries a miniaturization backpack, which shrinks objects held within using the latest in nanotechnology. Built inside the headgear are also a weapon and ammunition management system, a notepad where all the tasks can be viewed for all the different regions, and a Lexicon that explains new worlds that Cutter will pick up in this foreign world.

WHEN YOU'RE IN A STRANGE AND WONDROUS LAND, WHY NOT SHOOT ALL THE WILDLIFE TO HELL

DO YOU GUYS KNOW WHERE I COULD GET SOME ACTION ON THIS PRIMITIVE ROCK?

The main mission structure revolves around Cutter finding ways to cut off supplies to the soldiers to make them weaker. A wealth of tasks branch out from this structure, and in more than one case it will be necessary to travel between the different worlds to complete a task. Be prepared for anything, as these tasks will take the player to strange venues and though dangerous situations. Then there will always be soldiers in the way to complicate matters even more, but as a Navy S.E.A.L., Cutter can take care of himself, right? When a soldier finally dies, money (Zhorkins) can be found lying next to the body. Zhorkins can also be found hidden all over Adelpha, and some characters will pay for tasks completed.

At this stage more powerful weapons can be bought. The next weapon in the range is the UZA-SH pistol with a high rate of fire, and uses smoke tracer ammo. For the sniper in each of us is the SLNT-B dart gun, with a sniper mode. This dart gun won't kill your target, but will induce sleep for a short amount of time. A missile launcher called the HAWK-MK8 will take care of the most persistent of enemies and so will the LD-DUO 500 mortar launcher, which makes very satisfying explosions. Lastly is the FT-74 flamethrower for close quarter battle situations. Although it burns up fuel at an alarming rate, it will take care of any soldier anytime, anywhere. Cutter has a lot of other destructive gadgets at his disposal, ranging from dynamite with long-range detonators, hi-tech x-ray

binoculars, hologram devices and mini teleporting devices.

SAY NO TO POLYGONS

Infogrames made a risky choice by deciding to use Voxel technology to build their game engine. Instead of polygons, the Voxel engine uses volumetric pixels, which can be described as tiny building blocks. By putting these blocks together, a highly detailed and rich environment can be produced at the cost of 3D acceleration. This in turn requires quite a beefy computer to run, but results in Outcast having maybe the most beautiful and detailed environment ever found on a PC game, no jokes here. The engine features software bump-mapping, adding very convincing shadows as curves to the characters, and at times I had a hard time believing that no 3D was used to render the graphics. The water effects in Outcast makes water found in Unreal look like porridge, while fire, explosions and sunglare must be seen to be believed. The approach Infogrames took for Outcast definitely pays off in the visual department.

The character AI in Outcast is a showcase for any game that is currently out there. It seems that every character in the game has it's own specific task. Characters perform all kinds of duties, from fishing, carrying around objects to specific points, herding animals around and generally making the world come alive. During battle, soldiers run when outgunned, take cover, and will even call for reinforcements when their plans turn to dust. The Twon-Ha, a two legged lizard working animal, is the most common animal found in Adelpha, and is the workhorse of the Talan. Although a tad on the dumb side, a few of them can be used for fast transportation. Wild animals will hunt in packs, making life very difficult for Cutter, but once their ways are familiar, they make easy targets.

DESPITE THE SLIGHTLY BLOCKY LOOK, THE GRAPHICS ENGINE USED IN THIS GAME DOES EVERYTHING WELL ESPECIALLY ORGANIC STRUCTURES.

Sound in Outcast is exceptionally well done, and greatly compliments the characters, animals and the environments. Cutter running on different surfaces will make realistic sounds, and the slower the movement, the less noise is made. This makes it possible for the player to sneak up to an unsuspecting soldier to take him down silently, armed with fists. The music score is done by the Moscow Symphonic Orchestra, and definitely dictates the mood of the game. On countless occasions I found myself staring at the beauty of the sun and the landscape with soothing and uplifting music in the background, to more heavier percussion themes during fighting and other dangerous spots.

A MUST HAVE?

By successfully combining stunning visuals, intelligent AI and exceptional sound, Outcast manages to produce a brilliant action adventure. It creates a world where the player can totally immerse him/herself in the story line, and at times I really felt sorry for some of the characters in the game. The game has a hidden scoring system, where a final score is displayed once the game is finished. The scoring is divided between the tasks and subtasks completed. Whilst it is necessary to complete the main tasks to finish the game, one can get away with not finishing all the subtasks. There are various tasks that are not listed in the notepad, and it will be a good idea to pursue these tasks if the player is looking for a perfect score.

Outcast is definitely one of those must-have titles, capturing science fiction and fantasy in one polished bundle, it guarantees many hours of gaming pleasure for all fans of action and adventure games.

MEMNOCH

PC CD-ROM

GENRE

Third Person Adventure

Min Requirements	Recommended
Pentium 200 MMX 32 MB Ram 4 X CD Rom 2 MB PCI Video 600 MB HD Windows 95/98 (DirectX 6.1)	Pentium II 300 64 MB Ram 8 X CD Rom 4 MB AGP Video 600 MB HD Windows 95/98 (DirectX 6.1)

The game dares to be different by using new technology and it pays off. Outcast ups the par on action adventure games by offering a new style of play, and by creating a very immersive gaming environment, and is destined to become a classic.

Developer:	Publisher:	Supplier:	RRP:
Infogrames	Infogrames	Datatec Crew (011) 233-1111	R 299.00

http://www.outcast-game.com

Multiplayer	Comparitives	Pro's	Con's
No	Tomb Raider 3 MDK	Engrossing Great Story Intelligent AI	Not Everyone Will Like The Engine

Graphics	Sound	Control	Story	Continuity	Playability	
90	94	84	90	95	88	90

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Sony made an edict. They said that each new game must support the new Analog Controller. Ape Escape took it one step further. Spyro and Crash, the former kings of the 3D Platform genre (some of you may call it 3D Action/Adventure), have stepped down, passing the crown to Ape Escape, long may it reign!

Madman

APE ESCAPE

ISN'T SPIKE AND NET INTERNET TERMINOLOGY?

I'm sure you are wondering what I'm on about with Ape Escape taking it one step further. Simple. Ape Escape is the first ever Analog Controller (Dual Shock recommended) ONLY game (and proud of it!). For those who don't yet own such an item, there is even a limited-edition version of Ape Escape packaged with a limited edition translucent green Sony Dual Shock Controller. If you don't own a Dual Shock Controller, Ape Escape is a perfect excuse to get one. If you do, your Dual Shock Controller is a perfect excuse to get Ape Escape.

NO MORE MONKEY BUSINESS

Once upon a time there was an old, eccentric professor who invented a time machine. He also invented a "Peak Point Helmet", which grants intelligence to even the lowest of life forms. Once upon a time there was a cute, white, cheeky monkey called Spector (odd spelling, I know). Spector broke out of his cell, er… cage and got into the Prof.'s lab where he placed the Peak Point Helmet upon his thick, little monkey cranium and suddenly developed an urge to take over the world. Using the Time Machine he scatters his minions of monkeys around time, their objective being to rewrite history by destroying the humans and establishing themselves as the rulers of Earth. Meanwhile two 10-year-old boys who go by the names of Spike and Buzz (must've had really cruel parents) arrive at the Professor's lab, keen to be the first two humans to travel across the planes of time. They find the Prof. and his granddaughter Katie tied up and gagged. Once freed, the Professor explains that the monkeys are trying to take-over the world and enlists the boys to help him. You control the brave Spike and must travel back to different eras to capture these malicious monkeys and eventually Spector himself, restoring order and peace along the way.

CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Now at first it sounds pretty simple, all you have to do is kill the baddies and catch the monkeys with your Time Net. But one of the major difficulties when it comes to catching these furry fiends is the fact that they don't stand still. Not only that but some carry sophisticated weaponry rivalling that of Saddam Hussein's. In order to aid you in capturing the bouncing beasts you have your trusty light sabre, er… stun club which stuns your unfortunate victim just long enough to bag with the net. It may sound a bit cruel, but next to their evil deeds it's a fitting punishment. Some monkeys are trained fighters and toying with them will net you more than a few bruises. Once pursued these monkeys will proceed to run around you in circles, dropping slippery banana peels and slapping you upside the head. They really give you a run for your money (or should I say monkey?!). Along the way you'll have to deal with a treacherous T-Rex, a wicked woolly mammoth and hordes of smaller beasties all out to stop you from reclaiming history. Each level is brimming with monkeys but you don't need to catch them all, as you have a different quota for each level. To help you on your quest the Professor designs several gadgets, each complete with it's own training section (if you don't pass the training you can't proceed to the next stage), such as a water net to catch swimming monkeys, a propeller to reach areas and platforms too high to jump on to, a dash hoop (acts as a shield and makes you run fast), a slingshot (for hitting far away targets) and a radio controlled car to name but a few. You'll also find that in some levels a rowing boat awaits you to prevent jellyfish from stinging you and so on. Sometimes you may even have to catch a lift with a giant turtle! Along your way

WHEREVER YOU GO IN THE GAMING WORLD, YOU'LL ALWAYS FIND DINOSAURS!

STUNNING COLOURFUL GRAPHICS EVERYWHERE

you'll notice that with your current supply of gadgets, there are some monkeys that you cannot yet catch. As you progress you will get the gadgets capable of capturing these pesky primates and you will be able to go back to those stages and finish what you started. The different eras the game takes place in range from the prehistoric to the near past and the scenery and monsters change accordingly.

HOW DO YOU FLY THIS THING?

Ape Escape employs a unique control system, which at first may seem overwhelming, if not ridiculous but you soon realise the genius behind it. The game makes full use of the Analog Controller and after you get the hang of it (which doesn't take long), the control system proves to be absolutely amazing - it is one of the finer aspects of the game. Movement is controlled via the left analog stick, you jump with the R1 and R2 buttons, L1 and L2 control the camera (so does the digital pad), the right analog stick swings your currently selected weapon or gadget and pushing in the sticks (buttons L3 and R3) achieve crawling (to sneak up on monkeys) and curling into a ball. You learn all the different techniques along the way and there are mailboxes dotted around the stages to help you and teach you new tricks. If you leave Spike alone for a while he'll do tricks with his net, play with the RC Car or maybe even perform a few stunts with a yo-yo. The game also makes good use of the vibration feature of the Dual Shock Controller. Weapon and gadget selection comes by way of the four fire buttons on the controller and although there are a vast number of gadgets available, you can configure which button selects which with a quick press of the select button. The novelty of the control system doesn't end there, however. If Spike is in a row boat, each stick will control an oar, if you're skiing each stick will control a ski, if you're boxing each stick controls a hand and so on. This actually forces you to think, especially with the row-boat because just rotating the sticks madly will get you nowhere fast! A nice addition to Ape Escape comes in the form of three different mini games available when you collect a certain number of Spector Coins which are hidden in each stage. These mini games add life to an already longevity-extensive Ape Escape. They are a nice diversion if you need to relax after a hard day of monkey catching. It's a nice change to be able to collect things in the levels that actually have a purpose as opposed to just adding on to your point tally. This gives you incentive to go back to already completed stages just to collect those precious Spector Coins you left behind on your last visit. As I've already said, these mini games add life and variety to an already outstanding title. They are an amazing idea and I'm surprised we haven't seen them up till now considering the potential they have. Without the mini games I would say Ape Escape is roughly on a par with the other two ringleaders of the genre, Spyro and Crash 3 but these little novelties, in my opinion, are the major reason why Ape Escape steps on Spyro and Crash's heads on it's way to the top. The storyline may seem ridiculous but it is different and just adds to the fun. This game dares to be different and it pays off!

KATIE

Age: 14
Height: 155cm
Weight: (We can't tell)

Katie lives with her grandfather and tries to keep him out of trouble. She's very impatient and her grandfather's untidiness annoys her, though not as much as Spike, who's always hanging around and getting in her way. She's brilliant with computers and both Spike and the Professor are relying on Katie to keep the Time Station working long enough for Spike to make it home safe.

THE PROFESSOR

Age: 60
Height: 170cm
Weight: 80kg

Since he was a child, the Professor has loved tinkering with gadgets. Now he's growing older he tends to be a little careless, leaving his experiments lying around for anyone to stumble across. He relies on his granddaughter, Katie, to make sure he doesn't get himself - or anyone else - into trouble. Though he's worried about Spike, he's secretly thrilled that the Time Station actually works!

THIS IS THE CRASH BANDICOOT BEATER!

PLENTY OF ACTION, FUN AND GAMES

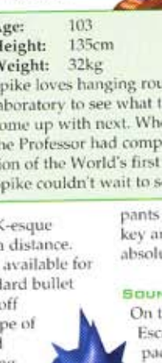
THE BUTTERFLY HUNTER!

BETTER THAN THE REAL THING?

When it comes to graphics, Ape Escape doesn't disappoint. Where other games may have pushed the envelope, Ape Escape gives it a mighty, gorilla-sized shove. The madcap monkeys look superb, as does the young, spiky haired protagonist. The horizon line is exceptionally far and the scenery and backdrops look amazing. The monsters, which come in all shapes and sizes, also look great and the opening video is nothing short of spectacular. The various cinematic interludes (a briefing for the era, some taunts from Spector etc.) are also well made. The camera tends to be pesky at times but can be moved with the directional button or directly behind Spike with the L1 button. Also available is a first person view so you can look around, and if you have the slingshot armed the first person view doubles as an MDK-esque sniper view to pick off targets from a distance. There are 3 different types of bullets available for your slingshot, those being the standard bullet which is good enough for bumping off most enemies (the only unlimited type of ammunition), detonating bullets and homing bullets. Additional detonating and homing bullets are available for collection from expired enemies. Graphically, this is without a doubt the best 3D Adventure title currently available on the PlayStation. The aggravating apes are beautifully animated and the attention to detail is amazing. When using the Monkey Radar, the L2 key (used to switch to first person view) zooms in on the monkey after you've found a monkey, displaying it's name, level, skills (strength, speed etc.) as well as any additional notes (e.g. "feels rejected" or "reads books"). You'll find the monkeys studying ancient ruins, getting a suntan, standing guard or sometimes on the back of an aforementioned T-Rex or Mammoth and it's up to you to find and capture them. The monkeys also have lights on their heads, the colour of which tells you whether everything is normal, if they're on alert or if they know you're there and they're running from you. The colour of their pants shows their strengths, for instance monkeys with red pants are strong fighters, those with yellow pants are your run of the mill monkey and those with black pants are absolute wild animals.

SPIKE

Age: 103
Height: 135cm
Weight: 32kg
Spike loves hanging round the Professor's laboratory to see what the old man might come up with next. When he learned that the Professor had completed the construction of the World's first Time machine, Spike couldn't wait to see it!



BUZZ

Age: 10
Height: 138cm
Weight: 34kg
Spike and Buzz have always enjoyed a little good-natured rivalry, so it's not surprising that both of them wanted to be the first to use the Professor's Time Station. But while Spike tries to save the World from the monkeys, Buzz is lost in the Time Vortex - where can he be?
What has happened to him?

SPECTER

Age: 4
Height: 125cm
Weight: 28kg
Specter used to live at the Circus where he'd keep people entertained by performing tricks and getting up to mischief. But this all changed when he found the Professor's Peak Point Helmet. He became hyper-intelligent - and evil! Now all he wants to do is rule the World, and Spike must do everything he can to stop him!

SOUNDING OFF

On the aural side of things, Ape Escape features pleasant tunes, the pace of which is in proportion to your current circumstances. The music just adds to the experience making Ape Escape even more enjoyable and immersing. The sound effects are also good with the monkeys screeching in alarm if they notice you, Spike's screams of "Got you!" and the characteristic sounds of the various monsters adding to the overall package.
The true greatness of Ape Escape can hardly be done justice with words. It is a truly amazing game, surpassing every single other similar game in the genre. It's miles ahead with excellent graphics, the best we've yet seen in a 3D Platform title on the PlayStation, a revolutionary and extremely functional control system, three different mini games, over twenty levels and a funny but clever storyline. Like Spyro and a number of other brilliant games, Ape Escape looks childish and at first the storyline seems to hammer that point home. It's a pity, because many people will be fooled by that first impression and will miss out on an absolutely excellent game, the best of its kind currently available. Underneath, Ape Escape is a truly engrossing game - so don't be fooled, just go and buy it, now!

HELP, SHARK... MONKEYS?

MADMAN

Ape Escape combines stunning graphics, amazing depth, a humorous story line, fun mini-games, madcap monkeys, and a revolutionary and exceptionally intuitive control system to make for the ultimate 3D Adventure title.

Developer:	Publisher:	Supplier:	RRP:
Sony Computer Entertainment Inc.	SCEE	Ster Kinekor Interactive (011) 445-7900	R 429.00

http://www.playstation-europe.com/ape-escape

Multiplayer	Comparitives	Pro's	Con's
No	Spyro the Dragon Crash Bandicoot 3	Good Control Mini Games Graphics and Sound	Seems Childish

GENRE
3D Platform

Controller Support
- Vibration Function Compatible
- Analog Controller Required

Optional Extras
- Memory Card 1 Block
- 1 Player

Graphics	Sound	Control	Story	Continuity	Playability
96	85	95	87	91	93

91

When it comes to cartoons, Warner Brothers seems to have the formula for short, punchy, and uproariously funny shows down pat. Falling anvils, bumbling villains, foiled schemes and Acme Products all add to the enjoyment of some of the best loved cartoons and cartoon characters in the world. It would only seem fitting that the icon of Warner Brothers' cartoons, the irrepressible Bugs Bunny, should appear as the hero of a Playstation game. You've seen him do his thing - now you get to do it for him.

Shryke

The most important factor to take into account when reviewing a game like Bugs Bunny: Lost in Time is the market at which this kind of game is aimed. The whole package is certainly intended for younger players, with an easy to follow story line, simple yet challenging puzzles, and an overall feel that screams cartoon.
Why, then, is it so addictive for older players too? After much thought and musing (over pizza) it has been decided that the appeal of the game lies in its Warner Brothers background. For most of our lives we have watched the Road Runner foil Wiley Coyote, or Daffy Duck making a moron out of himself, or, more specifically, Bugs Bunny getting the better of Elmer Fudd and Yosemite Sam. It holds little more for older players than that one element, but that element means everything when you embark on your cartoon adventure.
The story begins when Bugs Bunny discovers a time machine, which he mistakenly identifies as a giant carrot juice dispenser. Needless to say, his error launches him on an adventure of note. With the assistance of Merlin the Magician, Bugs has to make his way through several time zones, collecting clocks and golden carrots while avoiding the attentions of villains like the caveman Elmer Fudd and the Pirate Yosemite Sam. Even Marvin the Martian makes an appearance in the game. Enemies of dubious intellectual standing, dynamite, carrots and falling anvils are the order of the day as Bugs makes his way through each zone.
Controlling Bugs Bunny couldn't be simpler, whether it be sneaking past sleeping enemies, kicking the daylights out of stunned opponents, or simply bouncing around the level in the manner of any self respecting rabbit, Bugs' movements are cute and often quite funny. However, some of the feats that are expected of the player can be quite tough if not tackled properly, and one wonders if they wouldn't prove slightly too frustrating to some younger players.

AWWW... BUNNY GOT SQUISHED!

Graphics are important, of course, and this game relies on capturing the right feel of the cartoons for its appeal.
Unfortunately, something went a little wrong, leaving the game looking good, but not perfect. Of course, the terrain and characters are quite simplistic in execution, as any cartoon should be, but they tend to be just a little, well, not quite right.
The terrain is a wonderful 3D environment filled with obstacles and challenges (with the odd rabbit hole thrown in for good measure). Scattered around the terrain the player will come across carrots - which provide health - golden carrots, trampolines, moveable objects and clocks. These may be pushed, carried around, stacked up or thrown at enemies.
Another graphic feature that was included with the greatest of intentions and little forethought is a rotating camera that follows Bugs through his escapades. Unfortunately, this camera is less than intuitive, often resulting in lousy view angles that do nothing more than complicate game play.
The best feature of the entire game lies in the sound effects. This is both a good and bad thing: good because of the great approximation of the original cartoon sound effects and voices, bad because sound should only enhance a game, not be the best part of it. Sometimes Bugs does sound a little suspect at times, but the other voices are perfect, though, as are the sounds of clanging anvils, exploding TNT and the various smacks, whacks and cracks that abound within the game.
The world is rather large, with 24 levels spread over 5 time eras. These levels are big - trust me. However, once the game has been played, it is unlikely that it will do more than gather dust on a shelf.
Bugs Bunny: Lost in Space is a good attempt and despite its shortcomings, this is not a completely horrible game. It will take some patience and practice, combined with a lot of skill and a bit of luck, to complete. It's great for the age group at which it is aimed, and can be enjoyable for older players too, provided they approach it with a forgiving frame of mind. And that, in the words of the wise and sage Porky Pig, is all, folks!

ELMER'S ABOUT TO GET KICK STARTED...

SHRYKE

Bugs Bunny: Lost in Time is a 3D Platform game aimed at young gamers. Follow cartoon favourite Bugs Bunny through several time zones as he battles to get home. A little tame for most, the game does none the less show ridiculous difficulty at times.

Developer:	Publisher:	Supplier:	RRP:
Behaviour Software	Infogrames	Ster Kinekor Interactive (011) 445-7900	R459.00

http://www.infogrames.co.uk

Multiplayer	Comparitives	Pro's	Con's
No	Crash Bandicoot 2	Entertaining Very Playable Great for Kids	Poor Camera Angles Often Difficult Touchy Control

GENRE
Platform Game

Controller Support
- Vibration Function Compatible
- Analog Controller Compatible

Optional Extras
- Memory Card 1 Block
- 1 - 2 Player

Graphics	Sound	Control	Story	Continuity	Playability
65	70	50	50	56	57

58

Ever since Henry Ford first rolled his horseless carriage out into the light, man kind has been fascinated with automobiles - or, more accurately, with what automobiles can do. Except for a small hiccup - around the time when folks believed that travelling faster than thirty miles an hour would make you disintegrate - people have been fascinated with travelling faster than ever before. This desire, accompanied by the inevitable march of technology, has resulted in cars that achieve speeds inconceivable to innovators like Henry Ford.

Shryke

NEED FOR SPEED ROAD CHALLENGE

Speed is attractive, as has already been stated, as is the thought of climbing behind the wheel of a super car and taking it for a spin. Most of us, however, will never get the opportunity to do so - these vehicles cost far too much, and driving on our poorly maintained roads at the kinds of speeds that these machines perform at is more or less suicidal. Not to mention, of course, the long arm of the law who, after catching you doing over 200km/h in a Ferrari, will probably chuck you in jail and throw away the key. Yes, it's a dream that probably will never be fulfilled for the average Joe in the street. Which leads us to the next best thing. Electronic Arts' Need for Speed series has proven to be very popular with weekend drivers and dedicated racers alike. In it's latest incarnation, Need for Speed takes things a little further once more - something which has become a bit of a tradition with the game. This latest version, called Road Challenge, takes the player into a racing world with several racing modes available to provide different types of challenges for anyone playing the game. The entire substructure of the game is career based. In other words, instead of just driving race after race in a car chosen from a menu, NFS Road Challenge allows (or requires) the player to start a career which progresses as the game is played. Cars have to be purchased with race winnings, rather than selected from a menu. Cars owned may also be upgraded (which also changes the look of the car - mag wheels are added, suspension is dropped, spoilers are added, that sort of thing. As you progress through your career, your cars are constantly improved and new vehicles purchased with the winnings that you earn from racing. Cars may even be sold when cash is tight!

Another new feature, making its debut appearance in the Need for Speed series, is vehicle damage. At last, driving headlong into a pillar actually affects your game more than just costing you a few seconds of valuable race time. This turn round, it hits you where it hurts - in the pocket. Unfortunately, the vehicle's performance does not seem to be affected by damage at all, But race winnings are effected, and if your driving is a little less than sterling, the cost can knock you quite hard. Less money means fewer upgrades and cars, and consequently a longer slog to get through the game.

Not that driving like a total champ means you're going to be buying a new car after every race. They're expensive pieces of equipment, after all, and you may well find yourself having to complete tournaments several times, to collect enough grand prize winnings to be able to afford your next set of wheels.

RIGHT ON YOUR TAIL, MAN...

DEALING WITH GERMAN ROAD HOGS

The game itself is split into several playing modes. The basic test drive mode allows you to drive any car (except for the two locked GTR cars) around any of the tracks that you have unlocked. While this does allow you to take the cars for a spin around the track, don't expect anything for it - it's no race, and there is no prize involved.

Single races get a little more interesting, as you get to take on opponents, and generate a little cash. Money, of course, being what it is in the game, is nice to get, after all.

Tournament mode is the actual guts of the game. Here you enter various road tournaments, which are where the major winnings are to be made. Tournaments are structured according to the class of the car that is allowed to enter. The first tournament, for example, is the Roadster Classic, in which only two door roadsters (BMW Z3s and Mercedes Benz SLKs) may be used. A few Tournaments later, the Super Sedan Classic, only allows BMW M5s and similar cars to be used, and so on. Of course, to take part in later, tougher and faster tournaments, you have to buy new cars with the money you make in earlier tournaments. Quite cute, really.

A welcome return is made by Hot Pursuit Mode, a revisit to the play style that made Need for Speed 3 so popular. Of course, things are a lot tougher now, with cops that are quicker, smarter and a lot more aggressive. They tend to lurk far better than before, and are much more of a surprise when you run into them.

Special events are once off road challenges that are unlocked as game play progresses. Unlike normal tournaments, these are a little tougher, including night series and an open road challenge. These races require an entry fee, unlike the normal Tournaments, and tend to have better prizes.

Another mode, which makes for an incredibly exciting multiplayer game, is High Stakes. Running one of these is a little more complex than the average multiplayer game. It involves two players getting together with their own memory cards, each of which must have at least two cars saved on them. The race is played on a split screen, and the loser's car is permanently removed from his memory card and written to the winner's collection of cars. In other words, it's a race for pink slips, with the loser being down a car at the end of it. Of course, these games are pretty hot, and a spilt screen race format is not neccesarily the best way to do things, but there aren't any other options, really, so we'll just have to live with it.

Now that we've got through all that, we can get down to the nuts and bolts of the game. Graphically, while this puppy doesn't blow your mind, it ain't awful. The developers saw fit to take some of the modelling resources away from the car, leaving them looking poorer than previous versions (not terrible, just a little less detailed.) The tracks, however, are where the major graphics changes have taken place. Rather than using sprite based tracks, everything around you is 3D. The tracks have been fully modelled and textured, and enhanced with EA's usual lovely lighting effects. In short, the tracks look better. And there are a lot of them. There is a wide variance of settings in these maps, and the challenges the maps present are just as various. Add the thrilling whine of a high powered engine to the fast paced tracks, and things just get better. The sound within the game is high quality, including blaring hooters, grinding metal, and roaring machines. Musically, the game tends towards rather inane sounds, but that's a minor problem.

The controller gives the player full control of the car, of course, even going so far as to include hooter, headlights, turning signals and hazard lights (although why the last two should have to be included is beyond me.)

Driving the cars in NFS Road Challenge is fairly simple, at least initially. As the cars get upgraded, they handle better, with improved braking, top speed, cornering and acceleration. However, as you advance through the Tournament levels, and begin racing with more horses under the hood, things change quite considerably. Better cars do have a generally better performance, but added speed means added difficulty in negotiating the tracks. NFS is not a game for foot flat, pedal to the metal players. There has to be some kind of strategy behind the way the tracks are tackled, even if it is just something as simple as knowing when to brake. This is especially needed in later stages of the game.

Seeing as we're on the topic, it seems that the NFS team have used a very similar physics model to all the previous games. This is something of an imperfect model, when compared to games like Gran Turismo and Toca 2, and leaves the game feeling less than real. The cars stay flat and level during even the most hair raising turns - the only time your horizon acts even remotely correctly is when you hit things at high speeds. While the game is still great, this small factor moves it from the realms of realistic driving simulators into the category of a driving game.

That aside, this is one of the better driving games available, and a definite step in the right direction for the Need for Speed series. The wonderful thing about it, and indeed all the Need for Speed titles, is its wide range of appeal. Everyone should enjoy this. Only the most apathetic anti-driving game zealot will not find at least some enjoyment within this game's binary

The Means...

THERE ARE FOURTEEN VEHICLES AVAILABLE IN NEED FOR SPEED ROAD CHALLENGE: EACH IS FULLY UPGRADABLE AND HAS CUSTOMISABLE COLOURS. ALL ARE AVAILABLE, EXCEPT FOR THE MCLAREN F1 GTR AND MERCEDES BENZ CLK GTR, WHICH BECOME UNLOCKED AT LATER STAGES OF THE GAME.

GENTLEMEN, START YOUR ENGINES...

PlayStation

Need for Speed Road Challenge is a career based driving game that gets you zooming down the road in several locations around the world, in your quest for money, upgrades and new, faster cars. Adrenaline charged racing action.

Developer:	Publisher:	Supplier:	RRP:
Electronic Arts	Electronic Arts	EA Africa (011) 803-1212	R359.00

http://www.needforspeed.com

Multiplayer	Comparitives	Pro's	Con's
Yes	Gran Turismo, Toca 2	Several Game Modes, Great Career Base, Very Playable	Poor Physics

Graphics	Sound	Control	Story	Continuity	Playability
85	86	88	NA	90	90

SHRYKE

GENRE
Driving Simulator

Controller Support: Vibration Function Compatible

Optional Extras: Memory Card 1 Block; 1-2 Player

88

Amidst all the racing games, platform games, puzzle games and cute games something different and exciting has appeared. This new genre can loosely be defined as a third person special-agent action adventure - it's Tomb Raider in combat fatigues with the exotic locations replaced by real world arenas and the tigers and apes replaced by terrorists. It all started with Metal Gear Solid and at last it looks like the PlayStation has finally found a genre it's perfectly suited to.

RedTide

syphon filter

The story running in the background while you play the game is an ever-evolving tale of terrorism and evil plots that makes use of numerous video sequences and communications between you and your base to give purpose to the proceedings. The quality of the movies can't touch games like Resident Evil 2 from a quality stand point and come nowhere close to the dark and moody overtones in Metal Gear Solid. First impressions aren't good and you're instantly reminded of a hundred other games, seen that, and done all this before. If you've played Metal Gear Solid you'll remember how the movies immediately grabbed your attention, in Syphon Filter they're merely functional but still effective nevertheless. Gabriel Logan is the virtual persona you'll assume while playing the game. He's a tough Special Forces operative that must carry out a number of diverse and difficult missions, thankfully it's not a save the world mission but localised in, around and under Washington. The name 'Syphon Filter' is the code name for a deadly biological virus that is dispersed via viral bombs. During the game these bombs must be found and tagged for disarmament by the Chemical and Biological Defence Command (CBDC). The person responsible for this deadly threat is terrorist mastermind Eric Rhoemer. Your principal goal is to eliminate Rhoemer, but there's plenty of playing to be had before the final showdown. During your mission you'll be in constant communication with your partner Lian Xing who informs you of new objectives or performs vital tasks like surveillance, but overall these brief communication links go a long way to help the story along. It's gripping stuff throughout but lacks the sinister mood and strange events that made MGS so compelling to play, you'll find no invisible ninjas or corridors littered with dead bodies in this game. Syphon Filter is purely action orientated and the most imaginative concept in the game revolves around the deadly 'Syphon Filter' virus. This game has gone a more realistic angle as far as the story goes, this isn't a bad thing but after the sheer brilliance of MGS it just seems a little bland.

Sneaking and things

The control system used for this game is refined and intuitive but does cause some severe finger strain if you combine the actions of crouching, peeking around corners and sniping. Alone, each of these moves are simple enough to initiate but as soon as you start combining the buttons you'll quickly discover you need another finger on your hand to comfortably hit the fire button. This minor flaw does tend to aggravate on more than one occasion especially because sniping from around corners is key to completing some missions alive. The directional pad moves Gabriel around and there is a crouch/stealth button, an operate/climb/re-load button and a fire button. The shoulder buttons are for aiming, either manually or automatically and the remaining shoulder buttons make your character side step, useful for dodging bullets, flame-throwers and even helicopters! The automatic aiming button allows Gabriel to run, roll and dodge while constantly keeping his crosshair on target. This feature is important for avoiding bullets while pumping the lead into the bad guys. Although useful, the automatic aiming does cause some graphical confusion especially when the distance from you to your target is closer than a meter. Every now and then when this set of circumstances occurs, Gabriel can't seem to score any hits on the enemy, often resulting in an untimely death and a quick restart. Even though little practice is required for you to start behaving like a highly trained special agent it would have been nice to see a few optional training missions to kick things off with. This is just another minus where Metal Gear Solid scores a plus.

THIS TERRORIST CAN'T SEEM TO AIM ALL THAT WELL

Pressing your select button will bring up the various options such as your map, objectives, weapons and game options. The map is extremely useful to find out where you're supposed to go and the mission parameters and objectives are useful for finding out what you're supposed to do when you get there. Even though the missions are clearly explained you'll need to consult your tactical map to get an idea of where to go. The game options are the usual selection, nothing new - one interesting point is the saving of your game - ending a level allows you to save but as you complete different objectives you'll be assigned a check point. If you die you will be restarted at the checkpoint within the level. The problem is that most of the levels are so big you're forced to complete a whole level just to get to save your progress, if you end your game you'll have to start right at the beginning of the whole level. Most of the missions are tough to complete and offer plenty of play value, the most innovative part about each mission is the diverse nature of them and the addition of new objectives once a level is in play. Your mission objectives are often updated after receiving a communication from Lian Xing back at head quarters, these added objectives must be completed before you can complete the overall mission and all tie into each other. This on-going process adds tremendously to the game, it's never over until you see the save game screen.

DON'T GET SPOTTED IN THE STEALTH MISSIONS OR IT'S A BULLET IN THE HEAD

Sniping and dinosaurs

Of the twenty levels you'll be hard pressed to pick a favourite, some levels are dark, rainy and miserable, while others have you running around in a Tuxedo at a museum. The travelling from location to location reminds one of the many James Bond movies. All the levels are huge arenas of real life environments - the levels are so big because you often have more than two different objectives per map. The graphics are of an acceptable quality from a resolution point of view, the main area in which Syphon Filter excels is attention to detail. Almost everything can be shot at, climbed on or blown up. The sniper mode is a good example of this, if you take careful aim you can put out a street lamp and with the same bullet a terrorist. In the museum level you'll have to climb onto the back of a model dinosaur to reach a catwalk. It's a richly detailed game that manages to convince the player that you're actually taking part in all the action and not just watching a movie. The explosions, rain effects and use of the torch all behave convincingly, you can even leave bullet holes in the walls and do some damage to priceless exhibits in the museum level. Complementing the lovely graphics are a chorus of realistic sound effects such as the whizzing and popping as bullets pass by your ear, broken glass, walking on metal grids and shooting vases all sound good and the weapons each have their own unique sound. It's even possible to tell what weapon a terrorist is using just by its sound.

YOUR FIRST SERIOUS BOSS LEVEL

A typical mission

The interesting thing is that Syphon Filter doesn't have anything that you could call a typical mission, each and every different level uses different ideas so you never really feel like the location is the only thing that is changing from mission to mission. Possibly the first time you'll really get a good feel of the game is in your first stealth mission. You receive the following briefing from your base, "I've approved your request for access to the FBI files on Jonathan Phagan. I think your suspicions may be correct. The PHARCOM reception may be a cover for a meeting between Phagan and Rhoemer. Follow Phagan closely. Obviously, you must not be seen or captured. You are authorised to eliminate any of Phagan's security, but use silenced weapons only. Once you've observed the meeting, use whatever means necessary to capture Phagan alive. Officially, the agency knows nothing about this." The above forms part of your mission parameters, don't be seen or caught - the way to approach the mission is up to you. It might sound easy but those terrorist guards are very alert. Use your silenced pistol or sniper rifle and crouch, sneak and kill without making a sound. This level isn't too long to become annoying but highlights how effective you can be by not rushing in guns blazing. Among the levels like this there are a few timed missions where you must escape before explosives detonate or missions where you must find all the viral bombs on a level before the time runs out. The game usually leaves you with more than enough time to accomplish these goals but of course finding all the bombs will take more than a few restarts. Each level is refreshingly different from the last and guarantees that you'll want to see them all.

Filtered

The game does borrow heavily from a few classics but certainly has its fair share of originality. The weapon count alone is staggering with everything from grenade launchers to electric stun guns. The game isn't easy but then once you perfect the head shots and learn that patience is the greatest asset during stealth missions you can complete most levels without too much reloading. The focus is always on the action so you won't get bored either. The odd stealth mission does help relieve the tedious nature of running and shooting everything all the time and the game is also huge. Overall an excellent title that does the PlayStation proud, it's an award winner but the developers should have paid a little more attention to the story, now that would have made it close to perfect. If you enjoyed Metal Gear Solid and want for more then this is your game, what a blast.

PlayStation

RedTide

GENRE
Action Adventure

Controller Support: Vibration Function Compatible; Analog Controller Compatible

Optional Extras: Memory Card 1 Block; 1 Player

Syphon Filter is as good as it gets in this genre, the game has enough diversity to keep you interested until the end. Excellent attention to detail, realism, huge levels and more weapons than you've ever seen before make it one to own.

Developer:	Publisher:	Supplier:	RRP:
Eidetic, Inc.	989 Studios	Ster Kinekor Interactive (011) 445-7900	R 459.00

http://www.playstation-europe.com/syphonfilter

Multiplayer	Comparitives	Pro's	Con's
No	Metal Gear Solid	Huge Levels Diverse Missions Realistic Environment	Shallow Story Aiming Problems Average AI

Graphics	Sound	Control	Story	Continuity	Playability
91	90	86	81	80	89

86

We have been waiting for some time for another rally game to hit the shelves. Now you have the opportunity to sit behind the wheel of the latest World Rally Cars and slingshot your way to victory, or rather, not. Breakneck U-turns and spectacular jumps are your obstacles - the only way to keep ahead is with guts and determination. - Storm

V-RALLY 2 CHAMPIONSHIP EDITION

After the rather long layoff from rally gaming it was with great anticipation that I begged for V-Rally 2. Sitting behind some of the most advanced rallying cars and putting them through their paces has always been a passion of mine. With V-Rally 2 you have all of this and more, without having to strap yourself between the roll bars.
It must be said that the first V-Rally was a total disappointment, which left me with a bad impression of things to come. I will say that I am pleasantly surprised with the changes and improvements to the sequel. A totally new gaming engine was designed for VR2 to create the feeling of a new product, which it did. Having to simulate surfaces such as mud, dust, gravel, tarmac, snow and ice is not easy, but with Colin McRae Rally leading the way, we know it can be done. There are extra special eye candy features such as exhaust flames that spurt out, overheating break discs, and animated drivers plus the odd spectator that has to make a dash out of the way. VR2 does impress to a certain extent on the graphical side but lacks the punch that was needed to surpass Colin McRae Rally.

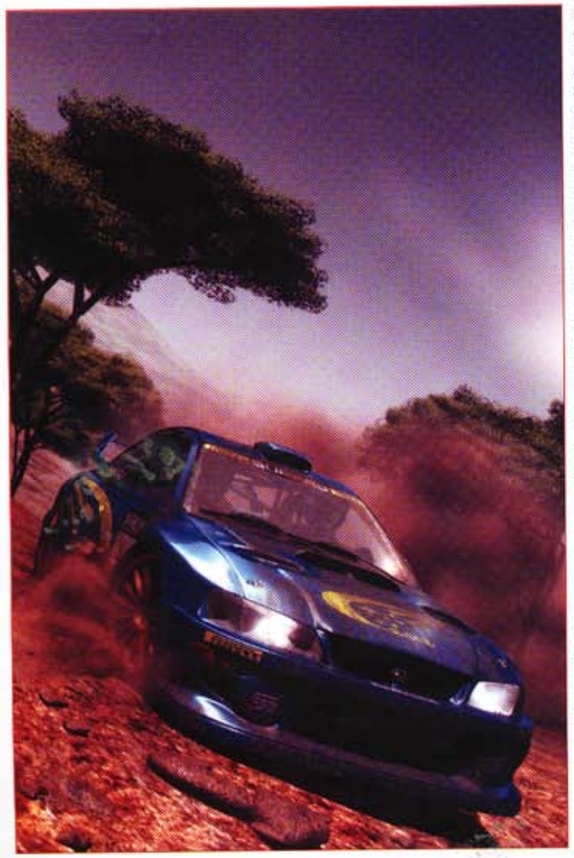
BUMPER TO BUMPER RACING

THE NIGHT IS CLOSING IN

RIGHT ON YOUR TAIL, MAN...

PILOTS LICENCE REQUIRED

The gaming options include Time Trial, Arcade (against other cars on the track), V-Rally Trophy and Championship which is the staple diet around VR2. The championship mode follows the true rally rules and goes stage by stage, country by country.
Something that VR2 does excel at is the amount of tracks that can be played on multiple surfaces and in varying weather conditions. 92 Tracks in over 12 different countries (again no South African stage) are available for your playing pleasure, with some excellent tracks that will have you at your wits end with sharp turns and power jumps. The tracks have their own surprises that are made up of multiple shortcuts and crossovers, making for intense racing.
If it's a range of rally cars you want then VR2 certainly makes up with 20 official cars to its credit. These include the Peugeot, Subaru, Toyota, Hyundai, Mitsubishi, Ford and many more to tickle your fancy.
Surprisingly they all seem to perform the same and have similar performance stats. This may be a gameplay ploy to allow players to use any car of their choice without being affected by performance issues. The vehicle physics are excellent,



sometimes a little too realistic at times, as you'll find yourself upside down if you happen to misjudge corners. The suspension is a little bouncy for rally cars but offers enough tension to keep yourself upright. One irritating factor is the inability to lock into a corner, kick the back out and power around. The car seems to lose power as it slides taking away the feel of controlling the vehicle. This brings the brakes into use way too often and offers little in the way of true grit fun in cornering.
Vehicle damage is present but not in the visual manor, a little disappointing when you consider that most titles being released offer this feature. Your car does take strain

under the rigorous conditions of rallying therefore you normally find yourself having to repair damage to the various parts of your car. This is done by allocating time to repair (as in Colin McRae Rally), of which you only have 30 minutes per stage. If you happen to have trouble keeping on the tarmac and causing too much damage then you will have to prioritise your repairs and hopefully keep your vehicle together enough to complete the stages.
Something that does deserve a special mention is the amazing intro sequence of about 4 minutes, which gears you up to play VR2. An awesome soundtrack and well scripted animated intro combine to set the tone for the game with amazing affect.
The sound effects are average in comparison to Colin McRae Rally with the engine noise making up the bulk of the sounds. Other commentary comes from your co-pilot as he mumbles out commands that should help you predetermine your set route and angle of attack. Sometimes he forgets to mention a route, which I think is more of a glitch than anything else, but you have the visual direction aid to fall back on in case of emergencies. The Track Editor is another of those surprise additions that excels because of its simplicity and ease of use. Creating a track is one of the easiest things to do with VR2, which could have you completing your own track in 5 minutes or less. Tracks can be stored on your memory card and shipped around to a friend's house to test their abilities against your designs.
Some of the more sombre notes include the irritating pop-up that cancers so many of today's racing games. There is also a fair amount of clipping that occurs, especially on roadside obstacles that are driven through as if they were not there as well as the odd texture slip in the tracks. In order to complete the game you will also have to pass through difficulty progressions that will be unlocked once the lower settings have been completed.
VR2 is a good game that does the basics extremely well, though lacking in certain areas against its main rival Colin McRae Rally. If you consider that VR2 has had an entire year more to progress, you would have expected something a little more than a valiant attempt at the crown. This is no Gran Turismo of rallying but does bridge the time gap we have had to endure over the last few months since Colin McRae Rally came out. Infogrames have improved on its VR1 significantly enough to be commended for their efforts.

PEDAL TO THE METAL

PlayStation

SHRYKE

GENRE
Driving Simulator

Controller Support: Vibration Function Compatible; Analog Controller Compatible
Optional Extras: Memory Card 1 - 4 Blocks; 1 - 4 Player

Vast improvements on the first but still falls behind the leader of the pack. New graphics engine and excellent vehicle physics catapult V-Rally 2 to the top of the rallying charts. With its track editor and wealth of options V-Rally 2 is a good buy for the discerning racing fan.

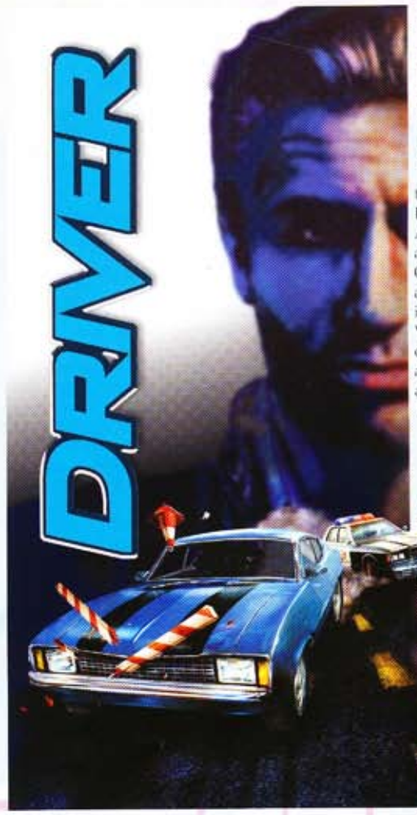
Developer:	Publisher:	Supplier:	RRP:
Eden Studios	Infogrames	Ster Kinekor	R429.00

http://www.infogrames.co.uk

Multiplayer	Comparitives	Pro's	Con's
Yes	Colin McRae Rally (92%) Tommi Makinan Rally	Car Physics Track Editor Funky Soundtrack	Clipping problems Pop-Up

Graphics	Sound	Control	Story	Continuity	Playability	
81	85	80	NA	82	79	82

DRIVER

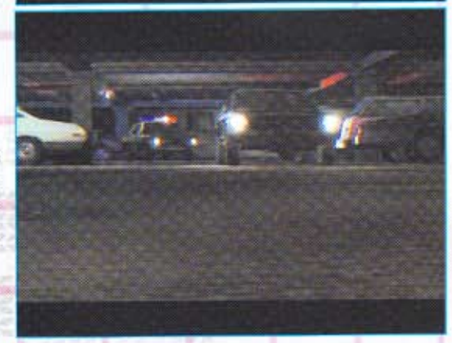


In the gaming industry we have tried to keep playing the good guy to distract Mommy from all the bad things normally associated with games. Now the time has come to grow up and attempt the role of helping the bad guys get their own back on the proverbial good guy. If there were ever a way of making a worthy swap of morals it would be to play the driver of a gang hell bent on challenging the judicial system and have immense fun doing it. But there is a twist to the story...

Storm

The Castaldi Family, the kingpin of crime has to be infiltrated by an undercover agent to take down this Mafioso organisation. Tanner, a maverick cop and ex race car driver volunteers to take the job and in doing so begins his long arduous task of proving himself trustworthy of the mob. A mix of planning, passion for driving fast and a fair dose of good luck will help you on your way to becoming the defacto driver for the illustrious Castaldi Family.

The mixture of 70's feel and big powerful cars is the perfect balance between control and technique, which is one of the strong points of Driver. The control mechanism is simple but incredibly effective because of its ease. The use of analog controllers makes the Dual Shock the perfect tool for the job. The only downfall is the force feedback, which is firstly, totally unrealistic but also mistimed. Luckily this is the only downfall with the control that otherwise is flawless in its concept.



LOVELY CINEMATICS ABOUND

Reflections have undertaken the task of recreating 4 major cities in meticulous fashion, right down to the corner café. If you think recreating cities such as San Fransisco, New York, Miami and Los Angeles is difficult, wait until you try and make your way around them. Graphically Driver is up with the best and outclasses other opponents with its traditional 70's feel and style. Vehicles, buildings, pedestrians and obstacles are realistic, creating an ambience for the time. Smoke trails and lighting effects are on par with Colin McRae Rally and the overall looks rank up the ladder with Gran Turismo.

The main feature of Driver is its superb gameplay and innovation that grips you and holds you hour after hour, before long you are explaining to the girlfriend why you happened to still be playing at 6 O'clock in the morning. The Undercover section is a culmination of mission based levels that utilise timing and planning to complete your objective. After proving your worth to the mob in the underground parking lot, you embark on a world of crime and high-speed chases. Step by step you are plunged deeper into the realms of the underworld with one intention of bringing the mob down. The missions are well thought out and difficult to complete from the beginning, but after unlimited attempts you should get the hang of the order of things. A detailed map shows the layout of the current city to be high-jacked by your crime family, making planning of escape routes and shortcuts a priority for completing missions.

I LEFT MY HUBCAP IN SAN FRANCISCO...

Add to this a city fraught with police hell bent on cleaning up the streets and you have one of the most entertaining driving simulations on the market. The deeper you infiltrate the Castaldi's, the more intense the missions and the more hard-pressed the cops are to catch you. You can only be arrested in one fashion, that being to wipe out your vehicle and that's exactly what the cops attempt to do. The higher the felony count the harder they pursue finally ending up with kamikaze results. The felonies break down to speeding, reckless driving (unavoidable), damaging public property, terrorising pedestrians, adding and abetting criminals, running red lights and driving on sidewalks and parkways. All of which will have to be transgressed if you are to complete the missions in the allocated time. Your control centre is your hotel room where you receive messages and choices on what missions you would like to follow. This makes a big difference to your relationship with the mob and adds to the re-playability of the game. Cut scenes add life to the story but are poorly created and lack quality. Nonetheless there is

MIAMI VICE.

YOU ARE THE WHEELMAN.

enough to keep your attention going until the next frantic mission.

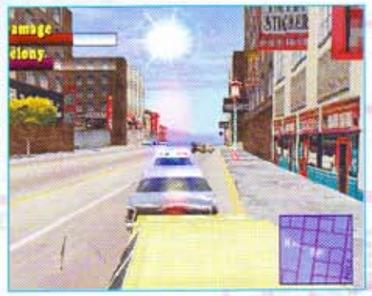
If you feel the pressure of the difficulty of the game, especially trying to complete the mission called 'the briefcase', which has you driving headlong down the Golden Gate Bridge into oncoming traffic, then you have the option to change the difficulty levels. Otherwise you battle along looking for those spare seconds you could save at each and every intersection as well as keeping a close lookout for the dreaded police car.

Other options of Driver include a pursuit mode which has you chasing a vehicle as it attempts to out-manoeuvre you, the objective is to damage him enough to bring him to a standstill. The Getaway option entails loosing the tail of the cops before they damage your car. Cross-Town Checkpoint is similar to a time-trial, as you have to reach checkpoint in the time allocated. Trial Blazer utilises markers that need to be touched in order to gain time, the more you hit, the longer you keep going. Survival mode is just that, last as long as you can against the intuitive AI of the PSX as he crashes head long into your car attempting to stop you as quickly as possible. Finally the Dirt Track mode is the opposite of Trial Blazer as you are not allowed to hit the cones and have to control your vehicle in the slippery dirt tracks outside town. All of these add dimension and depth to the already playable and incredibly entertaining undercover mode.

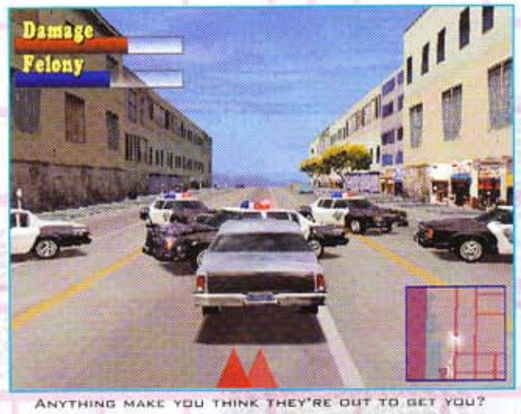
The most innovative idea though comes from the replay option of Driver. The Film Director option allows you to take some of your favourite action from replays and cut and edit them for your own personal collection. The software allows you to edit camera type, timing and position so as to create movies of your own. This addition was something ignored at first but I eventually realised the potential of creating some excellent movies that can be saved to memory card.

I found the PSX to be a most admirable mechanism to host this entertaining game that will have you sweating, crying and frustrated, but eventually, with patience, the enjoyment of completing your task will overcome all. Crash damage, which affects performance, will have you tearing at the Dual Shock Controller. Take my advice, keep your felony counts low and you car damage to a minimum, this will help with those precious seconds needed to reach objectives.

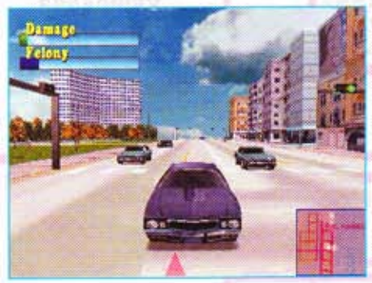
I thoroughly recommend Driver for its different attack on the gamer and its ability to keep your attention span for long periods of time. Reflections have hit the nerve that games such as Grand Theft Auto were attempting to pinch and more. As games enter the phase of playing the good and the bad, here you have the opportunity to be extremely bad as you work for the good - what more can you ask for? Driver takes its place next to my favourite copy of Gran Turismo and deservedly so.



BETWEEN A COP AND A HARD PLACE.



ANYTHING MAKE YOU THINK THEY'RE OUT TO GET YOU?



CRUISIN' IN THE MUSCLE-CAR

The longer you play Driver the more addictive it becomes as you try to master the burnouts, handbrake turns and 360's. Without self-confidence and experience it is very difficult to complete this game in under a few week and that is playing regularly. You will find yourself saving to your memory card at every possible chance so as not to lose out on a stage or mission completion.

PlayStation

STORM

GENRE
Criminal Driving

Controller Support: Vibration Function Compatible; Analog Controller Compatible

Optional Extras: Memory Card 1 Block; 1 Player

Adrenaline pumping missions and heart stopping gameplay culminate into one of the best driving sims on the market. 70's style driving makes for some interesting control methods and strategic thinking. Innovations in gaming are few and far between, this is one of them.

Developer: Reflections
Publisher: GT Interactive
Supplier: Datatec Crew (011) 233-1111
RRP: R359.00

http://driver.gtgames.com

Multiplayer	Comparitives	Pro's	Con's
No	Need for Speed: Road Challenge (88%)	Excellent Control Intense Gameplay Recordable Replays	Odd FMV Mishaps Single Player Only

Graphics	Sound	Control	Story	Continuity	Playability
90	89	93	90	95	92

92

ANNA KOURNIKOVA'S SMASH COURT TENNIS™

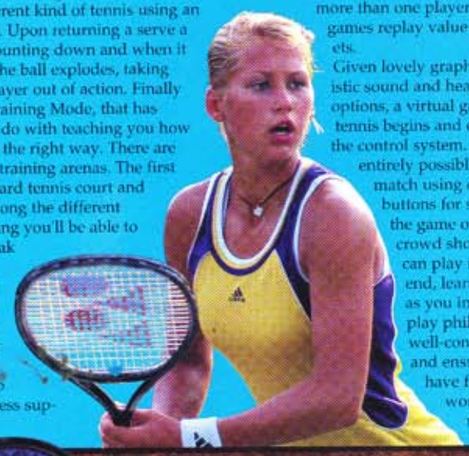
Preparing for a game of tennis is an involved and complicated process. Everyone owns a tennis racket, be it a scuffed-wood limp string misery or the latest Teflon coated razor wire ball killer, guaranteed you've got one somewhere. Once you've found it you'll need to buy a new set of tennis balls, remembering how tasty your dogs found those furry yellow spheres last time. If this is sounding like a familiar and painful memory then Namco has the solution. - Redtide

Serve

Anna Kournikova's Smash Court Tennis lets you feel all the anguish and pain the game of tennis dishes out but from the comfort of your own home. The only injury you'll have to worry about is a touch of controller thumb, unused muscle and bloated gut. Right from the start the game lays plenty on the table for consumption. The first option is the Exhibition Mode where you can play a single player game using any character on any court either against the computer or another player, or simply watch the computer play against itself. Some of the courts have different surfaces, which affects the way the ball bounces and the games can also be played over a one, three or five set match. You can also set up a doubles game where up to four human players can smash it out on one machine. Next up is the Tournament Mode, this is the 'career' option and you'll have to go up against a number of increasingly difficult computer controlled players. Taking a severe left turn, Smash Blast is a different kind of tennis using an explosive ball. Upon returning a serve a timer starts counting down and when it reaches zero the ball explodes, taking the nearest player out of action. Finally there is the Training Mode, that has everything to do with teaching you how to play tennis the right way. There are two different training arenas. The first one is a standard tennis court and coach and among the different types of training you'll be able to practice a Weak Serve, Slice, Top Spin and Strong Flat. You can also work on your serve with a scenic cliff top view, an endless supply of balls and most importantly no spectators. The training is clever in that you decide where your coach stands, where he hits the ball and where you want to return it. This effectively allows you to practice every single type of shot and also lets you work on where you'd like the ball to end up. You have a simple statistics summary after each training session but one area it fails in, is giving you any kind of help or guide. It would have been nice to see some stronger hands-on training instead of this hit and miss approach. The other training area consists simply of a wall, a ball, a racket and you. With each successive hit the ground scrolls one line down - keep this up for long enough and a few famous Namco games start appearing. It certainly is enough to keep anyone busy for a long time and with the option of having more than one player the games replay value skyrockets.

THE TRAINING MODE IS SUPERB

Given lovely graphics, realistic sound and heaps of options, a virtual game of tennis begins and ends with the control system. It is entirely possible to play an entire match using only two control pad buttons for shots, you won't win the game or pull off any amazing crowd shocking shots but you can play it from beginning to end, learning the harder shots as you improve. This easy to play philosophy is a well-conceived idea and ensures you can have fun and worry about mastering timing and positioning at your own pace. Almost every other sports title could learn a few things by this example, well done Namco.



Deuce

Although everything points towards a clear flawless winner the game does have its share of minor problems. For example, in an attempt to add a little humour, your character sometimes gets knocked over if hit squarely by a tennis ball. This happens a little too often and can sometimes swing the whole game around, it's funny the first five times you see it but after that the effect becomes limp and annoying. Another problem lies with your character taking time to 'recover' from strenuous shots or when overextending to hit a ball even though it has been used to convey realism it leaves you helpless to return the next ball. The Artificial Intelligence is adequate but it is possible to perform the same winning combinations over and over again, making things a little easy sometimes - this is only on occasion and only really qualifies as a minor gripe. A replay or highlights feature would also have added something extra. In summary Smash Court Tennis is an authentic tennis simulation game. It's fresh, innovative and nothing can beat the multiplayer game.

REDTIDE

GENRE
Tennis Simulation

Controller Support: Vibration Function Compatible; Multi Tap Adaptable; Analog Controller Compatible

Optional Extras: Memory Card 1 Block; 1 - 4 Players

Namco have definitely struck a winning formula with this unusual tennis title. The game shouldn't be judged by its cartoon-like look and feel and surprisingly presents a serious challenge. The best aspect has to be the addictive multiplayer game.

Developer:	Publisher:	Supplier:	RRP:
Namco	SCEE	Star Kinekor Interactive (011) 445-7900	R 429.00

http://www.namco.com

Multiplayer	Comparitives	Pro's	Con's
Yes	Actua Tennis Tennis Arena Hyper Tennis	Easy to Play Fresh Approach Excellent Multiplayer	Distracting Courts Body Shots Average AI

Graphics	Sound	Control	Story	Continuity	Playability	
80	75	91	NA	85	91	84

big air

Snowboarding is fast becoming one of the hottest sports today - at least in countries where it snows a lot. The skateboarders of the next millennium, snowboarders hurl themselves down fresh powder at break-neck speeds, defying gravity with amazing feats of agility and prowess as they turn, flip and grab their boards while flying over ramps and jumps. Snowboarding has become one of the defining proponents of extreme sports, and the following for the activity is sky rocketing. - Shryke

As with every successful sporting activity, game developers have jumped on the bandwagon and produced several snowboarding simulators. The latest example of these efforts is Big Air for the Playstation. Following in the footsteps of Cool Boarders, Big Air has some pretty big shoes to fill. That it does, and more.

Big Air is a well put together simulator that will have sports junkies begging for more. The best feature of the game lies in the ease with which tricks are performed. Gone are the complex button combinations that leave your fingers in twists and knots. Rather, simple tricks can be performed with a single button, while more complex manoeuvres may require simple button and rocker combinations to complete.

Okay, so it seems very simple. But be warned. You won't just pick up Big Air and complete it in a couple of hours. While performing tricks may be simpler than other boarding simulators, a decent sense of timing is required to pull the tricks off, and that only comes with practice. You'll almost certainly spend more than your fair share of time chewing on snow, rather than wowing the crowds with stunning aerial feats. Getting the right speed up, reading the height of a jump, landing with the correct centre of gravity: this is where the art of Big Air lies. Anyone can look stunning while in the air - getting down is the trick.

The slightly easier game play that Big Air features is refreshing. It allows the player to get into the game, even if it is only at entry level, without the frustration inherent in other simulators. However, the skill necessary to play the game at peak performance can only come with practice, which means that Big Air is not devoid of challenges. Like the man said, easy to learn, hard to master.

Big Air is a fun game, both to play and to look at. Boarders are customisable: you can pick their clothes and their board from lists including the top clothing and board designers around the world. Authentic board and fashion designs add a sense of realism to the game - although a good knowledge of what makes a good snowboard may be important if you're going to take this game really seriously. Each board has a list of facts, figures and statistics referring to it, and understanding these undoubtedly makes for a better basis of choice than "oh, those are pretty designs on that one!"

PEEKABOO! BIG AIR TRICKS ARE EASY!

Tracks are well modelled, although you don't get to see much while speeding down the slopes. The movements of the boarders are also well captured - something which always adds to the realism of a simulator of this type.

Unfortunately, something gets lost in the actual look of the game. With the attention that has been paid to detail, one wonders why the graphics are not quite up to scratch. This can create quite a large problem, considering that graphics make up so much of what gaming is about. However, if you can bring yourself to look past the mediocre visuals, you will enjoy the game much more.

THE EVER POPULAR HALF PIPE

One pleasing aspect of the graphics applies to the various cut scenes and load screens throughout the game. High quality, high action snowboarding pictures and movies abound in this game, and definitely add to the excitement of the simulation. However, you just see way too much of them. Big Air loads slowly, and very often. Be prepared to wait for the action to start. You may quite literally spend more time watching the game load than actually playing it.

As with so many other Playstation games, music was written specifically for this game. However, despite the obvious choice of techno grooves, the sound track is filled up with choppy, ragged skate-punk tracks which, while appealing to some (including myself) might work on other player's nerves.

The big question in my mind is one of viability. Yes, Big Air is a fun game, fine and well, but how does it apply to a South African market? After all, the only thing we know about snow boarding over here are the odd glimpses we catch of it on TV, which are few and far between. It almost seems a shame that a great game like Big Air will lose so much appeal on the local market, merely because we don't know enough about it. Hopefully there are a few people out there who will appreciate it for the good game it is.

SHRYKE

GENRE
Sports Simulator

Controller Support: Vibration Function Compatible; Analog Controller Compatible

Optional Extras: Memory Card 1 Block; 1 - 2 Player

Big Air is a thrilling snowboarding simulator. While the graphics may not blow your mind, the ease of performing tricks and quick, challeging courses will get you really excited - if you can wait long enough for the game to load, that is...

Developer:	Publisher:	Supplier:	RRP:
Pitbull Syndicate	Accolade	Electronic Arts Africa (011) 803-1212	R359.00

http://www.ea.co.za

Multiplayer	Comparitives	Pro's	Con's
Yes	Cool Boarders 3 X-Games Pro Boarder	Easy Tricks Very Playable	Long Load Times Mediocre Graphics

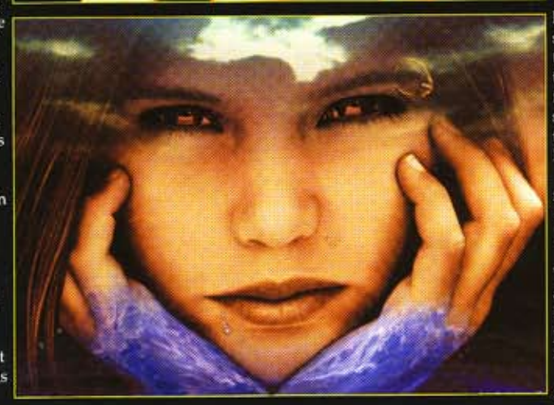
Graphics	Sound	Control	Story	Continuity	Playability	
51	60	78	NA	60	65	63

The Demo Scene

OPTIMISATION 101

THREE WAYS TO MAKE IT GO FASTER

BY PAUL FURBER
HTTP://WWW.SURF.TO/DEMOS
E-MAIL: SADEMO@EGROUPS.COM
E-MAIL: MAVERICK@IS.CO.ZA



Last month's column was a pretty brief introduction to optimisation in general. The subject is vast and complex and keeps gurus around the world occupied full time in their quest to squeeze more speed out of a piece of code.
But some of the tips and tricks they use are really easy to do for yourself and not that hard to understand. So here goes with three ways to make your programs run faster. I'll be using C to illustrate them where necessary but these methods apply to any language at all since they apply more to design than to the quirks of whatever language you use.

Tip 1:
Avoid inherently slow operations if you can and replace them if you can't with faster ones.
This sounds so obvious but it isn't really. It can take quite a bit of analysis of your code to find out what's really taking all the processing time. Last month I mentioned profiling tools. Use yours all the time. Run your code through it and then examine the results to see where the bottlenecks are. A good rule of thumb is that 90% of the time is taken in 10% of the code. If you can find ways to speed up that 10% then you'll get appreciable speedups. On the other hand, it's wasteful and time-consuming to spend lots of time optimising a routine which only runs once near the beginning of the program. It's much more fruitful to slim down that complex vector operation or fractal calculation.
Some inherently slow operations are mathematical - divisions, square roots and the trancendental functions like sine and cosine. Multiplication is actually quite quick - 3 clock cycles on a Pentium using the Floating Point Unit but the others are slow. Square roots take something like 70 clock cycles to complete when using the FPU. That may sound fast when you consider a Pentium 133 executes roughly 133 million clock cycles per second, but it adds up when you start performing several of them thousands of times per second in your inner loops.
One of the ways to eliminate this bottleneck is to calculate the values you will need in advance (when the program is starting up) and then just look up the right value when you need it. For example: if you need to use sin and cos in a demo (and you probably will) then calculate an array of values the length of the number of angles you will need and place the correct values in this array ahead of time. Then when you need to find the sin or cos of an angle you can look it up with an inexpensive array access instead of a slow calculation.

Tip 2:
Try and count backwards when performing a loop.
This is decidedly non-intuitive but it does work very well. If you have to do a loop which counts from zero to one hundred, performing an operation at each step then rather replace it with the equivalent routine that counts down from one hundred to zero.

Replace this code:

```
int i;
for (i=0;i<100;i++) {
 do_something_for_each(i);
}
```

with this:

```
int i;
i = 100;
while (--i) {
 do_something_for_each(i);
}
```

The first example is a simple for loop, the second is a while. The --i line is just shorthand for 'take one away from i before you do anything else.' The reason this works is because you're helping the compiler with two things. One, you're making it easy for it to generate faster loop code. Two: if you're working on a data structure using the variable i as an index, then the whole thing will be read into the CPU's cache before the loop starts. This means it will be accessed faster than if it was in main memory.

Tip 3:
Try to have as few calculations in your loops as possible. This is another tip that seems obvious but it's easy to fall into the trap without noticing it. In this example, the programmer wants to again count from zero to one hundred and perform some operations at each step, except this time he wants to step in increments of 10. Here's a piece of code that will do that:

```
for (i=0;i<10;i++) {
 do_something_with(i*10);
}
```

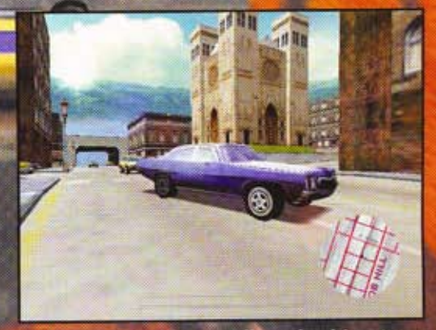
There's a problem though. At each stage, a multiplication is performed inside the loop which will naturally slow the whole process down. A simpler and faster method is this:

```
for (i=0;i<100;i+=10) {
 do_something_with(i);
}
```

Same result but much quicker to perform. If you think this is a trivial means of optimisation, you're right. But it works.
Local exponents of optimisation will be strutting their stuff at Optimise 99 this year. The venue will be a club in NewTown and the event will take place over two days starting the 22nd of October '99. There are lots of competitions, prizes, LAN games, movies and other cool stuff. Check out www.surf.to/demos for more information. See you there!

Paul Furber - 'Maverick'

DRIVER
YOU ARE THE WHEELMAN
FROM THE CREATOR OF DESTRUCTION DERBY 1 & 2



Mission-based format allows the driver to choose jobs and unfold the double-crossing intricacies of a movie-quality plot.

True-to-life driving obstacles. Traffic signals. Pedestrians. Oncoming traffic. Garbage strewn alleyways! And fleets of cop cars!

Authentic, real-life driving physics. All the white-knuckle sensation of muscle-car getaway driving.

We're taking the driving genre and blasting it out of the water with a unique concept and the hottest, fastest, most cinematic gameplay ever committed to the gaming screen! Delivering the gameplay goods in every way possible, DRIVER is about to send your gaming into serious overdrive.

YOU ARE THE WHEELMAN.

PC CD ROM
PlayStation
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WORFAIRE

With over 3.5 Km of high capacity network cables, 69 power house computers, the best networking hardware money can buy, plenty of killer prizes and hundreds of Quake and StarCraft players, Africa's biggest multiplayer event ever, Worfaire, began on Friday 16th July 1999.

The good

On the Friday, the clan events drew an enormous amount of interest, all we'd like to say is, if you weren't there then you've got no recourse on the Internet anymore, New Age Gaming and the GLSA's (Gaming League of South Africa) new calling card is either show up or shut up. We weren't surprised when many of the players who always have so much to say on message boards and chat rooms failed to show up at all...

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CREATIVE

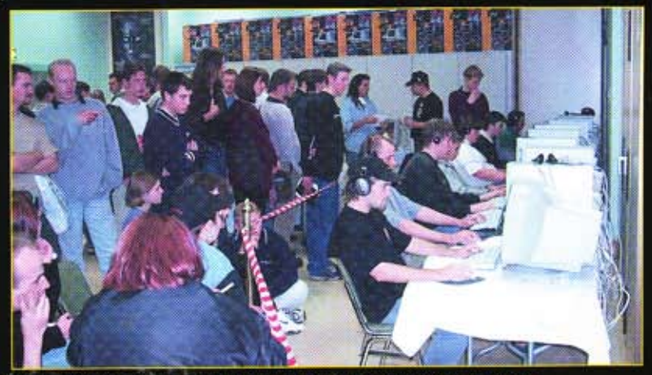
Overall, the level of competition was impressive, with many of the final games ending in nail biting sudden death finales, worthy of any internationally classed sporting event. Fortunately there was only one incident where the judges had to watch a recorded demo of a game to determine if any foul play had taken place. After everything was said and done though, both parties showed a tremendous amount of sportsmanship, more so than many people twice their age. All we'd like to say is well done guys - we need more people like you in competitions like this.

GAMERS LEAGUE OF SOUTH AFRICA

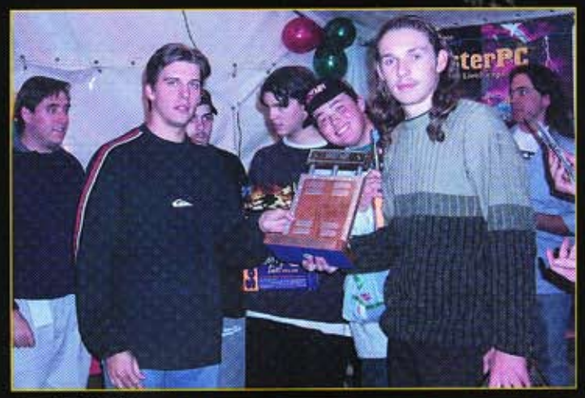
www.glsa.co.za

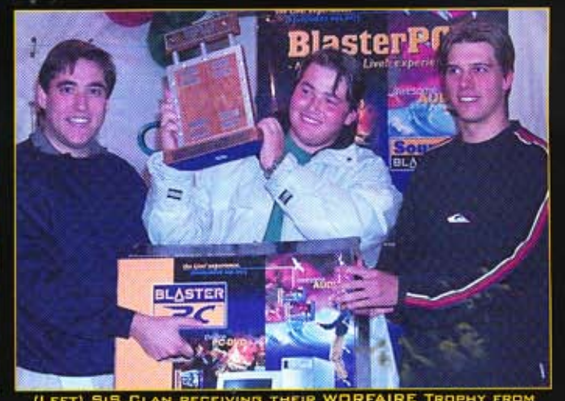
The bad

Considering the logistical nightmare involved running a competition like, this everything went surprisingly well, the only real problem we seemed to have was timing - after being put under some considerable pressure from the community the organisers decided to bow to the request. Everyone seemed to have their own unique and specific way of playing so most players brought their own mice and custom configuration files. There also seemed to be an inordinate amount of Quake II configuration settings we had to change and all this before the ten minute set-up time limit. So in-between the caretakers sudden desire to make tea with a kettle that inadvertently trips the power in the hall 1 sector and players problems with mouse drivers, config files and gamma settings, we feel that we grossly underestimated the setup time required. A very big thanks you goes out from the organisers to the players who showed patience and understanding.



THE PLAYING AREA WAS CONTINUALLY SURROUNDED BY SPECTATORS CHEERING FOR THEIR FAVOURITE PLAYERS



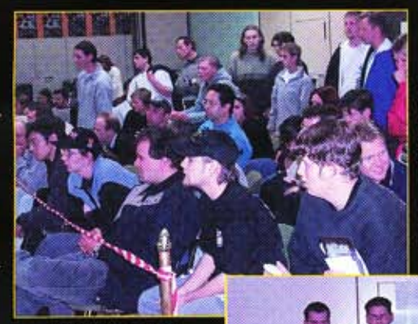


(LEFT) SIS CLAN RECEIVING THEIR WORFAIRE TROPHY FROM MICHAEL STANLEY (MMW - MARKETING MANAGER)
(TOP) KENNETH JOHNSON RECEIVING HIS CREATIVE BLASTERPC FROM NIR GRODZIAN (CREATIVE LAB SA GENERAL MANAGER) AND MICHAEL STANLEY (MMW)

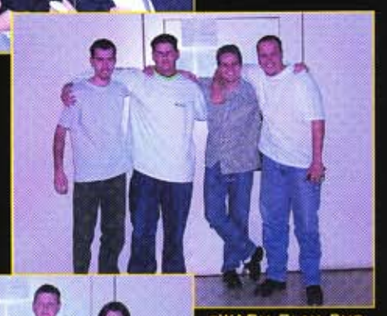
Highlights

Starting with the Quake2 Clan competition we encountered a few first round seeds that met each other first up. Reservoir Dogs (MNET's powerhouse team) unfortunately met Savage Immortal Soldiers 'B' (SiS) in the first round and come up second best. Not a big disappointment seeing as that the SiS 'B' team actually walked away with first prize of a SBLive! and a copy of Kingpin each. Other teams worthy of a mention is the Cloak & Dagger team, who performed well enough to pick-up fourth position and the sWARm Clan that sneaked into second spot. But the champions of the week were without a doubt the SiS Clan that came first and third overall and deservedly so. NAG and the GLSA solute these fine players and we hope to see them back again no time soon.

As far as the Starcraft Clan competition goes we have spurts of information but we are aware that The Chosen team walked away with the trophy. The top SA players again hotly contested the Starcraft single player as they fought their way through each round. The highly rated RAVEN[DC], NAG's own resident strategy expert, fell out of grace after meeting Sonic up the ladder. Johan Penning AKA Sonic[AI] showed resilience as he picked off his opponents one by one. Eventually it was left to Martin Sen AKA VerSyDen to stop his progress to number one. But no sooner had the game begun and Sonic was trudging zealots into VerSyDen's base, a surprise and calculated move. This advantage gave Sonic the edge he need to finish the game off in 10 minutes and pack a new Creative BlasterPC Premium into his backpack. The single player Quake 2 duels event was the best seen in South Africa, with the standard of play much higher than anticipated. Again we had some first round casualties that come up against some stiff opposition. As the day progressed it was clear that the Clan winner SiS was again on form with most of their players going through to the 3rd round. The highly rated Nosfuratu showed his impressive form against his opposition but slipped out in the 4th round after some impressive play from the 15 year old Xian from the SiS Clan. Last years Creative Carnival winner Viper from the Damage Clan was cruising along quietly and showed glimpses of his old self but the tension grew too much after he succumbed to another SiS member Radiant 13 - 3. It was said that Viper would be quitting Quake 2 but I'm sure after the release of Quake 3 we will see him return with a vengeance. Llama from Reservoir Dogs who made the trip up from Cape Town had a disappointing weekend after he picked up top players in both the clan and duel event. As things started to hot up it was left to Vio Nectro (SiS), Radient (SiS), Siberiyan (Reservoir Dogs), Xian (SiS), Vore (SiS) to fight it out for the winner prize. At the end of it all it came down to the 17 year old Kenneth Johnson (Vio Nectro) and 15 year old Garth Jones (Vore) to duel to the death. After Vore came through a bit of a scare against Xian in the semi-final, he was highly rated to dominate the final, but was surprised by Vio Nectro's calm and meticulous assassination of his dominance. Vio Nectro completed his quest for the Creative BlasterPC sponsored by Creative by convincingly beating Vore 8 - 1.



CROWD CONTROL



sWARm CLAN 2ND

CLOAK & DAGGER (4TH)

Finale

The organisers would like to thank all the participants and spectators for their show of force, camaraderie and sportsmanship. Special thanks go out to CyberWolf, Memnock, Soul Assassin, Lordzorg, Veng and Redtide for their caffeine habits and attention spans. A round of applause must go to Multimedia Warehouse and Creative Labs for their incredible generosity in allowing the GLSA to utilise there BlasterPC's, as well as 3COM and Datatec for the Switches and network cards and Data Reticulation Services for the 3.5km's of network cable still lying in my office. Also thanks to everyone who participated in the games, hard luck to those of you who never made it - you'll have to try again next year or in October when we... [Snip, quiet fool, it isn't official yet - Ed].

DCI Tournaments: The Place to Play!

Each month in NAG we take a look at some of the top events around the country, featuring the top players. Gamers are seen winning trips to New York, London and Tokyo, to play in competitions with cash prizes of millions of rands - literally. To the new player, or the player to be, their hopes of reaching that level may seem to be little more than a pipe dream. But the reality is that anyone can make the Pro Tour. We take a look at how you can make the jump from casual gamer to tournament winner. Contrary to popular belief, it's not about who spends the most money. Sure, you need the right cards, but it's more about knowing what is happening in the tournament scene. What decks are being played? What card combos are being used, and why? The best place to pick up this information is, not surprisingly, at tournaments. There are the major events, such as the Pro Tour Qualifiers and Regional championships, but many places hold smaller events every week. These are the places to meet other players, trade for the cards you need and learn the tournament rules. Better organised events will tend to be DCI sanctioned. The DCI is an international organisation which governs Magic: The Gathering organised play around the world. DCI membership is free, and all events you take part in will contribute towards your international ranking. This is the ranking you see on the player profile on this page, and the higher it is the better the player is. The DCI also makes sure that the judges at the events are capable of running organised play, and actually test and interview candidates who want to become a certified judge. This is one of the ways DCI tries to ensure that the tournaments you play at are fair and run in a professional manner.

These judges also help new players get used to playing in a tournament, and can answer questions about the rules you might have problems with. They may also be able to help with deck construction, helping you to choose the cards to play with.

Regular tournaments are held at the following places:

Gauteng
Dragons Lair, Hyperama Centre, Roodepoort (Carl 083 377 6409)
Facts & Fiction, Balfour Park, Johannesburg (Shop: 011 786 8870)
Facts & Fiction, The Glen, Johannesburg (Shop: 011 435 0311)
Future Fantasy, Victory Park, JHB (Patrick 011 782 6154)
Net Cafe, Hatfield, Pretoria (Joe 082 770 0514)
Outer Limits, Melville, JHB (Peter 082 466 0107)
Wizards Games, Edenvale (Dan 082 698 3453)

Western Province
Wizards Books, The Atrium, CT (Garth 083 600 1988)

Eastern Province
Fantasy Fortress, PE (Petrus 082 800 3501)

KwaZulu/Natal
Lahee Park Sports Club, Pinetown (Rob 083 449 2702)

Freestate
St James Restaurant, Bloem (Nicky 082 802 7440)

For regular updates on events, check out the Games Emporium site at www.geon.co.za.

The site is currently being redesigned, so if you would like to see anything new on it send your request to webmaster@geon.co.za.
The site also has more information on the DCI and tournament rules, plus dates and venues of sneak previews of forthcoming expansions and major tournaments, such as Pro Tour Qualifiers.

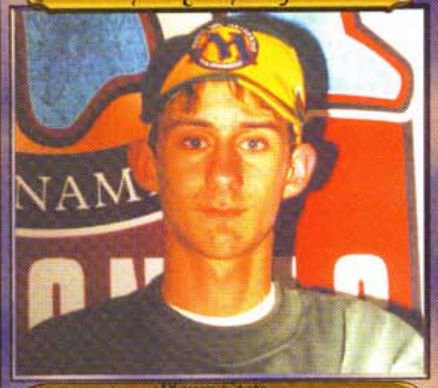
Mercadian Masques Pre-releases Set

The beginning of the next stand-alone block and the last release for 1999 is planned for October, but hundreds of South African players around the country can get a sneak preview of the new cards at the end of September. On Sunday 26 September '99 players in Cape Town, Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth, Durban and Bloemfontein will each open a Mercadian Masques tournament deck and three boosters, and build a deck from the cards they get. DCI co-ordinator for South Africa, Martin Frain, expects a big turnout at the fun events. "We fall under European organisation, and form part of a 38 country community. The number of players we had at the Urza's Destiny pre-release put us tenth in terms of turnout, and I expect us to move up. Magic: The Gathering is getting more popular in this country, and more players are finding out that the pre-release events are a lot of fun."
Cost of the events is R110, and players get the cards mentioned above and a special foil commemorative card. Venues still have to be decided, but pre-booking for all events will be done.

Arena Planned for South Africa

Arena, the shop based league for Magic: The Gathering, is set to hit these shores at the end of September this year. You join the league at the shop and gather points during the season - the more you play, the more you earn (even if you suck you still get points for playing!). At the end of each season, prizes, in the form of playable Arena-only foil cards go to the top players.
"The idea is to start with just a couple of stores, and expand the number each season. If you want the store near you to host Arena, mail me at dci@geon.co.za," said Martin Frain.

Player Profile



Player Stats

Name: Christiaan du Plessis
City: Pietersburg
Age: 16
Occupation: Scholar
DCI Comp Rank: New Player
SA Rank: Not Yet

South African National Team
Placed second at the SA National Championships to claim his seat in the SA Team heading for Japan - and has been playing for only six months.

-3 -2

Legends Membership Launch at GenCon

For DCI members who want more out of their gaming, there is the Legends DCI membership. Launched in South Africa at GenCon, members get a credit-card style membership card, an Italian Legends booster pack, a Magic: The Gathering poker deck, special members-only Counterspell and Incinerate cards and a newsletter (The European Sideboard) featuring news and articles eight times a year.
"Legends members will get also get priority booking for major events," said Martin Frain, DCI co-ordinator for SA. "Legends membership is not aimed at the average player, but rather at the more serious competitor."
Membership costs R150 for the year. Check out www.geon.co.za for your application form, or join at any major event around the country.

Hear the APPLAUSE
for Creative's Award Winners

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"No more flat games or uninspired music. This PCI card with 512 voices and true 3D surround sound adds life to anything."
- PC Computing

PC-DVD 5X with Dxr2
"If you have been itching to get your hands on a DVD player, the Creative PC-DVD Encore 5X kit is a perfect solution."
- Tech-review

Graphics Blaster Riva TNT
"Its 2-D and 3-D benchmark test scores put it in the top tier of graphics accelerators..."
- PC Magazine

Cambridge SoundWorks PCWorks FourPointSurround FPS1000
"Sound quality that's nearly impossible to match at this price... Possibly the best buy in PC audio."
- PC Gamer

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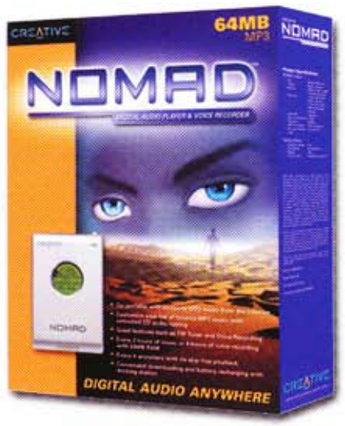
NOMAD

It seems that the music industry is entering an evolutionary cycle yet again. First it was Audio CDs and now we might be facing a change to MP3 CDs. The popular audio compression format MP3 is gaining more and more support as time goes by and the first dedicated devices for playing audio stored in the MP3 format are starting to appear on the market.
Currently there are only portable MP3 players available, but there are rumours circulating about dedicated players for use with stereo systems in development as well. We will just have to wait and see if those make an appearance, but for now we take a look at the latest portable player from Creative Labs called the NOMAD.



Since the announcement several months ago audiophiles everywhere have been looking forward to the release of the NOMAD. There are currently two versions of the portable player available - a 32-MB version with lesser features and a 64-MB version. Only the 64-MB version is currently available in South Africa and can be considered expensive at a retail price of R2399.00. It is however feature packed for the price.
The unit is capable of playing back MP3 audio files, which is its main function, but beyond this it offers FM radio reception and the ability to record voice messages. The unit can also fill the role of transporting files since you can upload and download any file format that your heart desires. The NOMAD also comes with 2 rechargeable batteries and a docking station, which plugs into your parallel port to make transfer easy and painless as well as the software necessary to control it from your computer. I do have one comment on the docking station though. Why didn't they use a pass-through cable instead of a standard cable? This makes it necessary to keep changing between your docking station and printer the whole time should you also have a printer. With a pass-through cable they could have prevented this problem and allowed both the docking station and printer to be plugged in simultaneously. Other than this the docking station is a great idea and even allows you to recharge the NOMAD's batteries while it is docked, which is quite often considering that they only last for 5 hours while playing music.

What makes the NOMAD attractive is its stylish looking magnesium grey case that is small enough to fit almost anywhere measuring only 58 x 85 x 17 mm. It reminds me of just how far we have progressed over the last couple of years to make such a small item capable of so much.
The 64-MB version, as its name states, ships with 64 MB of RAM for storing MP3 or other files. 32 MB is located onboard within the unit and the additional 32 MB comes from a small flash card that slots into the back of the unit. On 64 MB you can fit roughly about 1 hour and 20 minutes worth of CD quality (128Kb/s) MP3 files. You can purchase additional flash cards for storing files and this makes it easier to carry around more than the allotted 64 MB making it that much easier to have more than 1 hour and 20 minutes worth of music. The cards are fast to change but care must be taken when they are not in the unit due to their size. They are very small and can easily be lost.
I must admit that listening to MP3 music on the NOMAD is a sheer pleasure and there is no stuttering or clicking heard. The music is as clear while playing and can easily be compared to listening to the original track from the original audio CD. This is also largely due to the fact that the unit ships with high-quality earphones which has a decent response range. There is nothing more annoying than paying for a unit and then having to fork out more cash because they gave you cheap low quality headphones.

THE INTUITIVE NOMAD MANAGER SOFTWARE HELPS CONTROL YOUR FILES

To convey information to the user the unit has a small round LCD screen mounted on the front side. The information displayed are only the basics namely battery life, the song currently being played and the number of the song being played. When in FM mode the display shows to what frequency it is tuned to e.g. 98.00 FM for Radio 5.
The NOMAD can pick up any radio station 88 MHz -108MHz range, which covers all FM stations in South Africa. Up to 10 frequencies can be assigned to channels so you can find them easily without having to tune the NOMAD all the time.

Another interesting feature of the NOMAD is its ability to act as a voice-recording device and as such could be used to dictate notes to a secretary or just for reminding yourself of tasks to do, even do interviews with. We tested the voice recording and it averaged at 240 KB per minute, making it possible to record up to almost 2 hours worth of voice, not to mention that the recordings are clear and comparable to dedicated tape recorders.

For different types of music, e.g. Jazz, Techno, Rock etc., the NOMAD ships with a built in equaliser that can be set to 4 different modes to enhance the music. It is unfortunate however that you cannot specify your own equaliser settings and have to use the pre-programmed settings.
As the music industry is well aware, there currently exists a huge problem with the protection of intellectual property as far as music is concerned. You can get your hands on almost any song under the sun from the Internet and this is making the music industry sceptical about the MP3 format. To prevent this type of behaviour Creative Labs have included limited copy protection on the NOMAD. You are only able to copy MP3 songs onto the unit but it will not allow you to copy them back off onto your hard drive. This restriction only applies to copying MP3 files and you are still able to upload or download any other type of file you might be carrying around with you.
Overall I am impressed with the NOMAD and would rate it the most feature packed portable MP3 player on the market, even if it is a little pricey. I am considering buying one for myself to listen to all my MP3 songs while I am on the road, and would recommend it to all music enthusiasts, as it comes in handy for file transportation between the office and home. You can even listen to your favourite radio station if you get sick of listening to the MP3 songs and haven't had a chance to change them around yet.

Pro's: *Lots of Features, Rechargeable Batteries, Docking Station*
Con's: *Price, No Pass-through-Parallel Connection*
R 2399.00 (RRP)
Multimedia Warehouse
(011) 315-1000
www.mmw.co.za

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Logitech MouseMan+

The most neglected device by computer gamers is their mouse. We take it for granted, and rarely do we stop to realise that it is the main hardware interface for the majority of games out there. Not all mice are equal and some offer more responsiveness and a better design than others do, making a quality mouse essential in every gamers arsenal of weapons. Even if it is just to be slightly better than the next person. This is especially so with First Person Shooter games where quick response and accuracy is the name of the game and the deciding factor between the winner and the loser. The mouse industry *[Not the rodent type but the electronic type - Ed.]* has gone into a flurry recently with all the mouse developers releasing new mice of all shapes and sizes, not to mention new and stylish colours as well.
The new motif is a natural shape with more buttons and scroll wheel added in. One such mouse is the MouseMan+ from Logitech who have been innovators in the mouse market since the early days of computing. Installation is fast and simple, your basic Plug & Play installation with little effort involved. The MouseMan+ is a PS/2 mouse and comes with a 9 pin Serial converter for older PCs as well. Just plug it into the selected port and install the included Logitech MouseWare software. The reason I stated that a little effort is needed is due to the fact that you need to install the software first before Windows will detect it as a MouseMan+, Windows doesn't auto detect it at startup. Once the software is installed it will detect the mouse and configure it to the default factory settings. Afterwards you can change any settings using the Logitech MouseWare software to adjust the function of each button as well as the scroll wheel. The MouseMan+ ships with 3 mouse buttons, two on top and a third thumb button as well as a scroll wheel which is located in the centre of the two top buttons. The thumb button is slightly awkward, especially when playing games. You tend to squeeze the mouse when things get tense and in turn you press the button accidentally. Once you are comfortable with the thumb button, it does make an excellent zoom button. The MouseMan+ has one of those new natural designs and with the added white and grey plastic the mouse has a slightly futuristic appearance. The top surface sits comfortably in your hand with your whole palm resting on it while the top surface is slanted down and to the right. Unfortunately this makes the mouse uncomfortable for left-handed people, although right handed gamers should feel right at home.
One aspect that does take some getting used to is the control of the mouse. Since your whole palm rests on the surface of the MouseMan+ you need to glide it around, and not grip and push it around as with older mice. Once you are comfortable with it you will definitely see an improvement in your aim when playing games such as Quake 3 or Aliens versus Predator.
Overall the MouseMan+ is one of the better quality mice in the market today. It offers excellent responsiveness, a sleek design, and controls that can be used in games or everyday applications. The MouseMan+ also comes with a limited 3 year Warranty from Logitech and, should you have any problems, you can rest assured that there is local support for the device. At an RRP of R399.00 the MouseMan+ is slightly expensive but the accuracy and responsiveness can easily justify the cost.

Pro's: *3 Buttons & Wheel, Comfortable Design, Responsiveness*
Con's: *Right handed only*
R 399.00 (RRP)
Datatec Crew
(011) 233-1111
www.logitech.com

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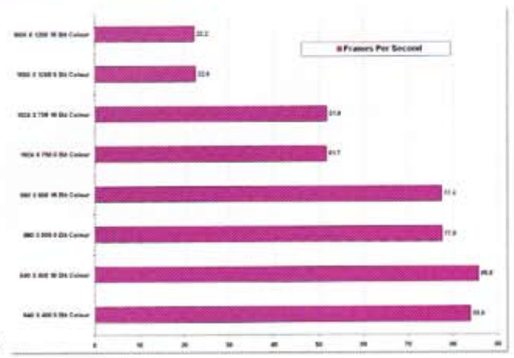
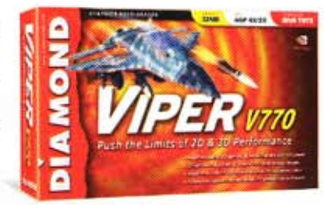
Viper V770 Ultra

We finally got our hands on the Ultra version of the Viper V770 from Diamond Multimedia. The cards just didn't make it in time for our 3D-card roundup in the last issue, but fortunately we can now have a look at the card and compare it to the 3D cards reviewed last month..
Using the new nVidia Riva TNT 2 chipset and a 300Mhz RAMDAC Diamond has created one of the best 2D/3D display solutions on the market. The TNT 2 chipset is one of the fastest on the market and with the 300Mhz RAMDAC the card is capable of pushing out resolutions of up to 2048x1536.
32MB of onboard memory also accompanies the card for large texture storage and frame buffering. The V770 Ultra also supports AGP 2X and 4X, although setting up support for AGP 4X requires an installation of a jumper on the CD. As I stated last month, this is cumbersome and they should have had the card auto detect what AGP support is available on your motherboard.
The Viper V770 Ultra is slower than the Voodoo3 3000 and Creative Labs TNT2 Ultra, but you can expect it to last longer due to AGP texturing support and the 32MB of RAM than the Voodoo3 3000, which will be needed for future games. On the other hand it is comparable to the Creative Labs TNT2 Ultra where the chipset is concerned, the only difference is that Creative used faster memory on their cards and is therefore roughly 10 FPS faster than the V770 Ultra. The V770 Ultra also supports textures of up to 2048x2048 and 32 bit rendering, what it does lack is the TV output of the Creative TNT2 Ultra and the Voodoo3 3000.





Unlike the OEM version the V770 Ultra comes neatly packaged in a box which contains the display card, installation manual, driver disk and two games namely Superbike World Championship and Wild Metal Country. This is why the box has a logo on the front stating that it is a Gamers Edition, and considering that the card retails at only R1645.00 it is good value for money.Installation is simple and painless utilising Plug & Play. Simply make sure that the AGP jumpers are correct, slot it into your machine, boot-up and insert the driver CD when Windows prompts you for it. Afterwards you are set to play 3D games to your hearts content. To date Diamond Multimedia hasn't announced anything similar to Creative's Unified drivers, which will enable their cards to run Glide based games as well. This is unfortunate, but most of the latest games come with Direct3D or OpenGL support and this only becomes a concern when playing legacy games. The driver ships with Diamonds In-Control tools to change settings on the card and for all you overclockers out there the card does come with pre-set setting for overclocking, although it won't allow you to change the core and memory speed directly.Please remember that the Viper V770 Ultra is only available at that price directly from CyberDyne Systems here in Johannesburg. They will of course ship it to anywhere in the country for a small courier fee. CyberDyne will also support the card throughout its 5-year warranty period should you experience any problem after purchasing a Viper V770 Ultra.
Overall the card is exceptionally good value for money even if it comes without a TV output. I have no idea why you would want to play or work on a TV screen anyway, since your monitor supports higher resolutions than your TV. Due to the reasonable price and the excellent Riva TNT2 Chipset as well as bundled software we are giving the Viper V770 Ultra an Editor's Choice in conjunction with the Voodoo3 3000 in the 2D/3D card display category.

Pro's: *2048x2048 Texturing, Reasonable Price, AGP Texturing*
Con's: *AGP Jumper Settings, No TV Output*
R 1645.00 (RRP)
Cyberdyne Systems S.A.
(011) 327-0237
www.diamondmm.com

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Important Information
This section is for PlayStation exclusively, PC gamers please see the cover CD where we place any new cheats for PC games. The archive on the CD is ongoing and contains all PC cheats to date. In the future we may consider placing a PlayStation cheat archive on the CD.

Ape Escape

Remote Controlled Car Bomb
When using the remote controlled car you can place it near a monkey and then hit the RC car with the stun club, and then boom.

Saving Your Life
When you fall off a cliff, press start and then exit, you will go to the time station with the same amount of lives you had before you fell off the cliff.

Secret Tunnel
In Thick Jungles, push down at the stop sign and you will see a tunnel.

Idle Animations
Do tricks with Time Net
Do a handstand
Listen to a stereo through headphones
Play with a yo-yo
Look through binoculars.

Blow up the Remote Controlled Car
There are two ways to do this - Get it caught under a door in training or drive it next to you, then pull out your Stun Club and hit it.

Big Air

All Levels and Players
Go to the screen where you select what music track you want to listen to, then put it on blink 182, [dammit] and play it. Next put it on blink 182, [untitled] and exit. When you leave, the game should start playing blink 182, [untitled]. Go to the Character Selection screen and hold Square + Triangle + Circle + X. The words "Blink 182 Rocks" will confirm the code.

Driver

Enter one of the following cheats at the main menu. If you entered the code correctly, you will hear a sound. Then the corresponding code will be unlocked on the cheat screen.

Invincible
Quickly press L2(2), R2(2), L2, R2, L2, L1, R2, R1, L2, L1(2)
No Police
Quickly press L1, L2, R1(4), L2(2), R1(2), L1(2), R2
Rear Wheel Steering
Quickly press R1(3), R2, L2, R1, R2, L2, L1, R2, R1, L2, L1
Long Suspension
Quickly press R2, L2, R1, R2, L2, L1, R2(2), L2(2), L1, R2, R1
Mini Cars
Quickly press R1, R2, R1, R2, L1, L2, R1, R2, L1, R1, L2(3) : The collision detection will still behave as if the cars were normal size.
Upside-down Screen
Quickly press R2(2), R1, L2, L1,

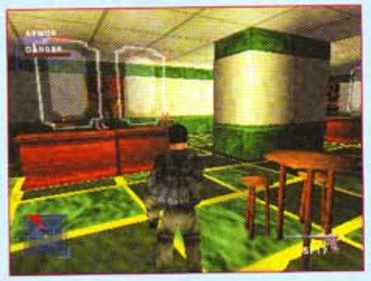
R2, L2, L1, R2(2), L2, R2, L1
View Credits
Quickly press L1, L2, R1, R2, L1, R1, R2, L2, R1, R2, L1, L2, R1

Syphon Filter

Backup Agents
Pause the game and press Up, Down, Square, Square, Triangle and Select.
All Weapons and Infinite Ammo
Pause the game and highlight the Weapons menu. Press and hold Right + L2 + R2 + Circle + Square + X.
Level Select
Pause the game. Go into the Options menu. Highlight the Select Mission option. Press and hold Left + L1 + R1 + Select + Square + X.

PLAYSTATION CHEATS

Easier Enemies
Pause the game and highlight the Map entry. Press and hold Right, R1, L2, and X. A laugh will confirm the code.



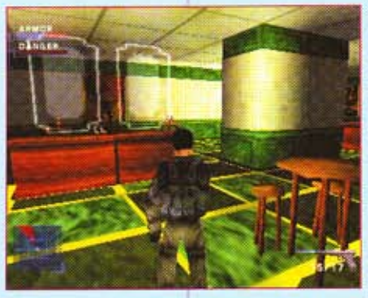
Super Pistol
Pause the game, select Weapons and highlight 9MM. Press and hold Left, R2, Select, L1, Square, and X. You'll hear, 'Understood'.
View All Movies
Go to the movie theatre in the first level. Pause the game, highlight Maps, then press and hold Right, L2, R1, and X. You'll hear, "Got it".
Harder Game
At the title screen press and hold Left, L1, R2, Select, Square, Circle, and X. The word "dammit" will confirm the code.
Survive Burning
If you're lit on fire, quickly press the Start button then press the Start button again. You'll be hurt, but alive.
X-ray Vision
Use the virus scanner to look through walls to see if an enemy is waiting for you.

Playing Tips

Terrorist Mob
If you're faced with a group of terrorists the best way to avoid getting killed is to move around in circles or any random pattern, while firing back. Rolling sometimes helps but getting back on your feet takes slightly longer, leaving you open for attack.
If you're surrounded by a lot of enemies and you don't equip the appropriate weapon, press Start to go to the character screen and

change your weapon there. Do not attempt to change the weapon by holding Select + L2/R2 because it takes a lot of time. You should know that Gabriel still does his weapon-changing animation so you have to evade enemy fire until the weapon is ready to use.

Ammunition Conservation
If you're concerned about saving ammunition in a game like this remember to use the head shot method. Use the manual aim (L1) and aim for the head of the enemy, one shot will kill instantly. This is very effective against enemies wearing flak jackets, furthermore, if you pull off the shot successfully on enemies that wear flak jackets, you can keep the flak jacket for yourself. At medium range, the first-person view mode is already targeted at head height, so a simple sweep with an automatic weapon easily discharges enemies.



Use the appropriate weapon. If the enemy is too far away use the sniper rifle. If the environment is dark, then use the night vision rifle. If there's a group of enemies, use gas grenades or the grenade launcher. If the enemy is in short range, use the handguns and shotguns. These are some examples - experiment on your own to find the type of weapon that is suitable for you.

Stealth Tips
You'll need to use stealth in Syphon Filter - and doing this can be quiet frustrating. Here are 3 tips to improve your chances of completing the game:

When a guard is on a route (walking back and forth), hide behind a wall and hold L1 to manual aim. Then hit L2 or R2 to do a quick pop out. Then you simply shoot the guard and let go of the buttons.

Instead of using your R1 auto aim, use the L2 manual aim. Wait until the screen says "head shot" then fire. This uses only 1 bullet and kills enemies with the first shot. When using stealth, shoot out spotlights so guards can't see you. If a guard is by a spotlight then snipe the guard first and then shoot the spotlight. When using 180° movement weapons, be sure to face the enemy, or shots fired will miss their intended target.
You cannot afford to make any mistakes if you're on stealth/infiltration mission. Miss your shot, and an enemy will be alerted. And once he's alert, he will stay alert for the rest of the game. After that, it's just a matter of time before he notices you.

If you have to deal with flak wearing terrorists, and the K3G4 is not available, merely use the first-person view mode to target the head or legs (legs cannot be damaged if the enemy is crouching, so it is only effective while they are standing).

General

Crouching increases accuracy, but also leaves you vulnerable, so it shouldn't be used frequently. You can also crouch-walk to sneak up on enemies, this way they'll never know what hit them.

Always pick up weapons left behind by dead terrorists, especially the powerful ones. You will need them a lot. Don't rely on your Taser especially when you're in the later stages of the game because the Taser doesn't work on bad guys with flak jackets.

Notice the danger bar on the top left of the screen? It's a very important bar. If the danger bar reaches max, that means the enemy has a clear shot on you. Your health will only be depleted after the danger bar reaches max, so hide behind walls or run if that happens.

Do not get hit by an explosion, caught up in flames, get struck by a train, get a head-shot (even though it's rare), or get slammed by car debris when you're near. Unlike other games, you'll die instantly if you do that.

If there's no enemy nearby, reload your weapon by pressing Triangle. Reloading takes some time and things will get hairy if you're reloading in the middle of a battle.

If there are barrels near the enemy, shoot the barrels to make an

explosion near the enemy. But beware that the enemies can do the same thing to you. In the labs, there are bottles on the table. Some bottles will produce gas if you shoot them, so experiment.

On later stages, you'll be given a viral scanner. You can use this to see through solid objects. By using this, you can see an enemy inside the building, so you can take the appropriate approach on him. Take note that even if you see him on the viral scanner doesn't make the enemy appear as a dot on your radar if you haven't seen him.

Defeating Anton Girdeaux
When playing against Anton Girdeaux, try to always keep a pole between you and him. Then he will be unable to see you. Hold L1 to manually aim whatever weapon you want. Hold L2 or R2 to peek out from behind the pole. Fire only at his gas pack on his back. Otherwise it will hit his body armour. You can see his gas pack from behind him when he turns to fire. Fire at the pack and let go of L1 and the other shoulder button and press L2 or R2 by themselves to crank your tail away from the flames. Repeat this about 5 times with .45 or about 10 times with the 9mm.

Defeating Rhoemer
Grab the gas grenades, then before you turn off the computer throw a gas grenade behind you at the entrance where Rhoemer comes in. As soon as the cinema ends he will die instantly.

Defeating the Chopper
Beating the chopper can be tough unless you know the proper way. First you will need to learn the choppers two basic attack patterns and be smart about evading its fire. Go to the edge and hold the lock on button and start strafing and then start shooting. Repeat this step as much as you can until it starts smoking. After it starts smoking, it unloads a whole ton of lead at you so you better be good at side stepping. It's almost beat when it passes overhead so when it does that just lock on and fire away and you should have it.

Please send any cheat requests to assassin@nag.co.za.

Send Off

This month felt shorter than most, largely due to our organisation of the Worfaire competition, which went quite well and seemed to finish too soon. The competition was definitely a learning curve for us and there will be some changes made when we host our next event. One example would be not to host two competitions on two totally different games on the same day. Other than the competition, I must say that this month presented us with some spectacular titles such as Dungeon Keeper 2, Aliens versus Predator, Driver, Outcast and a few more. Each of them is worthy of their individual scores and very entertaining to play. Overall this month has been good to gamers and I hope that the titles keep rolling in. You can never have too many games to play, although you might be forced to come up with new excuses to play all of them. Just call in sick and have a fragging session with the GF while he signs your sick note.
I would like to inform you that our Editor has been smitten by the Mistress in Dungeon Keeper 2, and our Editor-In-Chief has recently developed a craving for the illegal with

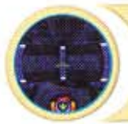
ERROL [VENG], EEEK! WHAT DID YOU DO WITH HIM.

Driver. I don't think any of us here in the office will be able to play any of those two titles anytime soon (unless we resort to prying the boxes out their hands with crowbars).
I do have an update on the comic strip that was supposed to be in Send Off by now. It is coming and the draft versions are being drawn up even as I write this. It might even appear as soon as next month. The Editor just needs at least 4 strips in reserve before he will allow me to publish it. Apparently the strip will be based on New Age Gaming employees or should I say, exploiting their habits for comedy. I wanted to look like Darth Maul in the strip but apparently I am not aggressive enough to justify this. I think the artist will agree with me once he is released from the intensive care unit.
This month we are also saying farewell to one of our employees who is returning to George in the Cape from where he will continue development on an upcoming web site. It was great having you here Errol and I hope that you still come visit us 'Johannesburg People' every now and again.

Here They Are, But You Never Heard It From Me...

We've already geared up *[Sigh - Ed]* for this smash title, so it'll definitely be in the next issue provided we can get away from playing it long enough to write it. The concept of mechanised robot exoskeletons doing battle in far off lands has almost as much appeal as first person shooting these days. We'll give you the full story next month - all gears ready to rock.

Once again we get to enter a fantasy realm and beat the living daylights out of all different kinds of creatures that should, by all rights, have been extinct a long time ago. And, just for those of you with a yen for Japanese animation, the whole thing is infused with a pervasive Manga feel. A huge world awaits you in Blaze and Blade.



The back of the box says, 'prepare yourself for an explosive new 3D action experience that will turn your world inside... out!' Sounds quite good hey? But as they say in the reviewing business never judge a box by its game - or something like that. Anyway get ready for over 30 robot enemies which you'll be able to shoot with 20 different weapons, Descent 3 is here!

Gang warfare on your PC, whatever will they think of next... Our special reviewers kit for this game includes a set of earmuffs - a 'get yourself a tuff attitude' guide book and a baseball bat with rusty nails. Take to the streets with a lead pipe and a foul mouth in this new first person slugger from Interplay, but watch out for the 18-age restriction.

Since the dogs of war have become kind of mangy and long in the tooth, it's time for the robots to take over. Machines lets you build an army of robots, research and improve them, and then blow away your enemies in three exciting view modes. So make sure your spark plug supply is full up, and that you get your torque wrench back from your brother - it's time to rumble!

Promotion of violent crime is big next month, with yet another gang-related game on the market. At least this one is funny, and all the bad language is bleeped out. This is a management game with a difference, and the biggest management problem will most likely be managing to pull yourself away from the keyboard.

Till next month, it is time to get my butt kicked by Warren again in the new Quake 3: Arena test that was released. I just have to beat him on at least one level, just one!

KEEP FRAGGIN, KICKIN BUTT, STRATEGIZING, SPORTSIZING AND PLAYING GAMES - SOUL ASSASSIN

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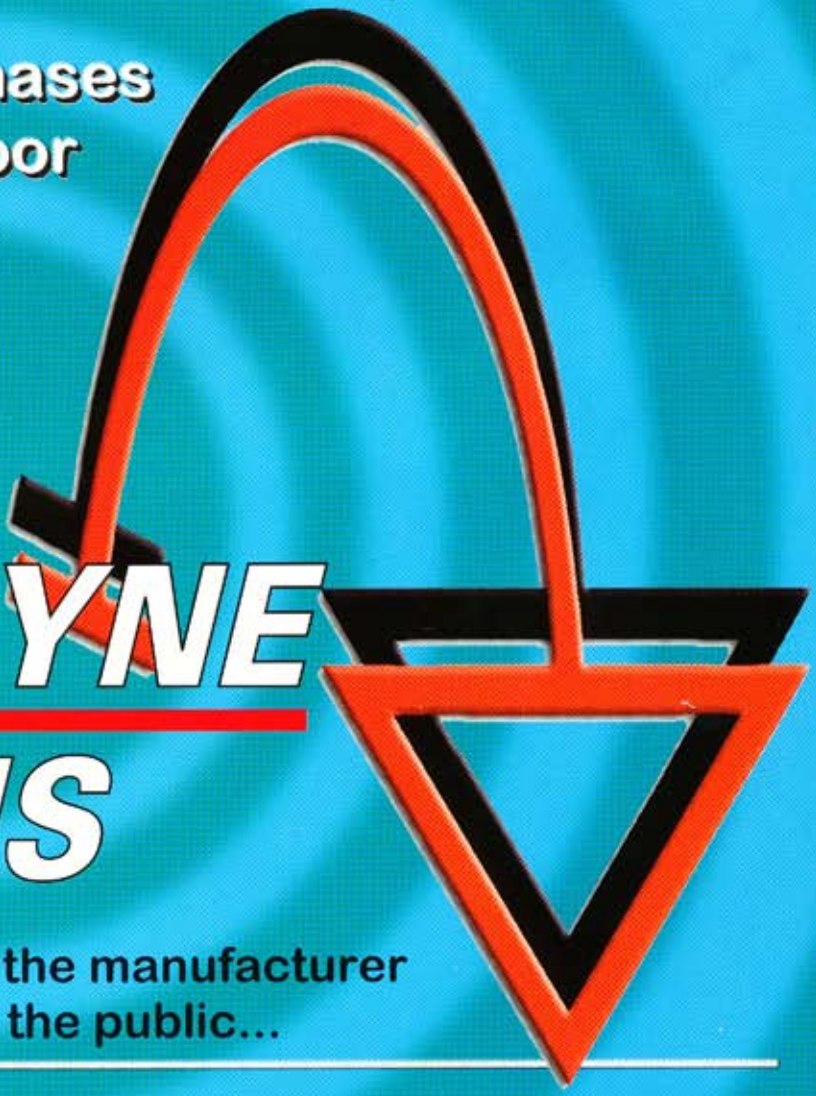

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